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Futurescapes of urban regeneration: ten years of design for the unfolding urban legacy of London's Olympic Games, 2008–2018

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ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on the urban legacy of the 2012 Olympics Games emerging in recent years has emphasized the form that development has taken and the ways in which this aligns (or not) with specific promises made in terms of regeneration before the Games. Though plenty of discussion of planning procedure has occurred in this context, less emphasis has been placed on how the process, rather than the products, of urban change has been envisioned through legacy planning and urban design, and the significance of this for regeneration. Given that London's much-heralded 'regeneration legacy' was, from the early days of the Olympic bid, portrayed as a long-term process aimed at addressing historical issues of socio-economic disparity in East London, and that planning and urban design would play key roles in anticipating it, this contribution to the literature is timely. The paper focuses on the period from 2008 to 2018, beginning with the launch of the what was called the Legacy Masterplan Framework. Drawing on empirical analysis of documents describing the main stages of legacy planning and design between these years, it then examines how regeneration as a 'futurescape' encompassing numerous aspects of timing and temporality has been anticipated, planned and evolved.

KEYWORDS

London 2012; Olympic Games; legacy; regeneration; futurescapes

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed the production of a great deal of literature related to the regeneration legacy of London's 2012 Olympics. Of that which relates specifically to urban design and development aspects, much has focussed on the *products* of anticipated and/or realized regeneration – on *what* is designed to be or actually delivered by way of public amenities, housing, employment areas, cultural spaces and the like.¹ Less has been written on how regeneration has been anticipated as a *process* in the context of legacy plans – involving different stages and timings – and, indeed, on how that process, through design, has been unfolding in time.² This reflects a broader tendency in regeneration studies to emphasize the physical and spatial aspects of planned change at the expense of the temporal aspects of transformation.³

Ideas of process have, however, been important in the context of designs for London's Olympics and legacy since the days of the Olympic Bid in 2003–4. It was then that the concept of a

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¹Such as: Bernstock, "Tension and Contradictions in London's Inclusive Housing Legacy," 154–71; Watt and Bernstock, "Legacy for Whom?" 91–138; Smith, "From Green Park to Theme Park?," 315–323.

²However, exceptions include: Davis, "A Promised Future and the Open City," 324–41; Evans, *London's Olympic Legacy*, Chapter 3.

³Such as: Raco et al., "Changing Times, Changing Places," 2652–2673; Degen, "Timescapes of Urban Change," 1074–1092.

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transformable Games landscape that could develop over time into a mixed-use ‘piece of city’ was first formed. Exemplifying a neoliberal conception of how to instigate and stimulate urban change,⁴ the Games were seen to have the potential to create valuable ‘catalysts’ to market-led development in and around the Olympic site after 2012 that the Labour Party Mayor of London Ken Livingstone promised in 2007 would ‘transform the heart of East London’.⁵ When the first major plan for this urban legacy, the Legacy Masterplan Framework (LMF), was launched in 2008, this transformative process was expected to stretch from the Games in 2012 to 2031.

A challenge for the appointed masterplanning team was hence to envision the legacy products as unfolding over this timeframe. As the economic, political and social contexts of development evolve continually and often in unanticipated ways, any plan formed so early in the process would be at risk of becoming dated and/or unfeasible. In response, the team developed a range of strategies in response to the uncertainty of the distant future and related to how the process might unfold, gradually realizing regeneration. Though the masterplan was renamed, and certain directions shifted in 2010, these broadly formed the basis for outline planning approval in 2011–12.

The main aim of this paper is to explore how planning and development processes were anticipated before the Olympics in the context of masterplanning, shaping strategies between January 2008 and July 2012 and also how they have been unfolding and continued to be anticipated since (July 2012–July 2018). It considers the relation between the two periods and how effective earlier strategies have been in both anticipating and laying the ground for later processes. In so doing, it also aims to consider the significance of these anticipated and unfolding processes for understanding the nature and politics of event-led urban change in East London. The paper’s contribution to the existing literature on London’s legacy is two-fold. First, it extends the focus of other histories dealing with the planning of the Olympics and legacy to the present year of writing.⁶ Second, it offers a new perspective on the history of masterplanning and the production of legacy over a ten year period which other studies, with their typically stronger focus on the spatial products and socio-material impacts of development, have not provided to date.

Planning and urban design histories are inescapably histories of futures. But to write a history focussed on how a process of transformation has been anticipated and also unfolded over ten years requires careful consideration of the nature of processes and a framework for analysis. The concept of a ‘futurescape’ elaborated by the social theorist Barbara Adam offers helpful resources for doing so, providing a range of ways of characterizing the structure and temporality of processes and considering how, as futures, they are anticipated and made.⁷

The paper that follows is divided into several sections. It begins by outlining the concept of a ‘futurescape’. It then shifts to consider the planning context for the legacy masterplans, focussing on key ways in which the process of regeneration was laid out in the context of planning policy and early Olympic and legacy masterplans between 2003 and 2007. Drawing on empirical analysis of documents describing the main stages of legacy planning and design between 2008 and 2018, the remainder of the paper comprises three further sections. The first and second consider the period between 2008 and 2012, focussing respectively on how processes of change and development, as ‘futurescapes,’ were anticipated and informed strategy in the context of the LMF and later Legacy Communities Scheme (LCS). The third section focuses on the period 2013–2018 in which legacy became the

⁴See, for example: Sager, “Neoliberal Urban Planning Policies,” 147–99; Hall, “Urban Entrepreneurship, Corporate Interests and Sports Mega-events,” 59–70.

⁵Mayor of London, *Five Legacy Commitments*, 3.

⁶Such as: Smith, “De-Risking” East London, 1919–39; Davies, “Beyond the Games,” 309–37.

⁷Adam, “Futurescapes”; Adam, “Of Timescapes, Futurescapes and Timeprints.”

focus of procurement and materialization and new plans were produced within the framework established by the LCS. Collectively, they consider how ideas of process have shaped design strategies at different stages, how process has unfolded to date and how this is significant for regeneration.

A futurescapes perspective on legacy and regeneration

The notion of a ‘futurescape’ is developed in Barbara Adam’s work to describe a particular approach to the study of futures across varied realms of social practice. Broadly, it encompasses a conception of futures as always ‘involve[ing] a number of irreducible elements’ that describe them not just as things but as processes unfolding through and beyond the present while, at the same time, an understanding that futures are constructed and produced within specific social and spatial contexts (or ‘scapes’).⁸ The ‘structural elements’ of futurity, she suggests, may encompass broad, cultural conceptions of the future – for example, the idea emerging in the context of the European Enlightenment and the rise of capitalism of the future as ‘open’ to human shaping rather than as predetermined by a divine power⁹ – along with a range of concepts that relate to the temporal positioning and dynamics of processes.

First, futures may be anticipated or planned to unfold within specific *timeframes* which are ‘bounded’, measurable chunks of time. In the context of regeneration, timeframe may denote the period allocated to the process as a whole and/ or to different events or activities within it. In turn, how processes are structured often involves the identification of specific *timings* and/ or *time sequences*. In development contexts, phases, for example, denote ways in which the activities of design, planning and construction are anticipated to interact and follow on from one another. They are often timed to facilitate completion within an overall project timeframe – in other words, set to start and end at particular moments or *time-points*.

Sometimes, the definition of such timings may be done to achieve a *synchronization* of activities – a strategy which will be shown to have been important throughout legacy planning. Futures can also be described in terms of their *duration* – the time, in other words, in which they are expected to exist, last or persist before yielding to the present or to other futures. The phases of development can clearly be described in terms of duration, but so too can development itself, which may be temporary or permanent to a greater or lesser degree. Processes may be described in terms of *tempo* which relates, as Adam puts it, to the ‘speed, pace and intensity’ at which activities are conducted.¹⁰ Thus, it is possible to refer to the speed of envisioned change which may connect to anticipated economic flows, risk-management strategies and/ or efficiency-drives, as recent scholars of capitalist time and speed suggest.¹¹

But lastly, and in contrast to these different measures of time, *temporality* draws attention to the general position of activities within processes relative to one another – to what precedes versus what comes after, or to what is nearer or farther – and to how things unfold through the passage of time, such as by ageing, growing or, indeed, regenerating. Temporality hence, offers an important way of describing processes and temporal relations in terms other than explicit clock-times.

This structuring of futures-as-processes relies, as Adam argues, on ‘knowledge practices’ that enable futures to be understood as certain or uncertain, determinate or indeterminate and the like from a current standpoint and charted as ‘present futures.’¹² But, as Raco et al suggest, defining

⁸Ibid; Also see: Adam and Groves, *Future Matters*, 185–7.

⁹An important reference here is the work of the philosopher Niklas Luhmann.

¹⁰Adam, “Of Timescapes,” 3.

¹¹For example: Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, 1–14.

¹²Adam, “Futurescapes,” 10.

timings within planning and development contexts is also an ‘inherently political process’ as, within any project, different actors and stakeholders have different conceptions of what should be delivered *when*, possess different sorts of knowledge, different goals and different capacities to legitimise and bring urban futures about.¹³ When design and development are stretched over decades, as is the case with London’s Olympic legacy, there is a potential for the process to be continually subject to contestation. This, as will be shown, creates specific challenges for design as a practice typically engaged in anticipating and guiding the production of urban futures.

We now turn to the history of legacy masterplanning, drawing on the various structural elements of the ‘futurescapes’ concept to explore how the process of Olympic-led regeneration has been anticipated, planned and unfolded. The research leading to this began at the start of the period under study, in 2007. The research process has involved using a variety of techniques including reading and analysing planning policy, planning committee minutes and design strategies, conducting semi-structured interviews with a range of actors involved in masterplanning between 2007 and 2017, attendance at numerous public engagement workshops and site visits. Participants in interviews included senior architects at the masterplanning firms, directors of design, planning and development working within key organizations including the London Development Agency (LDA), Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) and London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). The analysis begins with a brief background to the legacy masterplanning process beginning in 2008, concentrating on how the process of regeneration was established in earlier stages of planning between 2003 and 2007.

Regeneration, East London and the Olympics 2003–2007

The site for London’s Olympic Games, which lies as the cusp between the four London Boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Newham in the Lower Lea Valley, was first earmarked as strategic for regeneration in the mid-1990s (Figure 1). However, it was not until the creation of the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2000, which transformed capacities to plan strategically for large sites at the interface of local authorities, that plans began to take shape. Through the production of its first statutory plan for the city (published in 2004), the whole of East London was identified as ‘*the* priority area’ for planning and development.¹⁴ Within it, the Lower Lea Valley was identified as an Opportunity Area becoming a key focus for processes of accommodating London’s anticipated population increase and of post-industrial regeneration.¹⁵

The regeneration process described within the London Plan is long-term (though a specific *time-frame* is not given), requiring strategic plans, public investments in transport infrastructure and other initiatives to ‘catalyse’ development. The Olympics, then the focus of a Bid for the 2012 Games, are portrayed as key to this process by ‘levering resources, spurring timely completion of already programmed infrastructure’ and setting a deadline (or *time point*) for development that would help streamline the planning process.¹⁶ They would also put in place amenities and infrastructures that would, in theory, benefit existing communities while attracting investors and creating property-led solutions to urban decline, reflecting a characteristically neoliberal planning policy involving the use of megaevents to stimulate market-led processes of urban change.¹⁷

¹³Raco et al., “Changing Times, Changing Places,” 2656.

¹⁴Mayor of London, *The London Plan* [2004], 6.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 39–41.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁷See, for example: Essex and Chalkley, “The Olympics as a Catalyst of Urban Renewal,” 187–206; Chalkley and Essex, “Urban Development through Hosting International Events,” 369–94; Lauermaun and Davidson, “Negotiating Particularity in Neoliberalism,” 1277–97.

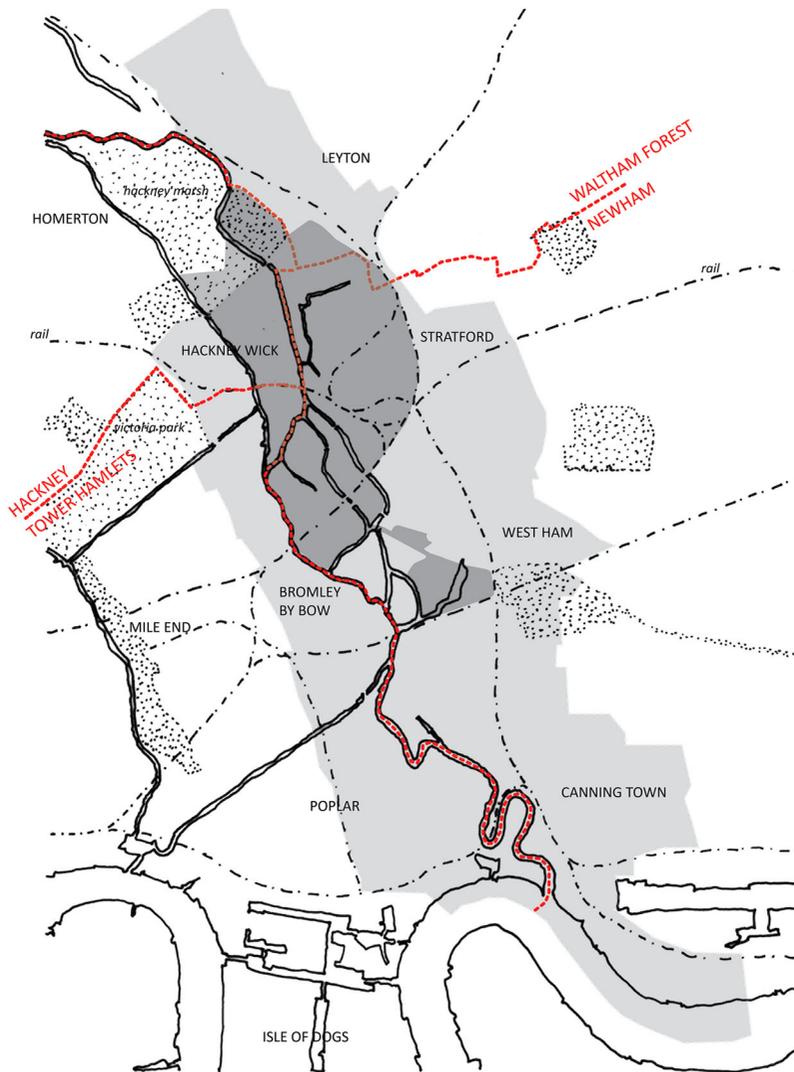


Figure 1. The Olympic Site in the context of London's Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area (author, 2014).

Once the Games had been awarded to London, the attentions of the GLA and London 2012 quickly turned to developing strategies for bringing these goals about, including the acquisition of necessary land, the establishment of new governance arrangements and the production of masterplans. Two masterplans – one for the Games and another called the Olympic Legacy Transformation Masterplan – were commissioned in 2005. The first was concerned with composing the stage-set for the Games, which was envisioned from the outset as made up of elements of different *durations* – from permanent venues understood as capable of providing long-term amenity value to temporary structures that would serve the needs of the event and its ‘celebratory,’ short-term, market-attracting machinery.¹⁸ The second dealt, hence, with the dismantling of temporary structures after the Games

¹⁸Boykoff, *Celebration Capitalism and the Olympic Games*.

to free up land for long-term mixed-use urban development and the adaptation of parklands and infrastructure to create local public spaces. Together, they articulated the relationship between the Games and the start of legacy in terms of a *sequence* of transformative processes.

Though the London Development Agency (LDA) – the functional arm of the GLA charged with driving sustainable economic growth in London – was given the power to acquire the land necessary for the Games, a process legitimized by claims of the benefit that they would bring, the production of the masterplans was led by the new Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), which was also granted planning authority over the site up until 2013.¹⁹ The arrangement reflects a frequently observed tendency of neoliberal planning authorities to delegate the making of growth-oriented urban futures to non-elected, entrepreneurial quangos informed by business-models of efficiency and competitiveness.²⁰

The *timing* of the launch of these masterplans was designed to ensure not only completion of the Olympic stage in good time for the Games, but the efficient transformation of the site just a year later, in 2013. What would be achieved within just eight years, LDA planners claimed, would transform the *tempo* of regeneration, massively ‘accelerating what would have been possible without the Games’ and the constitution of new powers that it enabled, highlighting important assumptions about the relationship between urban governance and the temporality of change.²¹

Executed by a design consortium led by the planning and design consultancy EDAW, the plans were awarded outline planning approval in 2007. Under the terms of the permission, the LDA, as the current site owner, was obliged to prepare a Legacy Masterplan Framework for the longterm, focussing on the areas vacated by the temporary developments, as soon as possible. We now go on to consider how regeneration was anticipated by LMF masterplanners and the design strategies developed in response.

The Legacy Masterplan Framework 2008–2010

The LMF was launched in January 2008 following the appointment of a masterplanning consortium made up of three firms. London based EDAW (Eckbo, Williams, Dean and Austin (since renamed as AECOM)) represented continuity from earlier stages in the legacy visioning, having been involved since 2002. London-based Allies and Morrison (A&M) were already involved in masterplanning the Games – and later were involved the temporary overlay and legacy transformation – hence representing continuity across different phases of Olympic and legacy design. Rotterdam-based Kees Christiaanse Architects and Planners (KCAP) were new but had extensive experience of masterplanning across Europe, including the Hafen City development in Hamburg, a regeneration project of commensurate scale.

The *timing* of the launch meant that the LMF could proceed in tandem with the design of the Olympic Park between 2008 and mid-2011, enabling park designs to be informed by emerging legacy strategies, and, thus in theory helping to minimize the need for reworkings of infrastructure and venues later. It was expected that three years would be enough to develop the LMF to outline Planning Application stage – referred to as Stage D by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) – enabling planning permission to then be *synchronized* with the completion of the Olympic Park. This would, in turn, ensure that detailed design and development could start straight after the

¹⁹Evans, *London's Olympic Legacy*, particularly Chapters 1 and 2; Smith, “De-Risking” East London, 1919–39; Davies, “Beyond the Games,” 309–37.

²⁰Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, Chapter 3; Sager, “Neoliberal Urban Planning Policies,” 178–179.

²¹LDA Interview, Planners, 11.07

Games, without the hiatus between event and legacy that past Olympic Host cities such as Sydney and Athens experienced.²²

Within this timeframe for the planning application, design development was expected to proceed through ‘concept design’ stages A-C (as defined by RIBA), leading to the production of two draft masterplans (named as Output B and C) which formed the basis of extensive stakeholder consultations. The purpose of masterplanning during the earliest stages was, in some respects, to devise a spatial strategy illustrating the ‘Five Legacy Commitments’ produced by Mayor Ken Livingstone in 2007 – a future defined in largely spatial terms including quantities of housing (10,000–12,000 homes), parklands (102.5 hectares), and the like²³ – within the areas identified in the Legacy Transformation Masterplan. But it was also to develop a vision rooted in an understanding of legacy as a long-term process of transformation.

The *timeframe* anticipated as necessary for this process was twenty-three years encompassing pre-Olympic design phases, extending to 2031 – a calculation informed by a range of factors from the scale of the site and experience from other large-scale projects to GLA policy regarding housing supply, as masterplanners explained. One important implication of this in terms of regeneration is clearly that benefits for local people would be a long time coming. A major challenge for design, as one masterplanner put it, was that, over this timeframe, the ‘contexts of development could substantially change,’ affecting the feasibility of any spatial development proposals the team might develop then, including ones devised in response to high-level commitments.²⁴

For example, the political context could change substantially given the four-yearly election cycles associated with democratic local, city and national governments with implications for the leadership of legacy, the status of legacy commitments and wider urban policy contexts. The broadly cyclical yet also substantially unpredictable, crisis-prone economic contexts shaping land and real estate values could have a strong bearing on the pace of capitalist development, as clearly suggested by the unfolding impacts of the 2008 credit crunch on the building industry. The transforming socio-economic context of East London as much as the global property market could impact on the landscape of needs and demands that development would respond and appeal to. In turn, technological innovations related to infrastructure, transport and construction could shape development in multiple but not yet foreseeable ways.

Uncertainty relating to these contexts and future processes led masterplanners to recognize, as stated in the Output C LMF, that ‘[i]t is impossible to determine a perfect land use or development scenario that will be realised over the course of the next 30 years or longer’.²⁵ Thus, rather than regarding the LMF as a means to fix future forms in the manner of traditional masterplans, they saw a need to develop a framework within which different kinds and forms of development could unfold over time, shaped by evolving development contexts.

The strategy was informed by ideas emerging particularly in the context of KCAP’s practice in response to issues of segregation and exclusion in contemporary urbanism worldwide, leading to the production of what they defined as ‘closed city’ forms and processes. In contrast, the ‘open city’ denotes urban spaces that are shaped over time, not just by top-down forces but by hybrid social actors, and that are also spatially permeable and inclusive.²⁶ These notions reflect a wider

²²See, for example: Davidson and McNeill, “The Redevelopment of Olympic Sites,” 1625–41; Cohen and Watt, “Introduction: A Hollow Crown,” 1–11. Gold, “Athens 2004,” 315–39.

²³Mayor of London, Five legacy Commitments.

²⁴A&M/ KCAP Interview, masterplanners, 11.2008.

²⁵LDA, *Legacy Masterplan Framework*, 12.

²⁶Rieniets, Sigler and Christiaanse, *Open City: Designing Coexistence*.

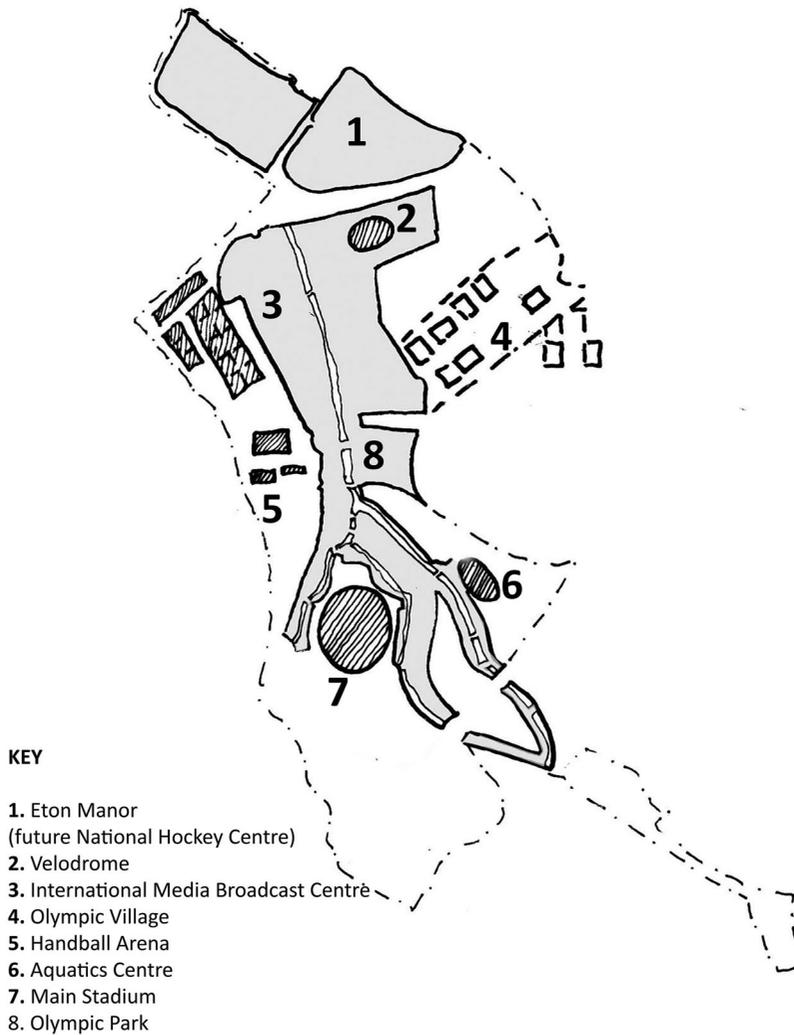


Figure 2. Diagram illustrating the Olympic 'Inheritance' (author, 2017).

emphasis in contemporary urban design theory on ideas of the city as continually made rather than ever finished, on the importance of recognizing the contingencies inherent to planned futures and on the need to understand how processes rather than just static urban morphology are shaped by design.²⁷ Of course, how development would unfold within the LMF would, in reality, depend on how different needs and interests were recognized and future procurement processes managed – on the extent to which the vision of an 'open city' became embedded in (neoliberal) legacy governance as well as design strategy.

Guided by these ideas, the masterplanning strategy involved setting out a range of suitably broad concepts and principles related to regeneration including building upon the future 'inheritance' of the Olympics (Figure 2), drawing inspiration from the site's naturally riverine topography to create

²⁷For example: Inam, *Design for Urban Transformation*; Carmona, "The Place-shaping Continuum," 2–36.

a ‘Water City’, establishing the general location and grain of six new neighbourhoods and defining the public realm including many ‘stitches’ between the site and existing, surrounding communities to maximize porosity and interconnectivity. These, masterplanners suggested, could guide the emergence of legacy even as development contexts evolved.²⁸

Reflecting the expectation to illustrate the Mayor’s Legacy Commitments and develop a spatial vision while still acknowledging uncertainty, the strategy then involved developing a single, highly researched and detailed spatial scenario, drawing in the process on a wide array of data including GLA policy related to city form and housing (tenure, sizes, etc.), guidelines related to development quality and space standards and population forecasts (which provided an important basis for modelling housing types and social infrastructure). The results of this, in the form of an ‘Illustrative Masterplan’, detailed drawings and perspectival visualizations, are clearly products of their time, strongly reflecting the vision of compact urbanism promoted in the context of wider ‘Urban Renaissance’ policy by the GLA and Labour Government (Figure 3).²⁹ In presenting them at public consultation events, masterplanners were clear that, while they illustrated ‘preferred’ outcomes of research and engagement with stakeholders and consultants, the site was ‘unlikely to be quite like that in the end.’³⁰ However, their production in the context of the Outputs B and C LMFs created an important basis for consensus-building over the possible nature of the future among different stakeholders, offered a ‘present future’ for people to react to in the context of public consultation events and enabled sound evidence of the site’s potential to be provided,³¹ helping in turn to achieve, as Smith puts it, a ‘de-risking’ of the site for prospective, private-sector investors and, in other ways, to drive design processes associated with the market-led future forwards.³²

But the anticipated long-term nature of the regeneration process also focussed masterplanners’ attention on envisioning how it might unfold over time. How the process was broadly conceptualized is conveyed in a series of diagrams in both iterations of the LMF that position legacy-making *temporally* in relation to historical processes of transformation. These illustrate a narrative extending from the industrial past through troubling issues of decline and obsolescence into a future characterized as a return to growth through transition to a post-industrial economy and as rehabilitated landscapes and communities. Clearly their purpose was to explain the nature of the development being catalyzed by the Olympics and portray it as a better future for East London.

Elsewhere, the process is portrayed in terms of more explicit *timings* and *time sequences*. These reflect a range of considerations encompassing those connected to the overall timeframe as discussed above plus others including the impacts on surrounding communities, understandings of the planning and development process, and the LDA’s plans for redeeming debt in land acquisition and the Games over time. As explained in Output C, following anticipated planning permission based on the LMF in 2011, processes of phased procurement and development would begin straight after the Games. The first phase, it suggests (2012–2015) would involve infrastructural ‘stitches’ to surrounding neighbourhoods and the conversion of venues, concentrating attention on firming these up within the Legacy Transformation masterplan. Reflecting understandings of the time needed for procurement and detailed design following outline planning permission, the development of most of the neighbourhoods would occur in a second phase between 2015 and 2025. The development of the

²⁸For a fuller discussion, see: Evans, *The Inside Track*, Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹See: Imrie and Raco, *Urban Renaissance?*, particularly Chapter 3 by Loretta Lees. For details of this in legacy plans, see: Davis, *Urbanising the Event*, Chapter 5.

³⁰A&M Interview, Masterplanner, 10.2009.

³¹For more on this, see: Girginov, “Governance of the London 2012 Olympic Games Legacy,” 543–58.

³²Evans, “Designing Legacy and the Legacy of Design,” 353–66.

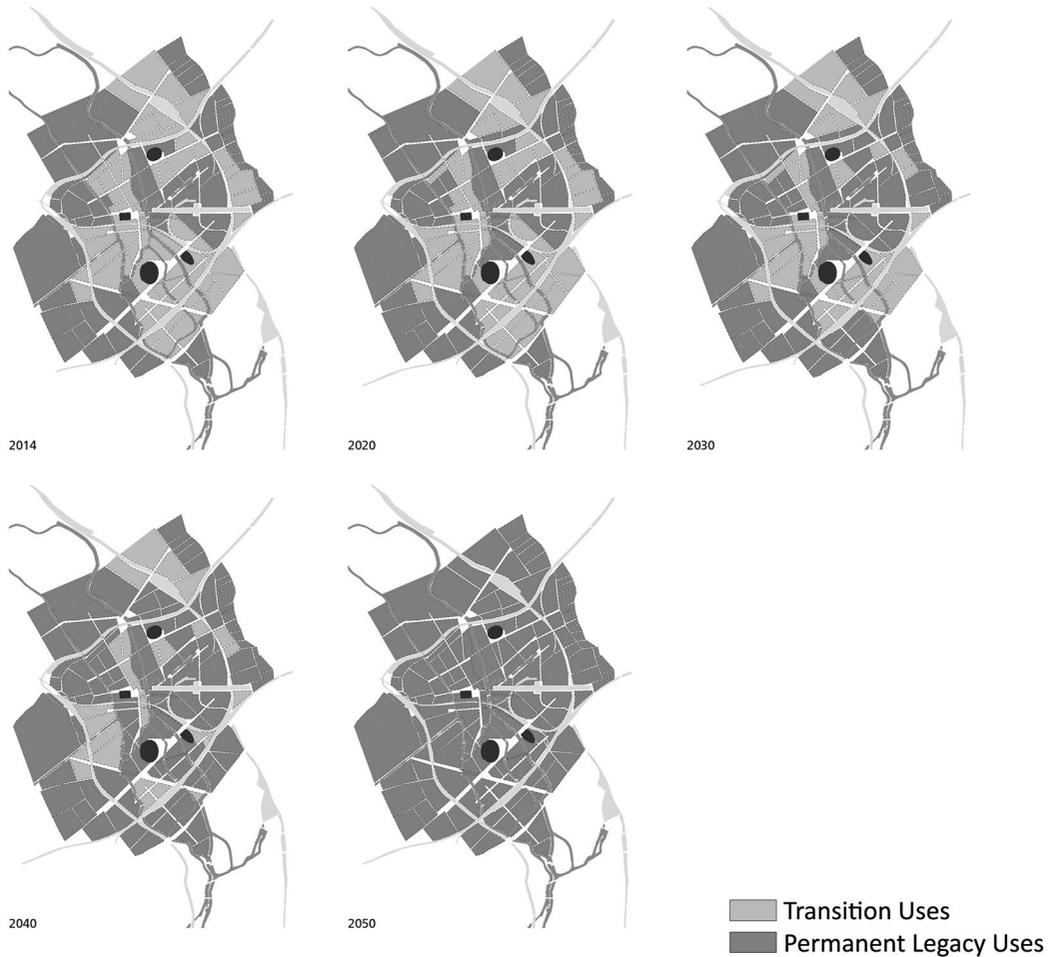


Figure 3. LMF Output C diagram illustrating the anticipated temporality of urban change, titled 'Field Evolution – Template for Change'. Source: The London Development Agency.

final neighbourhood south of the main Olympic Stadium would occur in a third phase between 2020 and 2031, its form being contingent on the outcomes of planning for major rail infrastructure in the area. In other words, the *tempo* of planning and development related to different areas and across the whole period could be quite varying. Each of the phases would, of course, encompass many stages of design, consultation, planning and construction, to be determined with greater knowledge in the future.

Alongside this outline phasing strategy, the LMF presents a range of other ideas related to development sequencing. For example, it suggests that the provision of social infrastructure would unfold in line with population growth, anticipated to reach 16,000 by 2031, suggesting a rhythm of public investment connected to market-led growth. To ensure that the character of the neighbourhoods would begin to register from the beginning, it suggests that development should encompass a mix of uses from the start (rather than, say, focussing on different land uses in different phases). However, it also indicates that, in the earliest phases, residential development could concentrate on delivering market housing in order to 'balance out' the existing housing profile of Stratford and the Lower Lea

Valley, creating an uneven *tempo* of change relating to different tenures.³³ Bringing forward the development of market housing in the face of recognized, historic ‘unmet need’ for affordable housing, especially for families, within the Host Boroughs³⁴ clearly reflects a cautious debt redemption strategy but also a classically neoliberal policy of creating economic development incentives and attracting the ‘creative class.’³⁵ It is difficult to see how this chimes with the idea of an ‘open city’; it points merely, perhaps, to how complex designs are often an amalgam of not fully reconciled ideas.

One of the problems of phased development is that some sites can remain empty and unused even as others develop, here potentially affecting the image of legacy. In response, masterplanners proposed a strategy to ensure that all sites would be animated from the start though a mix of permanent and transitional development. As a result, as one masterplanner put it, regeneration would encompass ‘a spaghetti of *durations*’ of both construction and use, and this could create opportunities for a diverse range of place-shapers.³⁶ Transitional uses might appear and fade in quite rapid succession, while permanence might emerge at a steadier beat. They might have a seasonal character like fairs and even ‘rotate’ around the site, rather more like crops, said one EDAW masterplanner.³⁷ Elements of transitional use could, as suggested in Figure 4, even be imagined continue into the 2050s by which time older areas of the site could be entering new phases of renewal. They would form part of a process of ‘cultivating’ the character of the different neighbourhoods, as Allies and Morrison’s Bob Allies put it.³⁸

Following the Output C consultations in February 2009, all seemed set for an early completion of the planning application. But, more or less throughout the production of Outputs B and C, the broader political landscape of London was changing. Mayoral elections on 1 May 2008 (just five months after the launch of the LMF) led to the appointment of the Conservative candidate Boris Johnson as Mayor, in place of Livingstone. Shortly after Output C was launched, with all its detailed analyses based on supposedly current policy and data, the draft of a new London Plan was released. Further uncertainty lay on the horizon in terms of the upcoming 2010 General Election and the long-term governance of the site. In other words, the LMF’s ‘present future’ was almost immediately out of step with the wider political context and promised to become more so, pointing to the difficulty of anticipating one year ahead in contexts of complex urban governance let alone twenty-three.

The Legacy Communities Scheme, 2010–2012

Following his appointment, Johnson began to instigate a review of finances associated with the Olympic legacy, a process used politically to support the creation of a new ‘special purpose legacy vehicle’ in the form of the Olympic Park Legacy Corporation (OPLC) in November 2009, in place of the LDA (which was, shortly after, abolished altogether).³⁹ Labour Peer Baroness Margaret Ford and Andrew Altman were appointed respectively as its Chair and Chief Executive, both bringing new perspectives and experiences of large-scale development led by private organizations to bear on legacy planning. These appointments, and very name of the OPLC, reflected Johnson’s aim of creating a financially independent and even more commercially-oriented organization than the

³³LDA, LMF Socio-economic Strategy, 31.

³⁴Ibid, 29.

³⁵Sager, “Neo-liberal Urban Planning Policies,” 159–161.

³⁶A&M Interview, masterplanner, 10.2009.

³⁷EDAW Interview, masterplanner, 10.2009.

³⁸Allies, *Cultivating the City*.

³⁹Evans, *The Inside Track*, Chapters 6 and 7.



Figure 4. LMF Output C Characterization of one of the legacy neighbourhoods. Source: The London Development Agency.

LDA at the start of an era of economic austerity following the financial crisis and of new Conservative government in London.

Following consultations on Output C (which were in February 2009), LMF design was suspended. A window of time was then created for the new OPLC to be established and undertake a review of what had been produced. Its critique focussed, not surprisingly, on the logics and policy context underpinning the scenario plans. In a foreshadowing of the Brexit-politics of recent times, the compact urban forms shown in these plans were not only seen as hallmarks of the Livingstone era which Londoners had voted against but as ‘overly European’, as the new CEO put it.⁴⁰ Though local people at public consultations had commented on a wide range of aspects of the proposals, comments made regarding the image of the city were portrayed as key concerns and used to support these directions, reflecting a curious alliance of elites with largely marginalized citizens. The result was the initiation of a process to create an alternative spatial vision, as a ‘piece of city’ more rooted in ‘London’s historic DNA’, as ODA Design Advisor Ricky Burdett put it.⁴¹ This of course suggested a major revision of the LMF scenario plans but, at the same time, highlighted the accuracy of masterplanners’ anticipation of shifts in the process and politics of regeneration over time.

⁴⁰OPLC Interview, Chief Executive, 02.2010

⁴¹Burdett, “The London Olympics – Making a ‘Piece of City.’”



Figure 5. LMF Charette Characterization of one of the revised legacy neighbourhoods by Caruso St. John. Source: The Olympic Park Legacy Company.

In January 2010, the OPLC launched a design *charette* aimed at exploring the potential translation of these new ideas onto the site and better ‘characterising the place’ in the CEO’s view than had been achieved previously.⁴² The process involved scrutinizing existing practices within the consortium as well as involving a range of new firms including Caruso St. John and Witherford Watson Mann (Figure 5). The result was the dismissal of Dutch KCAP, demotion of internationalist AECOM, and enrolment of the new firms within a refashioned consortium led by A&M. Explaining KCAP’s dismissal, an A&M masterplanner relayed how ‘the typologies KCAP promoted were, in the historicist environment surrounding the early days of the OPLC, seen to be not London.’⁴³

The legacy masterplan was relaunched as the Legacy Communities Scheme (LCS) planning application in late 2010. By this time, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government was in place at national level and had approved the strategy. Despite the new name, design development was not returned to RIBA Stage A but rather began at Stage D, suggesting that, while major changes would be taken on board, earlier work – and all the public funds invested in it – would not be squandered. The decision reflected the OPLC’s need to show that legacy was still on course at a time of

⁴²OPLC Interview, Chief Executive, 02.2010.

⁴³A&M Interview, Masterplanner, 07.2013.

criticism relating to escalating costs associated with the Olympics, tales of mismanagement associated with the LDA and change in design directions. It also reflected the diminishing *timeframe* before the opening of the Games and a continued recognition of the importance of securing planning permission and ‘going to market’ before then.⁴⁴

The overall *timeframe* anticipated for developing the urban legacy remained broadly the same in the context of the LCS as in the LMF, reflecting ongoing understandings of the time required not just to develop but also to build value and redeem debt (though debt related to land acquisition was written off by the Government in 2010). As a result, despite the OPLC’s emphasis on creating a new image of legacy, the challenge of designing for a process materializing over eighteen years remained significant for legacy leaders and masterplanners.

The strategy adopted in the LCS echoes the LMF, suggesting that, despite KCAP’s disappearance, the ‘open city remained embedded in the intellectual framing of the masterplan’ as one masterplanner put it, at least in broad terms.⁴⁵ The LCS Design and Accessibility Statement sets out a similar conceptual framework, involving the creation of six new ‘communities’ set around the park and along waterways, and of those being functionally ‘diverse’ and spatially ‘inclusive’.⁴⁶ Throughout the rest of the LCS, flexibility is created through the identification of zones and ranges pertaining to land-use floorspace, density, tenures and the like, rather than fixed spaces and development amounts. This is illustrated in the ‘Parameter Plan’ in Figure 6, one of a number of such drawings that, rather than defining form, establishes ‘limits of deviation’, maximum heights and general use mixes. As the Director of Design at the LLDC (which superseded the OPLC in 2012) explained: ‘We’re not predicating exact outcomes. [As a masterplan, it’s therefore] a different kind of animal to the traditional, right we’re going to draw this out and this is exactly how we want to see the blocks coming forward.’⁴⁷

The benefit is that it would allow outcomes to be fine-tuned, particularly in the context of negotiations between the OPLC and developers after the Games. It hence reflects a strategy of letting future private-sector actors’ assessments of what is economically viable determine outputs within a general regulatory framework.⁴⁸ In this regard, it chimes with the principle laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework then in development (and which was launched in the same year as the final planning application version of the LCS) that planning policy should not impede the *tempo* of development at a time of ‘sluggish’ recovery following the economic downturn.⁴⁹ But the risk was clearly that key elements of regeneration legacy, such as affordable housing, could now not just be delivered in different ways but potentially be watered down in order to boost the profitability of development.

Despite this flexibility, the OPLC’s goal with regard to urban form and character is clear elsewhere in the form of detailed neighbourhood plans and visualizations that, in the manner of the LMF scenarios, illustrate their preferences with regard to the future.⁵⁰ The general distribution of development in the LCS ‘Illustrative Masterplan’ is similar to the equivalent LMF drawing, though differences include a greater emphasis on terraced typologies rather than perimeter blocks, the incorporation of the costly ArcelorMittal Orbit championed by Boris Johnson and the loss of housing around the Olympic Stadium. The major difference however lies in the vertical dimension as a

⁴⁴OPLC Interview, Design Director, 10.2017.

⁴⁵Interview, A&M Masterplanner, 07.2013.

⁴⁶OPLC, *LCS Design and Accessibility Statement*.

⁴⁷LLDC Interview, Director of Design, 11.2017.

⁴⁸A point also argued by Raco in: “The Privatization of Urban Development and the London Olympics”.

⁴⁹OPLC, *Legacy Communities Scheme*, Employment Statement, 11.

⁵⁰OPLC, *Legacy Communities Scheme*, Design and Accessibility Statement.

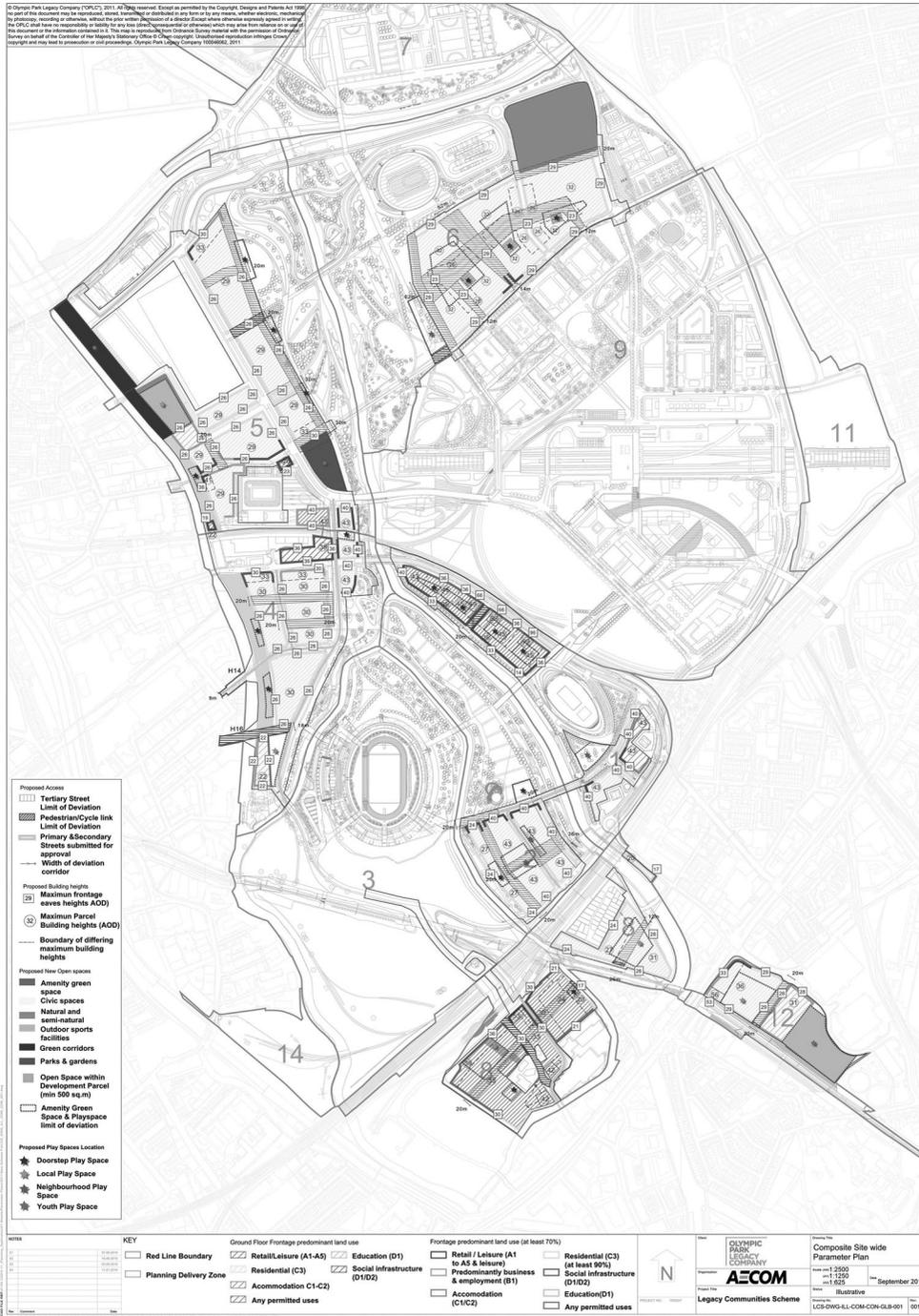


Figure 6. LCS Composite Site Plan. Parameter Plan. Source: The Olympic Park Legacy Company.

low-to-mid-rise (typically 3–6 stories) rather than mid-to-high-rise (typically 8–10 stories) topography is portrayed, reflecting the new neo-conservative nostalgia for Georgian and Victorian housing and diminished concern with maximizing the housing legacy and fulfilling Livingstone's commitments in this regard. The purpose of the scenarios was to put possibilities in the minds of prospective developers, ones they might be wise to consider in the context of competitive tenders, while not determining architectural outcomes as such.

Less attention is given in the LCS to the LMF to of how regeneration might unfold though, nonetheless, an outline strategy for phasing or *time sequencing* does form part of the planning application as does a concise statement concerning uses of different *durations*. A key goal regarding the latter was to secure planning permission on the basis that land-use may evolve through time in response to market forces, but not define the timings or nature of specific interim uses. The first phase of development, from 2013 to 2015, would encompass ongoing Post-Games Transformation works and preparatory works connected to the first neighbourhood (named as Chobham Manor). The second, from 2015 to 2021 and third, from 2022 to 2031 would now encompass approximately equal amounts of development, suggesting a consistent *tempo* of investment and accumulation through time. The phases are described in terms of areas of development and land-uses, but not specific neighbourhoods or Planning Delivery Zones (PDZs). The aim, masterplanners suggested, was to suggest that mixed uses should be delivered throughout but allow procurement processes to determine how development would unfold around the site.

However, similar to the LMF, the LCS suggests that, in spite of ongoing needs for affordable housing, 'the over provision of social rented accommodation in Hackney and Tower Hamlets' gives a justification to balance 'the overall level of affordable housing' and concentrate on bringing 'new people [to] move into the area.'⁵¹ These would be people who would be attracted to the market housing on offer, inevitably wealthy people given the rocketing house prices in East London, who would be beneficiaries of the investment of public funds in design, management, parklands and social infrastructure. This sheds light on the political meaning of 'convergence', a new byword for regeneration introduced in the LCS that 'within 20 years the communities who host the Games will have the same economic chances as their neighbours across London.'⁵² At a time of change in spatial terms, it suggests an ongoing emphasis on State-led gentrification process rather than on addressing the needs of those living in deprived areas.⁵³

The LSC was submitted to the ODA Planning Decisions Team (ODA PDT) for outline planning approval on 5 October 2011. By December 2011, the OPLC had been issued a response to its application, which included a range of requests for revision and clarification. The requirements generally involved the team tightening their definitions of development and providing clarifications on phasing and interim use strategy. An A&M masterplanner described this as a frustration, reflecting how 'the planners feel that it is their moral responsibility to have certainty [but] lack imagination and understanding of the capacity for the masterplan to articulate a process rather than a product.'⁵⁴ Several new documents and addenda to existing strategies were submitted in response in February 2012, though Andrew Altman resisted some requirements based on the team's belief in the value of maintaining flexibility.⁵⁵ This, he explained, would 'allow development proposals [to be] able to respond to market conditions' over an eighteen-year period. This was not just to allow standards and the

⁵¹OPLC, *Legacy Communities Scheme*, Housing and Social Infrastructure Statement, 106.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 11–13.

⁵³As argued in, for example: Davidson and Lees, "New-Build 'Gentrification' and London's Riverside Renaissance," 1165–90.

⁵⁴A&M Interview, masterplanner, 2013.

⁵⁵Altman, *Legacy Communities Scheme* [2012], Covering Letter, 2.

benefits of regeneration for local people to be lowered if necessary but to preserve the potential for them to be high.

All in all, the period of developing the LCS serves to illustrate the dynamic nature of regeneration as a process, the challenges of masterplanning for the long-term in the context of changing governance, and both some of the potentials and issues of flexibility. In the final section, we look at how development has unfolded on the site since 2012, focussing on the effectiveness of the LCS in guiding and facilitating the process and on the ongoing ways in which regeneration has been anticipated.

Building Legacy, 2012–2018 – the future forming

The ODA PDT finally resolved to grant outline planning permission for the LCS in late July 2012, enabling it to be synchronized as planned with the opening of the Games. But, just months later, with the moment of needing to demonstrate that all was on track past, the governance context in which the LCS had been produced was transformed again with the replacement of the OPLC by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). The reason for the shift related to several factors including the imminent completion of the ODA's role within the *timeframe* of Olympic development, creating the practical need for a new planning authority, the re-election of Boris Johnson as Mayor in 2012, under which authority he sought to gain greater control of the new organization – leading to the ousting of Margaret Ford and Andrew Altman – and the opportunities created by the new localism agenda unveiled by the Coalition Government, highlighting the ongoing significance of political cycles for the futures of urban design and development.⁵⁶

The LLDC was formed as a Mayoral Development Corporation under the Localism Act of 2011, reflecting characteristically Conservative aims to achieve 'a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government' towards a hybrid set of entities including cities, councils, local areas and, in this case, a kind of quango.⁵⁷ As such, its powers went considerably beyond those of the OPLC to include compulsory purchase and planning authority – including the ability to create local policy,⁵⁸ determine planning applications, give listed building and conservation area consent and declare new conservation areas – as well as the ability to manage a major public asset.

Though the OPLC and LDA had engaged with potential developers and conducted extensive market research, the resolution to grant planning permission enabled the procurement process to begin in earnest, focussing initially on Chobham Manor. Reflecting neoliberal faith in competitive processes as the means to secure the right combination of quality and value for money, the first stage in the process was a tender for development in accordance with the provisions of the planning permission. Bids were received from consortia of developers and designers, each outlining their approach to the LCS. Teams were then assessed according to a range of criteria but, reflecting the LLDC interests as estate managers, preference was apparently given to the team that provided the most 'economically advantageous' solution to what the LCS required. The result was the selection in August 2012 of Chobham Manor LLP, a joint venture between London & Quadrant and Taylor Wimpey. Their appointed design team comprised established practices in the form of MAKE (masterplanners), PRP, Haworth Tompkins and Karakusevic Carson.

The major significance of this, as one LCS masterplanner explained, was that a single developer was given the right to monopolize the evolution of the whole neighbourhood, excluding

⁵⁶For more on this aspect, see: Hoolachan, "Localism and the Scalar Politics of a Sustainable Legacy," 205–16.

⁵⁷Communities and Local Government, *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act*, 3.

⁵⁸As reflected in the launch of a new Local Plan in 2015.

other potential developers and landownership models. As he put it, however plans for Chobham developed from then on, ‘the sense of lots of different interests being expressed in it [as in the vision of the “open city”] has been lost.’⁵⁹ The emphasis placed in tender analysis processes on ‘track record’ in turn reduced the potential for smaller, less established firms to be involved in detailing tracts of housing or specific blocks, leading to greater homogeneity than might otherwise have been the case. As a former Design Director at the OPLC put it, these matters reflected the LLDC’s broader ‘emphasis on paybackability’ and desire to pursue what they calculated to be the most efficient strategy and least risky future over the six-year *timeframe* of development for Chobham (2012 to 2018).⁶⁰

Following the tendering process, the LLDC entered into negotiation with the chosen team, leading to the formation of a ‘development partnership’. This involved a contract between the LLDC as quasi-public landowner-planning authority and Chobham LLP as the private partner to whom it sold the rights to development. Between them, hence, these two elite partners possessed a suite of key capacities necessary to effect development, concentrating decision-making power at the localized interface between them.⁶¹ The contract encompassed a new masterplan based on the LCS, a phasing (*time sequencing*) plan and agreed *timeframe* for completion – hence enabling cash flow to be calculated, managed and controlled – set of performance indicators which the partner would be held to (related, for example, to convergence) and agreements relating to the sale of development and return of capital receipts to the LLDC, all establishing a legalized basis for delivering the future.

The LCS along with other documents produced subsequently by the LLDC, such as their Design Quality Policy and Inclusive Design Standards, required a lot of the development partner, the LLDC’s Design Director explained. However, as anticipated, flexibility allowed the outcomes to arise collaboratively, a process that involved drawing on developers’ ideas and expertise rather than simply ‘bashing them on the head’ with constraints and regulations.⁶² Chobham LLP, he said, was asked to consider ‘Lifetime Homes, prototypes for intergenerational living, housing for older people [...] kind of affordable products [and other] things that aren’t provided by the market’ but was then able to devise a delivery strategy themselves through their design team. The risk, of course, was that the financial priorities of both partners would, if in different ways, dominate in ‘the politics of the possible,’ to use Raco’s phrase.⁶³

The process of negotiation between the LLDC and the development partner and the translation of its outcomes into spatial strategy represented a shift from the open-ended future created in the context of the LCS to detailed, more instrumental design for construction. This began with a zonal masterplan for the whole neighbourhood by MAKE Architects, the production of which was *synchronized* with Legacy Transformation and the opening of most of the venues to the public. It was awarded planning permission in 2013 allowing the staged development of separate, more advanced masterplans for each of three development phases. These plans were awarded planning permission respectively in January 2013, December 2014 and November 2015. Beyond this planning stage, plans were of course not fixed in that moment but in a process of continual refinement extending into the construction phase through exchange between client, planners, designers, consultants and contractors. Development in Chobham began in 2014 and is on track at the time of writing for the third phase to commence in 2019.

⁵⁹A&M Interview, masterplanner, 07.2013.

⁶⁰OPLC Interview, Design Director, 11.2017.

⁶¹For more on this, see: Raco, “Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible,” 124–31.

⁶²LLDC Interview, Director of Design, 11.2017.

⁶³Raco, “Sustainable City-Building,” 124–31.



Figure 7. Present legacy: Street in the Chobham Manor neighbourhood (author, 2018).

As the aim of this paper is not to focus on the products of change, suffice to say that the masterplans and the urban form of the first development phase as now realized reflects much continuity with both the LCS Parameter Plans and the neighbourhood scenario plans. The resulting architecture with its townhouse typologies and Georgian proportions is also clearly a product of the OPLC's turn to historical precedents, as illustrated in [Figure 7](#). However, recent research has highlighted important divergencies from the LCS such as that while development quality is high, only 28 per cent of housing (as opposed to the target of 31 per cent subject to viability) was designated as affordable, with important consequences for the emerging demographics of the legacy 'community' ([Figure 7](#)).⁶⁴ While this reflects the anticipated process of 'balancing' out the tenure split of housing around the site, it is unclear what it might mean for the affordability of future housing. It may be assumed that this remains contingent on how housing policy evolves and on the ongoing weight given to viability assessments.

At the time of writing in 2018, the *time point* at which legacy development is due to be complete remains 2031 though this has not been consistently the case since 2012. Briefly in 2013, the LLDC explored the potential to bring the long-established completion date forward to as early as 2023. This came about as a direction from the Mayor, timed to coincide with the start of his re-election campaign, to demonstrate that, as a senior LLDC planner put it, 'we haven't just opened a shiny new park and [...] got a developer whose started on site up in Chobham Manor'⁶⁵ but might, if re-elected, be able to alter the *tempo* of legacy. But, while shortening the *timeframe* suggested that more development could be built earlier, there was a risk of needing to backtrack as development futures for both venues and sites were far from secure at that time. It was back to 2031 by 2014, reflecting recognition that a failure to meet publicized timings could be damaging to the Mayor and LLDC in the future but also of ongoing complexities and uncertainties in terms of legacy financing and delivery.

⁶⁴Watt, and Bernstock, "Legacy for Whom?" 131–139.

⁶⁵LLDC Interview, Senior Planner, 11.2017.

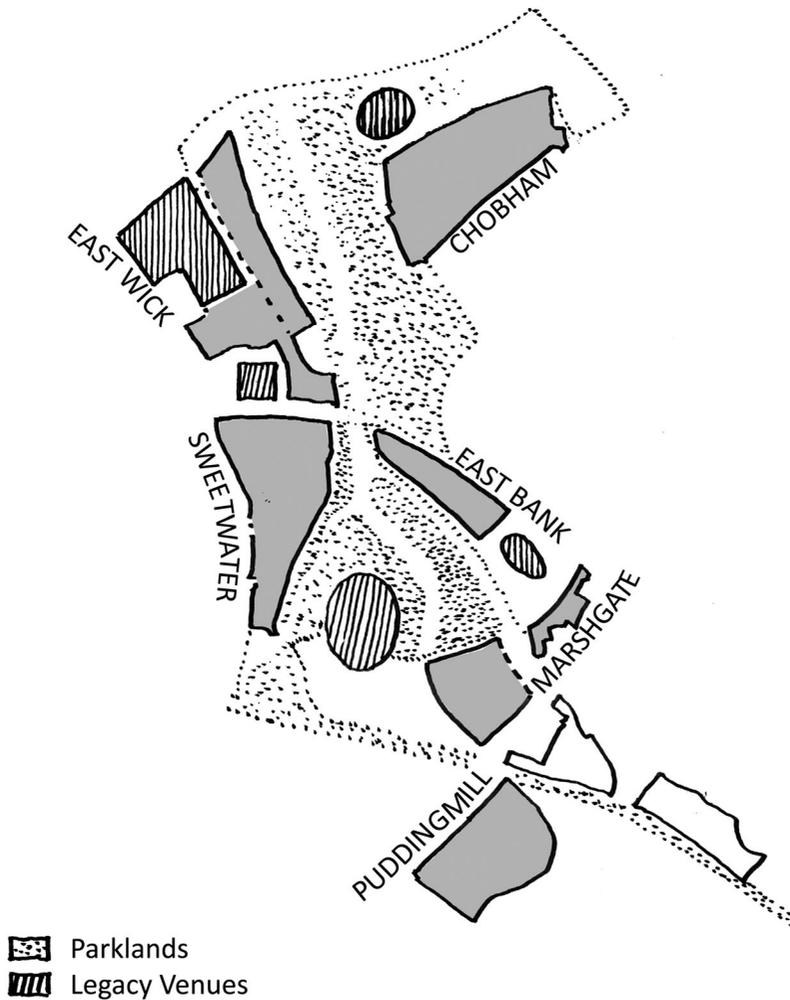


Figure 8. Neighbourhood areas – location plan (author, 2018).

Following on from Chobham Manor, the *sequencing* of development has been driven by procurement processes. The various areas it relates to are shown in Figure 8. To offer a summary, the procurement of development for the neighbourhoods of East Wick and Sweetwater followed on from Chobham in 2015 resulting in the appointment, again, of a single development partner (Balfour Beatty and Places for People) for this large site (encompassing 20 per cent of all projected homes). The masterplan by designers Shepherd Robson and Studio Egret West (2016–2018) is planned to unfold through seven design and development phases between 2019 and 2023, each led by a different team of architects.

The Stratford Waterfront area became the focus of a new zonal masterplan commissioned by the LLDC in 2015 led by A&M and including architects O'Donnell and Tuomey, Arquitectura Camps Felip and others.⁶⁶ It was planned to unfold in four stages, culminating in a planning application in

⁶⁶See for example: Allies and Morrison, *Stratford Waterfront: Stage 3 Consultation Review*, 2016, 4.

2016. Following a now familiar pattern, after the Mayoral elections of May 2016, the timeframe was extended to enable first a review and, then, for major design changes to be carried out in line with Mayor Sadiq Khan's new vision for the site, leading one renowned journalist to say it was 'trapped in a purgatory of masterplans, consultations and yet more plans.'⁶⁷ In July 2018, following the recent release of images of the new designs, submission for planning approval is anticipated for the autumn. Development is expected to proceed under several contracts with the LLDC, each involving different architects, and to start on site in 2020.

Marshgate became the focus of a development contract between the LLDC and University College London (UCL) in 2015. Stanton William Architects were appointed to produce a masterplan and this received outline planning permission in May 2018. Four development phases are anticipated, beginning in 2019. Finally, the LLDC commissioned Rick Mather Architects in 2014 to produce a masterplan for Pudding Mill but, in 2016, shelved this and appointed A&M to produce a new one in theory better suited to the emerging topography of Stratford Waterfront and Marshgate. These timings are governed by a range of factors including the complexity of the projects, the time seen to be needed for design, planning and construction, financing strategies, allowances for contingency and calculations of risk. In the context of volatility and public-private governance, they highlight the validity of LCS masterplanners' reluctance to overly prescribe development sequencing in advance of procurement, as this cannot be determined with accuracy in the context of market-led regeneration without the input of the developer.

While the focus of design has been on the permanent development in each of the neighbourhood areas, there has been effort to cultivate interim uses of different *durations*, reflecting the return of such ideas from the LMF since 2012. A built example, the Mobile Garden City in Chobham Manor (2015–17) formed a temporary landscape in which local people could learn about gardening and engage in food growing. It has since moved elsewhere, reflecting LMF ideas of rotating uses. A funfair on Stratford Waterfront created a seasonal attraction reflecting, again, earlier ideas concerning the temporality of change. Many more interim uses and pop-ups are planned as part of Stratford Waterfront and Marshgate developments. Not envisaged at the time of the LMF, however, was that interim uses would be led by the developers of the permanent architecture. This came about, as one former OPLC Design Director explained, because 'developers saw [interim use] as risk', so introducing them depended on them being allowed to control them. As a result, their purpose is now generally to 'to give an impression of what's coming,'⁶⁸ as the LLDC's Design Director put it, rather than to shape future character from the bottom up, hence enabling all *times* as well as places in the process of transformation to be converted into commercial opportunities for the development partners.

Coming back briefly to the outcomes of the procurement of 'permanent' development, it clear that the flexibility created through the LCS has, beyond Chobham, continued to enable quite a range of variations to emerge from what its scenarios ('present futures') indicated. As with Chobham, the masterplan for East Wick and Sweetwater closely follows the LCS, though drops in the number of affordable homes are here also suggested – to thirty per cent in this case.⁶⁹

In contrast, plans for Stratford Waterfront and Marshgate have evolved substantially, now focussed on the production of a major Culture and Education District. East Bank, as the Stratford Waterfront area has recently been named (though it was Olympicopolis under Boris Johnson), is planned to accommodate outposts of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sadler's Wells Theatre, Smithsonian, BBC and London College of Fashion, suggesting a reframing of regeneration here around future

⁶⁷Wainwright, "From Olympic Park to East Bank."

⁶⁸A&M Interview, Masterplanner 07.2013.

⁶⁹Watt and Bernstock, *Legacy for Whom?*, 131–139.



Figure 9. Stratford Waterfront (East Bank) View, as anticipated in mid-2018. Source: The London Legacy Development Corporation.

uses other than housing and employment (Figure 9). Marshgate is the focus for UCL East, ‘a radical new model for how a university campus can be embedded in the local community,’⁷⁰ and a radical departure too from the largely residential neighbourhood anticipated in the context of the LCS’s scenario plans. Plans for Pudding Mill have indicated very different forms and land-uses over the years, reflecting the high level of flexibility set for this area in the LCS (a reflection, in turn, of the assumption that it would be developed last) and its capacity to ‘absorb uses displaced from other areas,’ as one masterplanner put it (including the loss of residential use from Marshgate).⁷¹ Flexibility, hence, has continued to play an important role in facilitating unanticipated change and achieving Allies and Morrison’s goal of ‘cultivating’ but not controlling the emerging cityscape.

Plans for these areas, as one senior LLDC manager put it, are ‘very symbolic of the legacy that the Games has generated in terms of putting this place on the map’ and of how ‘the market has changed its perception’ of East London.⁷² Earlier masterplanning has clearly played a vital role in achieving this, as much by illustrating, guiding and facilitating evolution within the process of long-term transformation.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explore the planning of London’s Olympic legacy through masterplanning, not in the conventional way in which planning history is often done, by exploring the changing content of plans and the relation these bear to development, but by considering the nature of strategies related to the anticipated process of physical regeneration before the Olympics and how, in turn, design, planning and development process has unfolded since. Adam’s notion of a ‘futurescape’ has been key to this, the various ‘structural elements’ she identifies as vital for understanding futures-as-processes providing a methodological armature for the account throughout.

As shown in the introductory section, from the time of the Olympic Bid (2003–04), regeneration in East London was anticipated as a long and complex process – extending over a *timeframe* of decades – but one that the Olympics would create the means to accelerate by creating infrastructure and amenities by way of a first, State-led phase of development that would catalyse later investment in East London. This was seen as crucial for realizing a better future for its residents.

In the section on the LMF, it was shown how planning and development anticipated over twenty-three led to the production of a range of concepts and strategies for dealing with the uncertainties inherent to

⁷⁰UCL and LLDC, “UCL East Phase 1 at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park,” 4.

⁷¹A&M Interview, Masterplanner, 02.2017.

⁷²LLDC Interview, Director of Development, 11.2017.

distant futures and envisioning the process of development over time. Of particular significance were ideas of flexibility or open-endedness which created potential for the form of the future to emerge as development contexts evolved over time and which at least some masterplanners saw as means to allow many rather than few to determine it. However, the LMF suggested that these could also be interpreted as approaches geared to attracting private development and facilitating State-led gentrification.

The following section, which began by exploring the construction of a new 'present future' in the context of the LCS illustrated the contingency of spatial outcomes in the pre-planning phase on ongoing political support and the politics of urban futures and, in this sense the resiliency of ideas of flexibility. Indeed, although the image of legacy transformed at this point, flexibility continued to be considered important. This would create scope for the spatial and temporal aspects of development to be firmed up after 2012 in phases of negotiation and contractual agreements between the OPLC/LLDC and private-sector developers. Hence, it highlighted the extent to which the future was seen to depend on these judicialised processes and the assessments of commercial viability underpinning them.

In the final section, I argued that the LCS's flexible parameters have not only created scope for firming proposals up in line with the shortening *timeframe* to construction, but for coping with ongoing change, dynamism and surprise related to both the governance and evolution of market interests in the site without having to revise or undo planning permissions. Timings to have remained broadly constant suggesting of course that a great deal of contingency was built in at the start but also pointing to the role of preparedness through advance planning. However, I also argued that, through procurement processes, timings as well as outputs have come to be controlled by a more limited range of actors than once envisioned, reflecting desires to streamline development and manage risks in the crucial delivery phase when capital investment is due to be recovered, but with consequences for the meanings and process of regeneration.

Overall, the paper has revealed a process both anticipated and unfolding which, in spite of the various different in approach and political orientation which have led to evolution over time, reflect many features of neoliberalism in planning and development and related assumptions about the mechanisms and objectives of Olympic-led regeneration. But it also reveals the significance of urban design strategies connected to the temporality of urban change.

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