

SPAGHETTI JUNCTION (AREA 1)

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The construction of Spaghetti Junction swept away a significant chunk of Gravelly Hill and Aston under a promise of a better life for all. A modern Birmingham for a modern age. I was sold on the idea. I like building sites and the technology and machinery used in the construction matched all of my expectations and the promises of the planners. It was indeed a mammoth construction and engineering endeavour that we had not seen on this scale before in Birmingham.

The name Spaghetti Junction was soon coined and looking at the plans you could see why. I was so excited and watched its construction progress on a daily basis. I went in all the parts of that construction site where we should not have gone.

The area around Salford Bridge was quite a vibrant community with rows of shops extending around Slade Road and the Erdington Arms pub on the corner. Leamington Road, Bridge Road, Woodland Road and the bottom half of Copeley Hill were row after row of terraced houses. The top half of Copeley Hill had half a dozen very large, detached houses with Burlington House at the top. It was used as a reform school. The neglected gardens still had a derelict swimming pool.

Underneath the intended Spaghetti Junction were the meeting points of the river Tame's confluence with the River Rea and Hockley Brook, the Cross-City and Walsall railway lines and Salford Junction, where the Grand Union Canal, Birmingham and Fazeley Canal and Tame Valley Canal meet.

The bulldozers made short work of the Erdington Arms, Leamington Road, Bridge Road, Woodland Road and most of Copeley Hill. The remaining houses whose uninterrupted vista across Salford Park and the lake changed forever. My school friend, a remaining resident joined the blood lead monitoring scheme.

The first two concrete motorway decking support columns were erected at the bottom of Copeley Hill, which ironically seemed to be the last part to be completed as the light concrete structure grew towards the sky and everything else left behind on the ground grew darker. I so looked forward to its opening. The Aston Expressway with its seven lanes, flashing lights and the tidal flow system was a space age dream that would sweep away the traffic jams of Lichfield Road in an instant and convey you to, through and beyond town.

With the motorway system being bought right onto our doorstep, we could finally have a holiday with swift comfortable travel. Holiday travel down the A5 to exotic locations like Rhyl was always a nightmare.

The planners and architects were also keen to sell their baby with the self-same promise of goodies. On the new Victoria Road Island, they installed this row of benches so that joe public could sit and watch the passing Aston Expressway traffic in extreme comfort. As you can imagine, you had to stand well clear in case you were trampled under the rush of people eager to try out this new form of entertainment.

Nobody loves a baby as much as its mother.

We call it Spaghetti Junction. The planners call it Gravelly Hill Interchange, but we still call it Spaghetti Junction.

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10th September 2023