



Unpacking the complex exclusivity of new workspaces in London's Olympic Park

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Session: Workspace Conflicts, Urban Lives and Livelihoods: Emerging
Politics, Planning and Practice across the Global North and South

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Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park



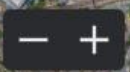
 Parklands
 Legacy Venues



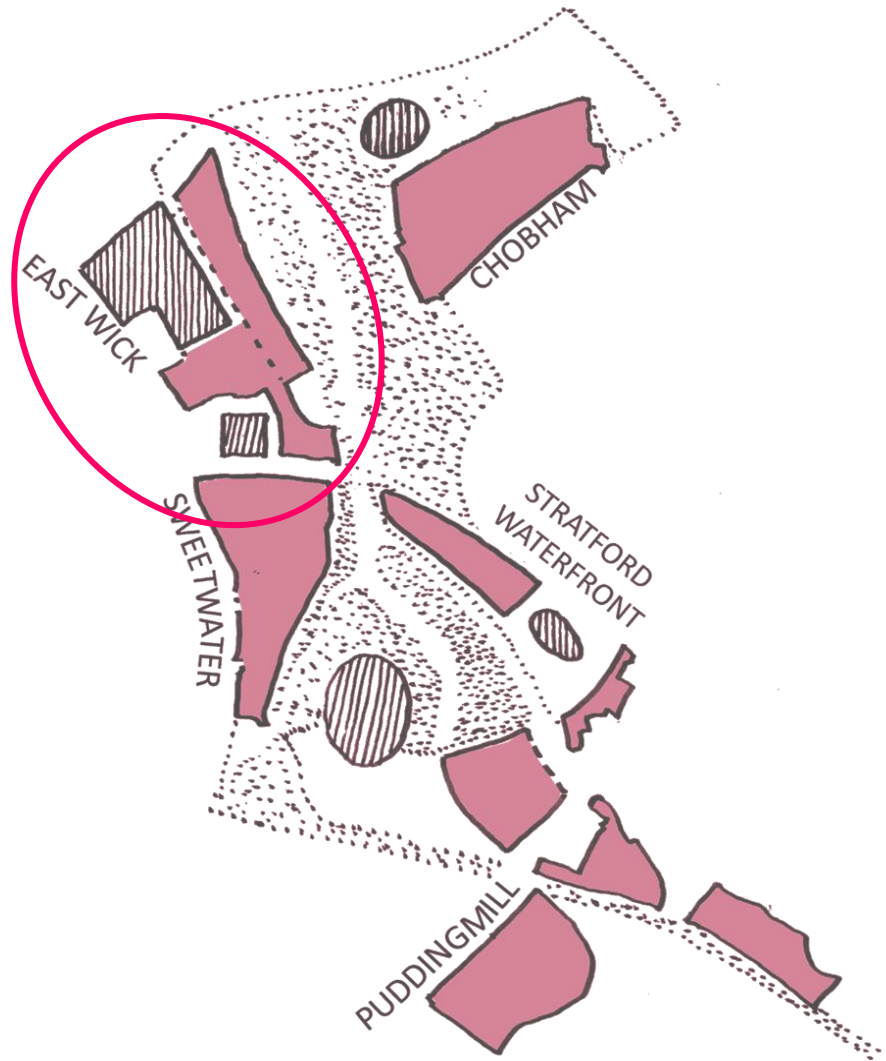
2023



3D



Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park



-  Parklands
-  Legacy Venues



- **An example, Here East** - a mixed educational/ employment area set amid the remnants of the International Media Broadcast Centre constructed for the Games.
- Completed in 2015, it is explained and portrayed as a key piece in the regeneration story of the Park, creating some 5,000 new employment opportunities, a major windfall for East London.
- An intriguing element of this discourse is how the outcomes of design and development are framed and represented in terms of the area's pre-Olympic past.

“The GLA is supportive of the principle of [...] the identified regeneration benefits of employment, training, new business creation and economic multiplier effects.” [Planning Decisions Committee, 25 February 2014]

“The Former Press and Broadcast Centres for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is today Here East. This major development builds on the creative and entrepreneurial heritage of Hackney Wick.”
[www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk]

“The site contained significant highly polluted industrial wasteland” [www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk]

“In a relatively short space of time, we’ve introduced thousands of new skilled jobs and fashioned a new cultural heartland in East London.” [www.hereeast.com]

“Our ambition was to spark an economic and cultural regeneration in East London – an area which has been underserved for over a century – and create a vibrant community which generated employment for thousands of people.” [Gavin Poole, CEO, Here East]

A new place of work and education + economic growth and prosperity that didn't previously exist.

A sense of seamless, uncomplicated continuity linked to a history of making, business and innovation.

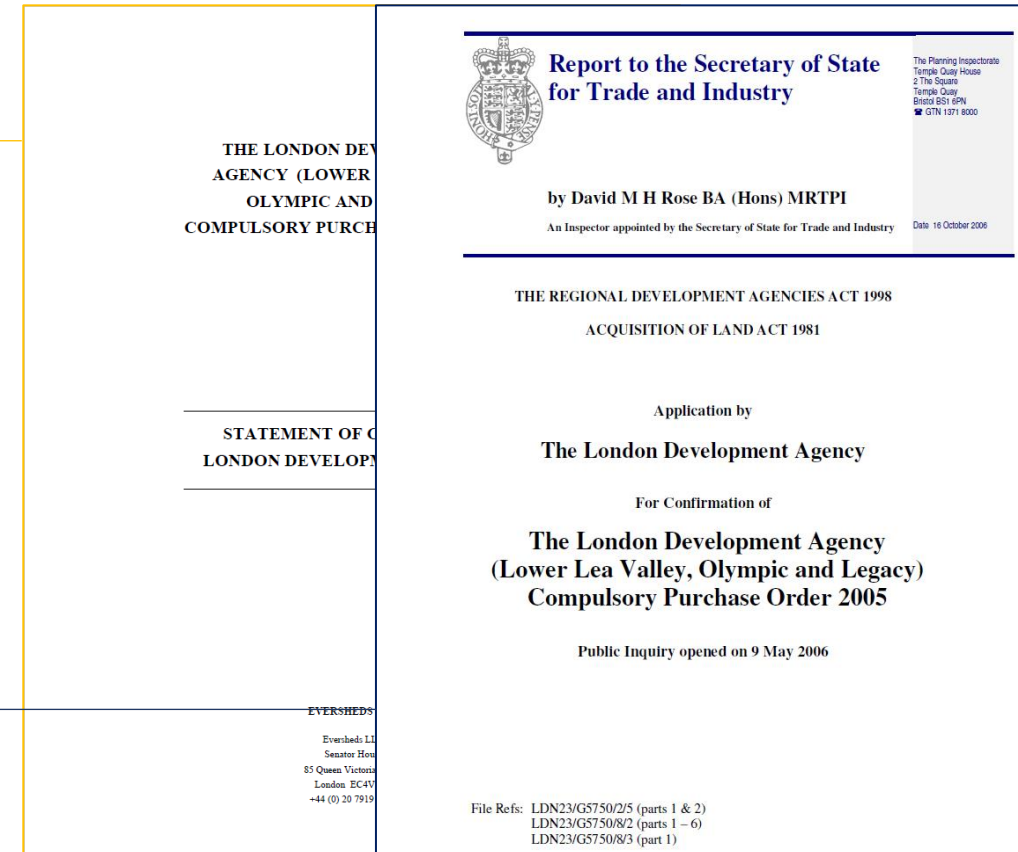
A post-industrial, remediated landscape that was once a wasteland.

A place of skilled employment in the wake of low-skilled work.

An area now capitalising on investment that was formerly lacking.

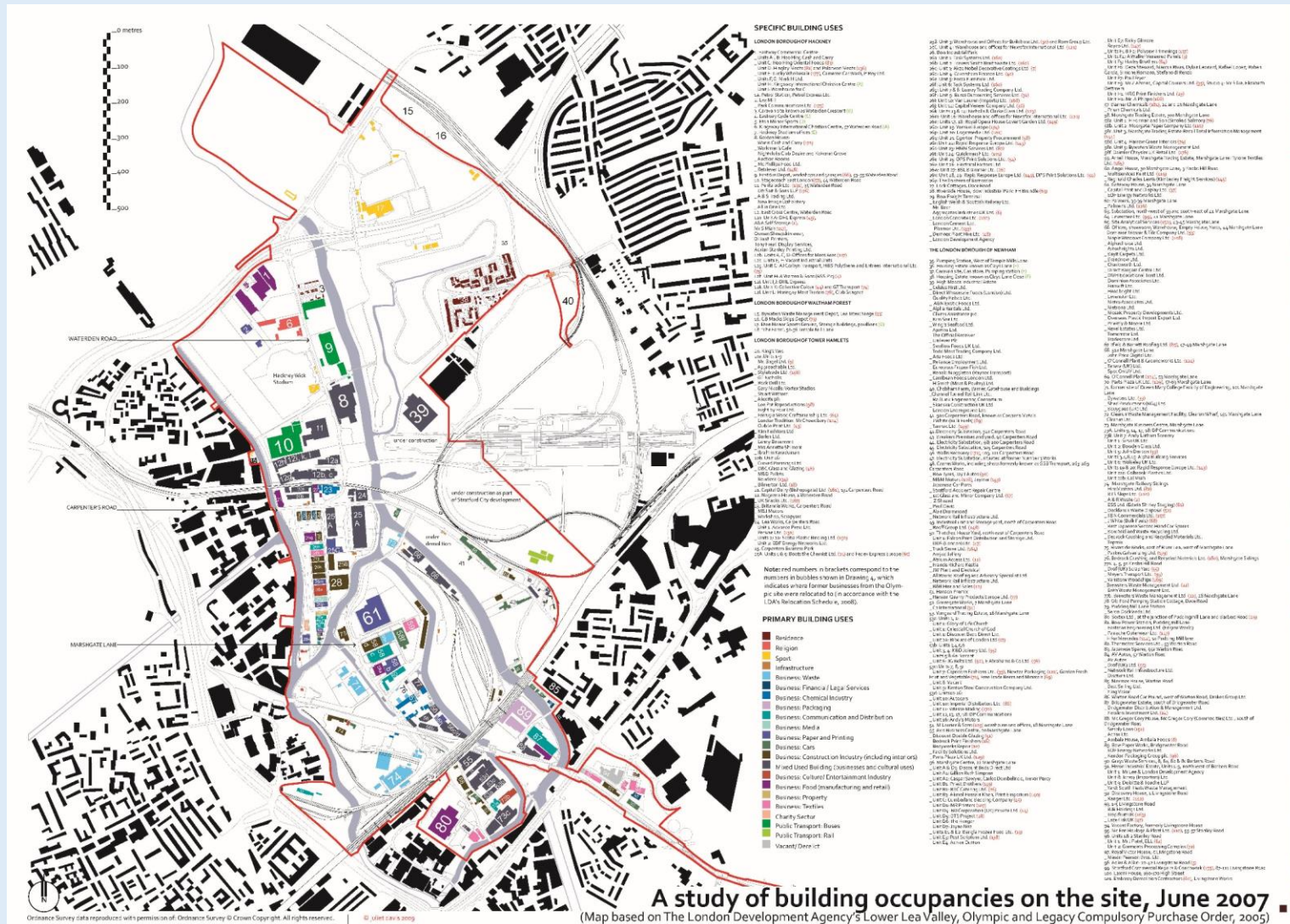
Context - the assembly and compulsory purchase of the Olympic site

- **2005** - *'Statement of Case of the London Development Agency'* prepared by Eversheds LLP
- **November 16 2005** - Compulsory purchase served by the London Development Agency enabling a process of direct displacement
- **Up until March 2006** - Objections to the Order received, totalling 450 – contestation of regeneration goals and plans.
- **May 6 – 4 August 2006** - Public Inquiry held during which 83 objectors were heard.
- **Autumn 2006** - Recommendation made by the Planning Inspectorate to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that the CPO should be confirmed,
- **December 19 2006** - Secretary of State's Formal Decision to confirm the Order
- **July 2 2007** - LDA was able to complete its process of taking possession of the site



Employment on the site in 2005/6 – a wasteland?

- 286 businesses, mostly SMEs – 5,300 jobs.
- Businesses operated out of a range of industrial buildings from 19th to early 21st century recently upgraded workspaces.
- There was relatively little vacancy.








Employment on the site in 2005/6

- The topography was varied – a mix of industrial yards, car parks, metropolitan open land, semi-wild verges, allotments, roads.
- An archipelago of industrial estate enclaves between rivers and infrastructures – a distinctive structure with roots in rural and industrial topographies.



KEY

	Productive Landscape
	Market
	Mixed Hard / Soft Derelict Landscape
	Hard Derelict Landscape
	Construction Site
	Carparks, Forecourts, Yards
	Railway Sidings (no longer used as such)
	Roads
	Public Tow Paths and Pedestrian Cycle Tracks
	Paths/ Tracks on Privately Owned Land
	Public Recreational Soft Landscaping
	Soft Landscaping on Privately Owned Land
	Verges
	Trees/ Shrubbery
	Campsite
	Rivers
	Tennis Court

Employment on the site in 2005/6

- Not all were industries as in ‘manufacturing’ – and among those a transition from early 20th century factories had occurred.
- They were highly diverse, including creative industries, foods, clothing, waste management.
- They reflected the ethnic diversity of East London’s population.
- Rents were low – 5£ per sqf per annum.
- 20% of all firms more than 40 years old – they were not failing.
- There was a number of very old firms going back to the 19th century.
- Many firms reported that they were thriving (Interviews, 2007-2015).

Range of Firms on the site at the time of the CPO

SIC	Classification	Per centage
B	Mining and Quarrying	<u>1</u>
C		<u>31</u>
	Manufacture:	6
	Clothing and Textiles	2
	Food	13
	Printing	2
	Furniture	2
	Glass Products	2
	Wood Products	2
	Concrete Products	1
	Metal Products	1
	Other	
E	Waste Management	<u>5</u>
F	Construction	<u>7</u>
G		<u>17</u>
	Wholesale Trade	
	Food	8
	Other Wholesale	9
	Repair of Motor Vehicles	<u>11</u>
	Retail	<u>5</u>
	Furniture	1
	Motor Vehicle Parts	1
	Other Retail	3
H		<u>7</u>
	Transportation and Storage	
	Postal and Courier Activities	<u>2</u>
I	Food Services	<u>1</u>
J	Information and Communication	<u>1</u>
L	Real Estate Services	<u>2</u>
M	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	<u>3</u>
N	Administrative and Support Service Activities	<u>4</u>
R	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	<u>3</u>
		100 per cent

Source: Standard Industrial Classification of economic activities (2007)



Marion Davies, 2006

- **Dispersal – a photographic archive** – pictures of those impacted by the CPO.
- Images draw attention to livelihoods, traditions, ways of making, materialities of workspaces.
- Most importantly perhaps, they reveal in ways freed of the need to make a case for regeneration.



Debra Rapp, 2006



Debra Rapp, 2006

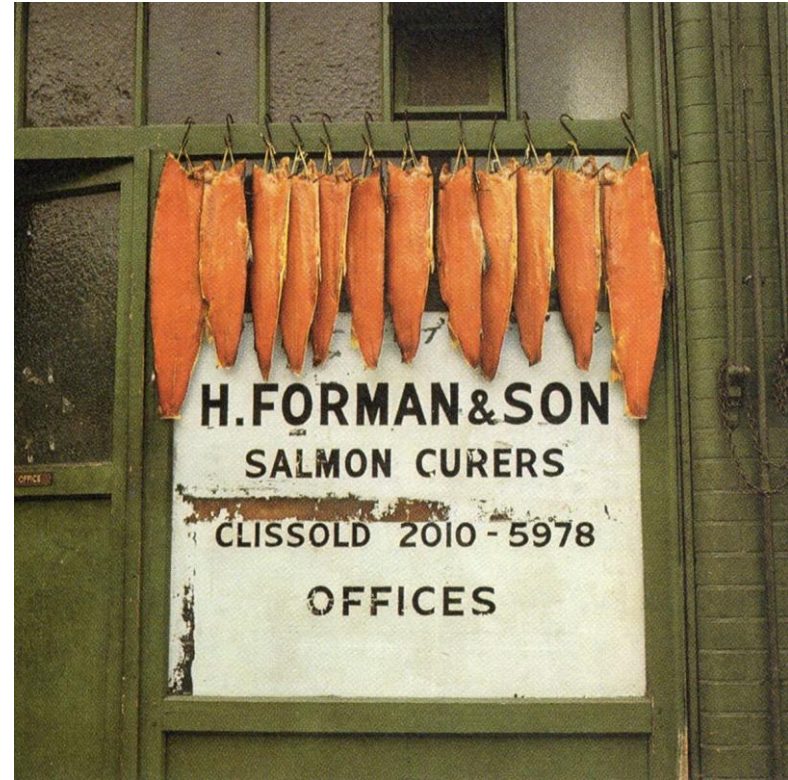




Marion Davies, 2006



Debra Rapp, 2006



Debra Rapp, 2006



Debra Rapp, 2006

Origins of Contemporary Representations of the Site in the Context of CPO – discursively constructing the wasteland

“The majority of the Order Lands are characterised by remnants of **past uses** [...] **Low intensity industrial activity** and land uses dominate, in the form of **old works**, cold storage facilities, waste storage facilities, car compounds and warehouse/distribution centres. There is a significant amount of unused and under-used land including sites with derelict buildings and where **fly tipping** has occurred often along the river banks and railway lines.” *[past rather than future]*

Statement of Case, 2005

“The **general** character of the Lower Lea valley is one of **environmental, economic and social degradation**.” *[contamination, and stigma]*

“In economic terms, the quality and perception of the physical environment creates a negative image which depresses **land and property values**, while also raising development costs, and thereby affecting the viability of redevelopment opportunities.” *[image problems + viable for who?]*

“The area is **fragmented** by railways, roads, rivers and canals.” *[lack of recognizable order]*

“The area suffers from a **high level of socio-economic deprivation**. Wards in and adjoining the Lower Lea Valley are generally within the 10% most deprived in England, with some in the 5% most deprived.” *[poverty, low skill]*

Inspectors Report, 2006

Representations of the future in context of CPO

- Displacement linked strongly to capacities to draw in major investment.
- Displacement as ‘sorting out’ ad-hoc, unplanned, piecemeal usage of the Lea Valley – elsewhere, language of ‘strategic’ versus ‘non-strategic uses.’
- Displacement presented as a long term, whereas the experience of those relocated is regarded as short-term pain only

*“The LDA’s proposals will displace a number of businesses; some of which are modern, large scale and significant employers. It will also frustrate their future development ambitions. **However, regeneration on the scale proposed will rely on, and draw in, private sector investment and achieve development on a planned and comprehensive basis to deliver the regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley.**”*

*“I am satisfied, as is evident from my earlier, Part 1, conclusions that the need to regenerate the Lower Lea Valley is striking and without question. Moreover, **the Olympic Games offers the exceptional means to secure that objective in a wide-ranging, comprehensive and timely manner. [...] The Games themselves [...] will leave a lasting legacy of regeneration and provide the impetus for further far-reaching Legacy phase benefits in the public interest.**”*

Contestation - ambivalent impressions of place and change

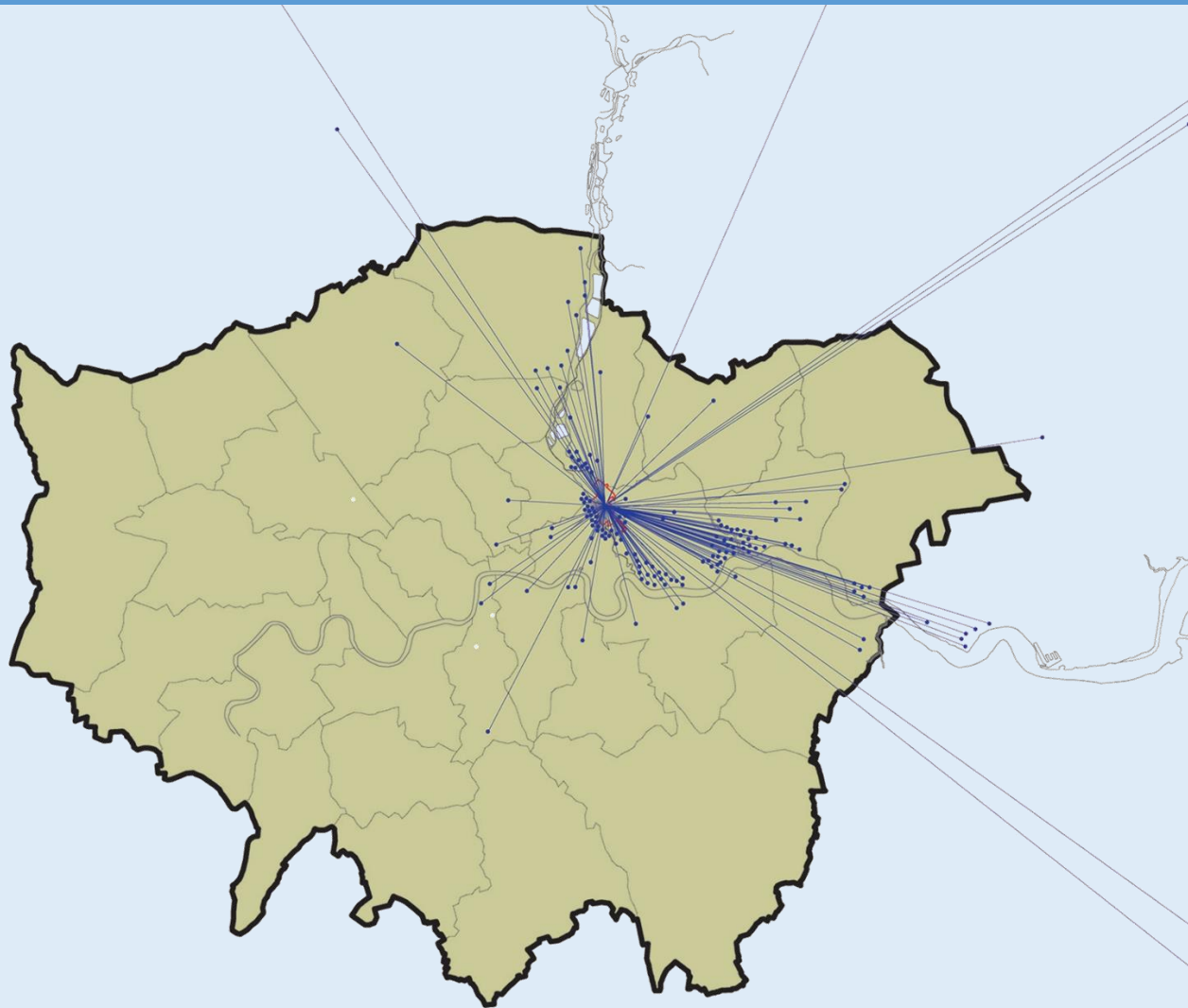
- Relegating 'non-strategic uses' to borders reflects value judgements. For many industries being located centrally was strategic
- Localised investments had been made
- The cost and trauma of upheavals would adversely affect firms and their local workforces
- Current businesses could be part of the process of regeneration and would benefit from investment and land remediation – why had this not been considered?
- Lack of evidence to show that the economic benefits of the Olympics would outweigh the tangible and long lasting benefit of retaining businesses.

OBJECTOR 172: *“The Company has recently invested considerable capital in the refurbishment of the property which is central to its operations and critical to its continued success as an importer and wholesaler of oriental foods.”*

OBJECTOR 34: *“Inadequate consideration has been given to the protection, preservation and relocation of employment-generating business within the CPO zone.”*

OBJECTOR 68: *“The Objector employs an ethnically diverse staff of 70, which increases by over 10% in the peak season and has resulted from a year-on-year growth of 10% - 15%, with varying skill levels. This generates significant economic benefit to the Lower Lea Valley and the surrounding area. Insufficient information has been provided to show that the economic benefits of the Olympics would outweigh the tangible and long lasting benefit of retaining the Objector’s business.”*

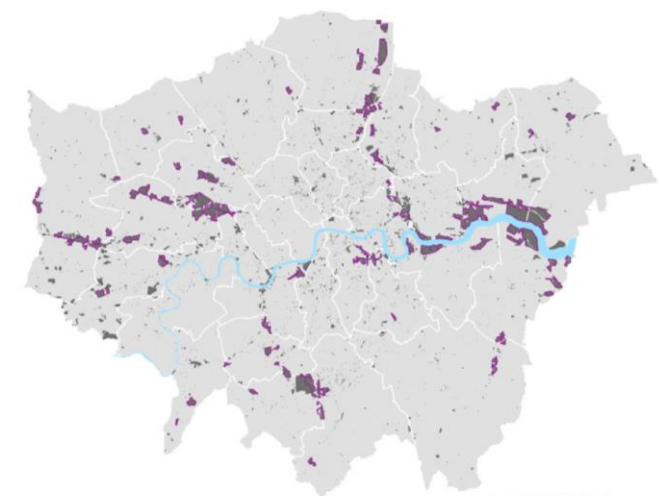
Relocation consequences



Interviews with 18 firms, 2015; follow-up photography with 11 firms, 2015)

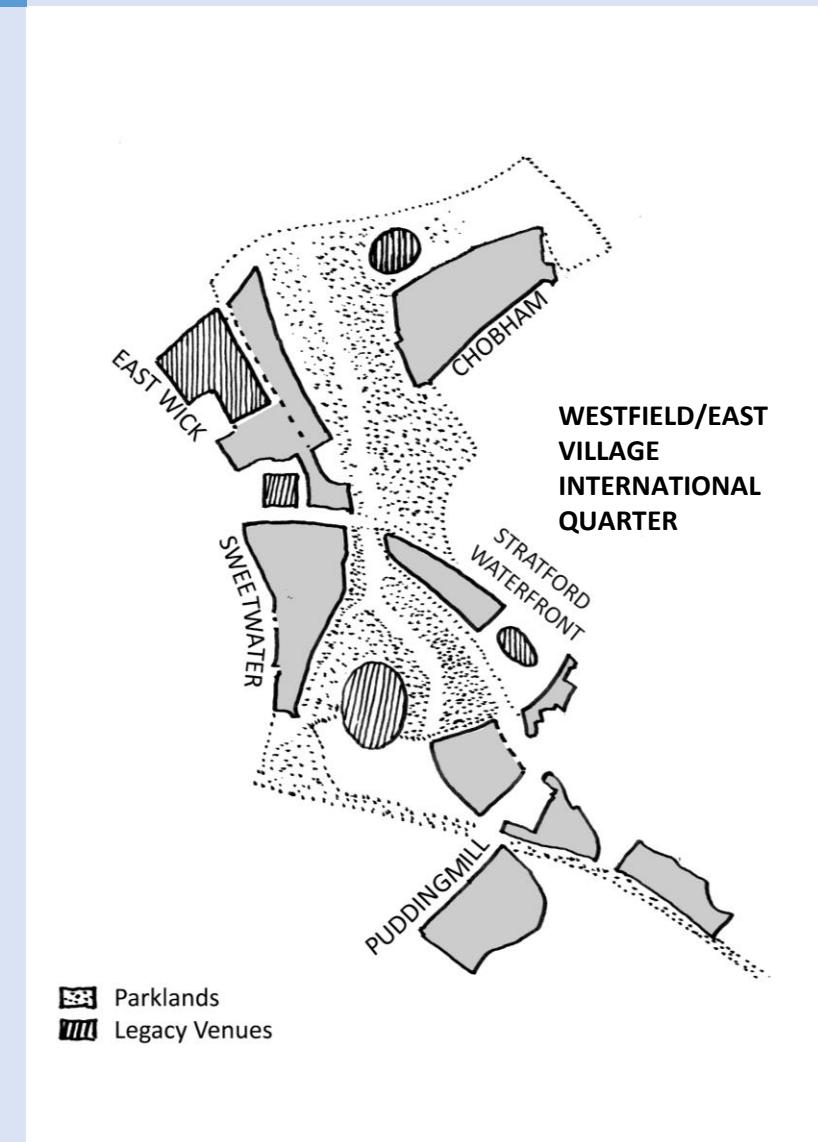
- 12% firms closed by 2008
- Closures disproportionate across industry sizes, types, tenures and ages

Figure 2.1 London's Industrial Land Baseline 2010 (source: URS/DTZ)



Enabled by regeneration planning

- New, highly designed workspaces, but at significantly higher rents - 42.50/ square foot/ annum typically for space in the Press Centre and Broadcast Centre
- Increasing the number of jobs – 8,165 estimated directly created on the Park by 2030 (by comparison to 5,300 in 2005), though this has taken a long time.
- Diversification of jobs through land use planning – from predominantly manufacturing in 2005 to a mix of industry, office, retail industry, office, retail, leisure, arts/entertainment and education – though far from being all high pay.
- The promotion of white-collar jobs and higher-value residential, cultural and employment uses that local residents can't afford – 'exclusionary displacement.'
- The creation of lucrative development opportunities and real-estate.



Overall Conclusions

- Evaluations of regeneration depend on highly simplified representations of the past, continuing to build upon an industrial wasteland narrative that historical records do not support.
- The paper has not sought to romanticise the site but construct a more complex account as a basis for evaluation.
- Today's Park can now be seen as a product of conflict suppressed by the power of long-term, vision-led planning – a product of displacement and a vision, ultimately, of gentrified space.
- It can be seen in terms of what has been and accomplished but actually also lost, and also of who has been allowed to gain, make and profit as opposed to who has not – a politics of regeneration.
- And, it can be seen again as an historical place built up and transformed through time, a material product of many different shifts in London's political economy and social life.