

BEYOND BELIEF

There is a credibility gap between what people in local voluntary bodies have been told by professionals in the Olympic industry and what volunteers' experiences of outcomes has been. This has happened most to those local voluntary bodies which have been the first to be affected by relocations from sites within the boundaries of the Olympic Park. Responses from them have been experienced by employees in this industry along a spectrum from hostility to indifference.

Fortunately there is still a widespread desire among volunteers to engage in constructive dialogue with branches of this loose confederation of planning, design and administration professionals but our experiences to date have taught us not to hold out much hope.

I am reporting here some of those stories best known to me as briefly as I can. It involves going into some detail about longer narratives. There is much more that has been left out. I am hoping to show that these experiences have many features in common.

I am focussing on negative experiences of local people in the hope that in future we will be better listened to. By being heard I hope that chances of mutually beneficial outcomes can be improved.

Martin Slavin

Games Monitor

“Planning for vitality must stimulate and catalyse the greatest possible range and quantity of diversity among uses and among people throughout each district of a big city; this is the underlying foundation of city economic strength, social vitality and magnetism. To do this planners must diagnose, in specific places, specifically what is lacking to generate diversity and then aim to supply the lacks as best they can be supplied.

Nevertheless aims of this kind cannot be pursued unless those responsible for diagnosis, for devising tactics, for recommending actions and for carrying out actions know what they are doing. They must know it not in some generalised way but in terms of the precise and unique places in a city with which they are dealing. Much of what they need to know they can learn from no one but the people of the place because nobody else knows enough about it.

Citizens of big cities are forever being berated for not taking sufficiently active interest in government. It is amazing rather that they keep trying.

Jane Jacobs, Death and Life of Great American Cities

“In October [2007], the LDA held a legacy visioning event with planners and urban designers to understand what kind of ambitions and aspirations people wanted for their communities.”

LDA Website: <http://www.lda.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.2444>

I note that no people from local communities attended this 'legacy visioning event'. Martin Slavin

Extracts from: **House of Lords debate, Olympic Games 2012: Legacy, Thursday, 17 January 2008**

"..government understands the shape of the forest but has no idea what is actually going on under the trees". Lord Peyton of Yeovil (quoted by Lord Mawson)

Lord Mawson (Crossbench) introducing the debate

We worry about what we see taking place under what one very experienced developer calls the smoke and mirrors of the Olympic Legacy.

When you stay in one place for a very long time you watch successive government programmes. Their effect on people's lives is often quite different from the intention of the rhetoric that launched them.

...creating sustainable communities is not about the macro but about the micro. It is about the devil in the detail of local relationships between people and organisations on the ground. It is not ultimately about structures, systems and processes but about individuals, relationships and friendships. It is about people before structures.

Many of us in east London are increasingly concerned that these crucial local details are still not understood by the more than 40 public sector agencies involved in the regeneration of the area.

It is not clear today importantly, which of the alphabet soup of organisations has the authority to lead the process.

The Olympic Delivery Authority seems to have given up on legacy. It has too much on its plate—I am sympathetic to that—and has passed the baton to the London Development Agency, but the LDA has no track record of creating excellent places for people to live and work. If it does not now engage seriously with colleagues on the ground then yet further opportunities for real legacy will be lost.

If we grasp this opportunity then we as a nation may have something valuable to share with the International Olympic Committee—some practical clues about how you do legacy in a way that does not leave us, as I have seen at Homebush in Sydney, with a large empty site; or in the position of West Heidelberg in Melbourne where the 1956 Olympics were held and where you can see the effect of getting these decisions wrong on a local community as long as 50 years later.

The problem is that the regeneration structures in east London are a mess. Those of us who try to make them work in practical ways know how serious that mess is and how much energy and time are being wasted. The present structures are confusing potential private sector investors precisely at a time when we want them to commit to the area. There needs to be simplification and some agencies need to go.

Baroness Whitaker (Labour)

The Travellers at Clays Lane had lived peacefully with the settled community for 36 years. They were offered and accepted a new site, which then, for complex, oddly unforeseen planning reasons, was withdrawn. The substitute site was a recreation area. It is felt that, in their urgency to vacate the land for Olympic development, the LDA and Newham Council have disregarded the needs and wishes of both the Travellers and other local residents, causing, I am told, much resentment in the local community. Far from gaining any benefits from the Olympics, they believe they have lost some of their scarce green space and community facilities. The good relationships between the Traveller community and the other local residents which had been built up over such a long time have been undermined. Rather than an increased sense of community cohesion, Travellers now feel more segregated and vulnerable.

After this, as I have said earlier in your Lordships' House, the Travellers were given 12 different dates for being moved, and they spent many weeks, with their children, with demolition, noise, heavy traffic and dust all around them, post stopped, phones cut off, and street lights gone. An allegation was made by the ODA that the Travellers had themselves caused health problems by burning toxic waste in a furnace, which turned out not to exist.

The All-Party Group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform, of which I am a vice-chair, discussed these matters with representatives from the ODA and the LDA who were kind enough to come in. They agreed that a senior official would deliver an apology about the wrongful allegation in person. Yet again, that is not what happened.

Extracts from: House of Lords debate, Olympic Games 2012: Legacy, Thursday, 17 January 2008

See more at: <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/547>

Clays Lane Cooperative Housing Estate - Decanting the residents

From an article by Julian Cheyne, formerly a resident.

A project of this complexity needed time and resources if it was to work and the LDA simply failed to do what was required.

The LDA made much of its commitment to 'sustaining communities' in its evidence to the Compulsory Purchase Order Inquiry. As can be seen from what happened to the Clays Lane community in practice this has meant little. Residents were told by the LDA they did not count as 'a community' unlike, for example, the Travellers. During the CPO Inquiry the LDA tried to claim, on the basis of the Fluid survey, that very few were concerned about the loss of access to a green space. Indeed the LDA said residents were 'isolated' by this green space. The survey results were deliberately misrepresented. In fact over 75% had expressed concern about living next to a green space. Many residents have not received amenities to match those at Clays Lane.

The LDA had originally said in a letter sent out in June 2004 that it would provide accommodation 'at least as good as, if not better than' what residents already had. The Mayor of London later said he expected us to get 'an improvement' in terms of 'space, quality, standards and amenities'. The LDA 'clarified' its promise to 'accommodation at least as good as in so far as is reasonably practicable' while the Community Based Housing Association said there would be 'winners and losers'. The Mayor's statement was dismissed by the LDA as the words of 'a politician'. Eventually all these formulas were forgotten and the final rehousing policy simply said we would get what was available from the local authority in the area we moved to.

Despite being told they could choose where they wanted to live many residents found they were unable to find homes in their preferred locations and were told to broaden their search areas often ending up in completely unexpected places. People classed as 'vulnerable' were also sent to areas they had not selected and others complained about the way office staff pressured them or failed to offer them the homes they wanted. We were assured the housing we would move to would be of higher quality than at Clays Lane. For some that has been the case, others have moved into damp

or poorly maintained properties.

See more at: <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/558>

The Manor Gardens Allotments

From July 2nd till September 23rd 2007 when plottolders were finally moved out they had to cope with difficulties caused by a lack of support promised by the LDA. From the closure of the Olympic Park Site on 2nd July around 20 plots continued to be cultivated within the allocated times of 10am – 7pm at weekends and 9am – 1pm on Wednesdays. These restricted access times meant they could not adequately water if the weather was hot. They were promised that a horticulturist would be on hand to water or do urgent jobs. Despite asking for this nothing happened.

Bulldozing, to allow test boring sites to be cleared and for site clearance, was taking place during this time. One plot holder arrived in August at her partner's well-planted plot to discover it had been marked up for bulldozing. She was scolded for moving the tape. A mature fig tree, which had been marked up for translocation to the new site, and inside an allotment clearly marked to be left undisturbed, was 'accidentally' destroyed by a bulldozer driver

Plottolders began to suffer thefts of tools and equipment from their plots. One plottolder arrived to find two of his tools on a trailer of tree surgeons who were working nearby. When the storage containers were opened at the new site a lot of equipment was found to be missing or damaged because of careless packing.

At many meetings the LDA had promised assistance particularly for the older remaining plot holders to pack, dismantle and carry their possessions to the removal vehicles and that adequate time would be given for this process. The reality was they had two three-hour slots with a Luton van and two or three men who didn't seem to regard it as their job to help. Plot holders worked incredibly hard and were under tremendous pressure to meet the deadline. The LDA underestimated the quantity of equipment to be relocated and booked insufficient containers. Plottolders tools, furniture etc was left out on the ground near the site office for ages until more containers came.

About a third of the new plots at Marsh Lane Fields have been completely waterlogged over the winter till now. This waterlogging is currently being professionally surveyed with a view to agreeing remediation.

Trees intended for transplanting from Manor Garden Allotments to Marsh Lane Fields lay out in the open at the new site, roots barely covered, during the unusually warm October rapidly dying. They remained thus with many unable to be transplanted until now because of the waterlogged plots.

Manor Gardening Society, with expert support and advice are very keen to participate in the design of superb allotments within the Legacy Park. They have been led to believe that the ODA/LDA are committed to such a provision and to an inclusive process of consultation about the design with plot holders and the Lifeisland campaign group.

Once again there is anxiety that such promises are merely placatory and will amount to nothing more than asking them about minor details once the actual site has been decided and the basic design complete. It is their hope that they will be full participants from the earliest stage in choosing not only where the plots are located (obviously within practical bounds) but also how they are to look and function.

From a report written by Julie Sumner 9th October 2007 submitted to the Waltham Forest Council's Olympic Scoping Panel

See more at: www.lifeisland.org

Eastway Cycle circuit Users Group: From Jenny Copnall, reigning British MTB champion:

"It is with sorrow and concern that I heard from the Eastway Users' Group of the ODA's decision not to provide mountain bike racers with an adequate facility in the Legacy Park after the Olympics have taken place. I fully expect the spectacle of the mountain bike cross country event at the 2012 Olympics to bring more young riders into our fantastic sport, many likely to be from the London area. It is essential that these potential future Olympians have access to grassroots competition in a safe yet challenging environment.

Eastway has, until now, provided this, and played a pivotal role in my introduction and development as a young racer. It means a great deal to me that future generations of riders in the London area are able to enjoy the same opportunities that I did. The Eastway mountain bike events not only whet the appetites of new racers, they also provide newcomers with a social hub of knowledge and experience, which is crucial for development.

The London area is not blessed with off-road riding places. In view of this I feel that it is very important that the finest example be reinstated, albeit with the break period during the Games, so that those who wish to become mountain bike racers can do so, without their urban roots hindering their progress."

From: Little off road Olympic legacy at Eastway, Michael Humphreys, Bikemagic, 28 2 07

More at: <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/387>

The consultation for the [planning] applications being made closes on 15th June [2007]. The plans show NO MOUNTAINBIKE COMPETITION FACILITY AT ALL.

Points you may wish to raise in objection:

- There has been no consultation, no attempt made to identify the needs of the cycling community based at Eastway.
- The plans are not suitable for cycle sport outdoors
- There is no off-road competition permitted within the constraints of the scheme applied for, so there can be no guarantee or planning condition made for it unless the scheme is rejected
- The road circuit is unsafe and does not allow for large fields to circulate
- Its layout is uninspiring, being pushed right against the A12 in the shadow of a large building
- The facility is cut in two by the A12 which brings noise and air pollution
- There is no possibility of safe concurrent running of road and off-road sessions of any kind
- The area made available for a legacy replacement is unsuitably small and in a marginal position
- No amount of 'design' prior to a subsequent detailed application for legacy can alleviate the absence of land area being made available in the outline application for the cycling facility in legacy phase
- Users were made promises and given numerous assurances about the validity of a legacy before they willingly gave up their facility to make way for the Games.
- The scheme now applied for in no way matches those schemes that were outlined and does not even come close to replacing the road and off-road cycling which made Eastway so successful as the base of a thriving community of people doing Olympic sports in Inner East London

From Olympic Legacy - British Cycling Board confirms stance against Legacy Masterplan, Singletrack Magazine, Mon 11 June 2007

More at: <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/446>

THE Olympics Development Agency has missed yet more deadlines for relocating our cycle circuit at Hackney Wick which closed last November.

London's 2012 Olympics has been nothing but a total loss for road-race, time-trial and mountain-bike cross-country that we used to do so successfully at Eastway.

Our young hopefuls persist in their aspirations, but without a proper facility it is difficult to keep them on the pathway that Lord Seb Coe (2012 Olympics chairman) and his friends say they know so much about.

Now we don't know when the relocated track will open. We never did get the promised 'interim circuit' in Docklands. We were promised a 34-hectare site as a 'legacy' afterwards, which is now down to less than 10 (and that includes a large velodrome and BMX that come with the Games).

What really worries us is that we had a site protected by Metropolitan open land status which has been taken from us on the promise of a replacement after 2012, supported by planning conditions that are now seemingly ignored by the development agency.

The agency's latest planning application is for high-density housing that would take its 'open space' requirement from the new velopark, as well as eating into a large part of the Eastway site we used.

From: 2012 Olympics has already robbed us of our cycle racing, Letters, East London Advertiser, 17 10 07

Source: <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/node/483>

The facility at Hog Hill [which is yet to open] was secured from the London Development Agency only after a long campaign run by Eastway Users Group. It is a 17ha site intended as a relocation while London's Games are being built and run. In 2013 the site reverts to its operator the London Borough of Redbridge for revenue funding, when the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) is to provide a legacy cycling facility back in the Olympic Park roughly where Eastway was. Details of the legacy are still to be finalised, but the requirement to replace the facilities for Olympic disciplines of road-race, time-trial and mountainbike cross-country from Eastway has been acknowledged by the legacy planners.

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More at: <http://www.londoncyclesport.com/news/article/mps/uan/3831>