

# ***Hackney Environment News***

Autumn 2003

## **LONDON OLYMPIC BID FOR 2012**

# **WHAT IMPACT ON EAST LONDON?**

A packed public meeting at the School Room, Round Chapel, was told that this was the first public meeting about the Bid for London Olympics.

The timetable is as follows:

- August 2003 EDAW chosen to produce Master Plan for Lower Lee Valley and assist Barbara Cassini's Company put the Bid together.
- January 2004. Submit technical questionnaire to IOC (International Olympics Committee).
- November 2004. Final Bid proposal submitted.
- July 2005 Decision about which City hosts the 2012 Olympics.

The Bidding Company puts the Bid together but the budget and main aspects of the Bid would be agreed with Government and London Mayor. Questions to the panel ranged widely.

### **The Stadium and other facilities**

Neal Coleman, London Mayor's advisor on the Olympics Bid, countered fears that Hackney would lose its open space to stadium and temporary facilities, reassuring the meeting that there was '**no question of permanent or temporary facilities on any part of Hackney Marshes**'. We are still looking for reassurances that Hackney's common land and open spaces are safe from development. The stadium might go on the old Hackney Stadium site, recently acquired by LDA (London Development Agency), and soon to be demolished. The position of the stadium, as well as Olympic Village and other facilities will be decided between August and December.

Meg Hillier, Lon Assembly Member, suggested that facilities built for the Games could be reused or pulled down afterwards to ensure they do not become white elephants.

The stadium at Sydney is rarely used- a stadium that is rarely used does nothing to regenerate an area. John McGill said the Lee Valley Park could run one or two training and competition sites as Regional resources after the Games. It is planned to convert the Dome to a 26,000seat arena that could be used to stage events such as gymnastics.

### **Environmental Concerns and Sustainable Games**

Jon Nott, Green Party GLA spokesperson for NE London argued for a low impact and sustainable Games. Since the meeting the London Mayor has issued some Environmental Principles. These argue the natural assets of the Lower Lee Valley. We need to know who has responsibility for issues relating to the environmental and sustainability. 'Green' filters will be incorporated into decision making- will this happen before or only after decisions have been made about the position of facilities?

Lee Valley Park heads a group considering environmental issues. Jon Nott pointed to the way in which in the name of 'Olympic Need', environmental issues are being over ridden in the run up to the 2004 Athens Games. We were promised that London would seek to emulate the 80% recycling rate at the Sydney Games. The current rate of recycling in Hackney is less than 10%!

## **What's in it for Hackney?**

We heard several times about the regeneration benefits of a London Olympics and of the Bid itself. Bringing together the ownership of land for an Olympics Bid means that the land is available for other purposes after 2005 (if the Bid fails) and after 2012 (if it is successful). However, as Rose Albrow, Chair of Hackney Wick SRB argued, the Master Plan for Waterden Road (which aimed to produce 3000 sustainable jobs) is now on hold until 2005 or 2012.

Guy Nicholson, Hackney's cabinet member for Regeneration and Culture argued that a Bid focuses attention of Government and others. It was argued that the bid complemented- rather than competed with - the proposed developments at Stratford. The first phase involves retail and housing and so could fit with an Olympics Bid.

Meg Hillier argued that the Bid would bring money into the area (eg housing in Stratford and West Ham, and jobs at Media Centre, Three Mills) and that it was important for the local community to benefit.

The Games would mean a lot of disruption and is already using up staff time and energy in Hackney and at GLA. It is suggested that community groups put together a list of what we could consider as benefits to present to GLA's Scrutiny panel, when it meets.

## **Transport**

Getting people to and from Olympics events will be a major issue. Guy Nicholson suggested that the most likely transport benefit an Olympics Bid would bring to Hackney was improvements to North London Line. Stratford is well served for public transport and there are new lines proposed to run south from Stratford. There seem to be no ideas about a new mass transit system which might benefit regeneration in Hackney Wick and east side of the Borough,.

## **Meeting count...**

A count taken at the end of the meeting by the Chair, Chris Church of the Community Development Forum, suggested that while the majority of the audience were not against the Olympics, they still had to be convinced that the economic and environment problems were being dealt with.

## **Consultation**

There are plans for consultation – the company appointed in August is Fluid. We were told that consultation will take a month or so to get underway. Some groups have started to put their ideas together in preparation for consultation.

The map produced here provides a basis for discussions about position of facilities and enables us to see where open space might be threatened by permanent or temporary facilities, car parks etc. Les Moore who sits on Hackney Strategic Partnership is working with Hackney Chamber of Commerce to bring together ideas about a sustainable legacy from a Bid and a possible Games. If you would like to be involved in these sessions, please contact Les Moore at [lesmoore@mailbox.co.uk](mailto:lesmoore@mailbox.co.uk).

HEF and Southern Lee Valley Forum are considering questions for GLA Scrutiny Panel in October or November. For a hard copy of the map or fuller notes from the meeting contact

HEF - a.woollett@btinternet.com  
and Adrian.c.stannard@btinternet.com for SLVF.

You can contact Meg Hillier, AM  
at meg.hillier@london.gov.uk, she expressed her willingness to pass on comments and queries. In Hackney the main contact is Cllr Guy Nicholson at guy.nicholson@hackney.gov.uk.

### **The Lower Lee Valley**

A wildlife corridor from River Thames to the countryside, providing contact with nature in the heart of the city. Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation- home to kingfisher (a species of national significance), native black poplar, dwarf elder and grey heron (species of London-wide significance). Of historical and heritage value, with some fine buildings.

Distinctive local character with a variety of habitats such as woodland, grassland, scrub, open water and mud banks and reed beds. Large habitats connected by small and sometimes fragmented habitats which provide valuable feeding stops. Many sites not accessible, but can be viewed from across river.

- Open space in Hackney is designated as Common Land and Metropolitan Open Land.
- Terms such as 'derelict' and 'brownfield' deny the wildlife, heritage and recreational value of areas for local people.

### **Old River Lea**

Tidal as far as Lea Bridge Road. Some 'natural' sections important for spawning fish, sustain a variety of plant and bird life such as herons and cormorants, kingfisher, coot, moorhen, and swan nest along River Lea in Hackney.

Winter visitors include teal and tufted duck. Mature trees along the river bank (sycamore, ash, willow, plane, black poplar, including native black poplar).

Steep banks along Hackney Wick section, with mud banks and reed Beds as approach Old Ford.

### **Millfields and Hackney Marshes**

Open spaces well used for recreation and sports, lots of football pitches marked out. Together with Middlesex Filter Beds, a local nature reserve, important wildlife areas, open water, river banks, trees and woodland, long grass as well as amenity grassland.

### **Wick Woodland**

mature trees and more recent planting, including native black poplars. London Mayor 'does not intend that there should be any building on' 'Hackney Marshes'. Waiting confirmation that East Marsh, Arena Field, and Wick Woodland are not under threat.

## **Lea Navigation (Hackney Cut)**

Built in 1768. Banks by Millfields are 'natural' but elsewhere are steep. Some rafts to encourage reeds and soften edges, and provide nesting areas for birds such as swans, coots and moorhens. Home to terns, Canada and greylag geese. Unusual dwarf elder. Open feel to Navigation as runs past Hackney Marshes, Daubeney Green, Wick Woodland and Arena Field. Towards Carpenters Road housing and industrial sites are close to the banks.

## **Arena Field**

Currently, work underway to make it less vulnerable to dumping and illegal occupation which have blighted it. At high level, grassed area for sports and recreation, trees, shrubs and hedge and longer grassland at lower level and along Lee Navigation tow path.

**Hackney Wick Station-** on north London Line.

**Hertford Union Canal** connects Lee Navigation to Regents Canal.

**Temple Mills.** Eastway Sports Centre and Cycle Circuit. Cycle circuit a one mile undulating track with great views over Lower Lee Valley.

**Bully Point Nature Reserve-** streams, pond, scrubland, mature trees. Grassland- long and amenity, and rare wet woodland habitat.

**Allotments** –some will be destroyed by building bridge to connect Waterden Road with Stratford Rail Lands Development.

**Waterden Road.** Industrial land, warehouses and old greyhound track bought by LDA to form part of Olympics Bid. Bid could help bring land together but also means delays in implementing Master Plan with emphasis on business use and employment rather than sports and leisure.

## **Potential legacy?**

Bring land in Waterden Road together in single ownership. Incentive to clean up dumped rubbish and make area less vulnerable to illegal occupation and dumping. Improve access eg new bridge from Wick Village to Arena Field, and across A12 at Bow Flyover.

Soften banks of river- more reed beds and nesting areas. Manage invasive species - Giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed.