

Plans for Future Essex .. in 1933!

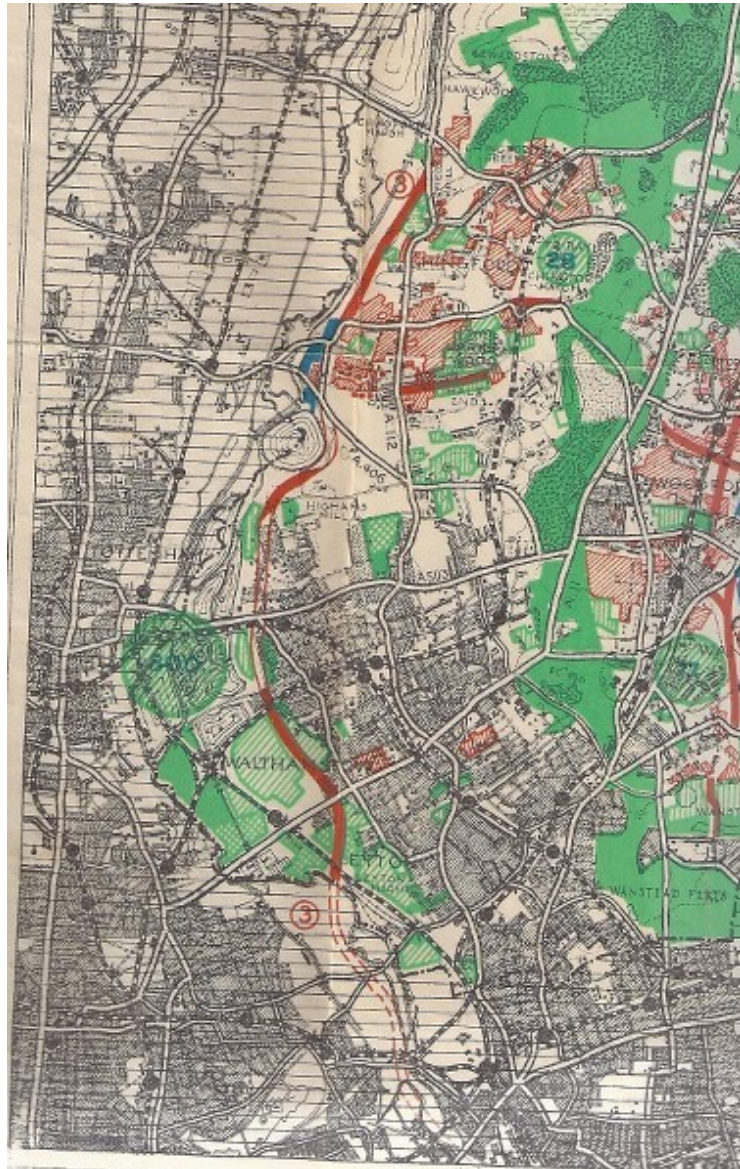
By Michael Gilbey

Some twenty years ago not long before I moved from Walthamstow I found a book I thought would be of interest on a used bookstall in the market. The book was quickly packed away due to our imminent move and only recently come to light again in a rummage through the attic.

The book is named "West Essex - A survey with some proposals for its regional development". Published in 1933 and written by a Professor S.D. Adshead of the University of London.

West Essex was defined as an area N/S of Brentwood intersecting with a horizontal line level from Ware in Hertfordshire. A fold out map within the book shows amongst other things some grandiose road developments including major roads. One road proposal follows very close to the line of the M25.

A new major road was also proposed running from near Stratford Broadway and along the line of the River Lea intersecting with Lea Bridge Road, Forest Road, the North Circular Road before finally rejoining the existing road network in The Ridgeway, Chingford near the existing Waltham Way/Mansfield Hill junction. (see map)



Although development proposals covered large parts West Essex, it would appear that the good professor did not rate Leyton or Walthamstow very highly and consigned their fate in only two unflattering paragraphs, which I have reproduced in full below. Just two paragraphs in a 120 page book!

"4. Outer London - Leyton and Walthamstow

This section of the area is distinctly East London. Except for the intervening Lea Valley - which in this position is either a wilderness, an area of railway sidings, Victorian factories, gas works or dumps - it would be a continuation of Hackney and Clapton. But as an extension of London it has not so much joined over the Lea River as become an extension north of West Ham and Stratford, via the Romford Road and Bow.

(....)

This section is largely residential, and it contains a vast area of terraced houses, such as were erected on the confines of every industrial town in England during the early part of the reign of Queen Victoria. More recently, some factories have been erected, and probably the best future development of these two practically built-up districts would be to pull down areas of old houses and erect thereon more factories: and to raise the flood areas and convert them into playing fields for a vast population of workers living on either side of the River Lea."

If these developments had gone ahead, the Walthamstow Memories site is unlikely to have existed save for talk about a vast industrial estate called Leyton and Walthamstow. As far as I can see, none of the proposals in this book were ever adopted, I wonder why?

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