



Spend more on the Olympics!

I've written the unthinkable. The Government should spend more on the area around the Olympic Park.

Three years ago, London First helped to deliver business support for the bid, which promised a dramatic turnaround in the fortunes of east London. But to deliver the Government's legacy commitments made to the International Olympic Committee requires more money than promised today.

At ExCeL today, Thames Gateway Forum heard Prime Minister Brown and 'Minister for the Gateway', Yvette Cooper unveil a new slug of funding. But £9.2bn over three years sounds less impressive when it is shared by almost half of South East England. Again the Government oscillates between focusing on the whole dart-board of the Kent and Essex Thames Estuary and the bulls-eye of the Olympic Park.

In a perfect world, legacy would be planned before the venues, allowing the Park to slot into that vision. Of course, the reality is that Games venues have to be ready by 2012. But the 'Legacy Masterplan Framework' won't be written until 2009, when the opportunities to integrate post-olympic infrastructure underneath and around the park will have gone.

We risk repeating the mistakes of the sixties and seventies, with a featureless landscape of anonymous tower blocks and medium-rise fortresses. Without a clear vision for East London's future, Olympic stadia may become embarrassing 22 carat bling in a down-at-heel pawn shop.

We mustn't let that happen. A bold vision can be distilled from the vibrancy of east London and its potential as a place to live, work and do business. From vision should emerge master plan and an investment schedule for bridges and roads, gas mains and phone lines, schools and health centres. Then developers will have confidence to deliver high quality homes and green spaces - desirable places for sustainable communities.

With ambitious vision, appropriate resource and effective delivery, a genuine transformation of the Lower Lea Valley is a winnable prize. With ambitious iconic development, the Lea can provide an artery for a vibrant new quarter of the capital, connected to the City, Europe and the world, a renowned destination and a fitting home for today's cosmopolitan eastenders and the next generation of new Londoners.

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