

# Urban change



## Case study

### Fantastic fact



In 1900, London was the world's largest city, with 6.5 million people.

To understand what a modern city is like, you need to know how, when and where it started, and how it has developed and changed.

## London – an example of changing land use

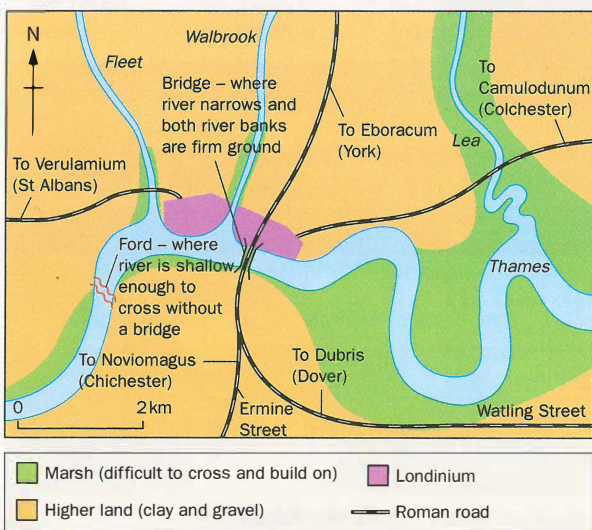
The Romans first built Londinium beside the river Thames almost 2000 years ago (map A). This site was chosen because it was easily defended and the Romans knew that it could become an important route centre. The actual site is now occupied by London's financial district, between the areas now known as the city's 'East End' and 'West End'.

From the earliest times, the western and eastern sides of London have developed in very different ways (photos B and C). The East

End has always been heavily industrialised and housed many of London's poorly paid workers. By contrast the West End is well known for its royal palaces, government buildings, large houses and expensive shops.

The East End developed first. Roman ships could not sail under London Bridge, the lowest bridging point across the Thames, so a port was established downstream of this. Industries developed behind the quays, as well as low-quality housing for the dock and factory workers, many of them refugees who migrated here from mainland Europe.

The West End developed later, around the 11th-century Westminster Abbey, and became the preferred location for royalty, the very wealthy, and the most influential people in government. One reason for choosing Westminster was that the



**A** Original site of London



**B** London's East End



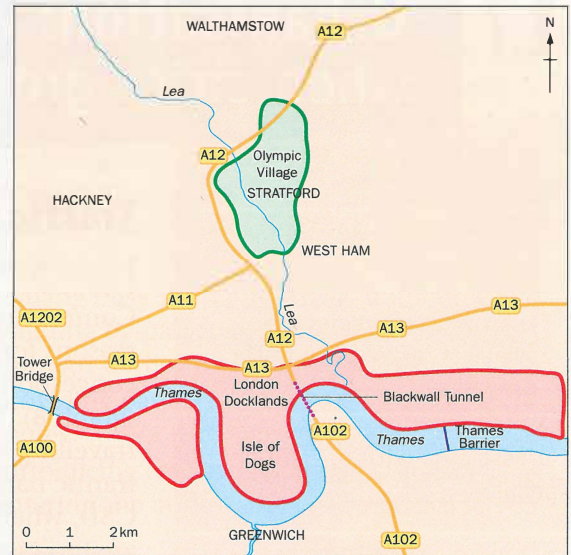
**C** West End of London



prevailing winds blow from the south-west, so any air pollution from the East End's industries blows towards the North Sea, *away* from the West End. The large parks in this part of the city were originally hunting forests for the nobility, and they have been used as recreational areas ever since. It is quite unusual to find so much open space in the heart of a city, where the competition for land is intense.

By the 1980s, sea-going ships had become too big for the East End docks, and most of the industries that depended on them for imported raw materials had re-located elsewhere. The East End's economy had seriously declined and local unemployment had reached record levels. In 1981 The London Docklands Development Corporation was established to redevelop the whole area and give it a new lease of economic life. Photo **D** shows what this area looks like now.

The 2012 London Olympic Games were held in the valley of the River Lea, a northern tributary of the River Thames, just east of London Docklands. A major aim of the project has been to transform this area of dereliction and deprivation into one where people will want to live and work long after the games have finished. Map **E** shows what has been done to transform the whole of this area.



DOCKLANDS	OLYMPIC VILLAGE
22 000 new homes, many in renovated warehouses	High-speed rail link to central London
10 000 upgraded local authority houses	Park and ride car parks
New shopping centres	Wetland habitats restored
New college/university campuses	New bridges across main roads
Indoor sports centre and yacht marina	Olympic Stadium – accommodates 80 000 people
Docklands Light Railway – 10 minutes to central London	Aquatics Centre – future training and competitive events
London City Airport – 500 000 passengers a year	Velodrome – links to cycle circuit and cycle routes across London
New road link to M11 motorway	Olympic Village – 3 300 new homes, 30% affordable housing
43 000 new jobs	370 000 m <sup>2</sup> for future business developments
1 500 new businesses	Media centre – office facilities for 8 000 people

**E** Modern development of East London

**D** London Docklands today

## Now Investigate



- 1 Make a sketch of map **A** and annotate your map to show how London's original site and the East End and West End have developed over the centuries. (Do not include detailed information about the Docklands and Olympic Games redevelopment projects.)
- 2 a Outline the reasons why it became necessary to regenerate London Docklands and the Lea Valley area.  
b Make a well-presented list of the regeneration plans for each area.
- 3 Find some examples of how the growth of London has resulted in urban sprawl in the surrounding rural areas.

## Further research



Investigate the impact of a previous Olympic Games on its host city. For example, the 2004 Games was in Athens – you could find out how it stimulated economic growth and improved recreational facilities in that city.

## Topic link



More detail about the environmental impact of rapid urban growth and its effects on the rural-urban fringe can be found on pages 48–51.