

Partial Commentary on the Current Newham Local Plan

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Introduction

I'm now thoroughly discouraged, but I'm publishing this as a sample of what's going wrong, embodied carbon, developer influence, sterile, mono-value, growth oriented, architect/developer oriented 'place making' view of a new grey high rise borough.

By about page 55, I'd lost my temper.

Stratford and West Ham Page 20

quality of environment and **strategic retail growth (including a significant amount of higher order comparison goods), tourism and visitor economy including food, drink**, arts and cultural, quality leisure and evening and night-time activity,

So the #greenwash is v. strong in this bit, isn't it?

improvements to legibility and parity of design and public realm quality.

This doesn't actually mean anything much. Legibility for whom? (see James C. Scott on legibility, for example). For the state? For the proles? How?

Page 23

The delivery of the three Strategic Sites will be key in the future development of the area, alongside **continued cooperation with the LLDC** to ensure that development either side of the border supports integration and cohesion.

How does the borough 'cooperate' with a 800lb gorilla LLDC, self-serving organisation devoted to vandalism-for-profit, see attempts to build extra traffic bridges and current the Madison Gardens Sphere (project includes revolving door of personnel LLDC -> MSG too)? Last time the site changed hands price was £60m?

Royal Docks Page 25

activation opportunities identified at scattered locations within the wider area

this is totally meaningless isn't it?

The Royal Docks will continue to perform a **growing economic role** in the production, conference, tourism and leisure,

More traffic, more pollution. Let's give up on 'leisure' too and starting putting books back in the libraries. Less jetting around to 'conferences' too.

Page 29

evolving development opportunities mean that **delivery may well far exceed the current estimates**, in which case infrastructure requirements will need to be re-visited in discussion with the Council

More, better, bigger, tons more embodied carbon, but who cares? Let's close City Airport too or, at least, return to single engine leisure.

Canning Town and Custom House Page 32

including new waterside quarters, **an expanded successful** town centre at its heart

More, better, bigger. Why is expanded = successful? More embodied carbon problems, less examination of intelligent reuse. One would think that the Climate Emergency Declaration meant nothing at all, one would.

visitor economy, business and conference clusters with good access to the Strategic Road Network

Gosh! A Strategic Road Network! Not much cycling or walking on that. Does it lead to the delightful Silvertown Tunnel too?

– marked by some of the tallest buildings in the borough

AKA unaffordable yuppie hutches.

Page 34

New and improved open space connecting with the green grid and integrating and re-valuing heritage assets will be provided amidst **large scale residential development**

A pocket park? Some tiny sops of greenwashing? What's the 'green grid'? Let's see the 'open space', doomed by a trafficked viability assessment on the map.

Page 35

monotonous housing

Did property developers help to write this? Bit of a joke considering the ugly stuff put up on McGrath and Upton Lane recently. Anyone asked residents, happy to be in their homes, whether 'monotony' is a problem?

Page 36

that **delivery may well far exceed the current estimates**, in which case infrastructure requirements will need to be re-visited

*See Page 35 and ad-nauseam, build, build, build! Not going to catch up any housing waiting list with this either, since all the new build takes forever (see factory modular) and is **genuinely unaffordable**.*

Beckton Page 40

as well as extensive infrastructure investment yielding new connections including river crossings and station(s) and accessible community facilities **commensurate with the scale of development**. Gallions Reach Shopping Park will **co-evolve and intensify**

Build, build, build! Shop, shop, shop! You know it makes (non)sense.

Page 41

together with public realm and **natural surveillance improvements**, along these and Woolwich Manor Way and in the local parks, **securing improved routes** to the town centre and the **other retail parks**

What are natural surveillance improvements? Other retail parks, AKA shop, shop, shop!

Low carbon local energy generation and district heating

Oh. How/where, for how many dwellings? Pipe dream.

Page 43

due to large sites awaiting development, the area contains large areas of open land that attract birds and other wildlife,

*Build, build, build. Kill those pesky birds! (even with the patronising **additional green space**)*

Page 44

development opportunities here mean that **delivery may well far exceed the current estimates**,

See above, ad nauseam, continues p. 94

Urban Newham Page 46

Achieve a stable, cohesive Web of Opportunity through place curation

*What does that, even **mean!***

Employment will be increased through improvements to town centre vitality and viability

AKA Bad, living wage, unskilled jobs soon to be removed via self-checkout etc.

Innovation will be called upon to develop new and viable uses for key heritage assets which will be re-integrated with their surroundings and neighbourhoods.

That's, at last, a fairly good bit, but need an inventory not a vague soon-to-be-forgotten aspiration.

Page 47

Forest Gate town centre will become an attractive and vibrant centre, retaining its urban village feel founded on established independent shops, arts and cultural activity and revitalised heritage assets

The person that wrote this obviously didn't visit Woodgrange Road or Upton Lane did they? Woodgrange (after extensive/expensive modification) is a messy nightmare of ad-hoc parking, litter, chicken shops, and betting shops. The ugly Earls Grove development comes 'right to the edge'.

*Durning Hall facilities **are to be removed** in the interest of profit. No-one sane would cycle in the road in either road, most people cycle on the pavement or (me) wheel/park the bike at the top. No bike racks on Upton Lane either.*

The expensive re-model of Woodgrange and the junction has probably made it 'worse', lots more ad-hoc parking and pedestrian unfriendly wait/scamper-across crossing at the station.

What 'heritage assets'? When we read this page, we see that the authors are dreaming, don't we?

The town centre environment and new development will complement, integrate with and reinforce its attractive heritage identity

What heritage identity? The station side is pretty much trashed via the new ugly flats too.

and the provision of **new open space**. Accessibility to local employment will be further improved through **intensification**

Good news, but they're dreaming, where will it go? Also it'll be miniscule. I presume intensification is something pretty bad.

East Ham Page 48

and valued open space, attending to **open space deficiencies in the centre of the area through green grid connections to existing spaces** and opening up and activating Metropolitan Open Land in the east.

Non-existent 'green grid' again. Let's have a map/inventory of all the MOL in the borough too?

Green Street Page 48

a more general emphasis on the **enhancement of legibility, movement experience and the residential environment**, including the provision of **new open space** and protection of key Local Shopping Parades.

What does that even mean? Where's the 'new open space' is it really, really tiny?

tired post-war estates

I presume a developer or architect wrote this bit? Decanting and gentrification?

Page 50

The quality of the public realm and movement corridors more generally in much of the area is also poor, affecting **people's enjoyment of the pedestrian environment, levels of cycling** and their overall impression of the borough.

*This bit is 'having a larf' isn't it. A cynic could opine that the 'people's enjoyment of the pedestrian environment' is marred by the ubiquitous (look that up!) on-pavement parking (**that may be illegal, in terms of disability access, wheelchairs, mobility scooters**). Also nearly impassible for child-buggies etc.*

*Levels of cycling remain low because a) we need a 20mph borough b) **Newham drivers need to learn to drive** c) all the residential parking means that drivers (if you can call them that) drive in the middle of the road, constant close passes for cyclists. I've cycled for about 50 years in cities **and now dread cycling in Newham**, most of the time I don't.*

Page 51

evolving development opportunities mean that **delivery may well far exceed the current estimates,**

*This is a bit of a theme isn't it? Not green and the borough is dense enough. Best way to stay green is to re-use, re-purchase, use factory-built modular not to build, build, build. Though this will obviously **disappoint the developer's and architects lobby.***

Noticeable that in all of the maps presented, there's no significant new green and no concept of 'serious' interstitial green (as opposed to architect/developer tree-in-a-box, in the case of Forest Gate community school (who block me on Twitter!), sycamore, the very cheapest). The attempt in Hackney failed somewhat (heavily increased tree cover) but no reason not to learn from that and 'do better'.

Page 52

Map of Newham

*This map shows how 'grey' Newham is, in fact. **Green Street** has an amusing name too, doesn't it? Since it isn't and is highly polluted.*

Page 54

This policy and definition of place-making defines the macro-level ingredients that relates to how a place looks, feels and works for day-today personal, social and economic activity

Unhappily the look and feel, usually dictated via the absolute arrogance and sterility of architectural vision, neutered by the 'viability' excuses of 'developers', then overpriced by landlords will certainly fail the unfortunate indigent and unconsulted population peering fearfully at their concrete future. Yes, at this stage, I've lost my temper.

It ensures places have a unique **offer** so that they draw on a **particular segment of the market**

Here we have it, don't we? Retail 'destinations'.

Page 55

Place-making is equally applicable to existing Urban Newham (web of Opportunity) as to the **urbanising** Arc of Opportunity

No comment, Arc of Idiocy missing, lost my temper now.

Page 59

Developers will be expected to conduct an HIA (Health Impact Assessment) for Major residential / mixed use proposals, **or address its scope** in their Design and Access Statements and Environmental Impact Assessments.

That looks like a get-out, doesn't it?

Page 60

No. of new takeaways permitted [no specific target: monitor for evidence of downward trend or sustained low levels]

Actually veggie curry buffets and healthy takeaways would be OK, wouldn't they? What about the betting shops, Sir Robin wanted those chased out, perhaps, so we'd all go to Aspers in Westfield?

Unresolved public health/environmental health objections [**No specific target**

No specific target** in a lot of the plan sections and prose. Which is why **it isn't really a plan.

Page 61

incorporate the principles of and achieve Secured By Design (SBD) accreditation

If one looks at <https://www.securedbydesign.com/member-companies/sbd-members?view=allcompanies> the list of companies is so long as to be meaningless.

Also, maybe the Met should start to do their job, rather than consigning us to well-designed urban prisons?

Page 64

(concerning the design objectives) Design outcomes are difficult to measure so outcomes are necessarily **proxies monitored through corporate surveys**.

*Yep, we've seen some of these surveys, or, as we call it, **post-hoc justifications**. Again there's nothing SMART (qv) in any of the plan.*