

Mapping Change for Sustainable Communities: The Olympics Legacy in Hackney Lea Bridge/Millfields and surroundings



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Group 3: Millfields and Lea Bridge



- The group's research taps into the rich, unique history of the green spaces in the above area - Millfields Park and the Middlesex Filter Beds. For instance, the area got its name from the mills that were located on the River Lea in medieval times, close to where the Park now meets the Reserve. The Black Path through the park was a key trade route as farmers brought livestock down the path from Essex to the city's main meat market at Smithfields. In the mid nineteenth century when cholera epidemics became a major health problem for the citizens of London, the filter beds were established to provide clean water to the thriving industrial metropolis.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

The group's research aims to answer two main questions:

- What are the experiences, needs and expectations in the access to, use and appropriation of the community?

marsh by

Hypothesis 1

The group formulated two hypotheses to help the research answer the two key ToR questions on the previous slide.

Hypothesis 1 below addresses the first ToR. The research will investigate how children respond to the unique historical importance of Millfields Park and Middlesex Filter Beds:

- By **bridging knowledge between adults and children** of the changes over time in the access to, use of and appropriation of the Marsh (specifically the Nature Reserve and Millfields Park), greater environmental justice can be achieved for children

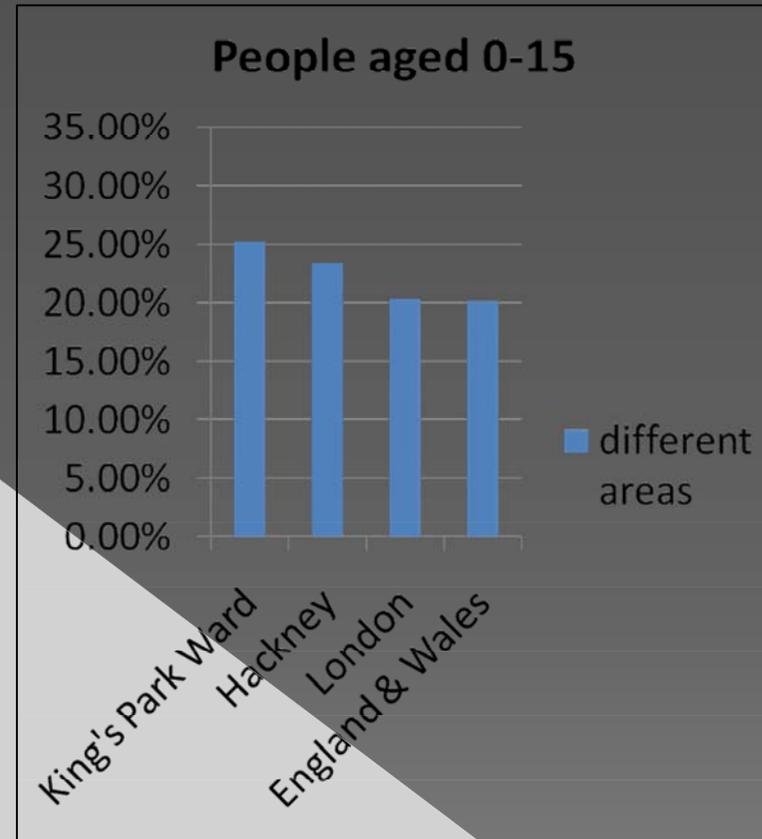
Hypothesis 2

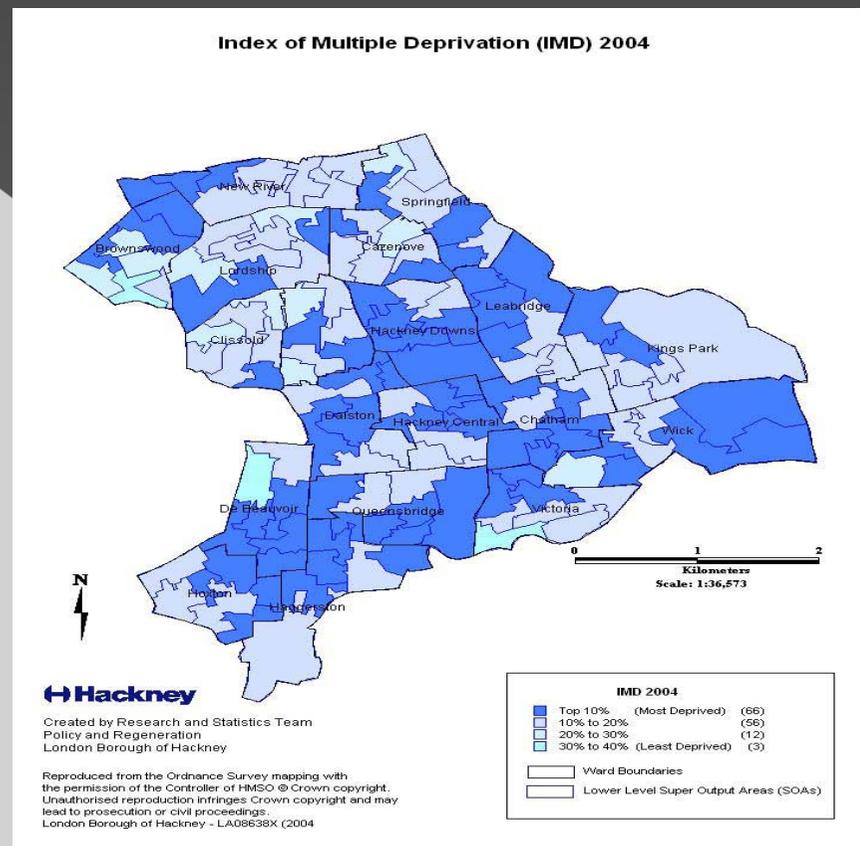
Hypothesis 2 below addresses the second ToR question. The research will investigate the views of key stakeholders to the Olympic developments and whether they are likely to benefit or disadvantage local children:

- *The **council's commitment to making sure young people gain as much as possible from the Games is more likely to be compromised than strengthened** by Olympic inspired development and legacy planning in and around the Marsh. This is because planning authorities believe Olympic developments and related interventions in the study area can be achieved enhanced participation through conventional consultation. However, such methods are failing to tap into the needs of children and their views are likely to be missed through the process.*

Demographics – Kings Park

The focus of the research is on local children. There are compelling reasons for this. At 25 percent, there is a large proportion of children living in this ward when compared to other parts of Hackney and the country. From initial research for the first ToR question, the group noticed that children were not generally consulted - only one teenager attended consultation meetings on the Millfields Park Masterplan for instance. For the second ToR question, early interviews with community stakeholders uncovered a concern that the Olympic developments were more likely to disadvantage rather than help the children of Millfields area, many of whom come from deprived ethnically diverse backgrounds.





This deprivation indicator reinforces the relative poverty that many children in Kings Park ward live in. The research will look at how do the green spaces and the Olympics effect them.

Environmental Justice

The group has put children at the centre of its own working definition of Environmental Justice and this resonates throughout the research:

- Environmental justice exists when environmental risks, hazards and investments and benefits are **equally distributed** among people amongst **all ethnicities and ages**. Physical and psychological access to environmental investments, benefits, and natural resources - specifically the Marsh and other green spaces - should be equally distributed. Furthermore access to information, **participation in decision making**, and access to justice in environment-related matters should be enjoyed by all people of all ages, including children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Methodology

For first hypothesis, the group conducted the following with kids from E5 club (after school club for local kids) -

Photo Mapping Exercise

- ◉ walking around Marsh/Reserve
- ◉ Invited kids for photo competition game
- ◉ History presentation about Marsh and its uses

Focus Groups Exercise

- ◉ Split children into small focus groups, get them to stick photos on map
- ◉ Collate data by taking notes and individual interviews

For second hypothesis, the group conducted qualitative research on stakeholder views on Olympics/legacy for local kids -

- ◉ Conducted secondary research
- ◉ number of in depth interviews with key stakeholders about kids use/access to marsh, planning process and Olympics

Official sphere – Background



These are the main actors from local/governmental/quango sphere responsible for planning/developments for Millfields Park and Filter Beds

Official sphere – kids and parks

Our research shows that children are very much at the centre of the council's vision for use of green spaces:

The council's vision -

“To ensure that all residents of the Borough have access to safe, well maintained and welcoming parks which enhance their quality of life and increase enjoyment opportunities whilst contributing to health and environmental improvement.”

Key Aim 1: To provide children and young people with parks that meet their needs and enhance their quality of life

To encourage children and young people to actively use parks and to facilitate opportunities in Parks for children and young people to learn about the environment

Official sphere – planning process

There is however an acknowledgement that ethnic minorities and children are not as involved in consultation process as they could be:

- Bruce Irving, Hackney Council: “The consultation is attended mainly by white British residents. Within the final Masterplan we are hoping to target the ethnic minorities and get them involved. We are going to try and get in touch with them – spring next year there will be more consultation and also hopefully with schools



Official Sphere - 2012 Olympics and Legacy

Again our research shows that the official sphere is positive about the Olympics. We will see how this compares with community stakeholders views shortly:

The UK government wants:

"To transform the heart of East London and inspire a generation of young people"

Hackney Council, the Olympics:

"its top priority is making sure it secures the best possible long-term benefits for Hackney residents and its committed to making sure young people gain as much as possible from the Games"

Hackney Council: "I think the Olympic Games will be a great benefit for the people of Hackney."

Olympic Park Legacy Company: "We haven't really engaged the marginalised youth but it's not really our role or responsibility"



Kids sphere – Background

- We chose to work with the E5 club which is an after school club for children residing in our study area. We organised a photo mapping activity that was followed by a focus group. This was spread out over two days. The first day was facilitated by local resident and activist Teddy Sawyer. We led the children on a tour around the Middlesex Filter Beds and then through Millfields park. The children were encouraged to photograph things they liked and disliked and to follow our route on a map. The focus group then involved the children linking photographs to points on the map(see below). The children then discussed what they liked and didn't like as well as what they would change. The children also referred back to historical information on the filter beds and the park that was provided by Teddy Sawyer.

- Background : E5 club
- Age group and ethnicity:
 - 5 yrs – 11 yrs
 - Afro-Caribbean, Black, White
- Two exercise:
 - Photo Mapping (7 kids)
 - Focus Groups (11 kids)



Barriers to use, access, appropriation

The group identified three barriers to their use of marsh and the filter beds. These can be broadly defined as psychological, a lack of facilities and a lack of awareness. This awareness denotes both awareness of the existence of these green spaces, as well as the historical significance or cultural narratives attached to these spaces.

Psychological barriers:

- “I don't like it here! The river looks dirty and is full of rubbish”
- “I don't like the marshes because its too muddy”

Lack of child based facilities

- “I'd like more swings and a play area”

Lack of awareness:

- “I've never been to the Marsh and I didn't know it was there”
- “I've only been to the marshes twice”
- “I didn't know about the filter beds. I haven't come here before”

Key Findings on kids access, use and appropriation of marsh

- Few of the participating children knew about the filter beds and even fewer had ever been there. There was more familiarity with the park as somewhere visited often.
- The children had little sense of the historical and social importance of the marshes . They were visibly engaged by Teddy's historical accounts of the marsh.



Community sphere – Background

We found evidence of an active and organised community. There are many groups and organisations within our study area in varying sizes and agendas. Some of the most prominent groups are listed below.

- Millfields Users Group (MUG)
- Millfields Wanderers
- Games Monitor
- Tree Musketeers
- Chatsworth Road Market Group

Community sphere – kids and parks

There had been a recent flurry of consultation surrounding Millfields park and also wider projects associated with the Olympics.

With the recent consultations for the park master plan, there was some concern at the absence of children at these meetings. The following three quotes are from some of the residents we interviewed:

“Lots of people at the consultation were looking at the master plan and saying ‘there’s no kids here and it’s a park’”



- “There are three schools around the park and they haven’t consulted any of them”
- “it would be nice if they had a focus group made up of a couple of kids from each of the specific schools.

Community sphere – planning process

Many of the local residents that we interviewed expressed some frustrations in regards to the planning process and particularly the consultation process. There was a perceived lack of genuine engagement with the community.

- “This public consultation has meant nothing”
- “I don’t get the impression that consultation processes do mean much”
- “I don’t think you are listened to at all, I think it’s an exercise they go through and they don’t take a blind bit of notice of it.”



Community sphere – 2012 Olympics and legacy

The Olympics was another issue which local residents were keen to talk about. There were some concerns and hopes surrounding the positive effects that the Olympics may bring to the Millfields area. There also arose fear that Olympic developments will shut access to the Marshes. Others were more supportive of the Olympics.

- “will ordinary people get to use Any of the sporting facilities after the games?”
- “we feel that our little park is the nearest little park to the whole Olympic affair and as a result we get a green flag from it and the council will feel duty bound to build public toilets and stuff like that”
- “we won’t be allowed in the Marshes for 7 years”
- “I’m generally supportive of having the Olympics in London”



Output

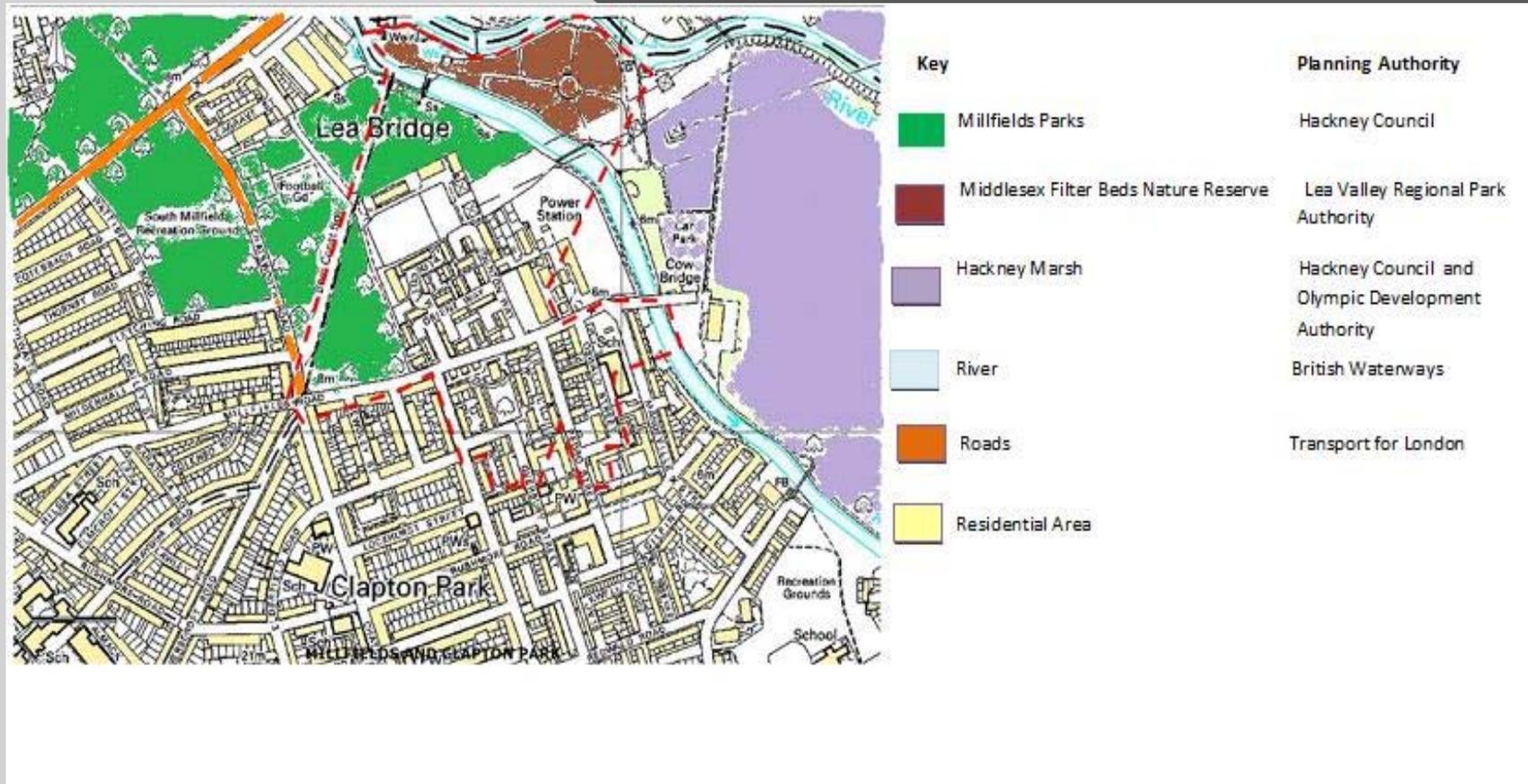
With the help and expertise of local resident and volunteer film maker Phillip Stonier, we have produced a short film documenting our photo mapping session and the focus group.

Why a film as the output?

We felt a film would display one of our hypothesis ideas of children learning about the history of the green spaces in their local area as well as engaging with those spaces. The film would be a valuable resource for the community in providing evidence of the simplicity involved in the engagement of children with green spaces as well as their ability to interface with maps of their area.

Jurisdiction Map for Millfields Park, Middlesex Filter Beds Nature Reserve and Surroundings: A possible second output

As a second output, we have attempted to draw together a jurisdiction map to help clarify which particular official body is responsible for the planning in different parts of the area. A confusion over jurisdiction in the area that arose from our interviews with our local contacts is what prompted this.



Conclusions

Hypothesis 1

There was evidence to suggest that yes, some children did gain a greater appreciation of the green spaces in their local area after connecting a bit more with the historical significance of these areas. On the other hand, some children were fully aware of the history and did not see it as a reason to spend more time in these places.

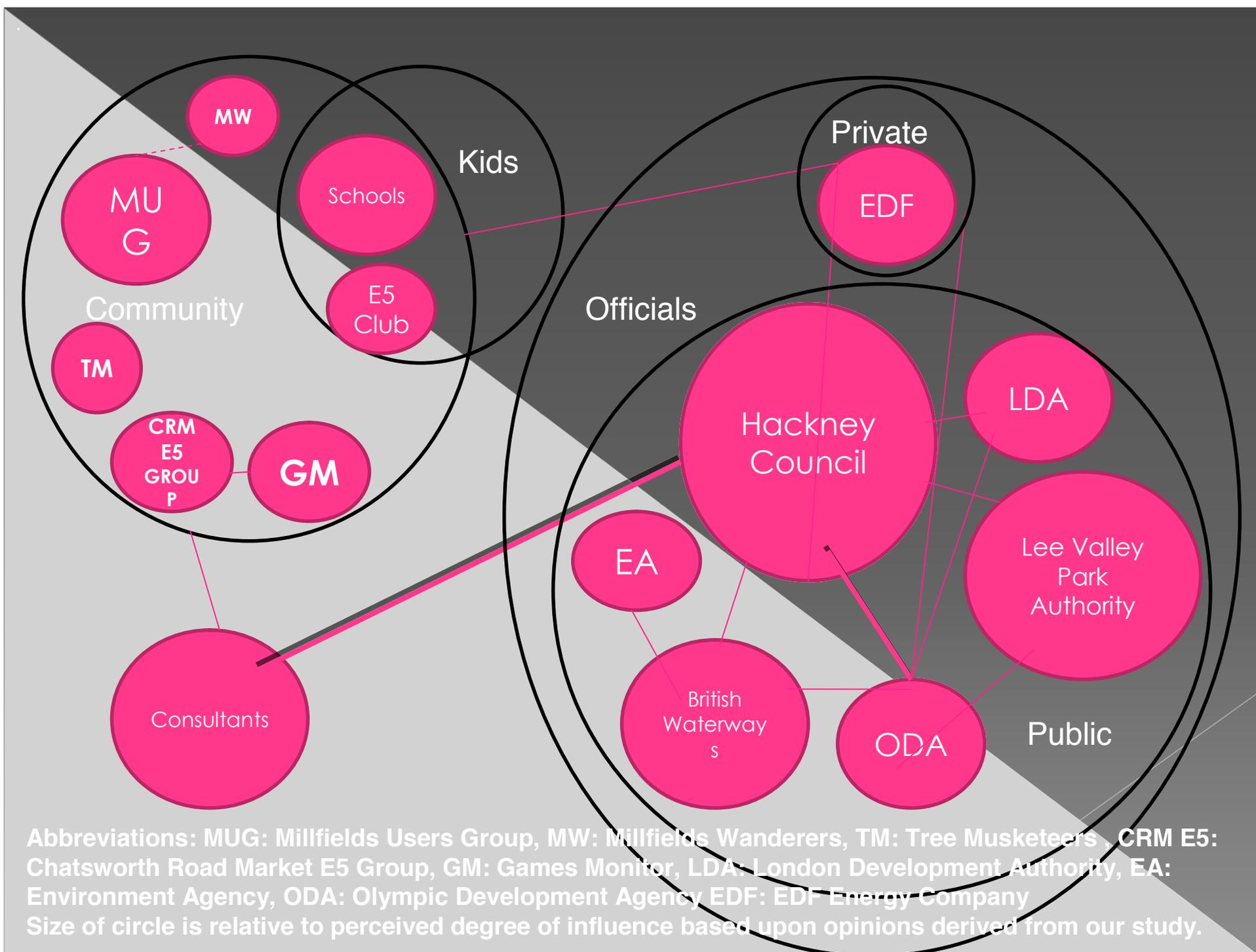
Hypothesis 2

The Olympic Park Legacy Company has identified our area of study as being too far away from the park itself to directly benefit from the legacy plan. On the other hand, there are improvements going on such as the Millfields park development which can be connected to the wider developments associated with the park.

The Complexity of the situation

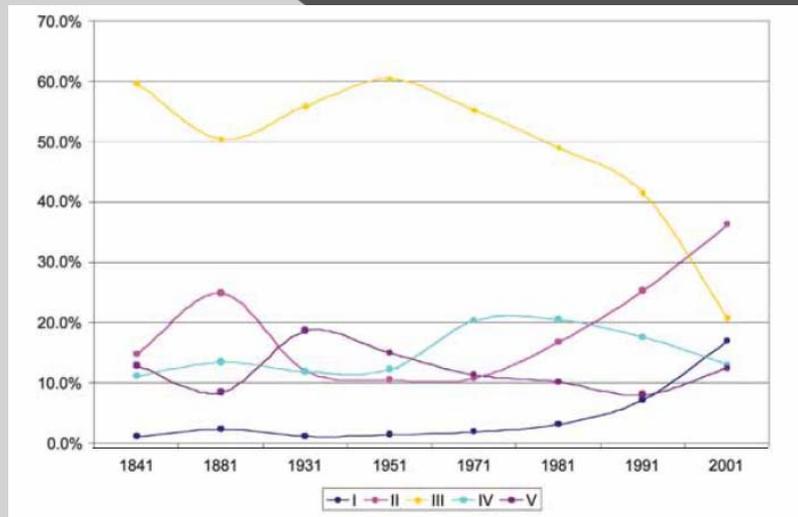
Our research uncovered more layers than we initially anticipated. As such it was hard to reach truly coherent conclusions. The more we studied, the more we uncovered what needs to be studied. This highlights the limitations of time that we worked within.

As such we have drawn up some future recommendations for research that would be useful for the community.



Abbreviations: MUG: Millfields Users Group, MW: Millfields Wanderers, TM: Tree Musketeers, CRM E5: Chatsworth Road Market E5 Group, GM: Games Monitor, LDA: London Development Authority, EA: Environment Agency, ODA: Olympic Development Agency EDF: EDF Energy Company
 Size of circle is relative to perceived degree of influence based upon opinions derived from our study.

Gentrification



Gentrification is something that is already happening in Hackney. There are numerous studies that support this. There are also numerous studies that provide evidence for the process that awarding the Olympic Games will increase the rate of gentrification in that area. The Games Monitor group have done some great work in this area and have collected many resources on the subject. One interesting thread that could have been followed would have been to investigate the effect of gentrification on the youth of an area.

The River Lea

The effects of Development along the River Lea, the loss of the tidal nature and the role of the Olympics in this.

There seems to be a lot to suggest that the tidal nature of the River Lea has been lost in order to facilitate the removal of waste from the Olympic Park.

The Olympic Park however, includes a railway system that appears to be more than adequate for waste removal.

There is some speculation about the real reason for the changes to the river that would benefit from further study.



Essex Wharf Developments

Tied in with the effects of developments to the river itself, there is also great concern about the developments along Essex Wharf and what they mean for the future of the area.

This appears to be one of the biggest concerns of the local contacts and as a result there is a reforming of the 'Lea Valley Federation' to energise civil society opposition to the developments.



“The golden age of green spaces in and around Hackney is drawing to a close”

The above is a quote drawn from the website of Millfields Wanderers, one of our contacts and prominent actors in the community sphere. This is not a view that we are saying is correct or incorrect, but it is certainly a view that is out there within the community, despite some of the best efforts of the official sphere to the contrary.

Thank you to the local partners for taking the time to work with us

We'd like to especially thank:

- Bob Bengé
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- Martin Slavin
- Phillip Stonier
- Real Ojokor & the E5 club staff
- Ted Sawyer
- The kids at the E5 club