

A Vision for Hackney Wick

Hackney Wick is the area between Cadogan Terrace (just west of the A12), the River Lea borough boundary east of the new Waterden Road, the borough boundary to the south, which runs along the current and former course of Wallis Road, and along the east side of Victoria Park. (Wallis Road, the main street in the area, used to run along the current alignment of Cadogan Close, passing under the railway roughly where the elevated footbridge over the motorway now is.)

(We will call the A12 a motorway throughout, as this is what it effectively is, despite the lack of such an official designation.)

The name 'Hackney Wick' is also frequently applied to areas to the south, e.g. to Fish Island. However, these areas were not historically part of Hackney Wick, and while a small part of Hackney Wick (around Rothbury Road and White Post Lane, north of the Hertford Union Canal) is in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, we are only dealing with the part of Hackney Wick that is within the London Borough of Hackney.

Hackney Wick has recently experienced a small urban renaissance, with an artist and small business community changing the use of industrial units located there, and many of the recent residents cycle. A new bike shop has opened and the area is widely considered an attractive place to live.

The main problem in Hackney Wick which concerns us here is motorway traffic, closely followed by through motor traffic bound for Stratford via the new alignment of Carpenter's Road. For such a small area, it certainly packs in the problems.

Approaches to the A12

The A12 junction with Wick Road and Chapman Road has a large land take owing to its three slip roads: one for traffic to join the A12 southbound, one to join the A12 northbound, and one to come off the A12 northbound. There is no possibility of leaving the A12 southbound here. Only the A12 Lea Interchange has a full complement of slip roads.

This is a historically important junction and the site of the former Victoria Park railway station, which was first located north, and then south of, Wick Road. It provided another public transport connection to the Wick, which was also served by the east-west rail route, which still exists, unlike the North London Railway route from Dalston to Poplar.

In terms of strategic traffic management in Hackney, this motorway junction and the one at the A12 Lea Interchange (see the section on Hackney Marshes) are Hackney's main causes of east-west through motor traffic, although naturally without their presence there would still be a certain level of through motor traffic to Stratford and north-east via the A104. Most of the traffic management problems in Dalston and Hackney Central, including widespread rat-running, are caused by users of through motor traffic modes trying to access the motorway.

Motor traffic aiming for and coming off the slip roads contributes to a poor environment for

cycling in Wick Road. The westernmost slip road, for joining the A12 northbound, causes fast motor traffic movements and has the potential to cause left hook crashes, although owing to low levels of cycling along this street this potential has fortunately not manifested itself much. Needless to say, the intimidating nature of the turn is not acceptable.

The other two slip roads cause an excessively complicated junction layout under and around the bridges. There are no redeeming features to the carriageway layout here; lane widths are generally inadequate for sharing, the central median takes up space which would be needed at the nearside, and staggered and missing pedestrian crossings are symptomatic of the need to reconfigure the entire layout here, a fairly major project and unlikely to be realised unless a radical and innovative solution to the motorway problem was found.

The best traffic management solution for Hackney would be to remove the motorway junction entirely and to restore some of the old streetscape in the space gained. This would greatly reduce through motor traffic around Hackney, as drivers would seek to join the motorway in other boroughs, primarily Tower Hamlets. Needless to say, the likelihood of this happening is very low, too. We discuss the desirability or otherwise of motorway access to and from the borough in the section on Hackney Marshes in greater detail.

So, while this option has no chance of happening in the foreseeable future, a reduction in the number of carriageway lanes is also unlikely. Wick Road up to the junction with Eastway and Chapman Road is TLRN and TfL would most likely block such a proposal. As the historic streetscape which used to exist here around the former railway station has been destroyed, there is also at present no cogent argument to be made about improving the walking environment. Only a disused pub survives. The area is a prime example of how excessive transport infrastructure was installed as London's population was shrinking. At the time, the thinking was that the urban grain should be loosened. This is no longer a possibility today, with a growing population and tremendous pressure on housing, and the A12 takes up a lot of space which could be used more effectively. Suggestions have been made of covering over the motorway to release space for housing or a linear park, but this would be unlikely to improve the problems with motorway traffic emerging here.

Few short-term measures suggest themselves. The left turn onto the northbound A12 should certainly be slowed by 'squaring up' the corner as much as possible. The junction layouts throughout could be simplified and the streetscene made more appealing by standard decluttering and other beneficial streetscape measures. However, it is most likely that this would be one of the later parts of this Vision to be realised.

As concerns priority for action, this will probably be one of the last parts of Hackney addressed in the transformation that we envisage in this suite of documents. Where few possibilities seem to have any immediate prospect of being realised, it is likely that earlier change for the better elsewhere can prepare the ground for change here.

Eastway

The former main east-west alignment of Eastway, before the M11 Link Road part of the A102(M) (now the A12) was built, is a residential street with attractive public buildings and

good links to green spaces. While the Trowbridge Estate to the east does not contribute much to the streetscene along Eastway, it is an attractive low-density development which will probably see intensification along with the rest of Hackney Wick in the foreseeable future.

Eastway is relatively narrow, between six and eight metres wide throughout, and there are no real options for improvements to the carriageway layout. The street is certainly unsuitable for the large amount of through motor traffic which uses it. This is mainly in the westbound direction, as from the junction with Lee Conservancy Road onwards only a bus-and-cycle lane is available eastbound, which reduces through motor traffic movements towards the A12 Lea Interchange. Such traffic is forced to use Lee Conservancy Road and then Homerton Road when coming from Eastway, which is less direct than taking the route along Kenworthy Road or Homerton High Street.

There is, however, a lot of westbound traffic, mainly because there is no possibility for southbound drivers of leaving the A12 at Hackney Wick owing to the missing slip road. Accordingly, drivers leave the A12 at the Lea Interchange and drive along Eastway to get to the Wick. With the 'new' Waterden Road, there will probably be less westbound through motor traffic on Eastway, but overall more motor traffic in the area than there was during the Olympics construction phase and the Olympics themselves. In any event, until the traffic management mess caused by the motorway is sorted out, there is little scope for improving Eastway itself.

The 'Red Path'

A local connection from Edmeston Close to Eastway, this crosses the motorway on a bridge. It used to be the only permeable feature between Wick Road and Lee Conservancy Road. At one point, the Eastway end was awarded Section 106 funding from a local development for the purpose of constructing a Toucan crossing there, and this was built a few years ago. The Red Path itself suffers from poor surface quality. It has been used less since Sustrans built the path along the northern side of the Eastway on Mabley Green. This links to the Red Path and is more open, providing a better and more direct connection to Lee Conservancy Road and further east. The Red Path, by contrast, is a more direct link to the Trowbridge Estate. Despite both paths being lit at night, they both have a certain feeling of isolation, and are not the most attractive connections to use at night.

The main improvement to be made to the Red Path is the access arrangement at the western end, in Edmeston Close, but this is in the scope of the Vision for Homerton.

Filtering in Wick

Hackney Wick east of Eastway and north of Wallis Road does not at present appear to attract a great deal of through motor traffic. There seems to be little rat-running south-east to north-west. There are certainly possibilities for filtering, however. Wallis Road and White Post Lane (in Tower Hamlets) could be considered if the access requirements to the industrial units there permitted. While it is unclear for how long they will remain in the face of likely high-density residential redevelopment, the industrial units still attract large HGVs

and this would have to be taken into account in any filtering proposals. Some streets already are filtered, e.g. Prince Edward Road outside the Hackney Pearl café.

Waterden Road

The 'new' Waterden Road, which in reality has a very different alignment from the 'old' Waterden Road, is a poorly-constructed street with poor-quality cycle-specific provision alongside and a standard carriageway layout of 3.5m wide lanes which should have no place in Hackney. As part of the general Olympic disaster, there was little scope for influencing it before it was built. Originally meant to be a dual carriageway, mainly to ferry customers by car from the A12 Lea Interchange to the shopping centre at Westfield Stratford, fortunately it was changed to a single carriageway street. Ideally, the street would at some point in the future be upgraded to a shareable width, but this would require pushing land boundaries and is therefore unlikely to happen.

The approach to Waterden Road from the A12 Lea Interchange (which we discuss in the section on Hackney Marshes) has been made unnecessarily complicated and indirect. While the fact that Waterden Road has been moved from its former more eastern alignment in order to increase the size of the Olympic Park is understandable, although it has made travelling south much more indirect, the junction layout at the northern end is entirely wrong and needs to be simplified. It is compromised by having been laid out when the idea was still to make Waterden Road a major dual carriageway connection to the A12 Lea Interchange, an idea resisted by the London Borough of Hackney, and the junction is now one with multiple slip roads whose layout is still somewhat based on the layout of the Northern Access Plaza which was located here during the Olympics.

While this would have reduced the park area to the east and separated it from a park-like 'buffer' to the west, it would, on balance, have been better to retain the more direct layout of Waterden Road roughly parallel with the River Lea. This would have created a buffer to the overdominant buildings of the former Media Centre which overshadow the street. The unresolved problem is that Olympic land use planning was aimed at creating two very distinct 'zones' here; on the one hand, to the east, the Olympic Park, and on the other hand, to the west, a major road, not an urban street, alongside the hangar-like Media Centre with its perfunctory and unattractive elevation. It will most likely take decades to address this problem.

Crossing of the motorway from Victoria Park

[What is now Cadogan Close used to be the western end of Wallis Road](#), the main street in the Wick. It passed under the railway at this point. When the motorway was built, the underpass under the railway was not converted into an underpass under the motorway (which was wider and constructed at a lower level than the railway), and a walking-and-cycling footbridge was built instead. This now provides a less direct, harder-to-negotiate connection and takes longer to cross. The bridge can be cycled at both ends and is not the worst connection imaginable, but little scope exists here to improve crossing provision. This alignment is still a significant connection for cycle traffic in the area, as Victoria Park is pleasant to use.

Cadogan Terrace

The problems with the north-south connections in this area were not introduced only by the building of the motorway, but largely predated this. The east-west length of Victoria Park greatly reduces permeability and in its east the only north-south connections outside the park are Cadogan Terrace, leading to Wick Lane (in Tower Hamlets) and Chapman Road/Rothbury Road/Wansbeck Road (Tower Hamlets). Not surprisingly, Cadogan Terrace, a narrow residential street with awkward car parking arrangements, is often treated as a rat-run by drivers. As ever, modally filtering this street would be desirable, but as it is shared between Hackney and Tower Hamlets, aside from residents both authorities would need to be supportive, which at present has not been explored.