London Docklands Development Corporation
1981-1998

An Overview
What was the LDDC?

- an urban development corporation (UDC) set up by the Government under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

Statutory objects

A UDC is expected to secure the regeneration of its area by:

- Bringing land and buildings into effective use
- Encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce
- Creating an attractive environment and ensuring that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area
Why was LDDC set up?

The Government’s response to the severe economic, physical and social damage caused to East London by the closure of London’s docks

“The place was a tip: 6,000 acres of forgotten wasteland”
– Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State, 1981

“Conventional local government solutions failed to halt the accelerating decline. A new approach was needed.”
– Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State 1986
The LDDC’s area

The riverside parts of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham

Area = 8.5 square miles

Coloured areas show derelict land and waters in 1981
The area in 1981
(Government Study)

- Catastrophic recent job losses
- High proportion of public sector land
- 95% social housing
- Local blue collar job skills did not match growth areas of the London economy.
- Severe dereliction made development costs very high and uncertain
- Government intervention required to cover extraordinary costs of land reclamation, infrastructure and essential amenities

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The area in 1981 ……continued

• Many development sites poorly served by the local infrastructure

• Poor strategic links with the rest of London, the country and internationally.

• No track record - lack of development over many years made prospects for development very uncertain

These factors made it difficult for the market, without external intervention, to reverse the steep cycle of decline
Four Key Powers
1. Land Acquisition
   • by agreement
   • by compulsory purchase
   • new vesting powers
2. Power to give planning permission
3. Powers to renew/revitalise the infrastructure
4. Channel for central Government Resources

Funding?
- Central Government grant
- Income from sales of land
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What the Corporation was not!

• A local authority
• A housing authority
• An education authority
• A health authority

• These functions remained with the Boroughs and other public agencies
• Corporation could and did provide funds for the development and improvement of these service
• Lack of remit often misunderstood by those seeking benefit for local people
How the LDDC worked

- Huge energy
- Flexible staffing
- No time wasted on drawing-up new town style master plans
- LDDC worked to flexible development frameworks and was ready to respond to unexpected opportunities (e.g. Canary Wharf)
- Positive development control regime - LDDC worked with applicants and tried to say “yes”
- Effective marketing and PR
- Effective project management – ability to soak up under-spends in other DoE programmes
The three phases of LDDC
1981-1986 – Putting Docklands on the map

- Key decision not to fill-in docks
- Initial focus on the Isle of Dogs
- Selling the area - marketing and PR
- Building the DLR
- Starting the infrastructure programme
- Establishing the private housing market
- Tense relationships with Boroughs
- Limited expenditure on community facilities
- Clinching Canary Wharf

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The three phases of LDDC... continued

1987-1990 – Building the Community Infrastructure

- Community budget boosted to £100m p.a.
- Heavily increased spending on social housing, health, education and training
- Increased community staff – 50 people
- Increased support for community organisations
- Improved relationships with the Boroughs
- The Tower Hamlets Accord and Newham Memorandum signed
- Continued spending on the infrastructure programme
- Property market falls into recession – much less private investment in housing and commercial development
The three phases of LDDC... continued

1991-1998 – The balanced programme

- Whitehall concerned that LDDC turning into a local authority
- Community expenditure reined in and focused on the Accord and Memorandum
- Still a substantial community programme (e.g. 8,000 homes refurbished)
- The market recovers
- Schemes for the Royals launched – not fully delivered by 1998
- Progressive withdrawal from 1994 onwards
What was achieved?
(LDDC’s 1998 Annual Report)

- £1.86 billion invested by public sector
- £7.7 billion invested by private sector
- 1,066 acres of land sold for redevelopment
- 144 km of new and improved roads
- the construction of the Docklands Light Railway
- 25 million sq feet of commercial /industrial floorspace built
- 1,884 acres of derelict land reclaimed

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What was achieved? .....continued

• 24,046 new homes built
• 2,700 businesses trading
• contributions to 5 new health centres and the redevelopment of 6 more
• funding towards 11 new primary schools, 2 secondary schools, 3 post-16 colleges and 9 vocational training centres
• 94 awards for architecture, conservation and landscaping
• 85,000 now at work in London Docklands
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How well did LDDC succeed?
(1998 Government Research Study)

• Widespread multiple market failure successfully tackled

• Total public sector cost about £3,900 million (LDDC 48%, London Transport 25% Enterprise Zone 27%).

• Half the public sector cost spent on transport infrastructure.

• Private sector investment £8,700+ million by March 1998 with more to come.

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How well did LDDC succeed… continued

- Wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits including 24,000+ housing units and 80,000+ jobs (gross)
- Housing tenure substantially more varied
- Every £1m of public sector cost generated:
  - 23 jobs (net),
  - 8500 sq m of office floorspace,
  - 7.8 housing units plus many other diverse and intermediate benefits.
- Some benefits still to materialise - the cost-benefit ratio should increase by a third by 2010 - 2015.

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How well did LDDC succeed … continued

• Substantial benefits for local communities and residents.

• More social housing than if LDDC had not existed.

• LDDC generated an additional 23,000 jobs in Central London by increasing the supply of high grade office accommodation which led to a more competitive financial centre.
The LDDC finished its work and left the area by stages….

- Bermondsey Riverside: 30th October 1994
- Surrey Docks: 20th December 1996
- Isle of Dogs: 10th October 1997
- Beckton: 31st December 1995
- Royal Docks: 31st March 1998

The LDDC ceased to operate on 31st March 1998 and was wound up three months later.
More Information… LDDC books

Mindful that its work aroused great interest worldwide the LDDC left:

- a Regeneration Statement
- 9 monographs on different aspects of its work
- 5 booklets about its work in particular areas

These were widely distributed but are not always easy now to obtain……so……..
More Information… LDDC History Website

A group of former LDDC people have set up a website:

www.lddc-history.org.uk

The site includes:

- The Regeneration Statement, monographs and area booklets
- An e-mail service for LDDC’s press releases
- Key personnel papers about the winding-up of the Corporation
- Other snippets of history
- Links to other useful sites

30,000 hits a year!