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The making and remaking of Hackney Wick, 1870–2014: from urban edgeland to Olympic fringe[†]

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This paper is concerned with issues of urban change in areas of London that have become the focus of regeneration strategies predicated on accommodating growth and development within existing city boundaries. Its focus is in the Lower Lea Valley in East London, which developed in the nineteenth century in the context of its peripheral location with respect to central London and which continues to lie at the seam between urban authorities. Today, this whole area is subject to regeneration plans based on addressing the physical and social manifestations of this transforming peripherality – including environmental impacts of industrialization, post-industrial piecemeal development, spatial disconnection, and long-standing patterns of social deprivation – by creating a framework geared towards attracting new investment, population and employment and, in the process, addressing the impediments to change that are seen to have been posed by fractured local policy. Taking one small part of this larger area, Hackney Wick, which is beside the 2012 London Olympic site in the London Borough of Hackney, the paper turns to planning history to explore its development from the nineteenth century in relation to urban boundaries. It uses this exploration as the basis for reflecting on the significance of contemporary boundary adjustments and plans predicated on facilitating the creation of local centrality for the remaking of an urban ‘edgeland’.

Keywords: boundaries; edgelands; regeneration; Lea Valley; development

This paper is concerned with issues of urban change in areas of London that have become the focus of regeneration strategies predicated on accommodating growth and development within existing city boundaries. Its focus is on part of the Lower Lea Valley in East London which, since the *London Plan* of 2004, has been identified as an ‘Opportunity Area’ for major development and includes the site of the 2012 Olympic Games. Strategy, broadly speaking, has concentrated on overcoming what are seen as physical and social issues connected with its historical remoteness from central parts of London and the legacies of its division by metropolitan and local urban administrative boundaries – including patterns of nineteenth-century industrialization, more recent piecemeal industrial development, and long-standing patterns of social

[†](Formerly: Planning and poverty in the Lower Lea Valley: unpacking lessons from late nineteenth-century accounts and understandings for contemporary post-Olympic regeneration)

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deprivation. Emphasis has been placed on the need to address the impediments to change posed by fractured local policy and administration and, at the same time, to address spatial and social issues specific to the Valley's diverse array of localities.¹ The paper focuses on one such locality. Its principle aims are to explore the significance of location with respect to boundaries for its development since the nineteenth century and to use arising understandings as a basis for reflecting on the role of contemporary boundary changes and associated development plans in urban change.

Hackney Wick, the area in question, lies in the north western corner of the 'Opportunity Area', as shown in [Figure 1](#). Hackney Wick is representative of the development of the Lower Lea Valley in many ways, as indeed of East London, but it is also a distinctive place rooted in its topography and location. From its beginnings as an urban settlement in the 1860s and 1870s, it was situated just within London's boundary, drawn along the River Lea, and developed as an industrial and working-class neighbourhood. In spite of the extension of London's boundaries in 1965, this early peripherality continued to inform its evolution. By the early twenty-first century, it displayed the hallmarks of what Marion Shoard has evocatively described as 'edgelands',² encompassing a disjunctive mix of raised rail lines, industry, a bus depot, a large tract of social housing, Traveller pitches, and a motorway interchange that reflected several eras of partial redevelopment of the original neighbourhood.

Since 2007, the emphasis of planning policy and strategy relating to Hackney Wick has broadly been on addressing fragmentation and other issues connected to this planning and development history through strategies predicated on transforming it into a 'local centre' – one of a series of neighbourhoods gathered around the new Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. In 2006, the drawing of new planning boundaries around the Olympic site was crucial to the implementation of Olympic and Olympic legacy masterplans across local authority borders and, following the establishment of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) in 2012, these have expanded to encompass Hackney Wick. What is their significance for development within, as opposed to beyond, them? What are the defining features of the new 'centrality' portrayed in planning policy and strategy? What do they appear to encompass or exclude? What does this suggest about the impact of regeneration on the area's existing built fabric and its uses? How does it relate to how it developed historically?

The discussion that follows approaches these questions by first looking to understand the historical role of boundaries in the incremental making of Hackney Wick as an urban 'edge-land'. Emphasis is placed on understanding the effect of boundaries in orienting it with respect to particular administrative and legislative centres and on how remoteness in these terms has been reflected, reinforced, or otherwise addressed through planning and development.

Much has been written of course about the relationship between urban boundaries and London's governance and development. The contribution of this paper lies in its focus on a particular urban locality over a *longue durée* of more than a century, drawing on extensive archival records. This approach offers a deep understanding of Hackney Wick's planning and development history but also has much to say about London more broadly. The first section looks at the relationship between its position at the edge of metropolitan London in the later nineteenth century and the patterns of *laissez-faire* development which defined it as a small industrial centre and residential enclave. The second looks at the slum clearance proposals, effects of war, and reconstruction plans that began to reshape Hackney Wick from the 1930s, in terms of its location just within the County of London. The third considers the significance of the

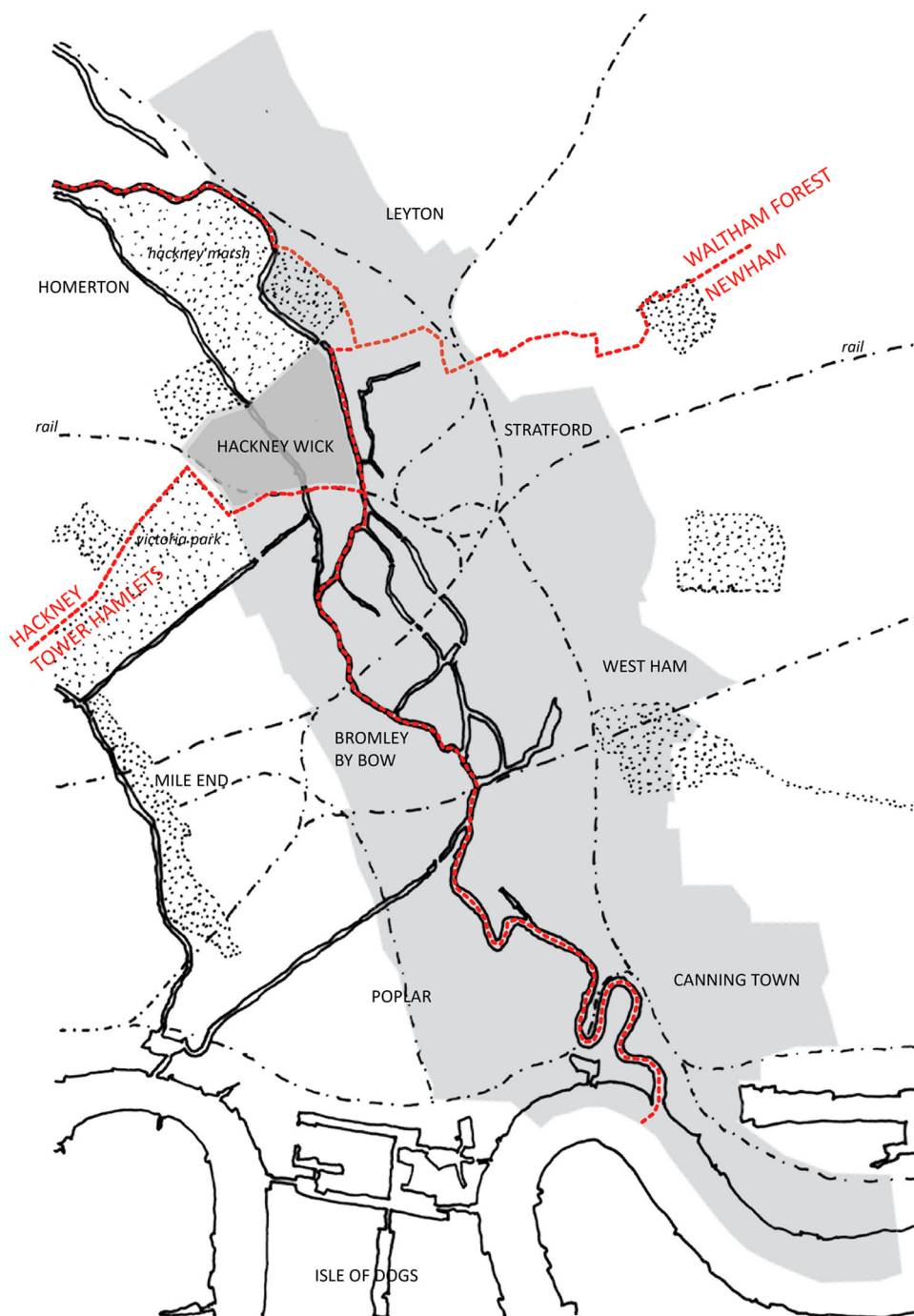


Figure 1. Lower Lea Valley 'Opportunity Area' (grey tone) and local authority boundaries (red, dashed lines).
Source: Juliet Davis (2015).

1965 extension of London's boundary in transforming Hackney's Wick's geographical situation with respect to the city as a whole and yet the peripheralizing effects of urban planning, state housing development, and the implementation of roadway schemes locally. The fourth focuses on urban redevelopment processes and the content of local plans from the late 1980s in contexts of the demise of city-wide urban authority and the decline of industry.

In a final section, the paper turns to recent boundary changes related to the Olympic site and the establishment of the LLDC and considers their role with respect to plans for creating new local centrality. In turn, it explores their significance for addressing the complexly assembled effects of Hackney Wick's, in many ways, troubled urban history and for the remaking of an urban 'edgeland'.

Urbanization: an enclave at the border

Hackney Wick's story as an urban place began in the second half of the nineteenth century when it formed part of the crust of the industrialization and expansion which led to the population of London growing from 1,995,846 people in 1851 to 4,670,177 people by 1901. Before it began to urbanize, the area that Hackney Wick would denote was already clearly defined by the River Lea to the east, by lanes connecting small villages at Homerton and Old Ford and providing passage across the Lea Valley marshes to Leyton, and by a jagged path down to the banks of the Hackney Cut Navigation that would form White Post Lane. This area lay at the heart of the Wick Manor and associated hamlet which lay to the east of the main Hackney estate of Lordshold. Consisting mainly of marsh, its lands were part of the seam of low-lying county borderlands between Essex and Middlesex stretching north from the Thames. As such, their rural uses were differentiated from those of the higher banks of the valley to the west and the distinction persisted in both the form and timing of urban development.

Indeed, by the time that population began to spill into Hackney Wick in the 1860s, urban expansion over the Lea Valley in West Ham was already underway and the area was bounded and divided by the lines of the North London Railway (NLR) and Great Eastern Railway (GER), which found it unencumbered by development in the 1840s. The presence of a new Victoria Park station may have been catalytic to this process, but raised rail lines cut Hackney Wick off from neighbouring areas and amenities to the south and west. In turn, Victoria Park, opened in 1845, provided a readymade amenity but, spatially, it reinforced the sense of its remoteness from other neighbourhoods, also underscored by the presence of a swathe of Lammas lands to the north. From the outset, it was an 'island' within London's expansion.

It lay just within the area defined as London at the formation of the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW). Established under the Metropolis Local Management Act of 1855, the MBW's principle purpose was to overcome the difficulties of implementing urban improvements particularly related to drainage and sanitation when the metropolis had expanded beyond its old core into three separate counties encompassing many politically and administratively fractured local jurisdictions.³ Its creation also led to the designation of a second tier of government in the form of 23 large vestries and 14 district boards. Hackney Wick, in the parish of St. Augustine, lay within the Hackney District, at its boundary with Poplar, as shown in [Figure 2](#).

Much has been written about the failure of the new metropolitan boundary to describe the limits of existing urbanization or to control development given that one of its effects was the rapid development of an East London 'over the border'.⁴ The development of the Lower Lea

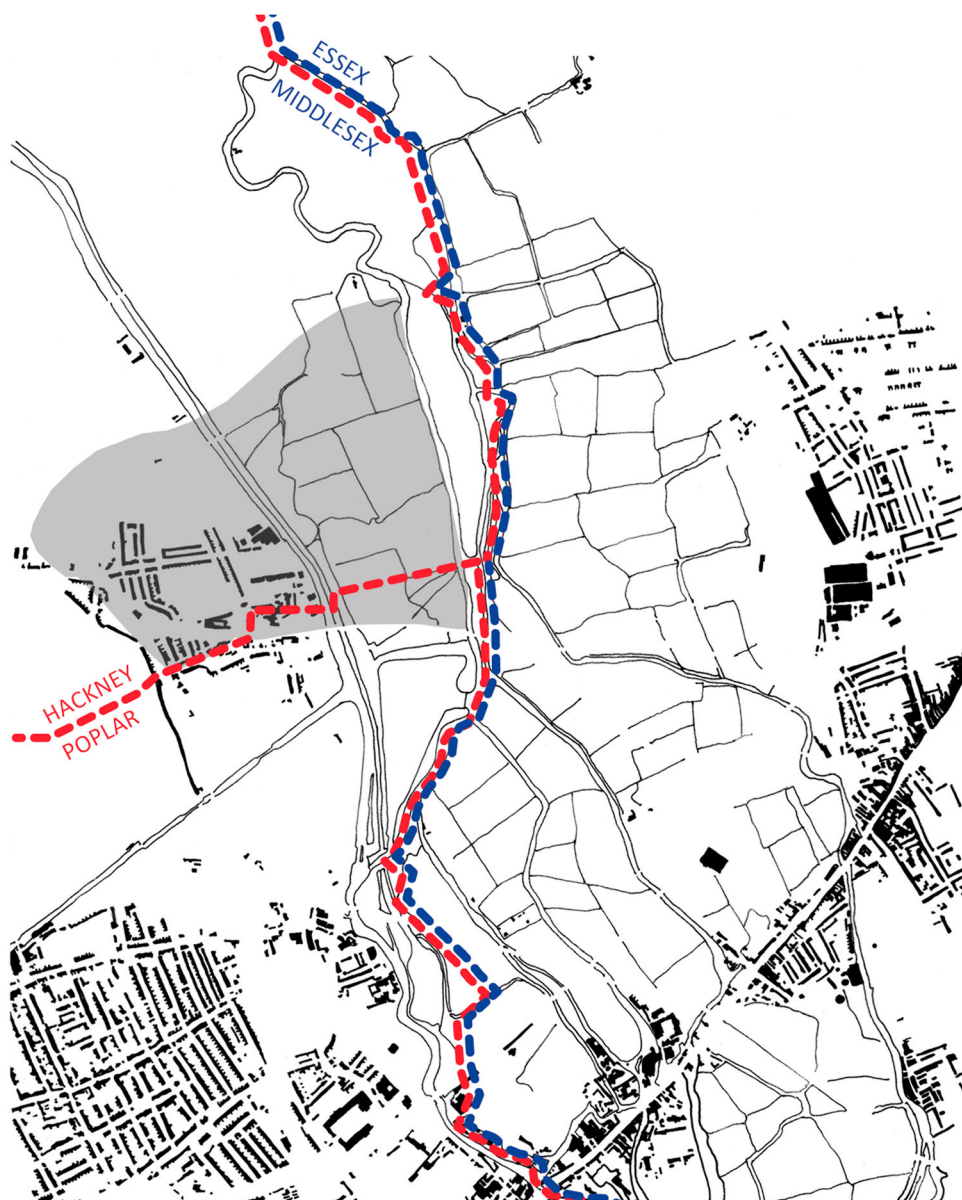


Figure 2. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 1870.
Source: Juliet Davis (2009).

Valley from the 1850s particularly reflected the impacts of legislation and its enforcement on the locations and distributions of London's industries. Key in this regard was the stipulation, first made in the Metropolitan Buildings Act of 1844, that noxious or *offensive trades* – 'that is

to say, Blood-boiler, Bone-boiler, Fellmonger, Slaughterer of Cattle, Sheep, or Horses, Soap boiler, Tallow-melter, Tripe-boiler and any other like Business' – could no longer be located within 50 feet of dwellings.⁵ The rule was modified in later legislation, including the Slaughter Houses & c. (Metropolis) Act of 1874, but the broad effect was to drive noxious trades east to West Ham where they also benefitted from cheaper land, lower rates, the Lea Valley's waterways which provided means of waste disposal and proximity to rail infrastructure and docks.⁶ The area over the border between Bromley and Stratford developed a particular concentration of such trades, but they also clustered in Hackney Wick from the 1860s where they were able to take advantage of low levels of residential settlement and were clearly in this marshy backland of the city as a result.

Dye, chemical, blood manure, and rubber works concentrated, along with other industries including confectionary and glass, which also benefited from Hackney Wick's location between London markets and the docks. In the process, Hackney Wick became a magnet for innovation – it was where the first plastics, known as 'parkesine', were patented in 1866, where the first waterproof cloth was made and where Capel Carless and Leonard manufactured the first petroleum from 1874. It also became an important focus for local employment. The confectioners Clarke, Nickolls and Coombs (Clarnico), for example, established in 1879, were employing 1249 people in jam and sweet-making by 1891 and continued to grow into the twentieth century. Thus, while Hackney Wick's industry originated in the context of peripheralization, it quickly became a small productive centre in its own right.

However, late nineteenth-century *laissez-faire* industrialization, as Clifford has argued, was instrumental to the environmental deterioration of the Lower Lea Valley including Hackney Wick.⁷ By the late 1860s, according to one newspaper article, its factories were already regarded as a malodourous 'nuisance' and a threat to public health through their toxic emissions and susceptibility to fire.⁸ In 1872, an incident of 'nuisance' caused by a chemicals factory succeeded in drawing the attention of the Hackney Board of Works and led to a court case.⁹ However, issues were able to persist and, according to one testimony, by the 1880s the Hackney Cut was heavily polluted, as 'factories in the immediate area covered the surface with an oily scum, while dead animals of all sorts and sizes floated about according to the wind until they disappeared'.¹⁰

Polluting, poorly regulated industry was in turn influential on Hackney Wick's development for poor quality housing, compounding the drawbacks of flood-prone land and the enclave-like character of land caught between railways and marshes. Development began in the 1860s, but the bulk of the neighbourhood was laid out and realized between the mid-1870s and the early 1900s as shown in Figures 2 and 3. It was developed speculatively for rental purposes by builders who acquired parcels of land leasehold from fragments of the disintegrated Wick estate, an incremental process clearly reflected in the street layout, which infilled space between rail lines and industry following the geometry of underlying fields (Figure 4). Development consisted of low-rise, two to three storey, cheaply constructed terraced houses with narrow frontages, no front gardens, and small outhouses in yards to the rear. Some, according to one newspaper article, were erected without foundations, directly 'built upon the sod' and had inadequate drains.¹¹ According to another, they were 'jerry-built', formed from porous bricks and mortar 'composed of sinder siftings [which] did not contain a particle of sand'.¹²

Being within the curtilage of London, Hackney Wick was of course subject to control and intervention on the part of the MBW and later London County Council (LCC) in the process of such development. In 1860, it received a branch connection to MBW Chief Engineer Joseph

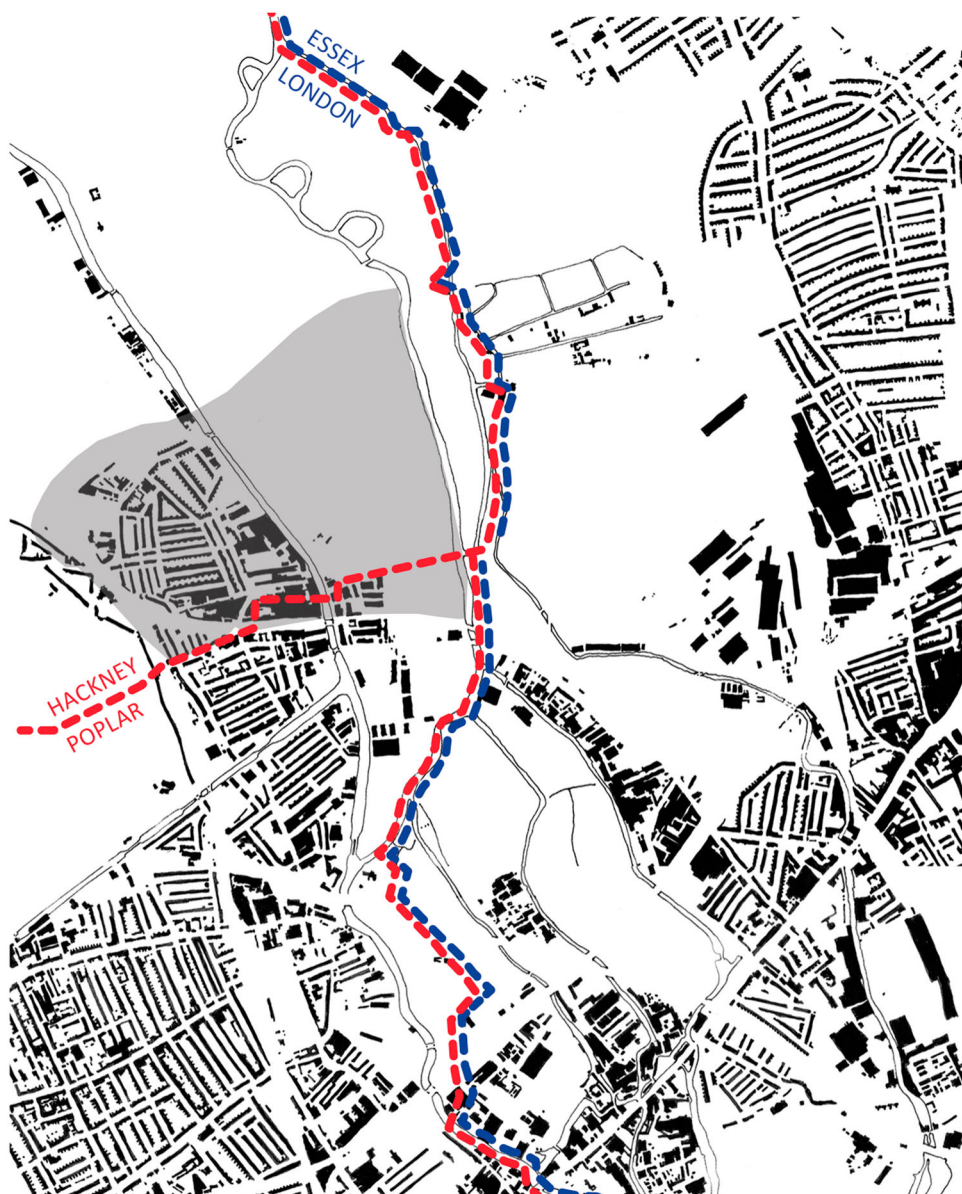


Figure 3. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 1915.
Source: Juliet Davis (2009).

Bazalgette's metropolitan sewer. Buildings were inspected by the District Board's Medical Officer of Health and sanitary inspectors leading to the emptying of cesspools and attempts to enforce legislation related to building quality and public health. The District Board instructed the paving of streets and yards and stipulated a certain level of upkeep leading, in the view of

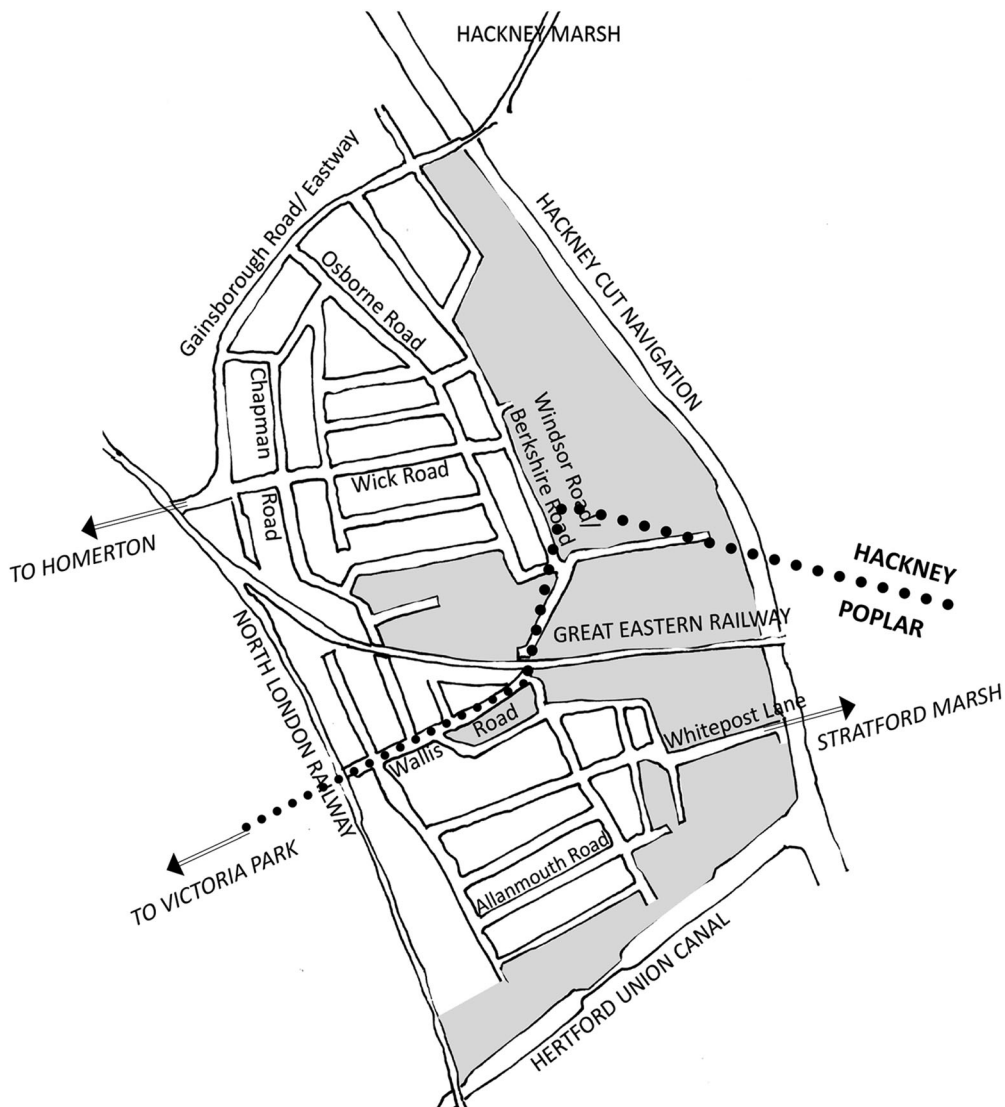


Figure 4. Map locating streets in Hackney Wick, 1890s.
Source: Juliet Davis (2013).

Medical Officer J. W. Tripe in his testimony to the *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes*, to the area becoming ‘much better than it was’ by 1885.¹³ The same could not have been said at this time of West Ham, over the border. In 1889, when the LCC was created under the Local Government Act of 1888 to supersede to MBW, the functions of metropolitan government with respect to development control and public health were extended. The LCC’s first tangible impact on Hackney Wick came with the purchase, in 1889, of the ancient

Lammas lands of Hackney Marsh just to the north. This served to transform a territory which had continued to reflect a pattern of ownership and belonging related to feudalism that had elsewhere in Hackney been transformed by urbanization by this time, creating a public amenity.¹⁴ However, the issues associated with housing in Hackney Wick, as in other parts of London, stemmed from difficulties in intervening in the established dynamics of market-led residential development and from ongoing weak urban government control of private sector, profit-driven production.

The result may have been poor quality in building terms, but the neighbourhood was richly served by retail including shops and street vendors, allowing all kinds of everyday needs to be met locally. Whitepost Lane and Victoria Road (later Wick Road) marked a commercial centre of sorts, offering an array of pubs, boot repairers, grocers, butchers, drapers, and the like. The area was also not uniformly disadvantaged by development. Booth's *Maps Descriptive of London Poverty* of 1898 reveal a population ranging in affluence from what he regarded as 'Fairly comfortable: good ordinary earnings' to what he judged as the 'Lowest Class: vicious, semi-criminal', though the majority of streets and particularly those at the heart of the enclave, were 'poor'. In these streets, as rents were high relative to the low and unsteady incomes of casual labourers, families were forced into crowded houses of two or more people per room. The 1891 Census indicates that the average occupancy of four to six room houses in one poor street, Chapman Road, was eight people, but some accommodated as many as 17. The population overall was 6863, generating a density of 210 persons per acre (ppa) – high for North East London.

Overcrowding related to conditions of labour and housing dynamics were features of areas of poverty elsewhere in late nineteenth-century London. However, a distinctive aspect of population concentration in Hackney Wick which was an effect of its location at the edge of London was its absorption of people displaced from clearance schemes in more central city areas, stimulated by legislation implemented by the MBW and proliferating under the more interventionist LCC. These peripheralized residents, referred to in castigating terms by Booth as 'failures who have drifted there from other districts', a mix of 'shady characters' and 'loafers', would have been unable to afford the rents associated with new housing schemes in these areas.¹⁵ Along with the environmental effects of peripheral industry and the conditions of labour associated with particular local industries, their pattern of settlement transformed London's eastern border for Booth into a 'girdle of poverty'¹⁶ and Hackney Wick into place of 'very marked peculiarities'.¹⁷

These residents would have been regarded as peripheral in a wider societal sense as well. Casual labourers were viewed as a 'residuum' of working-class society and became as such the subject of much debate in the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ In the 1880s, this focused on the threat they posed as potential dissenters and yet on their pitiable material and moral circumstances as 'outcasts' of the capitalist system. This concerned yet paternalistic culture was reflected Hackney Wick's selection for the development of the Eton Mission and several other religious institutions in the 1880s which sought to address the phenomenon of outcasting through Christian ministry and the provision of a range of other services then outside the remit of the state.¹⁹

The Eton Mission, founded in 1880 by Eton School, was the first of several such centres in London to be philanthropically supported by English public schools on the pretext of offering support to the poor.²⁰ By 1900, it had become a mission settlement, belonging to a family of such institutions established after Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel in 1884, with support from Balliol College, Oxford. In 1893, it acquired Church of England parish status leading, for the

first time, to Hackney Wick being designated as a discreet locality. The mission became best known for its clubs for 'rough and ready' boys and girls, which were devoted to skill, strength, and character building, epitomizing a culture of 'muscular Christianity' with which public school missions became widely associated.²¹

While these institutions set out to address perceived physical and moral weaknesses associated with the casual labouring class at the level of individual bodies, at the neighbourhood level, the mission sought to reorient the peripheralized community from its tangle of streets towards the church – away from the 'flaring lights of the corner "pub" [and] the smell of the fried fish shop' as one missionary put it.²² This was reflected in the development of the large mission church and hall, in 1893, by architect George Frederick Bodley (Figure 5) which still dominates the skyline and, in 1913, of the Eton Manor Old Boy's Clubhouse by H. S. Goodhart-Rendel which included a library, hall, and gym among a variety of other facilities. Resembling an Edwardian villa and sited next to the remains of old Wick House, the clubhouse alluded to a kind of belonging once associated with the feudal manor and seemed to offer to transform the urban enclave into a less socially marginal place.²³

However, the Mission, with its ethos rooted in Victorian views of the distinction between the social classes and its limited remit, was powerless to impact on the actual conditions of overcrowded housing which persisted into the twentieth century. Hackney Wick would not become a focus for major state-led intervention in working-class housing until the 1930s and, when it did, the emphasis was placed on issues of public health and modernization rather than on moral matters associated with crowded living, though the latter continued to play a role in assessing the needs of the poor.

From enclave to edgeland: the contexts of decongestion and clearance

In 1930, Hackney Wick's urban fabric was largely unchanged from 1900. However in this year, one street, Berkshire Road, was declared as a Clearance Area. Hackney Council's Medical Officer of Health reported that the LCC had agreed to include it within a 'provisional programme to be submitted to the Minister of Health' of 18 clearance sites to be addressed over the following five years. Four of the other areas were located just to the north in Homerton, also close to the London border, suggesting a new focus on sites that reflected the inheritance of late-nineteenth-century speculation and poorly controlled urban peripheral sprawl.

Indeed, the main significance of Hackney Wick's location in 1930 was that it lay within the County of London area which formed the focus of the LCC's so-called dispersal policy.²⁴ This was generally predicated on addressing the problems of housing supply in London by stimulating the flow of working-class families out of congested areas. Crucial to its implementation were the powers conferred on local authorities and the LCC through the provisions of the Housing Acts to initiate slum clearance within their areas and the LCC's additional capacity to purchase land and develop housing beyond the County of London. The aim was thus to fuel the processes of metropolitan expansion that became reflected in the increase of population of the area that would become Greater London from 6,581,402 in 1901 to 8,728,000 in 1939 while the London's own population reduced from 4,670,177 to 4,013,400 during the same period.²⁵

Within Hackney, a handful of clearance and housing redevelopment schemes were realized by the LCC before the First World War. However, projects led by the LCC and Borough Council began to proliferate during the 1920s and 1930s, motivated, at least in part, by the



Figure 5. The Eton Mission Church.
Source: Juliet Davis (2008).

state subsidies that began to become available after 1919.²⁶ But by the late 1920s, according to Medical Officer of Health G. H. Dart, Hackney's population was already falling as families were either voluntarily migrating or were being rehoused in LCC estates 'in the outlying districts'.²⁷

Records of the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* (1928–1931) suggest that Hackney Wick's population had also fallen by this time. Those properties surveyed accommodated on average 2.5 persons per room, though some peaked at four. This would have been above the level of the occupancy standard of two persons per room introduced in 1935, but it was much lower than 1891 levels. The records also suggest that though Booth had identified streets of variable affluence, they were regarded as largely 'unskilled' and 'poor' by 1930.²⁸ Hackney Council's *Slum Clearance Records* indicate that the Wick continued to be associated with a casual labouring population and a continuing pattern of settlement by peripheralized urban residents.²⁹

The designation of clearance areas and hence the definition of the 'slum' in the 1930s was, as Yelling argues, based on assessments of the physical condition of housing and its fitness for human habitation.³⁰ It was also related to the phenomenon of overcrowding which, in the context of pejorative attitudes to the poor (particularly of the casual labouring kind), was often seen to exacerbate and even create the public health issues associated with poor quality development. In classifying Berkshire Road as a slum in 1930, Medical Officer Dart noted the severe settlement of houses' main partition walls (resulting in sagging ceilings and roofs), dampness caused by 'periodic flooding', inadequate sub-floor ventilation, and various other structural issues said to require action by the LCC under the 'dangerous or degraded' structures section of the London Building Act.³¹ Similar issues were later noted in other streets, leading to the designation of three other clearance areas during the 1930s. These small sites suggest that many properties may in fact have been considered fit for habitation. However, a desire to deal with the area more comprehensively, on the basis of its overcrowding, is revealed by a plan by Joseph Architects (who designed much of Hackney's interwar public housing) from 1935 which shows the main part of the residential area – focussed on those streets marked as dark blue and black in Booth's maps – completely reconfigured for a significantly lower population (1328 people).

Urban government did not actually get around to implementing these proposals before the onset of the Second World War. The Berkshire Road scheme was cancelled in 1933³² and the three other areas, along with Joseph's scheme, were dropped in the following years.³³ Delays or cancellations following the initial representation of clearance areas were not uncommon in interwar London as authorities struggled to grapple with the scale of the challenges they identified. However, an important factor in Hackney Wick may have been the nature of the existing population. As Jerry White points out, rents associated with the LCC's overspill estates and with new council housing were generally affordable only by skilled workers unless there were several earners in an unskilled working family.³⁴ Their remoteness from employment prospects plus high transport costs also made them ill-suited to unskilled labourers. The funding requirement of the Housing Act of 1930 that those displaced as a result of clearance would be rehoused as part of the process also posed difficulties for the redevelopment of unskilled poor areas. Slum clearance may have seemed unviable, resulting in the Wick remaining little touched by comparison to modernizing areas located both within and beyond London's border during the Interwar period. The photograph in [Figure 6](#) was taken during at this time.

But it would be wrong to see the area as entirely neglected by urban government and its reforms. Development associated with the neighbourhood during this period tended to reflect



Figure 6. Aerial view of Hackney Wick, 1924 © [Historic England, Aerofilms Collection].

a broad aim on the part of the LCC of bolstering the resources of the existing population and indeed transforming it from within. The LCC developed public baths and washing facilities in 1935, was responsible for overall management of two schools, and, in 1947, added a public library to boost adult learning. The Hackney Casual Ward (known as the ‘spike’), under the control of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, served as a refuge for tramps and vagrants until 1948, albeit one offering few physical comforts. This aim was also reflected by the continuing presence of the Eton Mission which extended its local welfare services in the context of the 1930s economic crisis.

In commercial terms, the area continued to be served by a rich array of convenience shops, interspersed with smaller scale industries such as upholsterers, chandlers, and printers until the Second World War. In 1932, the Hackney Wick Stadium was opened east of the Cut, offering attractions in the form of speedway and greyhound racing. These spaces provided foci for Hackney Wick’s more and less transient populations against the backdrop of its poor quality, ageing housing and uncertain futurity.

Clearance was left to the bombing during the Blitz, which was indiscriminate with regard to quality or crowding levels and resulted in areas of Hackney Wick’s property being ‘totally destroyed’, ‘damaged beyond repair’, or ‘seriously damaged’ according to the *LCC Bomb Damage Maps*. The most damaged houses were demolished after the war, reducing Hackney



Figure 7. Bombed housing in Hackney Wick, 1941 © [Hackney Archives].

Wick's habitable stock by roughly a quarter and leaving voids in the urban fabric (Figures 7 and 8). As population fell, retail declined, and the former intensity of the urban enclave was diminished.

The bombing also impacted on the industrial area which was, of course, its primary target. In the 1940s, some noxious industry still persisted as a legacy of its nineteenth-century peripheralization and a number of firms still dated from that time but the range overall was more diverse, including food processing, printing, toilet paper, furniture and associated wood products, and general engineering that reflected London's consumer markets and the evolving distribution of its industries.³⁵ After the war, parts of the nineteenth-century industrial fabric were ruined and new industrial development tended to spring up in leftover marshy sites between the Lea River and the Cut, presaging the decline of the old industrial 'hub'.

The loss of intensity and inhabitable space resulting from decline and destruction created the basis for reconsidering Hackney Wick's potential for redevelopment, in the context of plans for the recovery and rise of post-war London as a whole.³⁶ In the *County of London Plan* of 1943, Abercrombie and Forshaw proposed that Hackney Wick would be comprehensively redeveloped but consolidated as 'neighbourhood centre' in the process, presaging twenty-first century conceptions of urban change. This would be achieved, they suggested, through the classical ordering of high residential blocks in relation to a central axis linking the retained Mission church as local landmark to a cluster of educational and other public buildings.³⁷ The neighbourhood would thus be reconfigured around social infrastructure rather than its disorderly old collection of condemned shops and pubs yet it would be a more peripheral entity with the main 'social unit centres', which Abercrombie and Forshaw identify for Hackney, closer to its

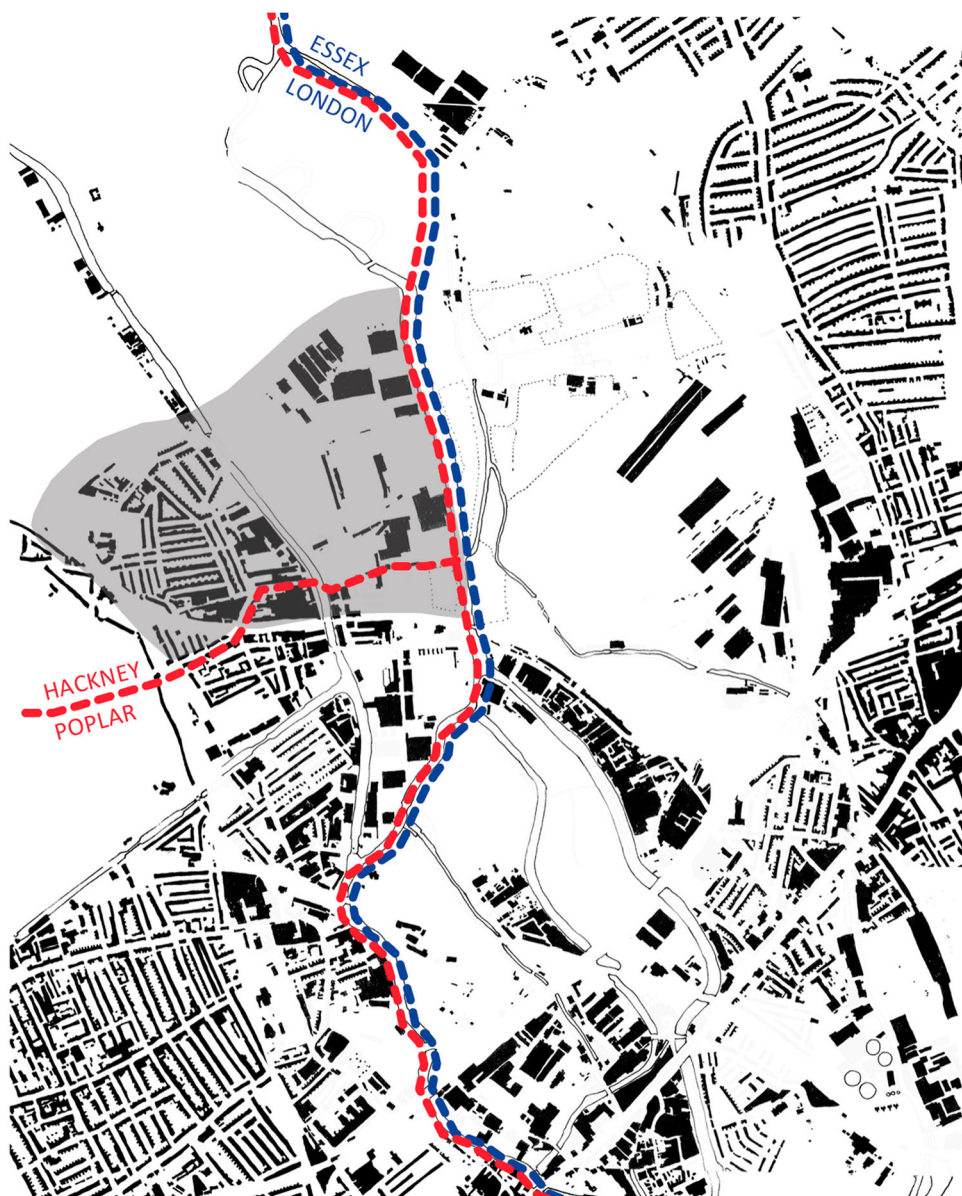


Figure 8. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 1950.
Source: Juliet Davis (2009).

core. Reflecting their conformity with the LCC's wider strategic goals of dispersal and decongestion, it would be planned for a smaller population, roughly half that of the 1890s, based on its location within the lowest density band for London of 100 ppa.

It would also become more isolated within Hackney rather than less so, as Abercrombie and Forshaw's road network plans proposed locating arterial and sub-arterial roads along Hackney Wick's western and northern edges, truncating the historic Wick Road link to Homerton and beyond at their intersection. The former road would add an extra layer of infrastructure to the NLR line which, as Abercrombie and Forshaw put it, 'is already a barrier between [...] communities',³⁸ and thus, in theory, provided a suitable site for part of their B-ring road around the city's inner area.

However, as a place on the edge of the Lea Valley, Hackney Wick was a focus for Abercrombie's proposals for controlling industrial development in London and his vision for addressing issues of historical peripherality in the process of establishing Greater London. The Lea Valley would remain as a major focus for industry according to his *Greater London Plan* of 1944. Notwithstanding, his 'Lee Valley' scheme highlights the potential for open spaces within it to connect the two halves of East London as well as to create brakes on further industrialisation.³⁹ This laid important foundations for later strategies related to the creation of the Lea Valley Regional Park and the Lower Lea Valley 'Opportunity Area'. Reflecting the wider approach, industry in Hackney Wick is shown to continue within the limits set by its *laissez-faire* Victorian development, redefined as the boundaries of an employment zone located just south of the reconstructed neighborhood.⁴⁰

What would this planned future, with its potentially toxic combination of redevelopment, decongestion, segregation, and zoning mean for Hackney Wick in the post-war era?

Consolidating the inner urban edgeland: redevelopment and deindustrialization

Plans to address the decayed and blitzed condition of the old residential area north of Hackney Wick were finally initiated in 1963, in the closing years of the LCC. Precise reasons for beginning then are unclear but ongoing indecision relating to strategic road infrastructure plans, the sheer scale of post-war reconstruction efforts, and financial issues may all have played a role in halting earlier progress. The Trowbridge Estate was planned in two stages, reflecting a two-step compulsory purchase by the LCC of the residential area north of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) Line. Redevelopment commenced in 1965 and the whole estate was completed in the early 1970s.⁴¹ Proposals were led initially by the LCC Architects' Department Housing Division, but after 1965, by the Greater London Council (GLC) Department of Architecture and Civic Design. They involved razing what was then described by the LCC as a 'clearly defined island area' of unfit housing,⁴² and their goal was to replace what had, for so long, remained symbolic of the failures of development control at the cusp of late-nineteenth-century expansion with a contrasting vision of urban government and public management.

Following the London Government Act of 1963, which provided the statutory basis for the formation of the Greater London Council and a political definition of the boundary of Greater London, Hackney Wick was no longer situated at the County periphery. It lay at the edges of the enlarged London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, at their boundaries with Waltham Forest and Newham. This would appear to hold out the promise of a new approach to Hackney Wick which, in view of its urban position, would address old issues of housing from the perspective of those living there in the 1960s who still lacked basic facilities. However, the developments that reshaped it under the GLC brought to brutal concrete reality the image of local severance that had been laid down by Abercrombie and Forshaw, though in a more extreme way.

Hackney Wick's location meant that it would have been affected by pressures placed on scarce land relative to housing requirements within London more widely.⁴³ Under the LCC's density zoning strategy of 1960, Hackney Wick was situated within the area designated for mid-density development at 100 ppa, just above the line of the next category up of 136 ppa.⁴⁴ Apparently on grounds of the alleged proximity of the amenities of Hackney Marsh and Victoria Park, though also reflecting a wider tendency for the densities of new residential schemes to increase, the LCC Town Planning Committee declared its willingness to push this up to 116 ppa in 1963,⁴⁵ and the final planned density was actually 133 ppa.

The most notable aspect of the 'mixed development' design of the Trowbridge Estate, in contrast to what Abercrombie and Forshaw indicated, is an extreme distinction between high- and low-rise building, with seven 21 storey 'point blocks', housing over 60% of the population, towering over a concessionary collection of 94 single-story 'patio houses' and a cluster of two to three story blocks of flats (Figures 9 and 10).⁴⁶ This polarized urban form would have been informed by the progressive storey-height subsidy available for flats after 1956 which helped to promote the ideology associated with high-rise⁴⁷ and clearly still made it feasible in the Wick in spite of marshy ground conditions and associated development costs. It also reflected the plan for 17% of the total accommodation to comprise 'old people's dwellings' which were low-rise. The towers were examples of industrialized mass construction technology, using the French 'Cebus Bory' proprietary pre-cast concrete system – said to have been, extraordinarily, 'only used once before in Algeria'.⁴⁸ They reflected what Patrick Dunleavy has described as the use of technology at this time as a 'shortcut' to social change, responding to pressures of time and cost but with all too little regard for the human lives now segregated vertically, off the ground, as well as distanced horizontally from adjacent neighbourhoods and amenities.⁴⁹

For a population of some 2800 people, a handful of shops, a library, and a club room were included by way of local resources beside one single retained fragment of the Wick Road – the Victoria public house. The public realm strategy was less legible than the old streets which vanished below indeterminate grassy verges, designated play areas, concrete car parks, and quiet pedestrian routes and courts. The reconstructed neighbourhood thus lost the sense of local centrality created by mixed-use streets with active frontages that it had previously.

As all this occurred, Hackney Wick was brutally disconnected from other urban areas to the west as plans for the East Cross Route from the Blackwall Tunnel to the Eastway link over the Lea Valley were implemented. This arterial road formed part of the inner loop, or 'Motorway Box', of the London Ringways scheme that was championed by a Conservative GLC from 1967 and crystallized in the *Greater London Development Plan* (GLDP).⁵⁰ From the GLC's perspective, the route of the NLR line from the docks which Abercrombie and Forshaw had suggested building alongside was an 'existing "crack"' that could be redeveloped with minimal impact on communities, though a motorway would make it wider.⁵¹ The GLC recognized that 'there could be a severe blight cast on adjoining lands and property' but this was apparently a risk that could be borne by the Wick which had always been remote and whose residents would soon be protected up high in their towers.⁵²

In the end, the East Cross Route was the only section of the 'Motorway Box' complete by the time the scheme was cancelled under Labour in 1973, amid widespread opposition to its urban impacts. As a six-lane wide conduit for heavy goods vehicles journeying through East London, with concrete sides and few crossings, it created a major boundary. Lost in construction were the



Figure 9. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 1970.
Source: Jenny Saunders (2015).

Victoria Park station and Eton Manor Boys Club which, in both practical and symbolic terms, reduced Hackney Wick residents' scope for spatial and social mobility. Testifying, as Hart suggests, to the era of 'technological dominance' in city planning, the East Cross Route



Figure 10. Aerial view of the Trowbridge Estate, 1970s © [Historic England, Aerofilms Collection].

translated into concrete a concept of urban order that was, elsewhere, largely curtailed by democratic processes.⁵³

Hackney Wick began to be impacted by de-industrialization in the 1960s. The departure of firms may have in some senses reflected the fulfilment of the industrial decentralization dreams laid down in earlier decades, but the unplanned effect from the early 1980s was unemployment and a new kind of economic marginality, produced in global rather than just regional or urban terms. Between 1969 and 1979, 3000 jobs or two thirds of those lost across the Borough were in east Hackney and 20% of the working-age population was economically inactive in Wick Ward by 1981.⁵⁴ The worst losses were from the largest firms – from toy manufacturers Lesney for example, north of Hackney Wick, 1333 jobs were lost, and many hundreds more disappeared from the Wick's own firms including Ingrams' India Rubber Works (closed in 1961) and Clar-nico (left in 1975). The result was dilapidation alongside a new *laissez-faire* approach to development control in the context of low development pressure – reflected in the springing up of makeshift car-breaking operations and the like in vacant sites (Figure 11).

In general, planning in the 1960s and 1970s helped to create the peripherality which has been the focus of regeneration over the past decade, failed to recreate local centrality, yet concentrated the social issues associated with poverty and economic decline within seven, structurally flawed point blocks towering over a landscape of major infrastructure, abandoned industries, transport



Figure 11. Makeshift industrial development and the Trowbridge Estate, 1970s © [Hackney Archives].

depots, and degraded waterways. In contrast to the Victorian pattern of development, this landscape was highly planned physically but, consistent with Shoard's description of 'edgelands', it reflected the failure to integrate the elements and zones of a larger spatial strategy, leading to the production of a problematic 'interfacial' place within the city.

Regeneration: beginning to restructure the edgeland

The task of addressing this would fall heavily on Hackney from the early 1980s. It would begin in 1981 when the Conservative government compulsorily transferred all of the GLC's estates in the Hackney area to Hackney Council, making it responsible for their maintenance and management.⁵⁵ Then, in 1986, the GLC was abolished following the Conservative Government's Local Government Act of 1985, depriving London of its metropolitan government. With the functions of strategic planning passing to the Department of the Environment, the 33 London boroughs, including Hackney, became responsible for addressing its dictates through their own development plans which initially adopted the policy framework of the GLDP. Hackney Wick's position at the edge of the London Borough of Hackney acquired a new significance in this context and became a defining factor in its development.

Records suggest that, in 1981, Hackney was reluctant to take it on, aware of reports that the point blocks had developed faults from as early as 1976, including leaking roofs, delaminating mosaic tiling, and ineffective heating systems, and were even infested with cockroaches.⁵⁶ When compelled to do so, the estate added a burden of buildings desperately in need of remedial works to a stock of housing with similar issues across the Borough. In 1982, it faced housing

vacancy rates owing to population decline of 8.8% and yet at the same time had a shortage of suitable dwellings to offer relative to needs and demand.

In the political debate relating to the condition of the Trowbridge Estate, local leaders and residents alike emphasized the damage done to the community by top-down planning and the failure of 'high technology' to ensure health and habitability. In 1983, Brian Sedgemore, MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, described the point towers as examples of modern 'jerry-building' and as 'a monument to misery and insensitivity, which demonstrates only too clearly how that which can be fashionable but which is not rooted in the needs of the people can quickly become a disaster'.⁵⁷ This criticism resonates of course with the wider discussion during the 1980s of the relationship between social alienation or exclusion and high-rise urban form.⁵⁸ The result was that, with the endorsement of the Department of the Environment and central government funding, the towers were demolished between 1985 and 1992, becoming 'spectacles' signalling the end of an era in planning.

In turn, the regeneration plans for the two vacant sites they left behind, developed at Hackney's behest from 1990, were for low-rise development, in theory complementing the retained patio houses and low blocks from the old estate and reflecting the view that low-rise typologies would be more liveable than the mass-produced high flats (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Patio houses of the Trowbridge Estate.
Source: Juliet Davis (2014).

Their urban designs were influenced by the discourse of ‘urban villages’ which developed during the late 1980s.⁵⁹ ‘Wick Village’, completed in 1996 by Levitt Bernstein Architects, reflects the principles of urban village design through a neo-vernacular layout consisting of pitched roofed, two to three storey residential development positioned around a series of squares. But, the fact that no uses other than residential were included in the scheme, that the squares are not especially permeable and are used for car parking, helps to communicate the impression of a suburban enclave rather than a village.

The second regeneration scheme, ‘St Mary’s Village’ is a similarly scaled development of flats and houses with gardens. It was designed by PRP Architects and developed by Lovells Partnerships in 2002 under a contract with Hackney Council as landowner. Unlike Wick Village, it includes amenities in the form of a community centre, a supermarket, and a doctor’s surgery, provided under the terms of a S106 agreement and on the basis that just under half of all units would be for profit through private sale. However, in the main, it too is a dormitory place, made up of a series of meandering ‘closes’ that turn prudently away from the East Cross Route yet also from the city beyond. Thus, while in theory exemplifying a new approach to the humane design of mixed-tenure community, these schemes fail to address either the spatial isolation of Hackney Wick from broader Hackney or provide a mix of uses beyond the provision of minimal services to residents.

In this regard, they reflect Hackney Council’s wider approach to Hackney Wick in the context of low development pressure across the Borough during the 1980s and early 1990s. The identification in the Local Plan of 1989 of strategic ‘major centres’ in Shoreditch, Hackney Central, Dalston, and Stoke Newington provided a rationale for channelling much sought private investment towards these places, but very much at the expense of other ‘local centres’ such as Hackney Wick and also secondary high streets within the Borough, such as Well Street and Chatsworth Road, which were peripheralized.⁶⁰ A hierarchical approach is also evident with regard to use classes related to employment areas in the policy, with locations such as South Shoreditch being promoted for B1 class office development while more remote sites including Hackney Wick were downgraded to B2 and B8 uses.⁶¹ These latter uses were seen to provide an important ‘source of employment and service to residents’ in the context of high unemployment levels though some, such as car breaking, are also described as ‘nuisances’ to be kept away from the Borough’s main centres. These approaches reflect a broader phenomenon of peripheralization at local authority boundaries in the context of local planning in London up until the early 1990s as identified by Hebbert.⁶²

It is clear from the *Unitary Development Plan* of 1995 that the Council saw Hackney Wick as having greater development potential and was identifying opportunities for private investment sites such as the derelict Hackney Stadium. But, while the public transport future was uncertain, it provided a strategic location for depots, general industry – including a rich array of small scale firms in areas including food preparation (meat and kebabs for example), printing, textiles, carpentry, and engineering – and also accommodated such cultural uses as a Ghanaian church (KICC) and informal market which would also no doubt not have been welcome closer to Mare Street but which complemented a similar range of activities within the borderlands of Newham, Waltham Forest, and Tower Hamlets.⁶³

From the early 2000s, units within the industrial fabric began to be occupied by artists, displaced as a result of increasing rental values from more central places in the East End such as Shoreditch and Hackney Central. The number of studios steadily increased and, in 2009,

architecture practice MUF identified as many as 321, mostly clustered within industrial buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – said to be the highest concentration of artists anywhere in Europe.⁶⁴ Little change resulted from this occupation in terms of building exteriors or the public realm but, in some cases, substantial re-workings of interiors took place, leading to the evolution of a ‘bottom-up’ live-work unit typology created with tacit permission from absentee landowners – often described by locals as long-term speculators with little interest in the locality – and under the radar of development control.⁶⁵ The clustering of artists brought new life to declined parts of the industrial area, quickly attracting other creative enterprises and activities.⁶⁶ Thus in the early twenty-first century, a form of renewal began to take place, related to these uses, though this was initially hidden from view from the perspective of the Borough’s development plans.

Towards a new centrality, 2007–2015: remaking the urban edgeland

With the return of a city-wide tier of government in the form of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the election of Ken Livingstone as Britain’s first executive city Mayor in 2000,⁶⁷ the Lower Lea Valley was established as an ‘Opportunity Area’ in the *London Plan* of 2004. This represented the first statutory strategic framework to be completed for Greater London since the GLC’s *GLDP*, and covered the same area.⁶⁸ Unlike the *GLDP*, with its focus on issues of declining urban population, the *London Plan* looked to strategies for accommodating increasing population through inner city regeneration, placing a characteristically neoliberal stress on economic growth and facilitating private investment. This responded to the rise in London’s population from the low of 6.7 million in the mid-1980s to a forecast 8.2 million by 2021.⁶⁹ ‘Opportunity Areas’ are viewed as sites for accommodating additional population and employment within urban boundaries. 50,000 jobs and 40,000 homes are projected for the 1450 hectare Lower Lea Valley, with 1586 of those homes and in the order of 134,337 square metres of employment space projected for Hackney Wick. The principle ‘opportunity’ of the Valley, according to the Planning Framework (OAPF) produced by the GLA with EDAW in 2007, lay in the potential, facilitated by the return of city-level planning, to rezone large swathes of industrial land and to overcome issues of social and economic marginality associated with post-industrial decline through its redevelopment.⁷⁰

Key in initiating this process was the redevelopment of the 2012 Olympic site, and this also involved the creation of new boundaries of ownership and planning control. Between 2005 and 2007, 254 hectares of land were acquired under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) by the London Development Agency (LDA), which had powers to assemble land for regeneration. The Olympic site’s boundaries, which spanned four Boroughs, divided Hackney Wick in two, as shown in [Figure 13](#). The CPO involved the transfer of land formerly held by disparate owners to public ownership under the LDA and led to the displacement of some 210 businesses and other uses regarded as non-strategic in the context of regeneration. Single ownership was viewed by the LDA as crucial for achieving economies of scale in addressing the historical issue of ground contamination associated with noxious nineteenth-century industry. A piecemeal redevelopment approach, it argued, would struggle to achieve the land ‘value uplift’ on which regeneration depended or provide the means to implement a comprehensive strategy.⁷¹ The opportunity to deliver lasting change was enhanced with the creation of a new planning committee and decisions team within the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) which,

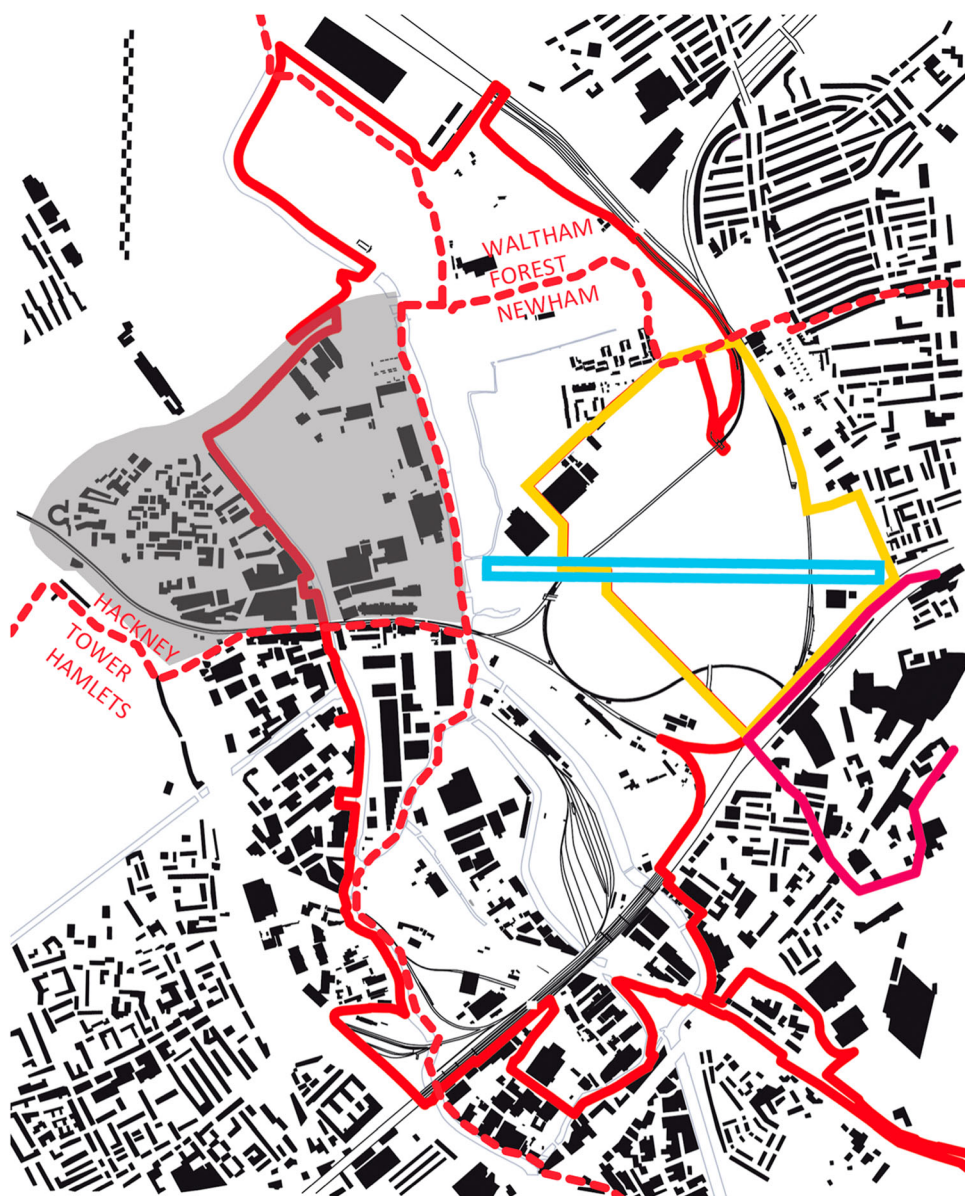


Figure 13. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 2007.
Source: Juliet Davis (2009).

independently of the Boroughs (though with their interests represented on the committee), gave outline consent to early Olympic and Legacy Masterplans in 2007. As the ODA's principal task was to facilitate Games-related development, its site boundaries defined the focus of a specific, even 'exceptional' planning process, legitimated on the grounds of long-term regeneration but,

in the short term, on the basis that the Games could not be delayed and that deliberations characteristic of local planning and major projects could not be accommodated. This process, predicated on closely managing the creation of an investment catalyst in the form of the Olympic Park, could not be more different from the *laissez-faire* approaches that had characterized Hackney Wick's industrial development in the past.

Beyond the construction site hoardings and security infrastructure that marked them until 2013, a new periphery was created – the 'Olympic fringes' as they became known, including Hackney Wick – which lay outside this process. As development for the Olympics proceeded, the fringes appeared as ragged fragments of the edgeland that had lain between them, reflecting continuities with its past and yet a greater degree of uncertainty regarding the future.⁷² The rapid development of sites in the Stratford High Street area in the years preceding the Olympics suggested scope for significant change in Hackney Wick led by the private sector, yet the designation of the historical employment area as industrial in the London Plan and the protection of the Trowbridge Estate following its redevelopment in the 1990s served to constrain capitalist forces during this period.

In 2010–2011, the fringes became the focus for a series of light-touch projects commissioned by Design for London (DfL), including public realm improvements, a primary school vegetable garden, and a social space within an historic building for the 'alternative' creative community in Hackney Wick. Their goal was said to be to achieve something quite different from the Games – to protect the qualities of peripheral space as 'a fragile ecology all too easily steam-rollered when development inevitably arrives [by] giving it a robustness and resilience to survive the forces of gentrification'.⁷³ The role of planning presented in DfL's *Stitching the Fringe* document which summarizes these projects reflects the classic dichotomy between facilitating change and preservation, as a 'balancing act' of anticipating the future while 'valuing what is there'.⁷⁴

However, it would be wrong to view this approach to the fringes as opposed to the goals of the wider regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley or the Olympic site. The *Legacy Masterplan Framework*, developed under the LDA from 2008, envisaged ultimately blurring the divide between the Olympic site and the fringes by enhancing local connections between them and via the creation of six new neighbourhoods that would span across them. It reflected priorities stemming from the 2007 OAPF in which Hackney Wick was portrayed as a 'local centre' within a network of hierarchized 'places of exchange' across the Valley.⁷⁵ This polycentricism echoes Abercrombie and Forshaw's analysis of London's community-based structure, though differs of course in its emphasis on mixed-use, high-density development, local connectivity and public transport, and in suggesting the development of communities across the Lower Lea Valley.

This implies considerable change, but the OAPF also made clear that the aim of new development should generally not be to erase the distinctiveness of the Valley as a hybrid landscape, or its life, but to include and build upon it in the process of urban intensification and growth. The creation of local centrality in Hackney Wick was presented in these terms as a matter of building upon a base of existing 'specialised industrial activity' and social housing to produce, alongside the employment reuses of the Olympic Press and Broadcast Centre and residential development in Hackney Wick East, a place-specific yet mixed-use and 'high density development hub'.⁷⁶ This approach would, in theory, create the possibility of addressing some of the drawbacks of historical peripheralization but it raises questions concerning the significance of revaluing or commodifying the area's existing uses or qualities and also regarding

the capacity of local planning to manage the potential impacts of development pressure on existing users or residents.

Building the 'hub' became the focus of a more detailed strategy in the form of an *Area Action Plan for Hackney Wick*, prepared by Hackney Council in 2010 and updated in 2012. Here Hackney put forward the goals of regeneration from a Borough perspective, emphasizing the Wick's physical disconnection as an island from the rest of Hackney as a result of infrastructure developments from the 1970s and its socio-economic position among the 10% most deprived localities in England (according to national deprivation indices). The main focus of attention in the strategy is at last not residential Hackney Wick but the employment area around the station which is seen to offer employment-led mixed-use development opportunities which could assist in boosting employment rates locally that continue to reflect the decline of manufacturing. Its aim is very clearly to promote forms of change that directly impact on these existing issues.

The Action Plan's authors acknowledge the value of the creative industries in realizing 'bottom-up' regeneration and, moreover, in transforming the image of post-industrial Hackney Wick.⁷⁷ They highlight the value of the historical industrial fabric with which many of those industries are associated (and around which a Conservation Area was first drawn in 2009). However, significantly, the policy points to a shift away from the emerging artist scene that characterized the Wick's early 2000s renaissance in its depiction of a future, 'high quality [...] cultural and creative quarter'. Its proposal to relax controls of the employment area would allow development to include 'research and development' and/or office uses as well as light industry and studios. This is clearly predicated on the desire to support a shift from industrial use associated with low-skilled jobs to professional employment and creative entrepreneurship, but it raises questions concerning the economic viability of such existing activities as art production, beer brewing, furniture-making and car-breaking, and how policy could protect them.⁷⁸ Furthermore, new policies related to listed historical industrial fabric raise the prospect for less permissive attitudes to its reuse and adaptation. Figure 14 illustrates some of the listed buildings within a view of Wallis Road from the station.

After 2010, in the context of new Conservative city leadership under Boris Johnson, the Olympic site's ownership was transferred from the LDA to the new Olympic Park Legacy Company but in 2012, this organization was superseded by the LLDC, which absorbed the ODA's planning powers.⁷⁹ In 2013, the LLDC's planning boundary was extended under the Localism Act of 2011, which is now that shown in Figure 15 – though the LLDC's actual land holding was not extended in the process. Positioned somewhere between a government quango and a 'Great Estate' the LLDC is now better able to manage development pressure at the fringes of the post-Olympic site in relation to the design and development processes unfolding within it, and to curtail the scope for uneven development related to different local authority priorities.

The LLDC's intentions are reflected in a range of planning processes and documents including a masterplan for Hackney Wick, a Conservation Area management strategy, and a new framework for the area as a whole. The masterplan for Hackney Wick is produced by Stirling Prize winning architects Witherford Watson Mann with Karakusevic Carson Architects. One of the key notions it advances is that of a 'dispersed centre', connected to a strategy of 'value equalization' across the Wick's development sites. This represents an attempt to create a basis for distributing commercial opportunities associated with mixed-use development along with



Figure 14. View from Hackney Wick Station.
Source: Juliet Davis (2014).

constraints related to conservation, quality, urban character, and regeneration – including heritage preservation, the protection of employment space, the provision of affordable housing, public realm improvements, and community infrastructure – as defined in the LLDC’s Local Plan 2015–2031.⁸⁰ The *Hackney Wick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Guidelines* of 2014 additionally define the heritage-related constraints, highlight the value of specific fragments of the nineteenth-century industrial fabric including elements from Clarnico’s works, the factory where Alexander Parkes made his ‘Parkesine’, Lion Works and the like, establish the possibility for building on the urban form of industries typically clustered around open yards and supporting an ongoing relationship between heritage and creative industries.

The sheer volume of planning policy and strategy now in place points not only to the LLDC’s determination to be seen to be effective, but to the fact that its focus on development control in the context of soaring property values denotes a shift from the earlier emphasis placed on catalysts and market stimulation. Since 2005, freehold residential property values in the E9 postcode have risen a staggering 154%.⁸¹ Residential land values averaging at £20,700,000/hectare in Hackney place huge pressure on existing industrial land. Studio and other commercial rents have risen, leaseholds are said by locals to be harder to come by, and socially rented accommodation represents a diminishing share of residential development – from 66% to 60% between 2001 and 2011 across the Wick Ward.⁸² The prospect of displacement for



Figure 15. Hackney Wick in the context of significant boundaries in 2015.
Source: Jenny Saunders (2015).

industries, artists, and residents is high as rents are determined by market forces; indeed an exodus of firms and artists is already in train. Even so, masterplanners have highlighted the difficulty of securing co-operation from private landlords in the light of short-term opportunities for capitalization and from speculative developers given high land values and expectations with

regard to profit.⁸³ The apparent attempt by both to circumvent suggested processes and policy is resulting in the politicization of heritage and the contestation of rights to use.

The precarity of the current situation from the perspective of existing users recalls many eras of the Wick's past, though of course contemporary peripheralization is driven by new pressures on land, space, and resources. History is most effective in highlighting the challenge of preserving the role of the edgeland as incubator and refuge given that this always depended on the mix of opportunities and issues created in the context of peripheralization, and yet today depends on legislation related to value as well as development in an environment of rampant speculation and gentrification.

Conclusion

The main outcome of this paper is thus an understanding that the shift from peripherality to centrality in planning strategies connected to Hackney Wick is accompanied by a fundamental shift in approach to its governance. City-level and local authorities have sought, at many times, to address perceived issues of marginality while nonetheless continuing to regard Hackney Wick as a peripheral place, somewhere to which undesirable uses may be relegated. Now it lies at the heart of a planning process predicated on controlling its transformation.

However, where current processes of planned transformation reveal a more continuous pattern from other eras is in the unsettling effects that they pose to existing occupants, particularly the most economically vulnerable, and the lack of assurance that they are able to offer that their uses and spaces will be protected. Indeed, as development pressure leads to displacement, the various plans which have formulated for Hackney Wick over the past decade risk appearing as bywords for new forms of social exclusion by facilitating the transformation of 'marginal' space into opportunities for capital accumulation – a process that is of course occurring across London.⁸⁴

The existence of the LLDC and the presence of its boundaries reflect the long-standing difficulties of coordinating city-wide and local plans in the context of fractured jurisdictions. Nonetheless, the advantage of focused planning in the context of wider urban strategy would seem to be that it offers the means to closely manage development impacts and be 'hands on' in supporting existing users as well as incoming population.

How this is done depends first and foremost on how local centrality is defined, on what and who an urban neighbourhood in contemporary London is able to encompass. This is then a matter of relating the drawing of limits to opportunism to the protection of freedoms to live, make, and use – of safeguarding the vital peripheries at the very centre of urban place.

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Disclosure statement

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4. For an evocative, first-hand account of this phenomenon, see Morley, "Londoners Over the Border," 241–3. Also see Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, Chapter 9.
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11. As noted in the *London Standard* on 8 August 1882, col 1.
12. As noted in the *East London Observer* on 22 September 22, 1877, col 5.
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15. Booth, *People in London*, 96.
16. Booth, "Condition and Occupations," 280.
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50. Jenkins, "Politics of London Motorways," 257–70.
51. GLC, *Greater London Development Plan*, 201.
52. *Ibid.*, 197.
53. Hart, *Strategic Planning in London*, 1–4.
54. LBH, *Hackney Borough Plan Position Statement*, 1982, EH4–5.
55. Mayoral Archives: The Trowbridge Estate, Hackney Archives [H/CM/304/36].
56. *Ibid.*
57. Hansard, Commons Sitting, Orders of the Day: Trowbridge Estate, Hackney Wick, November 11, 1983, vol 48, cc 584–90.
58. See, for example, Coleman, *Utopia on Trial*, particularly chapters III and IV.
59. Aldous, *Urban Villages*.
60. LBH, *Hackney Local Plan*, 1989, 7.
61. *Ibid.*, 42–4.
62. Hebbert, "London's Geography," 197.
63. Davis, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Chapter 4.
64. Muf architecture, *Creative Potential*, 2009.
65. See Brown, *Made in HWFI*.
66. Based on an interview with Richard Brown, local architect, resident and founder of 'Affordable Wick', June 2015.
67. Travers, *The Politics of London*, 43–79.
68. Gossop, "A More Compact City," 48.
69. *Ibid.*, 49.
70. GLA and London Development Agency, *Lower Lea Valley Opportunity Area Planning Framework*, iii.
71. Davis, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Chapter 4.
72. Davis and Thornley, *Regeneration and the London Olympics*.
73. Design for London, *Stitching the Fringe*, 42–3.
74. *Ibid.*
75. GLA, *Lower Lea Valley: Opportunity Area Planning Framework*, 9.
76. *Ibid.*, 28–9 and also 47.
77. LBH, *Hackney Wick Area Action Plan*, 20.
78. *Ibid.*, 65.
79. Cochrane and Allen, "The Urban Unbound: London's Politics and the 2012 Olympic Games."

80. LLDC, *Local Plan: 2015–2031*.
81. This figure is based on analysis of Land Registry data related to transactions of property between July 2005 and March 2015.
82. These figures are based on Office for National Statistics data.
83. This is based on interviews with Witherford Watson Mann.
84. See, for example, the range of localities described in: Campkin, *Remaking London*.

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