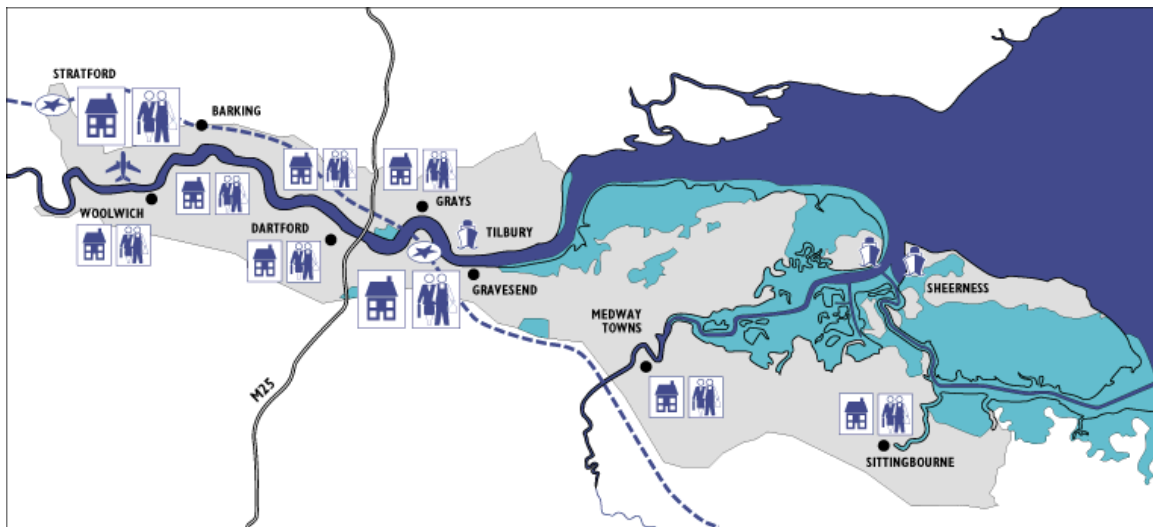


Origins and Evolution of the Thames Gateway Initiative

During the 1980's the Thames Gateway became the sub-area of London and South East England perceived by the government to be underperforming compared to other areas in the region. The area formerly known as the East Thames Corridor became the Thames Gateway in late 1994 when the UK government published a draft-planning framework that renamed that area the Thames Gateway. The largest single regeneration project in the country, the Thames Gateway is defined by the central government including an area of 450 square kilometers on either side of the Thames Estuary and stretches over 52 kilometers from the London Docklands to the Isle of Sheppey.



Development and Redevelopment in South East London

The Thames Gateway was the subject of redevelopment ideas since the 1970's. The discussion arose due to the significant decline of the manufacturing and port sectors, which were major employers in the area. There were endeavors to achieve a coordinated plan to deal with the issue; however nothing significant came to be during this time.

The specific origins of the current TGI are claimed to have stemmed from actions in the 1980's to combat industrial decline, unemployment and out-migration. The need for a large number of individual local authorities to collaborate led to the birth of the initiative.

In the mid 1980's the London Planning Advisory Committee started to develop strategic guidance for London, and this included an emphasis on changing the balance of development between declining East London and the growing areas west of the capital. The uneven nature of development also was a concern for The London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN). SERPLAN's main focus was to identify areas that would be the focus of future investment in the region. Many sites were identified; however issues that needed to be addressed were infrastructure improvements, and the removal of constraints such as land contamination. The plan to address these issues continued to grow and evolve, and by the early 1990's the project was officially named the Thames Gateway.

A massive amount of studies were done on the TGI. Key sites in the Gateway were identified as having the possibility of playing a strategic role of maintaining London's position of a World City. TG's position between London and Europe, and the planned investment in infrastructure were considered to be key drivers in the area's development. Scenarios that were studied again and again by consultants included possible job growth and population changes, as well as focus on the complex physical environment of the Thames Gateway. The TG is significantly covered with nature reserves as well as sites of interest. Furthermore, some industrial lands had the possibility of being enhanced into more attractive and environmentally friendly sites.

The Thames Gateway is an unusual redevelopment zone in many respects. Some argue that there was never a pressing need for redevelopment of the area, and this is why the process has been so slow moving. In the 1990's it was observed that the TG initiative was driven more so by a vision of its future potential, rather than because of pressing needs to support the area socially and economically. This slow process, however, has most likely led to a better-planned and better-executed development of the TGI. If there were truly a pressing need to revamp the area quickly, the design most likely would have suffered. The 1980's and the 1990's can be viewed as the maturation of an idea. There was not much significant work done, but the necessary committees and groups were getting organized to allow this massive project to unfold.

In all, the 1980's and 1990's led to the birth of a vision: many local boroughs working together toward urban regeneration and sustainable development. Secondly, there was the understanding that a public/private partnership would take shape. Finally there was the belief that the sum of the redevelopment of these communities would be greater than the whole. This would culminate in a vibrant and successful redevelopment, which would solidify and enhance London's dominant position as a World City.

Sustainability Thames Gateway: New Focus for a New Century

In 2000, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) selected the Thames Gateway region to expand its boundaries outside of London, drawing in all the local authorities that border the Thames from central London to the mouth of the Thames (crossing into Essex and North Kent). The regions and cities included in the Thames Gateway are:

- Thames Gateway London (including Waltham Forest & Redbridge, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Newham, Greenwich, Havering & Barking and Dagenham, Bexley)
- Thames Gateway East (including Thurrock, Basildon, Southend-on-sea), and
- Thames Gateway South-East (including Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Sittingbourne).

According to the UK government, these areas have been identified as "regeneration zones" for the development of "sustainable" communities.

The vision set out in the Thames Gateway Framework intended to “set the framework for a sustained and sustainable program of economic, social and environmental regeneration”. This initiative was led by the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership (TGSP) and represented the following groups:

- 5 Government Departments (Local Government, Transport, Trade and Industry, Education & Skills, Health)
- 3 Gateway regional partnerships (London, South Essex, and Kent),
- 3 Regional Development Agencies (the LDA for London)
- 3 Regional assemblies (the GLA for London)
- Various NGOs, including the Environment Agency

In addition, the TGSP named five strategic areas to focus its efforts, namely the Inner Gateway, Outer London Riverside, Central Gateway, South East Essex, and Medway Estuary.

In February 2003, the ODPM published the Sustainable Communities Plan that prioritized development in London. It identified the Government Office for London (GOL), the GLA, local authorities, Housing Corporations, English Partnerships, and English Heritage as key partners. It also established a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to oversee TGSP as they considered the infrastructure and timescale of the development. Infrastructure included transportation, utilities, housing, education, green space, flood management and quality of life.

In London, the TGLP was identified as a key player in establishing the planning priorities for the Thames Gateway area inside London's border. However, the TGLP's powers were limited to negotiation and voluntary participation. The TGLP sought to influence: the Mayor's London Plan (working with the GLA); cross-Borough sub-regional frameworks (East region) - a related document to the London Plan; local authority Unitary Development Plans (UDPs); investment programs for the Government Office of London (GOL) and the London Development Agency (LDA) - the two main recipients of regeneration funding from the ODPM; and Transport for London's (TfL) investment strategy. Because of the overlapping nature of these strategy plans, the London Thames Gateway Partnership Board (London Board) was created, comprising members of the TGLP, GLA, LDA, GOL, Housing Corporations and Borough Councils.

In April 2004, the London Board published the London Thames Gateway Development Investment Framework (TGDIF), which only covers the Thames Gateway region in London. This framework was primarily influenced by the ODPM's Sustainable

Communities Plan, the London Plan and Borough UDPs, with goals of brownfield regeneration, increasing investment and house building. This framework was also created to attract additional large investments from the private sector.

By 2005, huge investments were already spent in the Gateway, which helped to deliver 24,000 new homes and around 25,000 jobs (in 2003-04 alone). From 2003 to 2006, the UK Government has invested £7bn, with expectations that this will pave the way for private sector investment of £38bn in the planned housing and commercial development to the year 2016.

The Thames Gateway Interim Plan

Despite these large investments, the Gateway was still not performing as well as the rest of the Greater South East, which is why in November 2006 the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership published the “Thames Gateway Interim Plan”. This was not only a government plan, but “*a statement of common purpose by all those working for the Gateway... We all know the Thames Gateway has huge potential - and we have huge ambitions for it... Our aim is to build homes, not houses. Create communities, not conurbations.*” (Rt Hon Ruth Kelly, Thames Gateway Forum 2006)

The Thames Gateway Interim Plan provides a strategic framework in three parts: a Policy Framework; a Development Prospectus; and, a Technical Annex, with more supporting information and links to data sources and other research. The Policy Framework is a statement of common purpose it reflects the collective ambitions for the Gateway and details how partners will work together to achieve them. The Development Prospectus sets out for each location sub-region in the Gateway, the nature and scale of development proposed including major planning applications lodged and details of investment in key transport infrastructure. It brings together for the first time existing plans, proposals that are being developed, work that is already underway and what remains to be done across the whole of the Gateway. It highlights opportunities for private sector partners to get involved and shows how sustainable growth can be achieved where public and private sector investment works together. In it, investors and developers can gain insight to the development sites being offered. This plan also provides a summary of the plans and policies for the people living in the Gateway area.

The Olympic Games in the Gateway: And the winner is London?

Much has been written about the impact of the Olympic Games on cities that win the bid for the event. Do the Olympics have a net positive effect or not? This question is highly debated. Determining with certainty the connection between the Olympics and the success of a city is a major challenge, considering the innumerable factors and possible connections. Indeed, certain cities have fared well after the Olympics are held there. However, is the upturn of desirability in the region that hosted the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, due solely to the Olympics? Or perhaps was Sydney selected to host in part due to their financial health as a community? The factors that sway the ebbs and flows of social and economic status of a region are complex, and may or may not be solely attributed to one event.

In the case of the 2012 Summer Olympics, London was presented with an opportunity to tilt the scales of opinion on the question of the Olympics' ability to make a city grow. The infrastructure challenge is something that other cities have struggled with in prior years. London, however, has the ability to incorporate the necessary Olympic infrastructure into the enormous scope of the Thames Gateway Initiative (TGI). This fortunate situation allows London to be more creative in finding long term uses for the Olympic village, the media center, the aquatics center, and even the Olympic Stadium. For example, the Olympic village can easily be absorbed by the immense plans for housing construction that are already planned to be built in the area. Furthermore, greater freedom exists to place the aquatics center where its future use can be maximized. This would likely be a greater challenge in a city not undergoing such a major reformation project like the TGI. Whether or not London is able to take advantage of this opportunity cannot be judged at this time and cannot be judged responsibly for many years after, when long-term effects can begin to be understood. However, intuition tells us that the added flexibility that London has been granted, only serves as an advantage in incorporating the short term needs of the Olympics with the long-term needs of the city.

When judging the impact of the Olympics perhaps it is best to downplay the actual event of the Olympics itself. Recent Olympics lead us to believe that the infrastructure costs are relatively much greater than the costs of the actual Olympic structures themselves. Perhaps these projects are more successfully judged when compared with other major infrastructure projects of their kind. To some degree, the specific Olympic structural costs are balanced by enormous television revenues. On average these revenues do not appear to cover the entire cost of the Olympic structures; however, this balancing effect allows greater weight to be placed on the longer-term effects of the supporting infrastructure when trying to assess the overall value of the Olympic preparation effort. Like many large urban infrastructure programs, assessing impact seems more often be a matter of judgment than absolute fact. The crux of the argument lies with the hypothetical future of the city if the vast Olympics project is not undertaking. The issue of net value in relation to the Olympics will continue to be debated, but as long as major cities continue to vie for future Olympics it is hard to believe that they are the net losers that recent press may have us believe.

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