

Response from London Borough of Newham to the Outer London Commission consultation

For over 20 years the London Borough of Newham (LBN) has challenged its designation as an Outer London borough arguing that it shares key characteristics in terms of demographics, economic and social background and high deprivation with boroughs in Inner London. It has made submissions to successive governments setting out how this has resulted in significantly lower revenue support grant and other grant settlements, and in consequence, has much reduced the Council's capacity to respond to the needs of Newham's community.

Although LBN has not yet been successful in establishing IL status for the borough, it is important to understand the Council's own view that this is how it should be designated. It also highlights that Outer London is not a homogenous collection of suburban neighbourhoods. Newham is one of the most deprived districts in the country while the boroughs immediately east of the north bank of the River Thames have traditionally been more prosperous and with higher levels of employment than both Newham and the national average. While LBN welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Mayor's Outer London Commission (OLC) Consultation, it emphasises that its individual position and situation are kept in mind throughout the reading.

Economic Considerations

Outer London has often lagged behind Inner London in the past as a direct result of poor investment, restricted funding and a lack of job opportunities and skills training available to local people.

Newham aims to create a fair and, strong and cohesive community, in which our people can enjoy the opportunity and prosperity which has previously been concentrated in other parts of the Capital. And Newham is in a unique position to achieve this with our excellent transport links. Over the past decade or so, we have seen much growth in the local economy and jobs market which has been achieved through the strong leadership of local government.

Following the decline of the traditional docks and rail industries locally, Newham Council has worked with partners to support investment in key infrastructure such as transport links and communications technology, making the borough attractive for investment. Through our business friendly style we have supported Newham to be 'open for business'. We believe this approach is beneficial to our residents and acts as a driver for the local economy.

We aim to work closely with business - and business is growing in Newham. Our new economic foundations are in Excel, a world class exhibition and visitor venue, City Airport and Stratford City, which from 2011 will be Europe's largest shopping centre with hotel and business facilities too.

We have seen much growth within the fringes of the Thames Gateway area where organisations which need to be close to The City but cannot afford rents therein, have moved in to the area to take advantage of the fast links in to London. The construction and regeneration of Stratford City, Canning Town and Royal Docks has provided a much needed boost to local employment. We have worked hard with our partners to ensure our residents reap the benefits of

locally based businesses and they have continuously provided jobs to local people - London City Airport, Tate & Lyle and Excel Centre. We remitted business rates for the Excel Centre in their first year of business in order to build sustainable business and attract further investment into the borough.

Our infrastructure - transport, communications, exhibition space, was the platform for the successful 2012 bid - alongside the vision to regeneration East London. The 2012 Games in turn will help to speed up renewal in east London.

As we would expect with this level of growth, employment participation rates have risen year on year but we are still significantly below the London average. This is due to the Inner London characteristics we share with neighbouring boroughs such as Hackney and Tower Hamlets with high levels of poverty and deprivation.

'Super-Hubs'

We think the consultation document could have gone further to define exactly what a Super-Hub would be, which facilities it would require and also what the implications for the surrounding boroughs would be. In the remit of the OLC it was also asked to have regard for the wider regeneration of Outer London's town centres/ business locations which features very little in this consultation, but which are key to building opportunity and prosperity in Outer London.

Stratford could be a prime site meeting the likely definition of Super-Hub. The area is well connected nationally, regionally and internationally through fast links to City Airport. These links mean that Stratford can be of use to and deliver more benefits to adjoining boroughs than some of the other proposed Super-Hubs.

There is currently some misconception that Stratford is already a Super-Hub given its excellent transport links. However, while good transport is a necessary condition for any Super-Hub, of itself it would not be enough. There also needs to be major mixed development. One of the panel of advisers to the GLA Planning and Housing Committee stated that it is not yet certain that Stratford will realise the major commercial and employment led regeneration it needs to see the economic growth forecast for it.

Although the OLC is looking to create prosperity within the Outer London region, City Hall is at the same time undermining the process by allocating us such a large social housing target. We want Newham to become a net contributor to the London economy as opposed to reliant on it. We are of course committed to building affordable housing but at the same time, Newham must be allowed the opportunity to bring itself up to par with the rest of London and such large targets will ensure that Newham will continue to import poverty. Whilst we import need our ability to tackle worklessness and poverty amongst existing residents is limited. We assume that the availability of land has impacted heavily on the target allocated to us but it should be noted that sites available in Newham are often difficult to develop. They often fall outside of town centres, require much remedial work and need significant investment in community and physical infrastructure. Developing on available land will be counteractive to the economic development of Newham. We strongly advocate mixed development to ensure everyone benefits from a successful local economy. Building on this available land will

ensure that the borough is split in to pockets of poverty and concentrations of wealth. Mixed developments will go far to ensure this is avoided. In order to effect a real change in the opportunities for a choice of housing tenure, job opportunities, improved education and health standards and experience of safe, cohesive and attractive communities, housing policies have to enable mixed and balanced communities to ensure this borough prospers.

Therefore, to gain the best economic and social value from the hub site, we need to ensure that excellent transport links are tied in with sustainable employment and residential communities. Stratford already has and is surrounded by residential areas and is currently undergoing construction for one of the largest retail centres in the country. This makes it well placed to compete with Central London, Canary Wharf and retail sites such as Lakeside and Bluewater. With its excellent transport links and proximity to both inner and outer London boroughs, much of London will be set to gain from Stratford becoming a Super-Hub site. It would mean that less people would need to commute long distances as job opportunities could be provided on their doorstep.

Crossrail 1 will provide excellent connections to areas of East London and the Thames Gateway which have previously suffered poor connectivity to the rest of London. This will no doubt provide a much needed boost to surrounding communities. The creation of a Super-Hub should not have a negative impact on Crossrail 1 in terms of funding as we consider it to be crucial as a catalyst for other key town centres in Thames Gateway building opportunities and links between business, people and transport. We would also ask that the OLC is mindful of the Crossrail 2 development which would provide important connections for Outer London from the north east to the south west.

A clear and joined up vision for Thames crossings can make or break these opportunities. Newham Council has tirelessly supported the Thames Gateway Bridge and Silvertown Crossing as part of a crucial package to enable the regeneration of key sites in the Western section of the Thames Gateway. Both Newham and Greenwich have supported the Silvertown Crossing and safeguarded it in the context of a parcel of Thames River Crossings, including the Thames Gateway Bridge. The Silvertown Crossing has always been seen as complementary to the Bridge, rather than as a freestanding development. Without the TGB, there is no integrated regeneration and transport offer. Delivery of the Silvertown Crossing alone in fact undermines the emerging enterprise and community vision for the Royals. We shall continue to support and lobby for the Thames Gateway Bridge - looking at possible options to take the project forward.

We believe that businesses are in the best possible position to understand their needs. We know that businesses on both the North and South side of the River would greatly benefit from the Thames Gateway Bridge and therefore we recommend that they should be consulted on the issue. I believe that these businesses are in the best position to decide whether the TGB would benefit them and I believe they should be consulted on the issue.

Quality of life

We have a duty to ensure that local people share in any wealth generated in the area, that jobs are available to them and that they

receive the skills training and good quality housing which they need to improve their living standards.

By increasing the opportunities available in the area, employers will be able to attract the skills necessary to sustain their businesses but at the same time, we will be able to upskill our own residents to ensure that they can take full advantage of the jobs available to them.

Both Newham and Tower Hamlets have housing targets of around 40-50 thousand new homes but in order to meet such high demand while making new communities sustainable, we need to ensure that residents are well equipped to participate in the local jobs market and ensure that social infrastructure in terms of schools, health facilities and other public facilities are also provided for.

Newham often attracts people and families with lower incomes and has a high proportion of people who have never worked. The vision we have for Newham is to create a place people will live, work and stay. Currently, the issue we have in the borough is that once people begin earning mid to high incomes, they leave while we continue to import poverty. A sustainable community underpinned by mixed development is the best way to break the cycle and unlock the economic potential which this area has.

Transport

To ensure the Outer London economy is better able to compete with the rest of London, we need to ensure that transport links are excellent for the benefit of both commuters and business. As we have mentioned above, the Thames Gateway Bridge is essential for growth. It will help widen the jobs market through better accessibility and also will allow goods to be transported from north to south much more quickly. If indeed a Super-Hub is created in Stratford, we will need to consider such logistical issues. The ability to move goods easily will be crucial to attracting business and as well as keeping the Thames Gateway Bridge in mind it would also be a good time to consider the greater potential of a rail freight hub.

We have seen how much areas are affected if connectivity is poor. With the halt of the Dagenham DLR extension, we have seen plans for housing developments in the area put at risk. We would urge the Commission to ensure that similar mistakes are not repeated

With the economic development of the Outer London area, we must consider the implications of increased footfall. As the number of commuters increase, local transport must be able to cope. Currently, we see a strong need for increasing West Anglia services to the north, more trains serving the Lea Valley area and increasing the C2C capacity at West Ham. With the development of Stratford, we must also look at increasing the capacity of the bus station. Currently, the bus station needs extra links to all parts of the borough e.g. the link from Stratford to East Ham is extremely poor. The new station which serves the Stratford City area will also require good links with the rest of the borough to ensure that people will be able to reach the area easily. However for local people to really take advantage of any economic growth, we must ensure that train fares are kept as low as possible. They must remain lower than Zone 1 fares or will otherwise undermine the purpose of building sustainable and successful local economies.

Parking charges

The Inner London boroughs have benefited from substantial parking revenue which they are able to ring fence for specified programme and project areas. Income from parking charges on that scale have for the most part not been available to the Outer London boroughs. The advent of the congestion charge, where the proceeds are hypothecated for public transport projects across London has reduced this borough parking income marginally but the sums raised remain significant

It is with this background Newham proposes that a percentage of the net profit gained by inner London boroughs from parking charges should be distributed equally across all 33 boroughs to allow for councils to spend more on areas which will help their local economies.

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