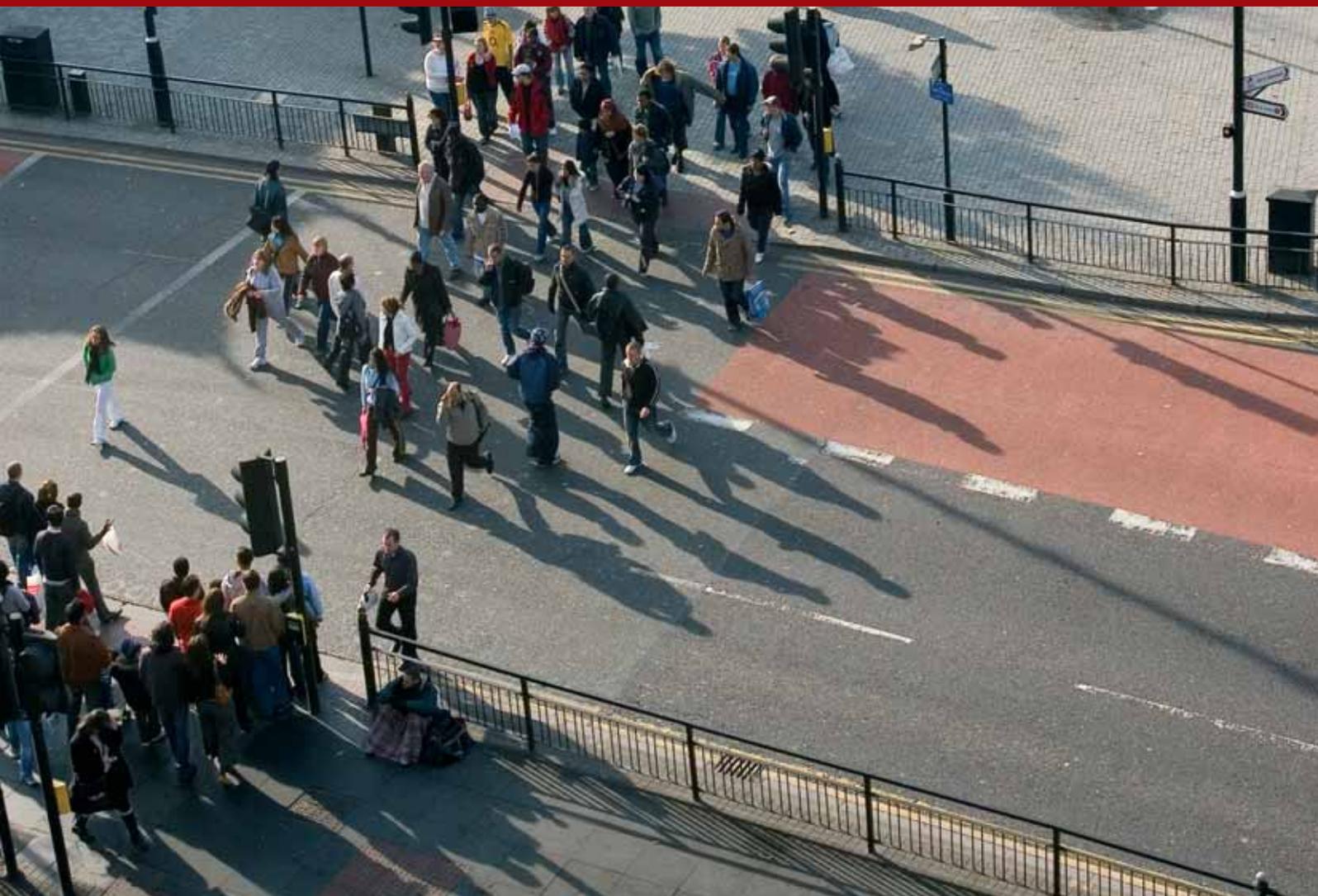


Inspiring communities

The churches in the heart of the Thames Gateway – playing their part in regeneration





CONTENTS

Foreword	1
The Bishop of Barking explains how the churches of East London are playing their part in the area's regeneration	
Communities for the future	2
Explains the churches' involvement with the communities of which they are a part – and illustrates their contribution to regeneration with a series of case studies	
The regeneration challenge	6
Describes the implications of the transformation of East London for those that live and work here	
Working together	8
Describes the five key elements that will enable the churches to be a more effective catalyst for creating sustainable communities across the Thames Gateway, now and in the future	

Many thanks to the London Borough of Newham for allowing us to use images from their photo library and thanks also to the featured churches who provided the photos that illustrate the case studies



Foreword

The Bishop of Barking, The Rt. Revd. David Hawkins, explains why churches are committed to building sustainable communities across East London

For centuries the churches have been at the forefront of creating sustainable communities. In many parts of the world they were the first providers of free education and healthcare and, across East London today, churches provide innumerable practical services and projects to help local people, and they form a substantial part of the voluntary sector in most areas. Some of these projects, featuring real faith in action, are featured throughout this publication.

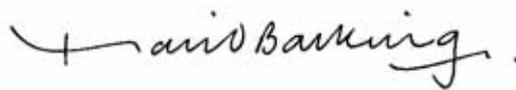
Like others, the churches believe that sustainable communities must be fully inclusive. Churches stand for social justice and a fairer, more compassionate, society. The contribution made by the Christian churches is distinct and embraces diversity – actively caring for those whom society neglects or rejects.

So churches have a vital role in helping to shape, and to support our communities. In East London, in the heart of the Thames Gateway, we are facing huge changes, huge opportunities, and huge challenges. Major redevelopment is being planned across, Stratford, Lower Lea, London Riverside, Romford, Ilford, Barking and Walthamstow, and, of course, the 2012 Olympics...

But what will this mean for local people? Will they benefit? Will we build, not only places, but also communities where people want to work, to live and to bring up their children?

Inspiring Communities describes some of the ways that the churches are involved in helping the regeneration of the Thames Gateway. Its focus is on the five boroughs at the heart of the Thames Gateway sub-region – Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest.

Inspiring Communities is published by the Church of England, in close partnership with the many Churches with which we work. We also work closely with other faiths, and other organisations and groups from the public, private, and voluntary sectors. We share the same vision, and the same goal – the best possible future, for everyone in our communities.



Bishop of Barking
The Right Reverend David Hawkins

Throughout *Inspiring Communities* the term 'East London' refers exclusively to the five London Boroughs in which it is set: Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest





PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Regeneration is coming to East London and the area is starting to be transformed. The Thames Gateway is the biggest regeneration project in Europe and the largest challenge facing us is to see that what is delivered is what the people of East London want and need, now and in the future.

It's undoubtedly a dynamic place for the 1.1 million people who live there, in very diverse communities with very real needs: the boroughs include some of the most vibrant, yet disadvantaged, in England. In 2012 the area hosts the Olympic games, and the eyes of the world will be upon it.

Successful regeneration demands a holistic approach, which brings together the needs of the community, the economy, and the environment. New buildings and infrastructure are not enough: regeneration must be people-centred, and here the churches play a vital role.

Regeneration, in the words of The Commission on Urban Life and Faith, has to "take into account less quantifiable questions such as quality of life, well-being, happiness even – what we might term the 'human face' of the city. We have to ask questions about the soul of the city as well, and about how faith communities can help develop this." (1)



Communities for the future

Churches are a strong focus for life in East London. They are a crucial element in transforming the area into better places to live and work

Living with communities

Churches are a constant presence and a strong focus for community life in every part of East London. The long-established churches, that is the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, The Salvation Army, The United Reformed Church and the Baptist Church, have 223 buildings and worship centres across the five boroughs, served by 297 clergy and hundreds more lay leaders and volunteers. The Church of England alone has 110 churches, with 159 clergy.

Christians of all denominations are committed to working out their faith in East London, and they're joined by the other major faiths, all of which are present and active right across the Thames Gateway. Faith leaders are probably unique among professional groups in that they live and work full time among the communities they serve – and so they know these communities intimately.

Churches are there for people at significant times in their lives – when they marry, when they have children, when they become ill or die – and for everyday advice and support. Every single church includes volunteers who are engaged in

servicing their community. Taken together, the churches are by far the largest voluntary providers of activities and support for children and young people, single people and couples, families and older people in the UK.

Together, the involved and committed church members, and the faithful communities they represent, are an integral part of urban life. In many areas they're a crucial element in building or transforming communities into better places to live and work.

Working with communities

Churches care for people in their place of work. The ecumenical chaplaincy network provides chaplains for some of the larger shopping centres and businesses across the Thames Gateway. The chaplains are trained to help people deal with issues in both their working and their personal lives. Other chaplains work alongside people in universities, hospitals, and prisons.

Churches are active partners in a range of projects, which are training, and equipping people for work, helping them to get jobs, as well as offering childcare and other practical support to working people.



ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, HAROLD HILL, ROMFORD

The St George's Church and Centre, built with partnership funding, is situated at the heart of the deprived area of Harold Hill in outer London. Open seven days a week, and intensively used by local people, St George's employs a full time community worker and is home to a wide range of activities, providing the main base for Surestart, and offering training, volunteering, childcare, and drop-in facilities. Much of their work is with young families, giving important development opportunities both to children and to their parents.

CHRIST CHURCH, THAMES VIEW, BARKING

The community advice centre attached to Christ Church, on the Thames View estate in Barking, provides an accessible port of call for around 3,000 people a year. The centre takes pride in treating people as individuals and helping with all their needs, including health, housing, training, employment, benefits, debt, consumer, fuel and legal issues. It has achieved the Quality Mark for its services, and receives many local authority referrals. Demand is expected to increase as the growth of Barking Riverside takes off, which the centre is well placed to meet.





ST LUKE'S, CANNING TOWN

St Luke's set up Canning Town Outlook in 2002, to provide a much needed meeting place and learning opportunities for refugee families from countries including Somalia and Bangladesh. In partnership with the local authority, other local agencies and volunteers, the centre offers English and sewing classes, with a crèche provided through Surestart. Many participants have gone on to gain employment or to continue their education. Useful information about accessing local services is shared in the classes, and at a well-attended parents' support group, which meets weekly.

BRYANT STREET METHODIST CHURCH, STRATFORD

Close to Stratford town centre, Bryant Street Methodist Church has converted most of its premises into a fully staffed centre for a large number of community projects. These include work with older people, mental health, domestic violence, adult learning and leisure, black history, parental support, additional schooling, and an after school scheme. Part of the centre also provides shared residential accommodation for 15 single people who would otherwise be homeless.



ST LUKE'S, GREAT ILFORD

St Luke's in South Ilford welcomed the chance to bring a 52-place neighbourhood nursery to their site, and used it as a platform for redeveloping their own church hall into a versatile new community centre. This now provides a Care and Toddler project, ESOL and other education programmes, meeting facilities for Neighbourhood Watch and local groups, and activities for Ilford's diverse community like an Asian Dance project and a Caribbean Elders group. St Luke's is collaborating with other centres in the area – a Punjabi Centre, a Muslim Centre, and a Roman Catholic Centre – a truly joint approach to meeting the needs of the local communities.

Communities for the future

Helping communities

Churches instigate and run a huge array of community projects, large and small. The resource base of church premises, the understanding of local needs and local cultures, and the long-term commitment of both paid workers and volunteers, makes church-based projects particularly effective and sustainable.

There is a clear focus within churches on those with particular needs, such as children and young people, parents, ethnic groups, women, older people, the homeless, those not in education, employment, or training. A number of churches employ community workers or youth workers. Churches support a wide range of projects including nurseries, after school clubs, community centres, drop-in centres, advice and information services, health projects, English language teaching, mentoring schemes for community leaders and financial support (for example, through the Church Urban Fund).

Spiritual communities

Churches see the eradication of poverty as a top priority. But it is also true that, while the relief of poverty is imperative, an increasing standard of living does not guarantee wellbeing. There are many people who end up feeling deeply dissatisfied with their way of life. For some, if not all, this is because their lives lack a spiritual dimension.

The Christian churches and the other world faiths are able to fulfil this most fundamental human need. They can offer a different perspective, a new and more rewarding way of living in relationship with God and with each other. Giving people this opportunity is an integral part of creating sustainable communities.

Backing communities

Churches are well placed to champion the interests of their communities. They often have good connections with central and local government, other public agencies, schools and the voluntary sector. Their faith requires them to be concerned, not just for their own congregations, but also for society as a whole.

"At the heart of a 'good city' needs to be 'good people.' We are not talking about... being nice. We mean people who are prepared to look beyond themselves and their own needs. The major dividend (of people of faith) is people motivated by a moral sense that other people and their circumstances matter." (2)

Churches are involved with people from every culture and socio-economic group, and can identify closely with their different needs and priorities, their hopes and their fears. People who are not well represented or listened to, so-called 'hard to reach' groups, often find that their voice can be heard through their local church.



Partnering communities

Churches are experienced in working together, and with other faiths and the community as a whole. In many areas there are well-established ways for this to happen. Each faith makes a distinctive and complementary contribution to the life of the community.

The churches are committed to uniting across denominational boundaries and to working within the Thames Gateway area in order to serve the people of East London. In all five boroughs, the churches are actively involved in local strategic partnerships, voluntary forums, and regeneration partnerships, from the sub-regional Thames Gateway London Partnership to locally based partnerships such as New Deal. Local authorities, housing associations, primary care trusts, charities, and similar agencies have all found that churches are valuable partners in their work.

(1) Page 5, 1.38. The Report from The commission on Urban Life and Faith. *Faithful Cities. A call for celebration, vision and justice.* Methodist Publishing House/Church House Publishing © The Archbishop's Council 2006

(2) Page 66, 7.1. The Report from The commission on Urban Life and Faith. *Faithful Cities. A call for celebration, vision and justice.* Methodist Publishing House/Church House Publishing © The Archbishop's Council 2006



ST PETER IN THE FOREST, WALTHAMSTOW

Churches in Walthamstow are active members of Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum, which works to promote community cohesion by bringing together the different communities to work on homelessness, crime, youth and health care issues. One particularly significant piece of work has been the Health Preacher's project – where representatives from faith communities undertook training in health issues in order to communicate key health issues to their congregations.

The Forum employs a full time development worker, partly funded by the church, and their remit includes building understanding and co-operation among the faith communities. One very successful project initiated by the Forum is the knife surrender programme. This has successfully reduced the level of violence involving knives in the borough and is run in conjunction with community safety partners.



ST MARGARET'S, BARKING

As the historic Barking Abbey church, St Margaret's is the cultural heart of Barking town centre, and attracts visitors from all over the world. Its modern church centre and refectory provides refreshments and a meeting place for visitors and local residents alike, and has become a real focus for community life, especially for many older people. Barking College and Surestart are among the many users of the centre's facilities. The church has also been active in the council's community arts programme, celebrating the history and diversity of local people as a way of involving them in the regeneration of the town centre. This has included a public arts event projecting images of local people onto the windows of the church; a film based on oral histories of local people, concerts for community festivals and arts workshops for young people.



ST PAUL'S, GOODMAYES

Rev'd Ben Rutt-Field and the church council at St Paul's, Goodmayes, has worked with the Family Housing Association and the London Borough of Redbridge to create 14 warden assisted flats and a new community centre. Some of the most vulnerable members of the community now have new homes. The church has a new hall, the local community, including other faith groups, has a great new meeting place, and the scouts and uniformed groups also have new premises. The facilities have been specially designed to cater for deaf and visually impaired people.

The regeneration challenge

The Thames Gateway is the biggest regeneration project in Europe and the largest challenge facing us is to see that what is delivered is what the people of East London want and need, now and in the future

1.1 million people live in the five boroughs in important and diverse communities. Across the area there are 245,000 children and young people aged under 16; 40,000 single parents, 70,000 older people aged over 75; 35,000 unemployed people; 240,000 people of working age with no qualifications; 100,000 people in poor health and 50,000 receiving Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disability Allowance. A third of the population is from black or ethnic minority groups and around 300 languages are spoken. (3)

The needs of the present communities must be addressed along with the plans for future growth.

The concentration of opportunities in this part of London is exceptional. A massive development is planned at **Stratford**, focused on the transport interchange, with an international station on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Proposals include 465,000 sq m office and business floor space, 187,000 sq m retail and leisure, 2,000 hotel rooms, 4,500 homes, community facilities, transport improvements, and public open spaces. Overall, the development is intended to create up to 33,000 new jobs.

The **Lower Lea** is another large area planned for regeneration, with extensive areas of underused, low-grade industrial land. Here the intention is to provide new homes, leisure opportunities, and enhanced public open space, with higher density redevelopments around Canning Town and West Ham; and to attract modern businesses leading to 8,500 new jobs.



Stratford and the Lower Lea are at the centre of plans for the London 2012 Olympics. **The Olympic Park** of 200 ha (500 acres) will be home to the Olympic Stadium, Aquatic Centre, and a range of sports facilities that will permanently benefit the area; as well as the Olympic Village, which, after the Games, will be redeveloped along with other temporary structures to provide over 9,000 new homes.

Regeneration in the once derelict **Royal Docks** is under way, including London City Airport, ExCel Conference Centre, and the University of East London campus. An Aquarium has been approved to create a tourist attraction, and there is ample space for large scale residential and business developments, north and south of the docks.

The huge **London Riverside** regeneration area extends from Rainham in the east along the Thames through South Dagenham and Barking Riverside to East Beckton, and then north to include Barking town centre. Over time, this area will provide around 25,000 additional homes, with a very large new community at **Barking Riverside**, a new urban centre at **South Dagenham**, and growth in **Rainham** by redeveloping parts of the centre and re-using industrial land.

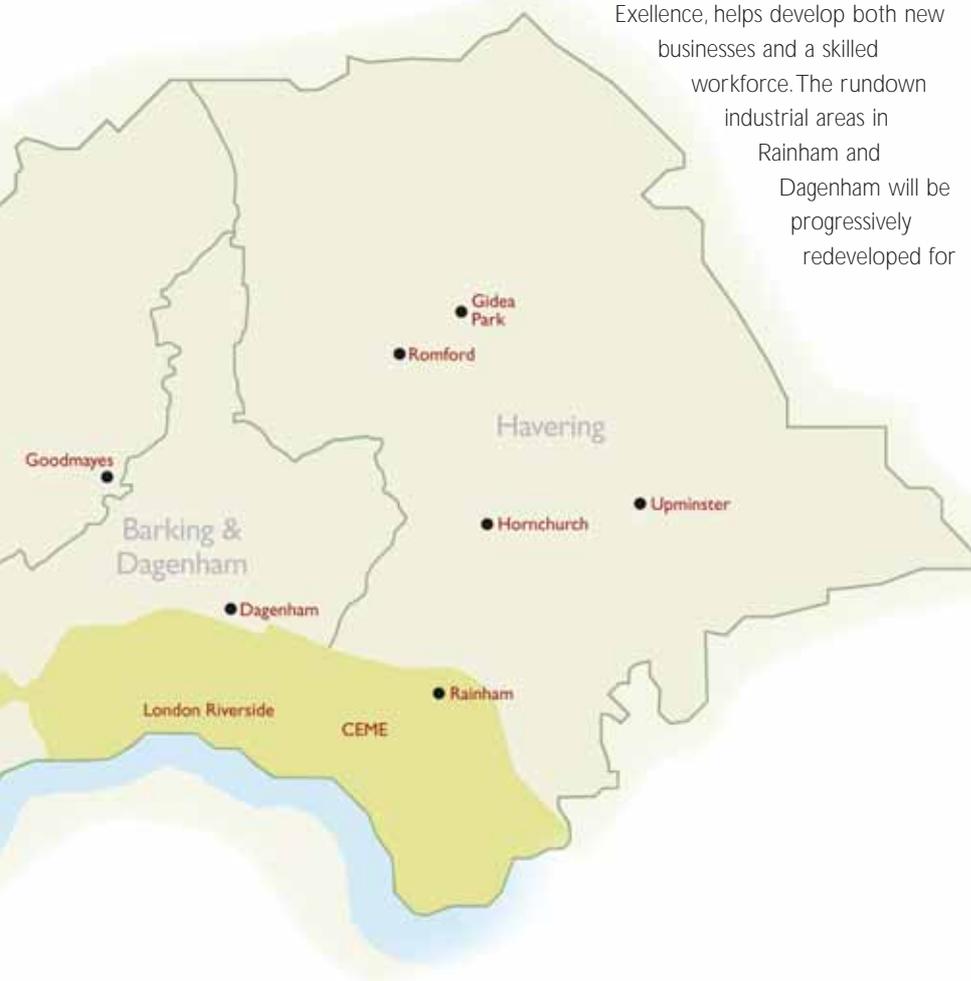
Some 650 ha (1600 acres) of nature reserves and riverside open space at Rainham will form the basis for the Wildspace Conservation Park, a major outdoor visitor attraction. **CEME**, the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence, helps develop both new businesses and a skilled workforce. The rundown industrial areas in Rainham and Dagenham will be progressively redeveloped for

modern industries providing good quality jobs. There is potential for further development at **East Beckton** as transport improves, particularly when Thames Gateway Bridge is built. And **Barking** town centre will see considerable changes, with a series of mixed-use redevelopments and improvements to the environment.

Other town centres are experiencing a renaissance too. In **Romford** the change has been dramatic, with the development of the Brewery centre, renewal and expansion of the Liberty, large mixed-use developments next to the Mall and the market, environmental improvements throughout the main streets and the historic market place, and the growth of a busy nightlife. **Iford** is planning to meet the competition with a housing-led strategy that will provide 5,000 additional homes in the centre, accompanied by increases in office and shopping floorspace. **Walthamstow** has a programme in place to achieve new infrastructure, jobs, and homes, together with retail and commercial property improvements in the town centre.

This adds up to a very big regeneration agenda for the five boroughs. *Inspiring Communities* shows how the churches are already helping local people to benefit from the changes.

(3) Most of this data is taken from the 2001 Census





CHURCH STATISTICS

Church of England

110 worship centres
159 clergy

Methodist Church

46 worship centres
20 clergy

Roman Catholic Church

38 worship centres
54 clergy

Salvation Army

8 worship centres
13 ministers

United Reformed Church

21 worship centres
17 ministers

Baptist

34 worship centres
34 ministers

The statistics above relate to the historic Christian denominations in Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and are therefore only part of the story. Across the five boroughs there are an increasing number of independent and black majority churches and they are important and distinctive part of the faithful community in East London.



Working together

The churches are already playing an important role in the communities that make up the Thames Gateway and now need the support of government to enable them to fully participate in the regeneration of East London

Successful regeneration demands a holistic approach, which brings together the needs of the community, the economy, and the environment. New buildings and infrastructure are not enough: regeneration must be people-centred, and here the churches can play a vital role.

The churches are already playing an important role in the communities that make up the Thames Gateway and there is a real desire to deepen the links between church and local government and others involved in regeneration.

The churches play a very active and positive part in every one of the five boroughs and have a serious and long-term contribution to make to the regeneration of the communities of East London.

There are five key elements to this potential partnership: involvement, openness, premises, capacity building and funding. With these ingredients in place, the churches can be a real catalyst for creating sustainable and inspired communities in the Thames Gateway, both now and in the future.

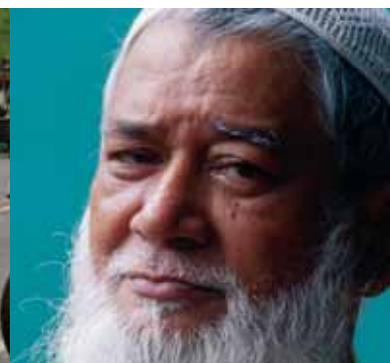
The five key elements:

- 1 **Involvement** – willingness to engage with churches as valuable partners at each level and stage in the regeneration process
- 2 **Openness** – recognition of the churches' potential, allowing them to work in a range of contexts including community provision and chaplaincy
- 3 **Premises** – particularly in large-scale redevelopments, churches need a base for their work with the community, and to practise the Christian faith
- 4 **Capacity Building** – like other voluntary organisations, churches often need help with training, information and advice, funding applications, IT and equipment, and improving or adapting premises
- 5 **Funding** – where projects and services will benefit the local community, churches ask to be treated just like other applicants for grants or financial assistance

For your response

For further information or to discuss any of the issues raised in this publication, please contact:
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In the Chelmsford Diocese, The Bishop of Bradwell, The Rt. Revd. Laurie Green, holds the portfolio commitment for regeneration, renewal and development issues across East London and Essex





Inspiring Communities describes the church's involvement in the regeneration of East London. Its focus is on the people of the five boroughs at the heart of the Thames Gateway sub-region – Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest – all within the Barking area of the Church of England's Chelmsford Diocese.

The regeneration of East London offers an unprecedented opportunity to meet the challenging and changing needs of twenty-first century London – for those who visit, for those who work here, but mostly for all those who are proud to call the area 'home.'



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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