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# INSIDE THE BLUE FENCE: AN EXPLORATION

**Juliet Davis**



Figure 1. The fence from different locations around the site perimeter (Juliet Davis, 2008).

## Introduction

Since July 2007, the 246 hectare site for the 2012 Olympic Games in London has been surrounded by an eleven-mile long, ten-foot high fence, framed with timber posts set into concrete and faced with blue-painted plywood. Although visitors may be admitted by prior arrangement with the Olympic Delivery Agency, who conduct tours of the site by minivan, gated openings in the fence now serve to admit only safety-inducted workers. The Olympic Delivery Authority's *Code of Construction Practice* explains that the purpose of the fence's height and form is to isolate the site - operations, operatives, equipment, materials, noise, fumes, dust - from its surroundings (ODA, 2007, pp. 4-6). In a number of press articles over the last eighteen months, 'health and safety' issues are seen as a thin disguise for rather more insidious assertions of political power said to be represented by the fence (e.g. Beckett, 2007; Van Spall, 2008). Its construction marked the final relegation to the past of processes leading to the relocation of several thousand users, a number of whom opposed the Olympic scheme up until the final closure of the site in the summer of 2007. Along the northern edge of the site, image panels against the fence form metaphorical windows onto a green, clean site in Olympic and Legacy modes populated with young, healthy users. Logos of Olympic sponsors Coca-Cola, Samsung and McDonalds are succeeded, without hiatus, by words like 'Create' and 'Everyone's 2012'. Stretching down the fence's west side, image panels contain drawings by Hackney school children, emphasising that 'vision' is something in which all may 'participate'.

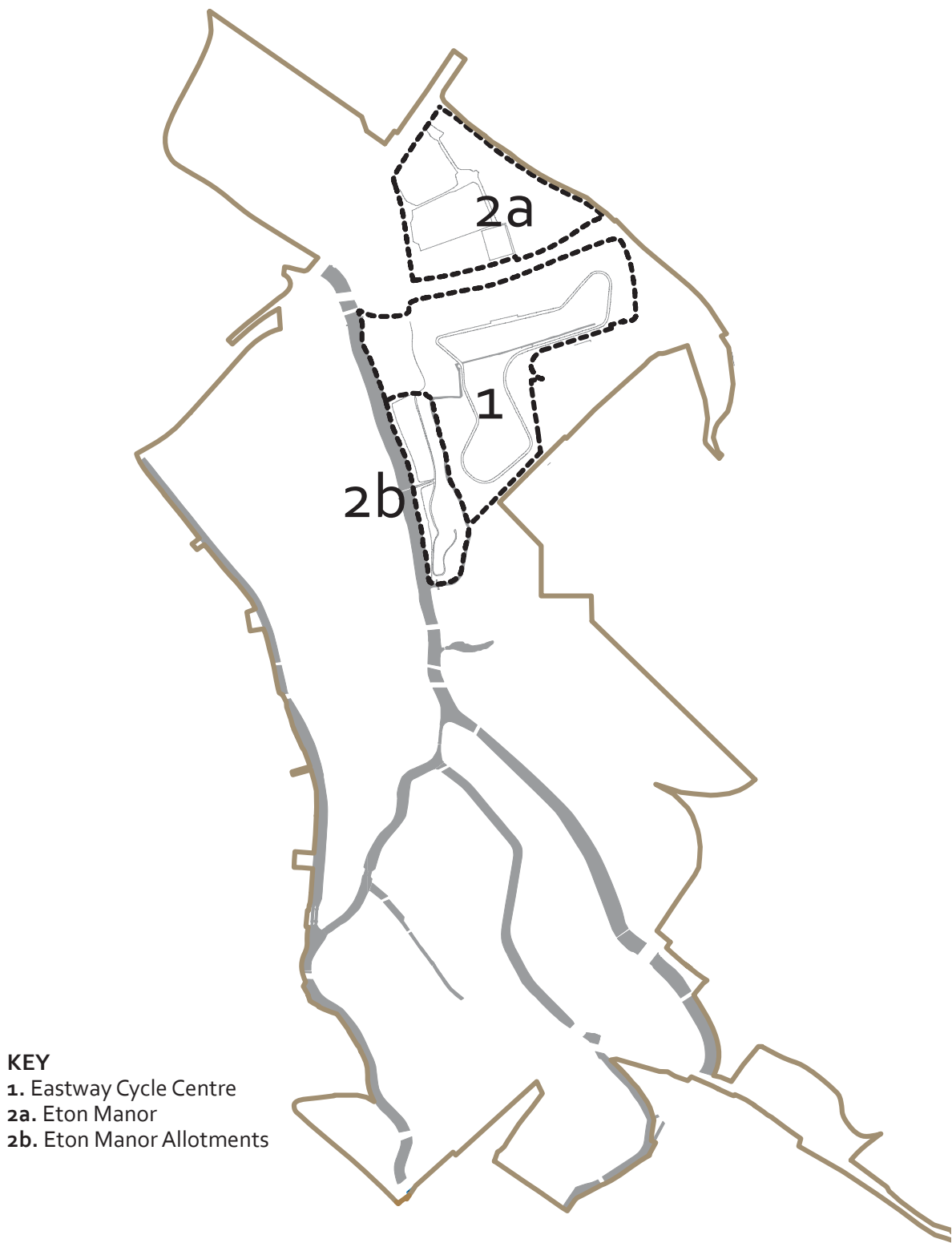
The broad aims of this paper are to represent the site prior to its enclosure within the blue fence and some of the effects of processes by which it was secured under a single ownership by the London Development Agency (LDA). Numerous accounts and assessments of the site and its locale prior to the commencement of demolition represent it in generic terms as economically, socially and environmentally depressed, reflective of decades of underinvestment, as 'one of the most deprived in the UK and Europe' (LDA, 2009). The Lower Lea Valley is said to suffer 'from high unemployment and low skills', to have 'one of the worst public health records in the country' (Ryan-Collins & Sander-Jackson, 2007, p. 20). Capita Symond's 2004 *Environmental Statement* for the LDA highlights the degradation and contamination of the site's landscape by waste and chemical industries. Such accounts may be seen to underpin the case for social, economic and environmental renewal that lies at the heart of the London 2012 vision.

There were 208 businesses operating on the site at the time that the London Development Agency (LDA) initiated a Compulsory Purchase of it in 2004 as well as a diverse range of cultural, recreational and productive uses. The LDA's *Compulsory Purchase Order Lands 2005* document lists 792 separate parcels of land under different ownerships. The cross section of uses and built forms on the site were reflective of a series of historical and incremental transformations of the site through processes such as industrialisation, philanthropy, destruction through war and post-industrialisation. These transformations suggest complexities of place not captured in the more general accounts and

assessments of the site geared towards its redevelopment. Focussing on three thematic categories - use, legitimacy and continuity - in the first part of this paper I endeavour to represent aspects of the site in more specific social and spatial terms. Between 2002 and 2006, the LDA undertook consultation processes with users of the site in order to negotiate terms for purchasing their land and relocating them. In the second part of the paper I discuss the Compulsory Purchase and relocation processes in relation to the experiences of two user groups - the Eton Manor Allotments and the Eastway Cycle Centre (Map. 1). My aim is to consider less the grounds for relocation from strategic urban renewal perspectives than the significance of relocation to new sites for these user groups.

Speaking to the broad aims for this collection of working papers, this paper documents research carried out employing combinations of different methods of spatial exploration and analysis. A broad methodological aim of this research is to integrate spatial research and representation with more conventional forms of sociological research such as interviews and text-based analysis. Making maps is seen as an exploratory process, and thus as a form of 'visual sociology', in the terms in which Becker defines it, as 'integral to the sociological investigation and therefore to a reader's sociological understanding' (Becker, 2007, p. 199).

I draw, amongst others, on Lefebvre's advocacy that 'the analysis of urban phenomena [...] requires the use of all the methodological tools: form, function, structure, levels, dimensions, text, context, field and whole, writing and reading, system, signified and signifier, language and metalanguage, institutions, etc.' (Lefebvre et al, 1996, p. 111). In the early stages of research for the PhD to which this paper relates - in the months before the blue fence was erected - site records were compiled based on a series of systematic walks. The use of conventions for making maps of the site has formed an important tool for representing material findings and observations derived from these walks. Becker argues 'making' visual materials involves selecting particular 'raw materials' and then transforming them into new media through which they come to 'take the form of an argument' (Becker, 2007, p. 27). Whilst each of the maps included in this paper is based on 'raw' Ordnance Survey data, this is effectively transformed so as to emphasise qualities of the site that relate to the categories set out above. An important aim in producing maps of the Olympic site has been to both 'describe' and 'explain' (Tufte, 1997, p. 29) its complexity - use by use, space by space, relocation by relocation. Some of the maps form snapshots or freezes of specific moments in the passage of time. However, I also use techniques such as the juxtaposition of historic figure ground plans to convey information about processes of change.



**Map 1.:** Location plan showing Eton Manor Allotments and the Eastway Cycle Centre.

## Part I: The pre-Olympic Site

### 1. Use

In his book *Writings on Cities*, Lefebvre discusses the 'specificity of the city' in terms of confluences or 'ensembles' of what he calls 'near and far orders' and of social reality with 'practico-material reality' (Lefebvre et al, 1996, p. 103). My research begins with investigations of the 'near order' of individuals, groups and spaces with the aim of understanding how urban 'ensembles' are formed at this level. Evaluating the uses of the site just before the construction of the blue fence has involved linking lists of named users from sources such as the LDA's *Olympic and Legacy Compulsory Purchase Order 2005* document with topographical data from the Ordnance Survey to produce maps that describe their spatial relationships (maps. 2, 3).

The two maps produced to represent the occupation of the site in 2007 reveal that the site supported a diversity of highly specific uses. These maps serve to add nuance to official representations of the site in terms of the twenty four standard land-use planning types endorsed by the Communities and Local Government Department. The two hundred and eight businesses ranged between scaffolding pole suppliers, a smoked salmon producer, newspaper printers, waste recyclers, Chinese cash and carry food suppliers, halal butcheries and a wig manufacturer. Although uses such as waste processing occupied large sites, most of the business uses on the site operated at a small scale in terms of their areas and employment bases, over fifty per cent employing fewer than ten people (LDA, 2004). Residential use formed a small proportion of the total area of the site, but encompassed nonetheless a variety of types, from Traveller pitches to single person cooperative dwellings to a gated private residence. Open space uses included allotments, a market and private club grounds for cycling and athletics.

There was no consistent relationship between open space and public use or between buildings and private use. Private yards used for hoarding scrap metal or parking cars occupied a prominent proportion of the open landscape, whereas some buildings were used for congregational, if not strictly public, uses such as churches. Genuinely 'public' use open space was limited to the designated Metropolitan Open Land sites of Arena Fields and East Marsh and to the Greenway footpath over the Northern Outfall Sewer. Uses of these varied across space and time, encompassing a wide range of formal, informal and illicit activities. Some spaces could be more easily characterised by disuse than by use - such as derelict railway sidings. Others still represented use and disuse simultaneously, such as a dog racing track turned into an informal, monthly market.

Not only were uses highly diverse but their distribution across the site was disordered if not shambolic. Although it might be said that the site was predominantly industrial in terms of use, the diversity of business uses and their distribution suggested a distinct lack of zoning (Boyer, 1997, p. 164), of contradictory or casual planning. Churches congregated next to bed makers, news printers next to Barnardo's charity offices. The sense of the unplanned is reinforced when one considers relationships between types of usage and buildings. Some buildings were purpose built, such as the Hanson premix concrete plant. Others were adapted from former industrial uses to form new bases, such as Kingsway International Christian Centre. Others were new, such as the pressed metal sheds that accommodated Fedex. Some run-down and poorly repaired buildings became yards, their interiors supplanted by containers or caravan offices. A number of strategic planning documents produced in recent years by the Greater London Authority, relating to the Lower Lea Valley, highlight its capacity for increased economic utility. This capacity is seen to reside in the very unplanned and dispersed nature of the topography of the pre-Olympic site and its surrounds. A tendency in these documents is thus to form linkages between economic prosperity and urban density and order (GLA, 2003, 2004, 2007).

The two maps speak only in certain terms of the ways in which uses blurred or users interrelated with each other. Social spaces such as churches, allotments and cycle clubs, though existing in close proximity, accorded with many of the characteristics of what Sennett describes as 'intimate communities' (Sennett, 2002, pp. 259-268) with few overlaps. This is reinforced by Map 4 which shows boundary conditions. However, field notes from walks in 2007 and research on the supply and distribution networks of businesses suggest a range of forms of connection to the broader city of London and its hinterland. Many user groups - allotments, churches, clubs - that were apparently isolated on the site, tapped in to services in the broader area and belonged to communities within London and/or beyond. The routes taken by Kingsway International Christian Centre 'combi vans', for example, articulated connections with African communities living around the site. The allotment holders, though apparently distanced from neighbouring uses on the site and forming a tightly prescribed interest group with a special connection to the land, also each belonged to broader work and neighbourhood communities and places. For businesses, the combination of an un-regenerated site implying low property overheads combined with its proximity to central London was often important. In a number of instances, spatial arrangements of proximate uses within the site created small places of exchange. The venue Club Dezire, for example, was situated to catch the passing trade of night time bus drivers concluding shifts in lonely hours. In general, I would argue that a number of elements of the pre-Olympic site reflected a curious inversion of the way in which Sennett describes positive 'urban disorder' (Sennett, 1973): a complex topography formed from different kinds of isolation.

Whilst Jane Jacobs generally associates diversity of use with intense and continuous public life, this link was not explicitly evident on the pre-Olympic site. Uses included many of the kind that Jacobs refers to as 'destructive' for urban life, such as transport depots and scrap yards. The fringes of the site were 'border vacuums' (Jacobs, 1972, p. 265) formed at river, rail and road boundaries. Whilst different 'rhythms' (Lefebvre et al., 1996, p. 229) of activity intersected across the site, it often appeared vacant, suggesting little communal or public activity. In spite of the diversity of places of work, relatively few of these drew a steady flow of customers. Open spaces - streets, paths and river ways - were often far less populated by pedestrians than by articles of fly-tipped waste. Residential accommodation was insufficient in quantity and kind to form a base of secondary use, routine or 'alternating rhythm' (Lefebvre et al., 1996, p. 235) beyond work. Though the market attracted enough cars to cause congestion in all the roads around, it was convened only once a month, the rest of the time lying desolate. Community groups such as the churches congregated sporadically, producing moments of intensity punctuating episodes of quiet.

## 2. Legitimacy

Different users of the Olympic site had different forms of affiliation to it in terms of land ownership. Most of the land occupied by businesses on the site, including bus depots and waste management sites, was privately owned, forming a complex mosaic of freehold plots. Though many private freeholders were also the primary occupants of their sites, many others were absent, their sites tenanted and sub-tenanted, often multiply, to a variety of small businesses (LDA, 2005). Glass manufacturers 'Nichols and Clarke' were the only business to have owned and occupied the same site for over a century. URS Consultancy's *Lower Lea Valley Business Survey* states that as many as fifty percent of businesses on the site had only been there since 1995 (URS, 2003). Roadways, railways and public spaces, as elsewhere in London, were owned by a series of public bodies including Thames Water, the British Waterways Board and the London Boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest. The Lea Valley Regional Park Authority owned land at the north of the site used for recreational purposes by Eton Manor and the Eastway Cycle Club as described below. By 2005, a range of other public bodies were acquiring parcels of land in the context of emerging regeneration strategies for the Lea Valley, Stratford City and the Thames Gateway, including Network Rail, Transport for London and the London Development Agency.

Overlaying this patchwork of ownerships were further layers of 'occupation' of a more or less formalised nature. These included legitimate tenancies held by unregistered businesses (Ryan-Collins and Sander-Jackson, 2007, pp. 14-15) and residential occupations of local authority land by families of Travellers who had acquired rights from them to remain. Many spaces, though formally owned, such as the edges of river ways, spaces under the elevated A12 highway, a partially disassembled dog racing track and the Greenway footpath, could be said to fall under a category that Franck terms 'loose' space (Franck, 2006, p. 26).

'Loose' space is defined by Franck as that which is 'tactically' appropriated rather than formally acquired, and characterised by 'unexpected uses not set by a predetermined program' (Franck, 2006, p. 27). Lefebvre uses the term appropriation to refer to a process 'clearly distinct from... property' (Lefebvre et al., 1996, p. 174), through which ownership arises, broadly speaking, in the context of 'participation' in the production and reproduction of the 'oeuvre' of the city. The allotments can be said to be loose in the sense that habits of sharing food and resources established informally and over time between legitimate, if culturally diverse, plot holders. The Hackney Wick Market can be said to be 'loose' in a different sense - in that traders established their footholds in the context of an absence of formally programmed uses or controls of the former dog racing track. Stephen Gill's photographic portrait, 'Hackney Wick' conveys the chaotic and dilapidated nature of this space - a tumble of merchandise and waste, fleetingly assembled (Gill, 2005).

For a former manager of the Eastway Cycle track, the 'looseness' of the site, particularly of the market, fostered far fewer positive grass roots forms of social exchange and appropriation than criminal and/or opportunistic activities of various kinds - fly-tipping, the vandalism of private property and public space, sales in stolen goods, formations of seasonal Gypsy encampments. He recalls that Hackney Wick Market 'was a boot sale market, so it was anyone, so of course it was an outlet for the black market... I mean they closed it down eventually 'cause they were selling arms... If our bikes were stolen, we'd try and go round there and buy them back' (Eastway, interview, 17. 08.2008). He describes how this 'black market' inscribed itself in a pattern of circuitous, secret paths cut across private lands and against the grain of legitimated routes conveying public 'rights of way' on the site. For the Eastway Cycle Centre, it became necessary, in this context, to become increasingly defensive and exclusive, to fortify their turf against 'anyone' through high enclosures and gates. Franck argues that 'loose spaces', when characterised by activities that 'have wider political and ideological contexts and consequences', can form effective catalysts to renewal. However, the example of Hackney Wick Market suggests that when 'looseness' involves elements which exist beyond codes of mutual 'respect' (Sennett, 2003, pp. 53-64), their effect can be the reverse, to corrode social relations.

### 3. Continuity

The aim of this section is to view the site in terms of a series of continuities on the one hand - that relate to the user groups discussed in the next section - and gradual transformations 'through everyday negotiations of meaning' on the other (Stavrides, 2006, p. 185).

#### Cultivation and common land

Until the eighteenth century, Leyton, Hackney, Bow and Stratford were rural villages. The fields and marshes of the Lea formed common meadows for horses and cattle to graze in the valley between them, as shown on Starling's *Plan of the Parish of St. John at Hackney* (1831). The designation of East Marsh, to the north of the Olympic site, as common land is said to date from the reign of Saxon king Alfred the Great in the ninth century AD, though practices relating to the use of this land may long precede this. Lammas is a feast day marking the mid-summer in the Celtic calendar and the day on which cattle could be turned out onto the fields to graze.



As villages began to be absorbed within the expanding nineteenth century industrial metropolis and old farms and manors were sold for urban development, the role and significance of Lammas Land transformed. Between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the urban edges of Leyton, Stratford and Hackney drew steadily closer together, fusing across the Bow to Stratford Road (Maps. 7,8). From the 1840s, railway and utility companies began purchasing land under acts of 'Inclosure' for train lines and waterworks that sliced across the site - Waterworks Canal, Bazalgette's Northern Outfall Sewer, the Great Eastern Line for example - and gradually swelled into huge sidings. Open space was incrementally enclosed for industrial purposes, in the form of privately-owned factories and warehouses. Remaining space was also increasingly used for allotments and market gardens as opposed to grazing livestock, providing food for increased neighbouring populations and forming part of The Home Front efforts during the First World War. The area caught in the scissor of roads across the north of the site was acquired by philanthropist and Barings Bank director Arthur Villiers in 1907 for the Eton Manor, described below. Allotments placed under pressure from post-war industrialisation were protected under the so-called Eton Settlement, becoming the 'Eton Manor Allotments'. By 2007, these allotments were the only ones left within the cartilage of the Olympic site, reflecting the incremental distancing of local communities from rural land, collective ownership of land and of cultivation.

A number of authors, including E.P. Thompson (1963) and Joseph Rykwert (2004) have argued that the significance of the English 'Inclosure Acts' passed by Parliament from 1714 lay not only in the physical enclosures they represented but in the way in which land was privatised. These processes in many parts of England 'deprived the rural poor not only of the fish and game on which they had relied... but also of cooking fuel' (Rykwert, 2004, p. 24). Common land remaining at the turn of the twentieth century such as White Hart Field and East Marsh was incorporated by the local District Councils in 1904. They were in turn incorporated into the Lea Valley Regional Park in 1971 as part of a network of 'metropolitan open lands'. Whilst thus no longer truly common land, the public right to access remains within the metropolitan open land definition.

A mile to the north east of the site is Marsh Fields, which continues to be referred to as Lammas Land and is outside the remit of the Lea Valley Regional Park. A mixture of elements - including seasonal Travellers, an old signal box turned Gypsy home, an isolated Victorian terrace turned into an athletics club, a field of piebald ponies, wild rabbits, condoms, organised sports, a raised plateau over Second World War bomb rubble called 'Table Mountain', rows of mature plane trees, paths covered in broken glass and a fetid stream - characterise it. The western edge of this space began to be eroded in the late 1990s by the construction of a new road and a Eurostar train depot. From 2004, this was exacerbated by development plans to relocate businesses and allotments from the Olympic site here, described below.

Iain Sinclair recalls coming across what he terms the last of the 'marsh centaurs' in the weeks preceding the construction of the blue fence (Sinclair, 2008). A Leyton Lammas Lands Defence Committee<sup>1</sup> (LLLDC) member recalls old Leyton 'commoners' returning from the marsh with pockets stuffed with rabbits and blackberries. Such practices represent threads of continuity – all-be-the ambiguous - in the context of wide ranging transformations of the site over three centuries. It is arguably less the specific or historic practices of beating bounds or grazing cattle that are important for a contemporary reappraisal of common land, but the openness and possibility offered by genuinely public space for the development and layering of multiple informal and social uses and their spatial artefacts over time. Such possibility - in terms of practice and of culture - is commonly recognised as being absent in contemporary, controlled and/or privatised public spaces.



### Sporting legacies of the past

Spectator and team sports, seen as an important constituent of the Olympic Legacy have a tradition on the site going back to the 1860s when the Eton Mission was created. Hackney Wick in 1860 was 'about the size of the Eton Playing Fields' (Eagar, 1953, p. 205). Eagar explains the origins of sports facilities as part of a social reforming drive to create 'better men and better methods' in the context of industrialising and white working-class East London. A Victorian spirit of Christian Socialism led to establishment of a mission church in Hackney Wick, a Sunday school and a club for school-age boys. Curates at the mission developed a range of sports within the club, including swimming, athletics and rowing.

Eton Manor emerged in 1907 as an offshoot of the Eton Mission, its founders seeking to develop sporting discipline and skill amongst school-leaving aged boys with the premise of supporting their passage into work. Its primary founder, Arthur Villiers, began this project by developing club buildings



**Figure 2 (top).** Aerial view of the Eton Manor, 1920; **Figure 3 (Bottom left).** Hackney and East Marshes, 1920; **Figure 4 (Bottom right).** Eton Manor chess club; all courtesy of The Bishopsgate Institute.

at Risenholme Gate, at the edge of Victoria Park, used for social gatherings and indoor sporting activities such as table tennis and chess. Villiers' obituary describes how he then 'bought twenty acres of derelict water-filled ballast pits at Leyton and gradually developed and built a magnificent sports ground of some thirty acres, known to almost every Londoner as 'the wilderness' (1969). Given that the Eton Manor establishment's aim was to provide opportunities for young men in one of the poorest urban areas of London, this name, 'the wilderness,' is significant, suggesting that their rescue lies in a landscape opposite to that of industrialisation. An aerial photo shows orderly pitches landscaped at different levels and bordered by clean white pavilions - a space sequestered from the rubbish tips and industries at its borders. Its enclosing wall can be still seen flanking the dual carriageway of the A12 whilst the long secularised Eton Manor Athletics Club and Eton Mission Rowing Club continued in operation until 2007. The church hall of the Eton Mission Church, now the parish church of St. Mary's at Eton continues to provide space for a Karate Club, its members comprising a far more cosmopolitan cross-section of local children than those of the early mission. Many former Eton Manor members view the forthcoming Olympic venues as a vindication of Villiers' efforts, an effective continuity of the 'manor' after three decades in decline.

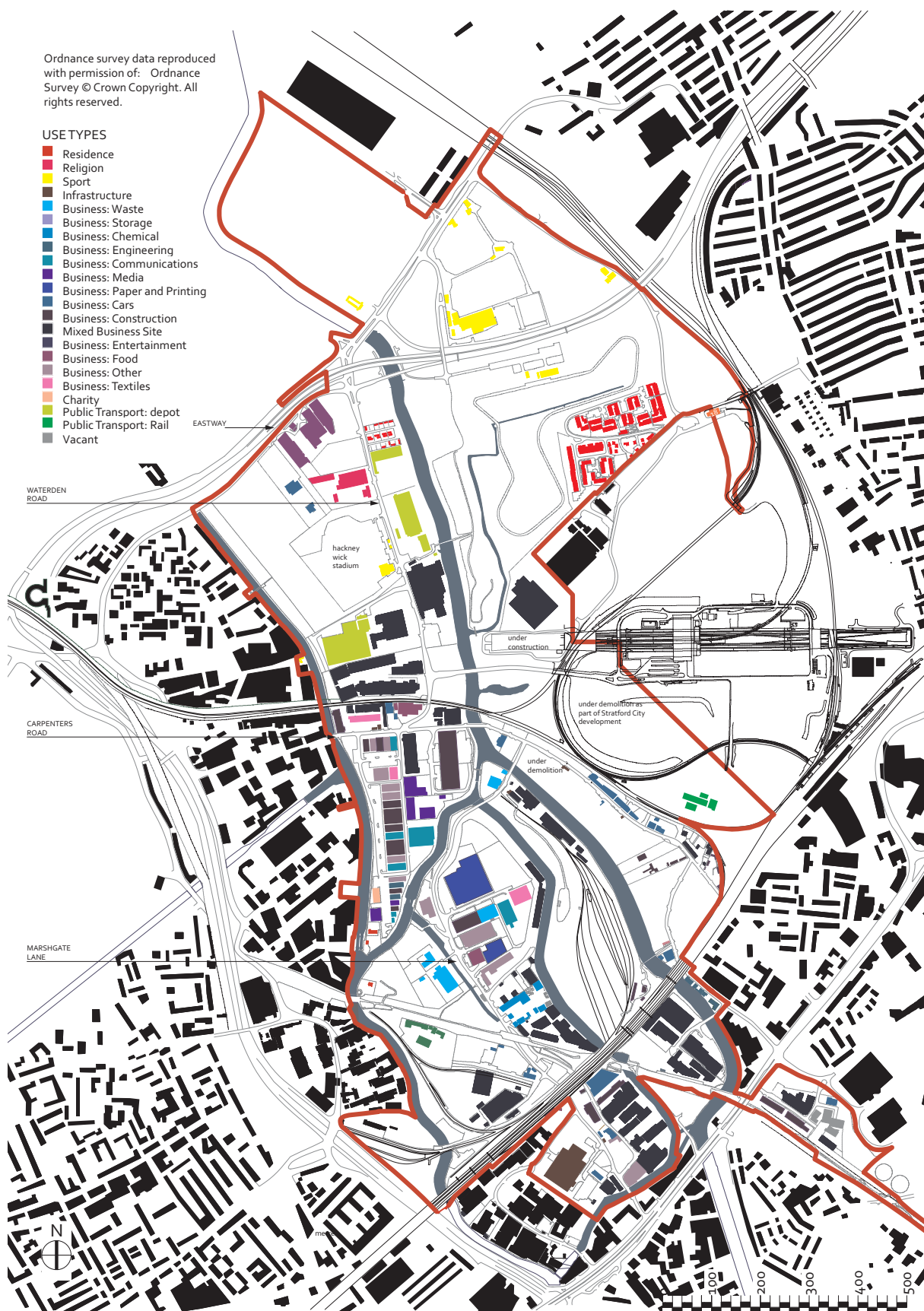
The transformation of the marshes at Hackney and Leyton into a landscape of maintained football pitches occurred rapidly at the turn of the twentieth century following their incorporation by the district councils. The Eastway Cycle Circuit was founded through the Lea Valley Regional Park in the 1970s, on ground formerly used for land-fill, at the edge of the newly constructed Eastway road or A12. Although representatives from its former management allege that they struggled over the last fifteen years to maintain an orderly physical profile for the club in the context of the broader post-industrial site, the Eastway Cycle Circuit formed a site for national cycling championships during the 1980s and 1990s.



Figure 5. Eton Manor Allotments, 1920, courtesy of the Bishopsgate Institute.

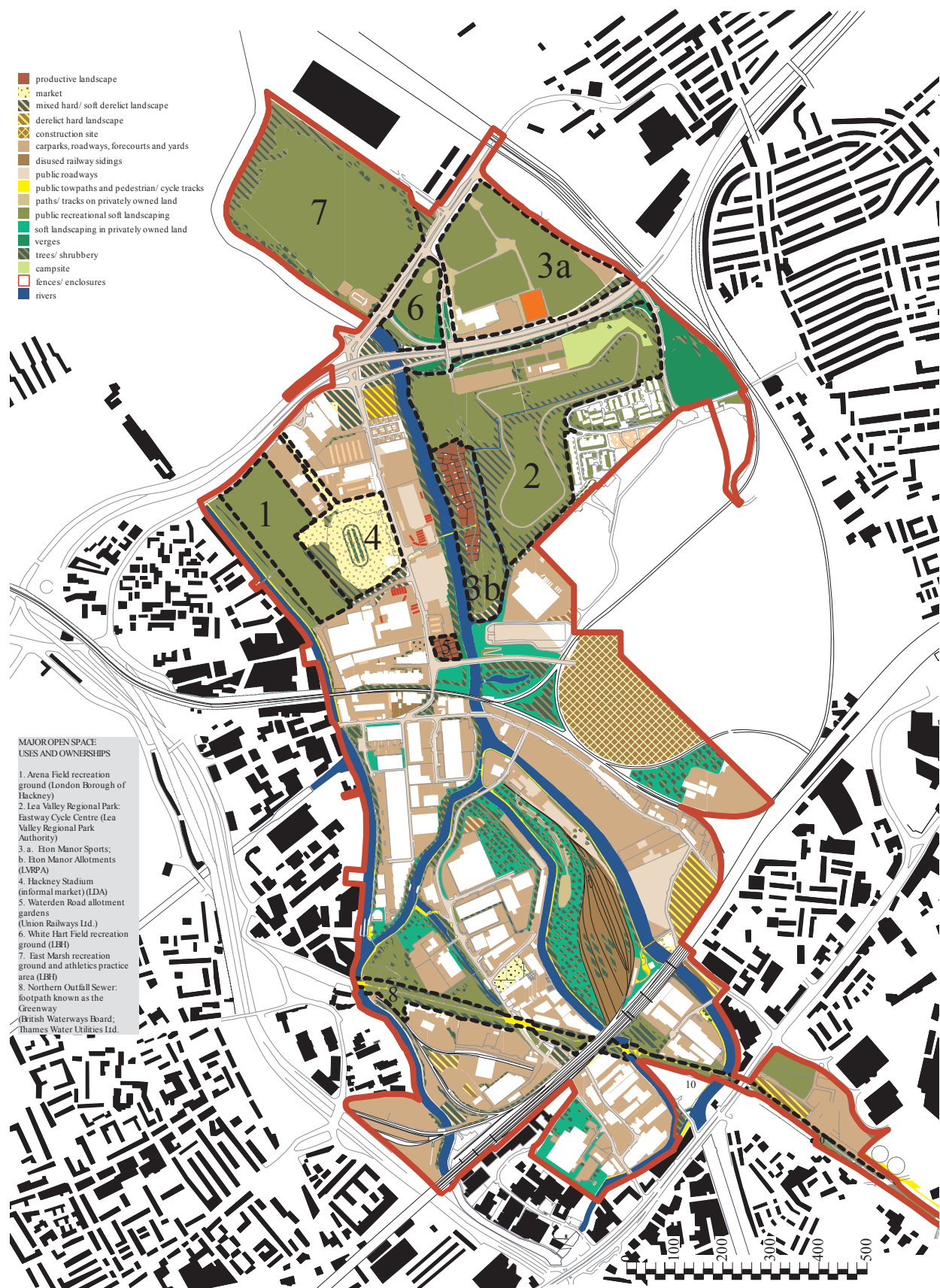


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Map 2.: Diagram showing occupation of buildings on the Olympic site in 2007.

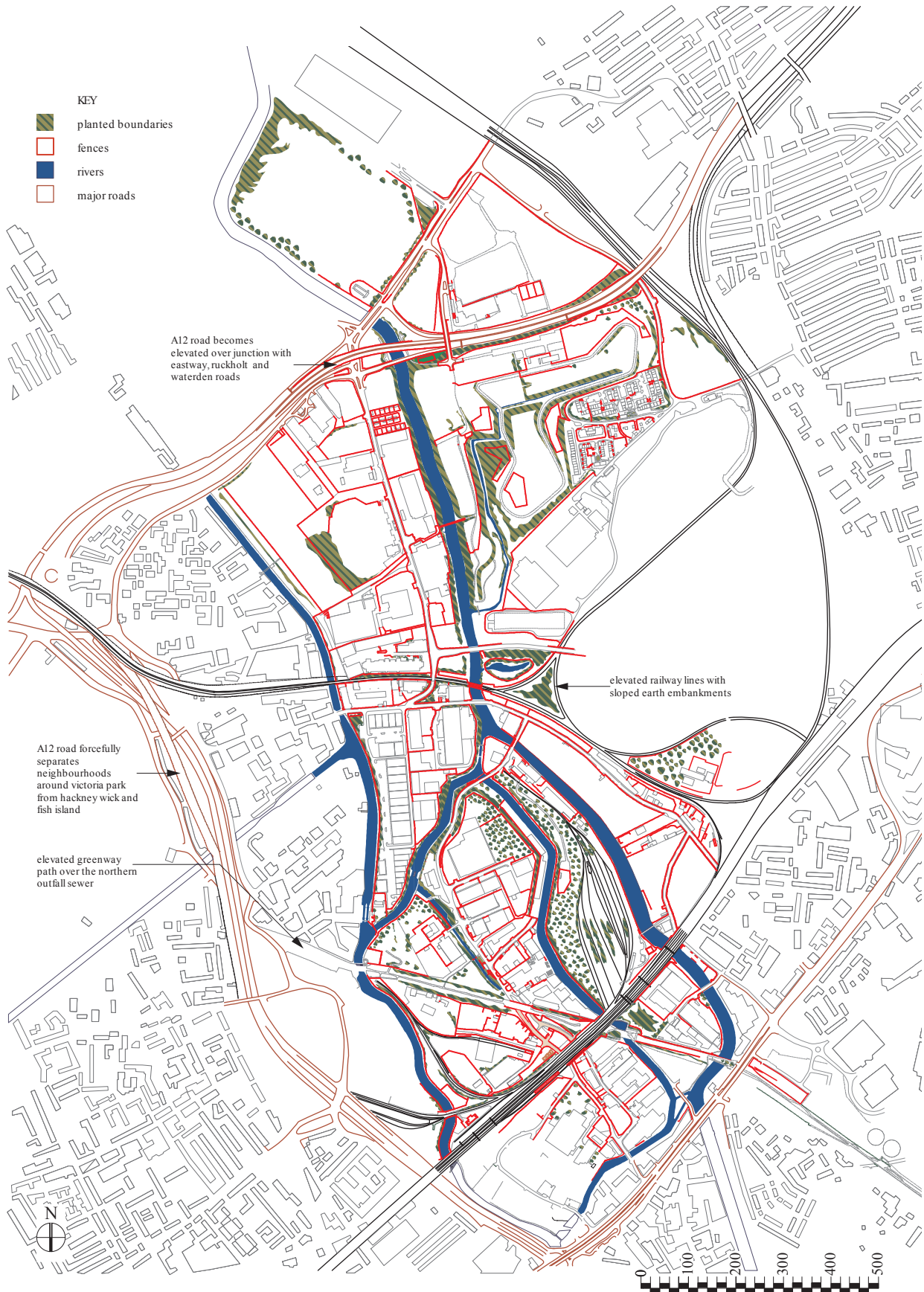
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Map 3.: Diagram showing types of open spaces on the Olympic site in 2007.



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**Map 4.:** Diagram describing borders and boundaries on the site in 2007.

## Part II: The relocations

The London Development Agency (LDA) was endowed with statutory power to compulsorily assemble the land designated for the development of the Olympics under the Regional Development Agencies Act (1998). The assembly of land forming the Olympic site involved two separate Compulsory Purchase Orders. The first was a Power lines *Compulsory Purchase Order*, confirmed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2005, the second the *Lower Lea Valley, Olympic Legacy Compulsory Purchase Order 2005*, confirmed on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006, relating to all other property interests and. An LDA representative explained in interview how, through the CPO process, the organisation sought to avoid falling under the kinds of criticism levelled at the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) over the redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs in the 1980s. This hinged on the lack of opportunity offered to local people to benefit from enormous financial profits accruing from the development of the former docks and the lack of community involvement in decision-making about the nature of regeneration (see Hall, 1998). Although the development of the site for the Olympic Games was non-negotiable once the London bid for 2012 had been won, the LDA sought to avoid having to formally draw down their compulsory purchase powers by negotiating settlements for relocation with each landowner and/or significant occupant. The LDA's 2004 *Relocation Strategy* outlines the financial compensation available to these landowners, involving the offer of 'a market value for their sites' (p. 6), and the advisory support available in terms of selecting, purchasing and obtaining planning permissions to develop potential relocation sites. A second LDA representative described in interview how negotiations, in a number of instances, involved attempts to persuade small, unregistered business owners and occupants to formalise their enterprises in order to qualify for compensation (LDA, interview, 23.11.08).

Maps 5 and 6 reveal the trajectories of each of the relocations from the site. The numbers at the end of each line correspond to the numbers in brackets in Map 2. A representative from Design for London suggested in interview that, 'You want to somehow try and redistribute stuff so everything's in its right place and free up space in the Lea Valley by allowing some of the non-strategic uses to move out' (GLA, interview, 12.12.2007). In these terms, an important aim of the relocations was to contribute to a strategic 'rationalisation' of the uses represented on the site, predominantly within East London. Map 6 reveals that though some businesses were relocated individually, many were relocated in groups to newly designated or consolidated industrial 'zones' within the Thames Gateway in line with the then Mayor of London Ken Livingstone's *Supplementary Planning Guidance: Industrial Capacity* (2004). Residential users including the Travellers, meanwhile, were generally relocated to residential areas at the fringes of the site are enabled can tap in to its existing social and physical infrastructure. It is interesting to note that, even with the support of the LDA, local and regional land-use strategies have not been able to solve the problem of where to relocate the Kingsway International Christian Centre. The clergy and congregation are still, at the time of writing, without a permanent home, temporarily squeezed into in much smaller building in Walthamstow and struggling to attain planning permission for the construction of a new church on a former industrial site in Beam Reach, London Borough of Havering. The location of this site is several miles from the Olympic site and hence a considerable further travel distance for many members of the congregation, creating long- term implications for the community and constituency of the church.

Whilst most of the relocations from the Olympic site are intended to be permanent, a certain number of them have the capacity to be temporary. In other words, it is intended that, following the Games in 2012, some former occupants and uses pertaining to the site will be able to return and, in different ways, form part of 'Olympic Legacy'. Different mechanisms within the process of developing the 'Legacy Masterplan Framework' are in place for securing the involvement of specific user groups and/or of preserving specific uses across the interval of seven years needed for the construction of the Olympic

Park and the hosting of the Games on the site. Former occupants subject to temporary relocation include the Manor Gardening Society and Eastway Cycle Club - discussed specifically below - the users and uses of open spaces at Hackney Marshes, East Marsh and Arena Fields and, last but not least, a considerable range of native wildlife. Users such as the Manor Gardening Society and Eastway Cycle Club are defined as 'stakeholders' and as 'special interest groups' with respect to the Legacy masterplan, and both occupy important positions in terms of the LDA's 'consultation and engagement' programme concerning the design of the Legacy park. The Hansard records of Parliamentary proceedings on 25th February 2008 report that the 'Olympic Delivery Authority continues its comprehensive ecology programme to ensure the preservation and protection of wildlife in the Olympic Park'. Nesting boxes have been created for bats and birds in nature reserves close to the site. Fish – including eels, tench and bream - were collected from the rivers passing through the site and released further north. Insects, including protected bee species, invertebrates including newts and toads have been 'translocated' to nearby sanctuaries (Hansard, 25 Feb 2008), from where, it is said, their descendents will eventually be returned.

Whilst LDA's *Relocation Strategy* sets out the 'key advantages of the [site] in terms of attracting occupiers [including] the good road links, proximity to customers and affordable premises' (LDA, 2004, p. 9), it does not consider any ways in which, in more qualitative terms, certain users formed 'attachments' to the site as a place (Minton, 2006; Hayden, 1995) or the potential significance of this. The strategy assumes that financial reimbursements based on specific measurements such as the cost of land and of relocation can, in all cases, compensate for the loss, temporary or otherwise, of familiar places in a local landscape. At a visit to the site in December 2007, an ODA representative explained that the opportunity underlying the physical devastation of the site lies in lasting decontamination of the land - including ridding it of heavy metals and destructive plant life such as the Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum Mantegazzianum*) and the Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia Japonica*). This explanation suggests that a fundamental aim of the regeneration of the site lies in creating conditions for restoring a landscape long subject to abuses of industry and the effects of dereliction. It also raises questions of what will be lastingly lost in the process and about the value of known, existing places relative to visions for their future. Through interviews carried with former user groups, it has become evident that such questions formed the basis of their often heated negotiations over relocation.

### **The Eton Manor Allotments**

In 2004, in the early stages of the Compulsory Purchase process, the LDA initiated negotiations with the London Borough of Waltham Forest and relevant landowners to relocate Eton Manor Allotments to the Lammas Land at Marsh Fields. The Leyton Lammas Land Defence Committee campaigned through to the CPO Public Enquiry held in March 2006 against this. Whilst the Manor Gardening Society viewed their activities as a collective enterprise, the LLLDC viewed the proposed relocation as another form of 'Inclosure' or privatisation of land.

Interestingly, social ties between some Eton Manor Allotment holders were initially strengthened by the common aim of opposing the LDA's proposals during 2005 and 2006. Plot holders also developed ties of solidarity with other groups on the site such as the Clay's Lane Residents Association and the Eastway Cycle Centre. Owing to the energy and commitment of a number of plot holders, including Moro restaurateur Sam Clarke, the case of the Eton Manor Allotments drew support from a number of newspaper journalists and social commentators such as Iain Sinclair, becoming highly publicised. Much of Sinclair's commentary in the press revolved around what he saw as the arrogance of a public institution claiming to 'imagine it for [us]' what community and its places might be or how to make them.<sup>2</sup> The isolation of 'intimate communities' described above somewhat transformed in this context. Group leaders and supporters met - in each other's homes, at local pubs, on the allotments - to share



experiences. The representative from the allotments interviewed as part of this research suggested that mobilising media support was an important tool in securing the best possible outcome from the negotiation process with the LDA.

As the process wore on inexorably, certain members of these groups began to pull apart. An allotments' representative argued in interview that this was because they felt defeated by the process and were already 'so cowed by authority that they would just agree to anything' (Eton Manor Allotments, interview, 01.09.2008). However, those that managed to marshal a media campaign became strengthened, participating in active demonstrations of solidarity on the site in the run up to its closure in 2007 or pinning up posters and banners critiquing the Olympic Park proposals. The representative claimed that negative propaganda was often pulled down by 'the authorities' (the Boroughs and the ODA) reflecting the assertion of law and enforcement over public opinion.

For Eton Manor Allotments, it was not 'market value', but relationships, established over time with each other and with their land that was important. At the Public Enquiry held in 2006, allotment holders objected to the relocation site they were being offered on a number of grounds. Most significant of these objections rested in the likely breakup of the allotment community through relocation and the inadequacy for growing crops of the Marsh Fields site offered in compensation (LDA, 2006, pp. 315-316). Although the correct number of sixty seven plots were offered as a replacement for those lost, a series of factors - proximity to a busy road, appearance, a standard layout of sheds, a different soil - have conspired to sever ties between the community and the land as within the community itself. For the allotments' representative interviewed as part of this research, their relocation and subsequent demolition of their plots flew in the face of sustainability agendas regarding the provision of locally grown food in the city. Moreover, for this representative, they point to a fundamental failure in the LDA's conception of how to both nurture and create 'sustainable communities', for which time, routine, maturity and tradition - bound in meaningful ways with place - are of the essence. This outlook is reinforced by concerns raised by the authors of the New Economics Foundation's report *Fool's Gold*: 'Tessa Jowell said that disposal of publically acquired land after the Games "will aim to maximise land revenues."' This statement seems a long way from the Government's stated desire to create sustainable communities and long-standing regeneration in the area' (Ryan-Collins and Sander-Jackson, 2007, p. 20). For the allotments' representative, the social ties forged on the Eton Manor Allotments could not simply be replicated at a different site. The plots, made through a century of cultivation practices including preparing soil, rotating crops, tending to windbreaks of mature plum trees could, similarly, not be re-made overnight. The current failure of the relocated allotments suggests that whilst certain uses and properties can be detached and redeployed readily and strategically, others may not so immediately.



Figure 6. Eton Manor Allotments (Juliet Davis, 2008, 2007).

## The Eastway Cycle Centre

The LDA describe the Hog Hill facility both as a direct replacement of the Eastway Cycle Circuit and BMX Centre and as the first concrete step in terms of creating the Olympic Legacy. However, it is also envisaged that the Velodrome and associated outdoor cycle circuits planned for the post-2012 Olympic Park will enable the Eastway to have an on-site 'Legacy' as well. The Eastway Users Group (EUG) was formed in 2003 - at the time that regeneration proposals for the site were first announced by the LDA - by club affiliates. The leader of the group's children used to use the cycle circuit at the weekends. Whilst not opposed to regeneration proposals, the hosting of the Olympic Games on the site or the relocation of the club in principle The EUG mounted a prominent campaign and entered into a combative relationship with the LDA. In interview, an EUG representative suggested that, given the strength of the LDA, negotiation could only result in a satisfactory outcome for former users if they fought hard for what they wanted. As he confirmed,

*'It was a case of settling down and basically negotiating the best possible outcome [...] I just didn't lie down, I just didn't go away I was in their face full time and if they thought they'd won one argument I was just about to bring another one down on them and I really did have a pretty clear vision for, how to work against them and the stages [of it]'* (EUG, interview, 20.08.2008).

As the Eastway Cycle Circuit lay on land owned by the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), the group was initially offered an alternative site within the park, known as Rammey Marsh. This site was presented to the EUG as having a number of advantages. The LVRPA would be able to retain a cycling amenity within the park and its users would benefit from the investment the LVRPA could make towards their sport. The EUG were, however, dissatisfied with this site on the grounds that it was former industrial land known to be contaminated. Unlike Eton Manor Allotments, EUG didn't seek to fight for Eastway itself, recognising the futility of that, but for a favourable alternative. From their perspective, a good site was more important than which local or regional authority they fell under. Throughout 2005 and 2006, they campaigned to be offered a site they believed would suit their members better than Rammey Marsh. This is known as Hog Hill and is former agricultural land at the edges of Hainault Forest in the London Borough of Redbridge. The EUG were eventually successful in persuading the LDA to purchase this site and, with them, to submit a planning application for its development. This application was placed in November 2006 which, as EUG point out, was a full three years after they had initially formed and commenced their dealings with the LDA. It is interesting to note that the campaign was fought almost entirely to the advantage of users rather than staff at the centre, of whom all but one were made redundant in the transfer to the new facility, now under the management of Vision-Redbridge Culture and Leisure.

Whilst the centre at Hog Hill is now viewed as a permanent facility, relocation from the perspective of users continues to be viewed as temporary. In fact, the EUG representative stressed that whilst 'yeah, we've got Hog Hill but [I said to the LDA] "don't say you didn't put us through the mill to get it and it's a completely separate issue [from legacy]. It's provided us a relocation [but] all of your documentation says [that] you've got to have a relocation and a legacy strategy. So if you want to move the goalposts now, I want to take it back to [a] planning enquiry"'. For the EUG, unlike Eton Manor Allotments, it is arguably not the specific place of the pre-Olympic site that informed their insistence on having a stake in the Olympic Legacy, but desire to promote their sport in a specific London locale. In collaboration with representatives from British Cycling and Sport England, the EUG are now involved in Technical Consultations with the LDA and their Legacy Masterplan team on cycle circuit provision with the Olympic Legacy Park, beside the Velodrome. In interview, the EUG representative maintained that the emphasis of its ongoing campaign is on creating a 'world class' cycle track in the Inner East End, the need for which is underpinned by the British cycling team's successes in the Beijing Olympics in 2008 (EUG, interview, 20.08.2008).

## Conclusions

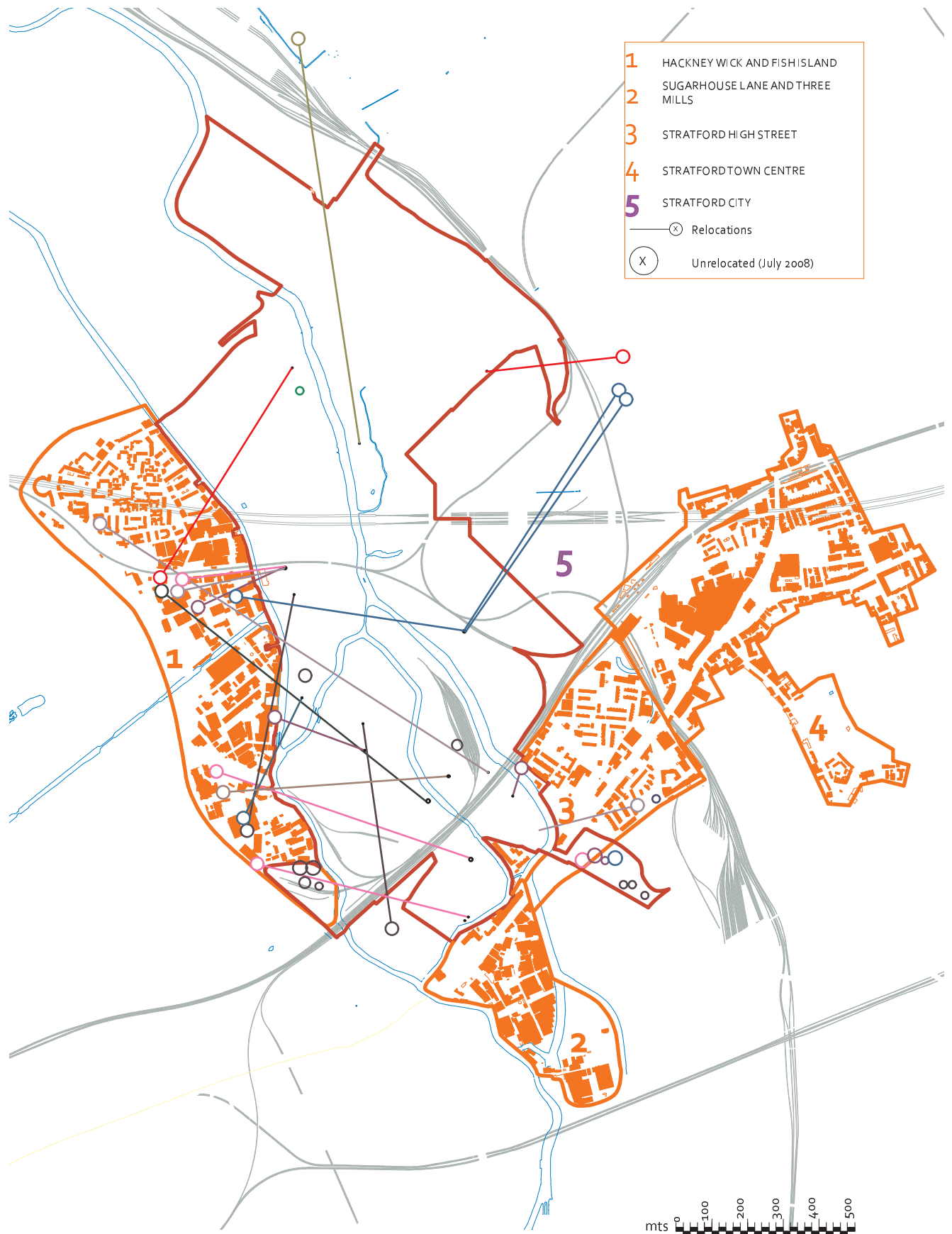
Sennett and Jacobs both argue that there is danger of romanticising historic places, particularly at the cusp of erasure, a process which serves to render them less complex. In the first part of this paper, I used a combination of drawings and text to provide a brief account of the pre-Olympic site in terms of three particular themes - use, legitimacy and continuity. Each of these categories formed an effective lens on the site's complexity, allowing me to explore different aspects of its history and focus on specific user groups. I argued that the natures of use and ownership as of history, were varied and often contradictory. For example, although certain uses appeared to congregate randomly and disjunctively, the distribution of others appeared to follow certain organisational logics resulting in localised places of exchange. Whereas some spaces were tightly prescribed, others were 'loose'. Different spaces, buildings and uses on the site as found in 2007, reflected a series of historic processes. Whilst processes, relating for example to changing patterns of land ownership, metropolitan growth or industrialisation, have somewhat different trajectories, intensities and durations, their products superimposed one another on the site, creating a distinctly layered and fragmentary urban landscape.

In the second part, I considered the significance of relocations forming part of the LDA's Compulsory Purchase process for particular former user groups on the site. The pattern of distribution of relocated users in Maps 5 and 6 serves to reveal the urban strategy behind it. The maps also speak of shifts from more tactical to more strategy-led forms of ownership and inhabitation. Whilst many of the footholds that users had on the pre-Olympic site might be said to have involved 'tactics' and opportunism, their relocation reflects their incorporation within a strategic urban framework based on visions of growth and change at the scale of the city. In this light, it is interesting to note that whereas some users - waste businesses, car businesses, print firms - could apparently be relocated relatively unproblematically, the relocation of the Eton Manor allotments had more instantly detrimental impacts on their community. For them, the process of relocation represents a break with routines and 'attachments' established over time and firmly *in place*. For the EUG, there is little question that both current relocation and projected legacy facilities represent improvements on what they had formerly. The management 'community' has changed, but the cycling community is now strengthened by having a better club building and cycling track. The greatest drawback of the process appears to have been the time it took for settlement to be reached, for the value of investing in cycling to be widely accepted and recognised.

An aim of my research is to use issues raised by studying the evolution of the site from the 1750s to 2007 to interrogate visions for change and growth in the emerging *Legacy Masterplan Framework* (LMF). Major questions I draw forth from the above analysis are as follows: Firstly, how might the emerging urban order, patterned by the Olympics, re-incorporate some of the more positive aspects of the diversity and complexity that the site once represented? Secondly, how could the ownership of the site transform over time to accommodate a spectrum of formal and informal, prescribed and loose occupancies and appropriations and how might these become effective urban catalysts? Thirdly, how can processes of consultation and engagement with community, former user and other stakeholders in the development of the *Legacy Masterplan Framework* begin to heal the gap between the site's past and an envisioned 'renewal' townscape of the future? Perhaps some of the battles waged over rights to common land or public space, over the ethics of urban farming, or the ways in which specific groups define their own communities in relation to place, could begin to translate into new spaces within the grain of the strategic framework or at least provide conceptual tools for its development.

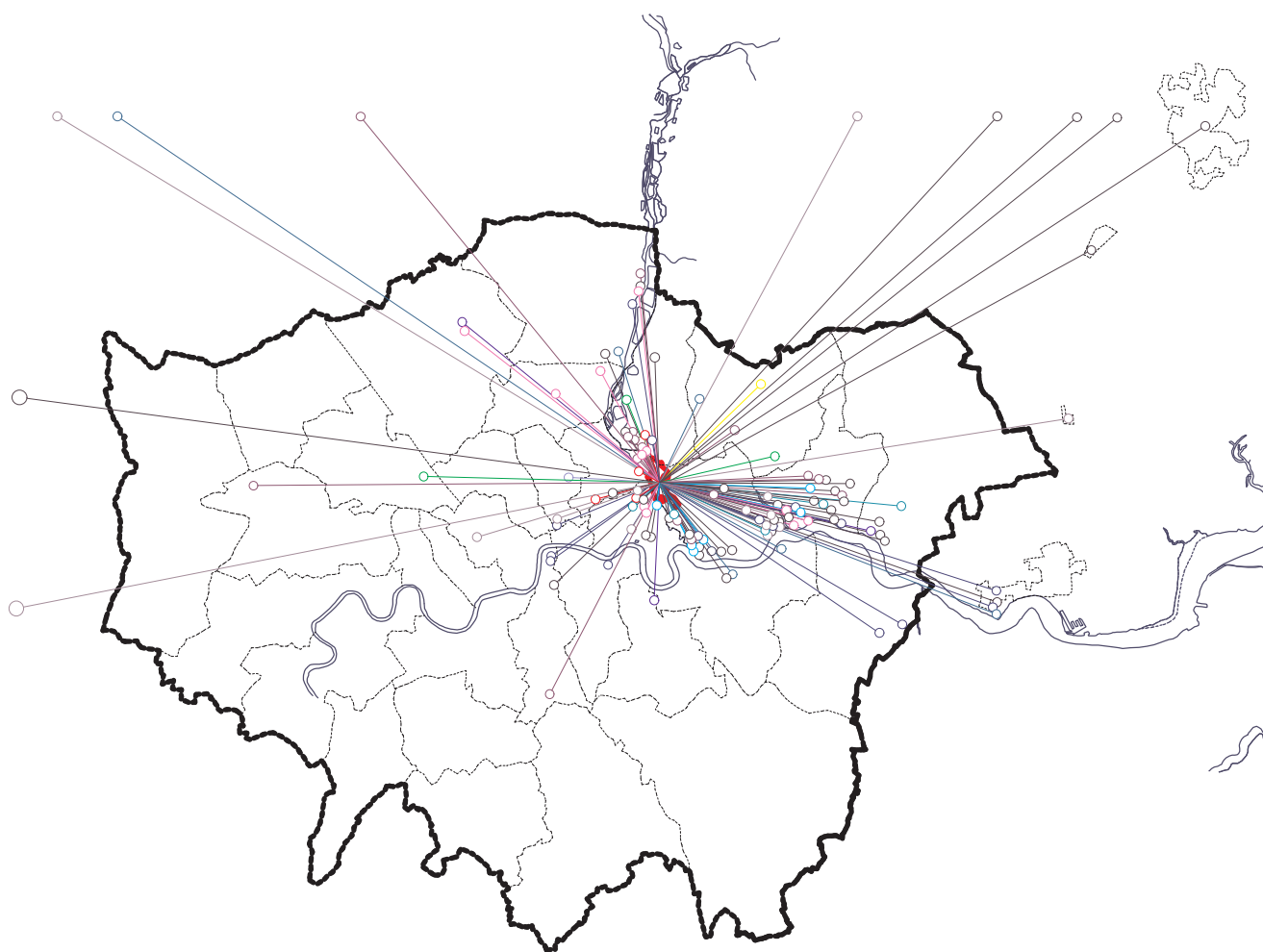
Without seeking to deny the obvious advantages of redevelopment, I am nevertheless drawn to Sinclair's assertion that 'the pains of the past need to be appeased - or they will come back' (Sinclair, 2008).

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**Map 5.:** Diagram showing relocations of user groups from the Olympic site to neighbouring 'Fringe Masterplan' sites in 2008.

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**Map 6.:** Diagram showing relocations of user groups from the Olympic Site in 2008.

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Map 7.: Figure ground plans of the site in 1870 and 1915.



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The LLLDC is an organisation which was first formed in 1892 to oppose the enclosure of land in the Lea Valley east of Leyton Village by the Great Eastern Railway and the East London Waterworks Company.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the 'Support for the Manor Garden Allotment Society' website. Last updated 22.11, 2006. Retrieved 31.01, 2009, from: [http://www.lifeisland.org/?page\\_id=2](http://www.lifeisland.org/?page_id=2).