

newsforum



The London Forum working to protect and improve the quality of life in London

The London Forum of
Amenity and Civic Societies
Founded 1988

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Chairman's remarks

It has been a busy period since our last newsletter in the summer. There were several issues arising from Transport for London's plans and from the Mayor's interventions on development proposals that prompted me to give evidence to GLA Assembly committees



Traffic and Transport

The consultations on Crossrail and on the Uxbridge Road tram ran through into October. Although both these transport proposals would cover the Acton to Southall corridor, there does not seem to be an integrated transport strategy that relates them.

TfL propose to design and implement a tram system which, when operating, would displace many thousands of vehicles off the Uxbridge Road. The impacts on the A4, A40, M41, the routes linking to them and local residential streets have not been fully evaluated. The highway capacity of Shepherds Bush Green would be halved. Extra traffic delays, noise, pollution and danger would be serious.

I gave details on these issues at a meeting of the GLA Assembly Transport committee but, unless there are significant plan changes, these points will have to be carried forward to a public inquiry on the tram next year.

TfL are reported to have said that the tram schemes do not yet have funding and the expenditure on congestion charge extension will be significant. We are seeking consideration of the cost/benefit aspects of both schemes by the Assembly Budget committee and the TfL Board.

With the 'Corridor 6' to Kingston dropped from the Crossrail plans, that project is now likely to be of lower cost and with more stations west of Paddington. The positioning and construction period of some planned

ventilation and escape shafts are causes for concern. Members will be exploring these issues at the Crossrail meeting on November 16th (*see back page*).

Unsustainable development

There have been several approved developments that do not conform to planning policies and we will all have to increase our efforts to have the London Plan and local UDP/LDF requirements upheld in future.

I attended a public inquiry as third party objector to a proposed development that could set several precedents for disregarding policies of the London Plan. Unfortunately most of them had been approved by Ken Livingstone but the negotiations had not been made known to the Council. Other major developments have lacked assessment against the Blue Ribbon Network policies.

Brentford is having its population doubled but the developments have left the area short of play space, school capacity, health facilities and other public services. Further developments there that would not meet planning policies appear to have the GLA's approval (*please see page 3*).

Evidence on these cases has been provided to the Economic Development and Planning committee of the Assembly and to the Mayor's SDS team for investigation.

Environmental issues

At a September meeting of the Assembly Environment committee I suggested topics

for inclusion in their future programme. Our points covered the dumping of sewage into the Thames when there are heavy rain storms; worsening air pollution; the impact of Heathrow airport development and operation; the permitted development status of mobile 'phone mast installations; 'grotty' public realm areas; inadequate recycling levels and the failure of Councils to maintain trees and parks.

Local Government

Just as London's Councils are struggling with sub regional and local development frameworks the Government launched a new 'Vision for Local Government'. The associated ODPM research papers seem to imply that the restructuring expected following the Local Government Act 2000 is incomplete. The London Forum will be asking its member societies what has happened in their Council with committee structures, devolution of decision making to local level, the operation of scrutiny processes and community involvement.

Societies now need to check their local authority's Statement on Licensing Policy, to ensure there are adequate safeguards and controls for the late night economy changes due early next year.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

The role of heritage in regeneration

The guest speaker at this year's AGM was **Dr. Simon Thurley**, Chief Executive of English Heritage. A brief summary of his talk follows.

Dr. Thurley immediately established a rapport with his audience by disarmingly giving all credit to his staff for the high-tech nature of his presentation.

English Heritage Policy

On English Heritage Policy, he pointed out that care for our heritage has become not so much a question of preserving buildings as of managing change. Change has made our history – and created London. Instead of just saying no to the wrong things, English Heritage prefers to be seen as the enabler of good things. Nevertheless there are moments when they have to be tough. There is a virtuous circle in the approach to historic building which goes – Understand; Value; Care; Enjoy. Without undermining the “area” approach to conservation we must also cherish the individual which people value – the isolated, unlisted Victorian pub, for example!

Recent examples of English Heritage intervention cited included:

1. The P&O site close to Kings Cross, completely redesigned after criticism from English Heritage (and others) to the original proposals.
2. The designation of an Area Action Plan for the City Fringe area of Shoreditch/Hackney.
3. The rescuing of the original Brunel bridge only recently discovered hidden within the more recent bridge carrying Bishops Bridge Road over the railway at Paddington. The Brunel Bridge will be re-erected nearby.

Problems at Trafalgar Square and Woolwich Arsenal

Under the heading of Capital Solution and Heritage Dividends, he cited the Heritage-based solutions to problems at Trafalgar Square and Woolwich Arsenal. He was aware that the former had been the subject of criticism from some – not least, in the pages of our own newsletter – and could, perhaps, have been even better, but nevertheless felt that it had been brought back into the public realm to the benefit of all. In the case of the Arsenal, Berkeley Homes had undertaken a good restoration project on a heritage site in which no one else had shown any interest and which could well have faced demolition and comprehensive redevelopment. Its

success was shown by the fact that flats in the restored buildings were selling faster than the new ones. Outside London, heritage-led urban renewal had boosted the economic revival of Frome, Somerset. The publication of Heritage Counts demonstrated the economic benefits brought to Cathedral cities etc, where heritage is the driver of tourism.

Heritage Environmental Local management

The importance of emphasising the value of a whole landscape, and not just individual buildings, was being highlighted by Heritage Environmental Local management (HELM) and by the new tool of Area Characterisation. This has enabled English heritage to show, for example, that the Thames Gateway area, facing massive redevelopment, is not “large swathes of derelict land”, as has been asserted to justify blanket redevelopment, but an incredibly heritage-rich area of historic towns and villages and multi-period archeological landscapes. No less than 80 Character Areas have been defined, which will be invaluable in assisting local cohesion for the new communities.

Low Demand Housing

Finally, he addressed the issue of Low Demand Housing, and the concerns that in the north of England one million homes are abandoned and half a million – many of them splendid Victorian terraced homes needing only modernisation - are scheduled for replacement by the surely, by now, discredited tower blocks. Nelson, a superbly-preserved, but depressed, Lancashire mill town, was scheduled for complete replacement but, thanks to grass-roots objections, supported by English Heritage, and following two public inquiries (the Government rejected the conclusions of the first that the existing town could be saved and regenerated) the Government has now agreed that this historic town should be completely restored.

Dr. Thurley gave very thorough and honest answers to a wide range of members' questions which followed, and the Chairman ended by thanking him for a very informative talk which had reassured us that English Heritage was addressing the realities of heritage and conservation, under difficult present-day conditions and constraints, in a positive and proactive way ■

London's got the hump

“London's Got the Hump” is the title of the London Assembly Transport Committee's Report on the impact of Speed Humps, published earlier this year. While it concludes their proven value in saving lives, it highlights that there are now other measures which can be used to reduce speed and improve safety, either in tandem with, or as an alternative to, humps. Its main recommendations, in summary, are that:

- any removal of humps should be accompanied by equivalent or more effective speed reduction measures;
- Transport for London and the Boroughs should work together on better-designed traffic calming schemes;
- Transport for London, must ensure that the views of various stakeholders, especially the emergency services, are taken into account before funding schemes;
- The emergency services must ensure that they respond to traffic calming consultations and take part in traffic management initiatives;
- The Pan London Road Safety Forum should issue best practice on traffic calming consultation; ensure that best practice on traffic calming is shared across London; establish pilot schemes to test the new Vehicle Responsive Humps; and ensure that local strategic routes are agreed between Boroughs and the emergency services;
- The Department for Transport should change the regulations to enable local pilot schemes, using speed cameras or limiters, to enforce 20 mph zones instead of humps and other engineering measures;
- The Boroughs and the ALG should pilot studies of noise and damage levels on houses before and after the implementation of traffic calming measures, including humps;
- The ALG and TfL should ensure that Boroughs publish data on the effectiveness of their traffic calming schemes ■

The full 38-page report is available from Richard Davies, Assistant Scrutiny Manager, Assembly Secretariat, Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA.

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Olympics for London

Tom Ball attended presentations at the 'London 2012 Bid Forum' in mid September, and was impressed by the comprehensive approach and the wide cross sectional support.

August was full of the Athens' Olympics. The excellence in the organisation and presentation, showing the best of international sports men and women not only in competition but multi national comradeship, engendered an infectious enthusiasm, touching everyone. The denigrators of Athens' ability to host the Games, were totally proved wrong. There is no doubt that other venues have benefited from the legacy. Richard Sumray of the London 2012 Bid team, and who spoke to the London Forum earlier this year, said that "Barcelona went from the 29th city in the league of attracting visitors in Europe, to now the 5th". In UK we have seen how Manchester, real and perceived, greatly benefited from hosting the Commonwealth Games. So what about London hosting the games in 2012?

On May 18th this year, The Olympic Committee (IOC) awarded London, 'Candidate City' status. This means that London, along with their rivals, prepares the next submission – the full 'Candidate's Bid Book' for 15th November 2004. This will be a 600 page document giving details of technical aspects of the plans to host the games, including security, funding, sporting facilities, infrastructure, transport accommodation, cultural activities, the legacy, and much more besides. During February and March 2005, the IOC Evaluation Commission carries out inspection visits to all Candidate cities to 'check out the bid claims, and specifically to look at the capabilities to stage the Paralympic Games. In May 2005 the IOC Evaluation Commission submits its reports to the IOC. On the 6th July, in Singapore, the IOC President Jacques Rogge will announce the result of the vote of all IOC members. Will this be London?

Richard Sumray reported that the various meetings in Athens with IOC members (all Candidate Cities were allowed to be available for discussions), indicated that London's comprehensive approach, embracing all aspects not only of London but with reference to the UK, placed it high in the stakes. London had showed it actively believed in being prepared and ready by the first stages of planning and programming already on the way, which were addressing relationships with communities of east London. More than any other contender,

London demonstrated its concerns for environmental issues, and the ongoing benefits - referred to as the 'legacy', as well as first and ongoing costs and benefits; also transportation and infrastructure.

In the process of putting together the Bid Book, there are a number of specialist groups researching and consulting to bring together the best evidence, and just how to present the information. For example the disabled interests – and that means all ranges, are involved; and another group is making the case for 'culture' involvement from the obvious to little appreciated aspects of London's multinational society. Other groups include education – full and further; business sponsorship and active involvement; Faiths – the many facets; local environment as well as environmental aspects of construction; and very significantly employment – to be a continuum and serving local needs in an area which has high unemployment.

The team, under the Chairmanship of Lord Coe – Seb Coe, twice Olympic gold medalist, is determined to make the best presentation, since the point of the race is to come in first. The opportunity to bring the Games to London, to raise and encourage international recognition, but to raise the interest in sport and culture, is what this is about.

I am impressed with the enthusiasm and particularly the realism, and determination of the team. In this brief article it has not been possible to cover all aspects, Government and GLA support, the important role played by volunteers; as well as showing how the Stratford site has one of the best in transport terms. When London wins the bid in July next year, then the investment and preparations will start, with gradual implementation over a period of the next seven years or so. This can only be good for the five boroughs the Lea valley, and beyond; but particularly for employment, and the youngsters now who will be training in readiness to compete in 2012. 'London 2012' has my support 100%. How about you? I do hope so.

Tom Ball ■

Register your support and back the bid:

www.london2012.org/en/support/register/

Besieged by development

Will Brentford be unsustainable?

London Forum chairman, Peter Eversden, gave evidence to the GLA Assembly Urban Renaissance Scrutiny Panel on our concerns about the potential lack of social infrastructure, community facilities and open space in areas that have received regeneration grants and those that are planned for 'opportunity and intensification' growth in the London Plan.

One of the examples discussed was Brentford. Resident and civic societies in West London are worried that the town will lack the services that its doubled population will need if current proposals are approved. Planning permission has been given for over 1,200 flats and there are additional developers' proposals for more housing units on several other ex-commercial sites, some up to thirty storeys. Local people would have liked to see the infamous tower blocks of the sixties taken down, not surrounded by modern equivalents.

The area will see a considerable change from the present family oriented population as many of the new flats will be one and two bedroom units. The Brentford Community Council doubts if Hounslow Council has considered fully what sort of housing and facilities are needed for a sustainable community and it fears traffic grid-lock in local roads. The transport accessibility index for many of the development areas is only 3 on the London Plan housing density matrix which would not support such a concentrated building programme.

Residents' associations point out that there is hardly any play space now for children, school places are limited, doctors and dentists claim full lists and other facilities are becoming severely stretched.


The site alongside Kew Bridge with a planning application for a mixed use development, predominately flats, has aroused the most local opposition. It is adjacent to three conservation areas, near the listed water tower of the Steam Museum and opposite the World Heritage Site of Kew Gardens. Yet it has no context sensitivity at all in its proposals.

Despite its location, the proposal is for a 'landmark' building with a corner tower of eleven storeys and accommodation blocks thrusting out one above the other, on the edge of the Thames. A 'wetland habitat' is to be created underneath a riverside boardwalk

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The Government report on London

Download the report in pdf format at:

 www.number10.gov.uk/files/pdf/london-report.pdf

which is likely to be an unattractive and an inadequate replacement for the flood capacity that has been on the site. Affordable housing within the development is to be contained largely on the north side with many units facing into a tall inner courtyard which has at its base the entry to the car park for the whole development.

The housing density would be two and a half times the maximum the London Plan would envisage for the site. There is a well developed and adopted Council Site Brief, the height limits and design requirements of which are not met by the proposal.

What was most surprising was that the Stage 1 letter to the Council from the GLA Planning Decisions Unit failed to pick up many of the ways in which the application is in nonconformity with the London Plan, with the Mayor's other strategies and with the recently adopted UDP of the local authority. Of even more concern to local groups was that the Council's case officer report to committee also lacked analysis of those problems and gave little recognition to the objections of statutory consultees. The way the proposal fails to meet the UDP, Blue Ribbon and other Thames policies had not been adequately identified. The London Forum has criticised those reports on this application and one local society has lodged a complaint.

The lesson of all this is that we will need to be vigilant in Opportunity Areas, particularly in the Thames Gateway, as development proposals emerge. Also that more needs to be done in London to protect historic sites from encroachment and the degradation of their setting. The Government should adopt UNESCO standards for the protection of World Heritage Sites and strengthen the legislation safeguarding our historic built environment.

Our members will need to make sure that local planning policies in LDDs that replace UDPs are well developed, particularly for areas of regeneration. Also that pre-application consultancy is really insisted upon, as the Government has included in PPS1 but not upheld well in its related guidance ■

Summary recommendations

London overall

- Understand and sustain London's attractiveness, in its widest sense, to the knowledge-based, creative and increasingly international workforce and visitors that underpin London's global competitiveness.
- Develop a strategy for managed international economic migration; tackling illegal immigration, building on current programmes.
- Continue to address inequality through decent housing, neighbourhood renewal and work-first approaches to social inclusion.

Housing

- Improve the responsiveness of housing supply; the conclusions of the Barker and Egan reviews will be especially pertinent to London.
- Ensure high standards of design and construction; use planning obligations to build sustainable communities.
- Continue and extend reform in the housing sector designed to allocate homes according to the needs of tenants and communities.
- Explore options that could release some of the equity tied into the housing stock in London to fund more sustainable communities.

Transport

- Central government should be as clear as possible about its contribution to infrastructure in London, and the tools available to the Mayor to fund and implement his transport strategy.
- Complement the existing approach to transport modelling and appraisal with a systematic approach to researching best practice and new techniques for urban transportation.
- Use pricing and other tools to manage travel demand in London.

Public services

- Recognise the unique London challenges which place strain on public services, over and above challenges faced elsewhere.
- Develop workforce pay and recruitment plans to establish quality and stability in the leadership and staffing of London's public services, particularly in the services and localities of greatest need.

- Configure services and infrastructure within London to go with the grain, and manage high mobility and diversity, for example NHS drop in centre or unique identification, referral and tracking for children.
- Tackle some of the preventable challenges presented by aspects of mobility and diversity at source, especially by improving English language skills.

Labour market

- Gain greater understanding of who makes up London's workless population to inform policy making.
- Work with public and private employers to increase disadvantaged groups' access to job opportunities.
- Ensure that there is sufficient financial incentive for people in London to look for work and a stable transition from benefits to employment
- Ensure that people have the skills and abilities to work, particularly English language skills.
- Continue to improve the quality of the state employment service in London: strengthen management capability and flexibility, incentivise cross-service co-operation, strengthen links with employers.

Structural issues and governance

- Allow time for the devolution arrangements introduced in 2000 to become fully established and functioning, and for the GLA to deliver on the strategies it has developed.
- Recognise the regional tier and London's specific characteristics in developing the government's ongoing agenda of public service reform, devolution and civic renewal ■

Looking forward to the past

On 28th June, Heritage Minister Lord MacIntosh unveiled the Government's proposals for a fundamental reform of Britain's heritage protection regime, following a public consultation which drew over 500 responses.

The changes will include:

- A new unified "Register of Historic Sites and Buildings of England" bringing together listing, scheduling and registration and incorporating World Heritage Sites. It will also contain a "local section" recording conservation areas, local lists and registers.
- Responsibility for designation decisions at national level transferred to English Heritage, subject to Government policies and criteria for designation. The Secretary of State will retain a power to call in exceptional cases.
- New statutory right of appeal for owners.
- English Heritage must give an annual account of activities against the published policies and criteria.
- New requirement for public consultation on applications to list. A new interim protection order will be placed on each asset until a decision is made.
- Listed building consent to be unified with scheduled monument consent to create a simplified, integrated heritage consent, administered by local authorities. Government will also consider further unification of consent regimes, including the integration of conservation area consent and planning permission.

Primary legislation will be required at the first opportunity, likely to be 2006/7. Meanwhile, English Heritage's pilot project programme will explore these proposals in practice, and ensure that the details are right.

Additional measures, to improve heritage protection will be introduced without legislation, from April 2005.

These will include:

- A review of the criteria for listing buildings by DCMS and English Heritage. Proposals will be consulted on later this year.
- The assumption of the day-to-day administration of the system (but not designation decisions) by English Heritage from April 2005. Changes to the list will be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

"English Heritage now look forward to leading the introduction of the reforms that will create a modern, positive and comprehensive framework for the management of the historic environment."

- A new comprehensive pack for owners, including a "summary of importance" setting out the reasons for listing, a map which indicates the extent of listing, and general information on designation and seeking planning consent (That type of log book and information pack was introduced two years ago by one of our members, the Bedford Park Society, for its 365 Grade II listed properties. Their scheme, "From Knowledge Comes Care", was described and discussed at a London Forum open meeting last year and covered in an edition of newsforum).

Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage said: "English Heritage welcomes the government's decision to implement major reform of the heritage protection system. Having worked in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on its review, we now look forward to leading the introduction of the reforms that will create a modern, positive and comprehensive framework for the management of the historic environment. The new system will give English Heritage additional roles and enhanced responsibilities." ■

Runway alternation may end

An extra 200 flights a day could use Heathrow airport if both runways are used simultaneously for both take off and landing, according to campaigners against its expansion.

The Aviation White Paper mentioned the possibility of using mixed mode method during "peak times" but did not clarify what those times might be.

BAA is keen to introduce the new system when Terminal 5 opens in 2008, despite the annual limit on the total number of flights imposed as a condition of its approval. BAA is reported to have said "There seem to be clear economic benefits from mixed mode but we will have to take account of the environmental implications."

The effects could be huge. Over 40,000 people live under the flight paths and more are affected by the noise from aircraft movements. For many there would be a rise in noise levels to 57db, the level the Government agrees causes annoyance. The end of the alternation scheme half-day respites from the higher level of noise exposure would severely affect the quality of people's lives.

The boroughs of Hounslow, Richmond and Teddington are in the top five of the most polluted in London for ground ozone as a result of the current emission levels. This will result in more people suffering the respiratory and lung diseases and asthma that badly affect so many people there now.

It is time the Government planned an off-shore airport, linked to the Channel Tunnel Railway, joint funded with France and Belgium who would share the facilities. 'Predict & Provide' for airport expansion in the South East of England is a discredited policy.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■



"The effects could be huge. Over 40,000 people live under the flight paths and more are affected by the noise from aircraft movements."

Spotlight on Pinner Association

Looking after a lively, historic village in Metroland.

Founded in 1932, the Pinner Association is among the oldest of London Forum's member societies. If there was no great threat prompting its founding, there have been several since then – including a 1960s plan to build a tower block in a beautiful, curving high street lined by timber-framed buildings. "There was a huge outcry," says chairman Cynthia Wells. "The association held a meeting and it was packed, with people standing out in the street". As a result the building was saved – which in those days was by no means a foregone conclusion. Nearby Stanmore lost its pretty high street.

Pinner's high street – a mixture of genuine, medieval and Tudor timber-framing, honest Georgian and Victorian brick, and fake half-timbered fronts – nonetheless holds together as a good-looking, well-maintained and much cherished whole. (Curiously enough, it's the over-scaled 19th and 20th century half-timbering that American tourists always home in on with their cameras). The high street is lively because, quite invisible up alleys to south and north, are extras clusters of shopping including a Marks and Spencer food store and a Sainsbury's. Other pluses are the absence of lighting columns (all street lights are attached to buildings) and the well-cared-for state of flowerbeds and (thankfully minimal) street furniture. This is largely down to Pinner self-help following the establishment of a joint Pinner Association/local traders committee. One keen member, photographer Peter Saunders, not only tends flower beds but has been known to paint bollards.

Spirit of community enterprise

This is, indeed, in tune with the spirit of community enterprise that has distinguished the Pinner Association since its earliest days. One notable achievement followed a consensus in the latter stages of World War II that Pinner's memorial should be of benefit to local people. A public appeal launched by the association raised enough money to buy West House, the Georgian service wing of a former manor house, and the land surrounding it, and in 1948 this became Pinner Memorial Park, a generous open space in the heart of the village. Park and house were handed over to Harrow council to administer, but alas! they appear to have fallen down badly, at least in respect of West House, which has

been neglected and vandalised, and a cottage formerly occupied by the park-keeper. When the council made his duties "peripatetic", they unwittingly made him eligible for "right to buy". He understandably exercised that right, and later sold on at a profit. Thus one of the buildings paid for by the people of Pinner is an anomalous private house in the middle of a public park.

Harrow's first art gallery

Despite this setback, the association has refused to give up. On the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, it established a peace garden in part of the Memorial Park, and its volunteers ensure that it is better looked after than the rest of the park. With the council's blessing, it is raising funds to restore and convert West House into an art gallery – it would be Harrow's first – and a museum. This will house a collection of some 500 drawings by one of Pinner's most famous sons, the artist and cartoonist William Heath Robinson, whose name became synonymous with machinery of over-the-top complexity designed to perform quite simple tasks such as raising a man's hat or "doubling Gloucester cheeses by the Gruyere method".

The association set up a separate trust to carry through the scheme, and this has so far raised £300,000 of the £500,000 needed for phase 1 – restoring West House, adding a café, and wrapping a conservatory round one side. Its architect adviser is one Ptolemy Dean, appointed before the TV series Restoration made him famous. When it has successfully accomplished phase 1, it plans to seek Lottery funds towards the £2m needed for the art gallery and museum.

Pinner and District Community Association

Cynthia Wells makes the point that the Pinner Association has been adept at "spinning off" separate bodies to carry forward specific projects. Another instance was the establishment of a Pinner and District Community Association which built and now runs Pinner's well-used village hall, opened in 1982 at the high street end of the memorial park. In the case of West House, the Pinner Association covers from its own funds the fund-raising and other project expenses. Every pound contributed by the public thus goes towards actual building work.

The association's successes over the years have included saving several notable buildings from demolition, including the picturesque Bee Cottage; in 1972 saving by volunteers' hard physical labour an open space called Little Common, which was full of half demolished air raid shelters and was in the council's view ripe for development; and, quite recently, persuading the council to redesign and scale down an ambitious but defective traffic calming scheme. It would, says Cynthia Wells, have pushed rat-running traffic down quiet roads which had no problem, and also meant that one sports car owner would have grounded his precious machine every time he took it out.

Less successful have been its attempts to ensure that Harrow's Unitary Development Plan has some teeth. It has so weakened planning control, says Cynthia, that "you can only stop a bad development if you can show it is 'out of character with the area' - which is so subjective". And in spite of the UDP inquiry inspector finding 125 dwellings per hectare acceptable, the council has increased this blanket density to 150 on the dubious grounds that Ken Livingstone would certainly reject 125. It finds it is having to fight off proposals to replace single dwelling houses with blocks of flats because of a feared domino effect – once one gets permission, others will rush in, and also build on back gardens, destroying one of Pinner's great attractions, its green and leafy character.

Other preoccupations

Other constant preoccupations are protecting the green belt, where it must always be vigilant lest non-permitted uses gain a toehold, leading to green field development and traffic generation; mobile phone masts ("Why, oh why, can't the different phone companies share a common network of masts?" asks Cynthia); and public lavatories – or lack of them. Harrow council closed Pinner's only public loos following vandalism and even talked of selling the building off. The nearest public toilets are now a mile away in North Harrow, and council officers seem to think that is acceptable. Perhaps they're all young and have strong bladders.

A lively village

Most of Pinner, spreading out from its historic high street, is 1920s and '30s Metroland. But that doesn't mean it's a dead dormitory

Society profile – Pinner Association



Age 72; born 21 March 1932.

Circumstances of birth No specific threat, but a sense that Pinner was a very special place which needed loving care and protection from insensitive development.

Biggest successes (1) Defeating, by sheer weight of public protest, a 1960s proposal to build a tower block in Pinner's picturesque high street. (2) Raising the money to buy West House and its gardens and create a public park in the heart of the village as a war memorial to the dead of two World Wars. (3) Set up with local traders a High Street improvement scheme to enhance and care for Pinner's historic heart. (4) Pioneering a flood alleviation scheme, since taken over by the Environment Agency. (5) Millennium celebrations, with carnival procession down a main street closed to traffic, drew more than 8,000 people.

Biggest disappointments/frustrations (1) Neglect by Harrow council of West House. (2) Loss of some historic buildings, including Dear Farm, demolished to build a cinema. (3) Loss of the last public lavatories in Pinner, closed after vandalism. (4) Continuing mindless vandalism, meaning council has less to spend on positive, worthwhile improvements. (4) Weakening of Unitary Development Plan, and setting of higher blanket densities. (6) Domino effect of blocks of flats in place of individual houses in spacious gardens.

Present preoccupations (1) Improving badly thought out traffic calming measures. (2) Exercising constant vigilance about creeping non-permitted activities in the green belt. (3) Lobbying for NHS to carry out promises on respite care centre for elderly people. (4) Raising money to restore and extend West House as a public amenity and to house a Heath Robinson Museum.

Working details Committee of about 20, including chairman Cynthia Wells, president David Rowlands (who also chairs the planning committee), vice-chairman James Kincaid, and secretary Louise Callan. This and network of sub-committees involves some 30 people; team of 78 "collectors" headed by four area leaders both collect subs and deliver thrice-yearly magazine *The Villager*. Some 4,000 members pay £3 (individuals) or £5 (two in same household). AGM plus one half-yearly members' meeting. Profitable publishing ventures, including currently available *Ten Walks Around Pinner*.

Special characteristics "Pinner is a village with a historic centre that is also very lively," Says Cynthia Wells". It's not an artificial community. It's a strong community and there's always something going on".

Last word "I hope that we can preserve what is good in Pinner for future generations".

THE PINNER ASSOCIATION

Pinner Association



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w www.pinnerassociation.co.uk

suburb For instance, Pinner's Millennium celebrations, two years in the planning, centred on a huge and colourful carnival procession and attracted some 8,000 – 10,000 people; Humphrey Lyttelton played in Pinner's 14C church; and the next day the high street was closed to make way for a huge street party. And for three years now the association has organised band concerts in the park – always good weather and never fewer than 600 audience.

"We're a village and a very lively one," says Cynthia, who also edits the three-times-a-year *Villager* magazine. She of course wishes rather more younger people would lend a hand in the association, and more of the 22% of Pinner's population who are from ethnic minorities. But she and her colleagues waste no time in wringing their hands – instead they are apt to get them dirty, often doing things the council ought to do and would no doubt wish to – like maintaining the flower beds in the memorial park's Peace Garden. "People sometimes seem to confuse us with the council. They blame us; they say 'Why don't you do something about it'. Impressively often the Pinner Association does just that ■

"The spirit of community enterprise has distinguished the Pinner Association since its earliest days."

Spotlight – help!
See back page

Below Pinner High Street.



Are there amenity open spaces for public use in new housing?

Comment by **Tom Ball**.

“Members are raising this issue across London because there is a lack of spaces for children, teenagers and adults being incorporated in housing schemes, particularly in areas that have received regeneration grants or are designated for ‘opportunity and intensification’ growth in the London Plan.”

At a time when there is pressure as well as opportunity for new housing developments, at increasingly higher densities, we need to be vigilant that the proposals are acceptable under a range of criteria. One in particular is of great concern – public play space and recreation areas within developments. This is an issue across London, where often, spaces for toddlers, children, teenagers and adults are not being adequately provided in housing schemes.

Whereas in times past, local authorities held it as an essential prerequisite, that play facilities and quality spaces were included; now, since most developments are built by the private sector they are often not to be found. This may even be the case where there are no houses with gardens, and the housing mix is of flats of two, three and four bedrooms.

The scenario is not good. It is reminiscent of early Peabody and WWI local authority housing, which provided only hard areas between four and five storey buildings, for clothes drying and refuse storage bins. We have taken for granted that the better practices of say the LCC and other local authorities, meant that there was a statutory provision, but the position is not clear.

In “Planning” (3.9.04), this matter has been clarified, and it points out that there is no statutory requirement, although there are a number of sources for recommendations. With the consent of the author I quote for our members’ benefit the question, and the response given .

“I have recently moved from an authority that has a unitary development plan policy requiring 20 square meters of private amenity space for every habitable room in new and extended dwellings. My new authority has no such standard and relies instead on government advice. My understanding is that the government views such matters as being largely for the developer, so long as some provision is made for refuse storage, the drying of clothes and so forth. Where can I find relevant guidance AM ”

The response from Development Control Services Ltd., was as follows –

“The 1992 version of PPG3 explained that a development’s functional requirements are for the most part a matter for the marketing judgement of developers in the light of their assessment of their customer’s requirements. But this advice was not

carried forward into revised guidance issued in 2000, which is now largely silent on amenity space provision. Instead the note emphasises the need for good design and more efficient use of land through more flexible policies and development standards. Unlike in some other planning jurisdictions, there appears to be no national standard in other advice, including the companion guide ‘Better Places to Live: By Design’, which encourages a qualitative approach to the planning of space around the home. But while Inspectors will generally support the need for some provision, often relying on standards set out in development plans or supplementary guidance, they will not endorse their rigid application if in a particular instance there is no evidence of harm to overall policy. PM”

So be warned – although there are normally standards for provision in the local UDP and guidance is given in PPG 17, one needs to be alert to the extent that such are followed and applied. Guidance may not be followed and recommendations may be ignored, for a variety of reasons. In some instances, a financial contribution by the developer might be acceptable – to fund improvements or alternative provision nearby.

London Forum members should pay particular attention to this aspect of planning applications for all future housing developments; and take it up with their local authority as appropriate. Good living environments is a policy of the Mayor’s Plan for London, and that should mean provision of local amenity space – not an improved park a long way off.

Tom Ball ■

Source: ‘Planning’ 3rd September 2004, Page 23, Development Control Casebook Forum, “New Queries”.

Peabody housing pre first world war – space for washing and refuse.



A serious spillage into the Thames

Dennis Woodman of The Kew Society reports.

The River Thames is one of the cleanest metropolitan rivers in the world with a famed diversity of wild life. That has not come easily. From the stench recorded by Pepys to the present day, there has been a long hard battle by pressure groups to reverse the economic imperative to use the River as a sewer. It is a difficult battle: there are many vested interests to be brought on board. Today that success on our stretch of the River can be measured by the two Thames Strategies, from Hampton to Kew and Kew to Chelsea, and the recently adopted Blue Ribbon policies of the London Plan. The officers of statutory authorities are even more proud of these achievements than is acknowledged by the authorities themselves. It is a political commitment to be nurtured.

Exceptional circumstances in August

On the 3rd August 2004, Thames Water pumped hundreds of thousands of tonnes of raw sewage into the River Thames during torrential rain. The sight of dead fish, rats and other detritus made headline news. But, as the Public Services Committee revealed in its report, there are already, regularly, 50-60 sewage discharges annually into the Thames that go unnoticed. The system relies on releasing untreated sewage into the Thames when the drainage system is overwhelmed. The 3/8 event was a combination of exceptional circumstances that gave it press coverage and brought the "buck passing" between Thames Water, Ofwat and DEFRA, into the public domain.

Evidence to the Committee

Thames Water was asked to attend the London Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee in September to answer questions and was the principle witness with the Environment Agency in support. Ofwat and DEFRA were noticeable by their absence. It is difficult to get these bodies to account to the GLA. It was disappointing that members of the committee saw it as an opportunity to make trivial political points about the "fat cats" and "inflated profits" of Thames Water, when the witnesses were providing an enormous amount of technical information as a result of the £4 million Thames Tideway Strategic Study by Thames Water and others over the last four years.

"This event brought the responsibility for these discharges into the public domain: there are already, regularly, fifty or so sewage discharges every year into the Thames."

The solution to the sewage overflow problem

The proposals included a request for funding for a solution to the sewage overflow problem. The solution, in ball park figures, would cost of the order of £1.5bn and add £40 p.a. for ten years to water bills in London. DEFRA asked the Study Group to review their proposals and look for ways to reduce the cost. This unfortunately meant that funds for the scheme could not be approved by December 2004 when Ofwat's pricing review for 2005-2010 will be agreed. The cynical view of this referral was that DEFRA was kicking the solution into the long grass for five years: it was poor politics to consider the possibility of a water bill increase in an election year.

Divided responsibilities

Technically the solution to storm discharges lies in the hands of Thames Water. Politically it remains with the government of the day to approve the level of investment, the consequent charge on the public purse and the raising of the money.

The Kew Society is trying to organise a public seminar for February 2005 for the benefit of all amenity societies, where the conclusions of the Thames Tideway Strategic Study can be set out in detail, following the publishing of their final report. Meanwhile interested readers should ring Communiqué, the Study's PR firm, on 020 7828 4888, and ask for the TTSS reports for 2001 and 2002. They are short, informative documents ■

Information sources

Those concerned about the impact of mobile phone masts will find a recent paper, *Mobile phone masts: radiation and you* by John Hunt of great interest.

A solicitor and a founding trustee of the Environmental Law Foundation, John currently assists Mast Action UK, the National campaign Group for safe siting of masts. He is a committee member of the Heath & Hampstead Society.

His paper gives an excellent survey and explanation of the facts with technical details and relevant data from the latest research. He explains the TETRA system which is currently being introduced to the country by BT.

He also looks at potential future health risks and the problems of insuring it, and at the wider political issues. John asks what the politicians are doing about the conflict of interests and finds that they appear to be currently favouring the economic benefits of this new technology over the concerns about health. They are torn between the two opposing forces: big business, with its taxes on profits and license fees together with the perceived need of the public to have access to mobile phones. On the other side is the increasing weight of scientific evidence indicating adverse health effects and the public concern over it.

The legal background is discussed with reference to The Human Rights Act 1998 and recent Court of Appeal cases.

The paper is essential reading for anyone concerned about this issue and is available on email from the London Forum. Contact Helen Marcus (*see back page for details*) ■

Sources of information:

Mast Action UK

<http://freespace.virginnet.co.uk/mast.action> or email mast.free@virgin.net

Powerwatch

www.powerwatch.org.uk/

EMF Guru

www.EMFGuru.com

The Stewart Report

www.iegmp.org.uk/

Government Information

www.doh.gov.uk/mobile.htm

Round the Societies

A round up of news from our member societies.

By **George Parish**.

The Enfield Preservation Society

News carried a warm tribute to the Society's President, Valerie Carter, who died in June. Despite a long period of poor health, she made enormous contributions to the Society's work in a number of areas, but her main expertise was as a writer and publisher. She was best known to London Forum members for her history of the Society, *Fighting for the Future*, an easy winner of the Forum's Print Award in 1998, and for its successor, *Treasures of Enfield*.

Peruvian Adventure

Bill Tyler, President of the Finchley Society and a founding member of the London Forum, will be telling the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association in October about his sponsored spring trek along the Inca Trail, which has so far raised over £15,000 for the National Autistic Society. With typical understatement, Bill says it was hard work at times, especially the highest pass at just under 14,000 feet.

"KXRLG"

The Amwell Society circulated with its July Newsletter a substantial brochure from the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group, which seeks to make a reality of the public consultations on the Argent St George proposals for the railway lands, a development which would take up to 20 years and be heavily dominated by office blocks.

Sustainable Aviation

The Greenwich Society reports that the courts have given the go-ahead for a Judicial Review of the Aviation White Paper. The challenge, mounted by HACAN ClearSkies, Stop Stansted Expansion, LADACAN (Luton) and Wandsworth and Hillingdon Councils, will expose key flaws in the consultation document and Aviation White Paper.

Broadband in Camberwell

The increasing load on the Camberwell Society's Planning Sub-Committee that has resulted from Southwark's requirement to increase housing provision and densities to accord with national and London-wide directives has required the acquisition of Broadband for the Convenor of the Sub-Committee. The Society's decision to pay for this has been accepted by the Charity Commissioners.

The proposal to move Brunswick House from Vauxhall to Camberwell, as reported in my last roundup, meanwhile continues to run and run. The July issue of the Camberwell Quarterly published several letters, including an impressive critique of the proposal by an English Heritage Inspector writing in a personal capacity, and the proposal is to be debated at a Society open meeting.

Dan Leno and George Robey

The Herne Hill Society Newsletter celebrates the anniversaries of two locally born music hall stars, Dan Leno and George Robey, who died 100 and 50 years ago respectively. (I must declare an interest in this story, as George Robey was a distant relation through his marriage to Blanche Littler, sister of Prince and Emil, the theatrical impresarios).

A Blue Plaque For Grieg

The Clapham Society reports that the historical associations of Clapham Common, hitherto best known for the Clapham Sect, have now been

"Croydon's designation in the London plan as a preferred location for very tall buildings gives extra credence to these nightmare visions. No wonder that the Public Inquiry into the draft Croydon Plan has now slipped by several months."

widened by the erection of a blue plaque to commemorate the residence of Edvard Grieg at No 5 The Cedars during his concert tours of England from 1888 onwards. The house was the family home of his London publisher, George Augener, and while Grieg was in residence the Norwegian flag flew from its roof.

Commons Cash Crisis

The Putney Society notes that, through a series of circumstances beyond their control, the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators are under serious financial pressure. One consequence is that they will be unable to afford the cost (between £90,000 and £150,000) of promoting a Private Bill in Parliament to enable them to grant rights of way or easements over Common land. This in turn could delay the construction of a new Primary Care Centre on the redundant Putney Hospital site.

Croydon's 20/20 Vision

Last but not least, the Croydon Society, with limited resources, is having to respond to a whole raft of town centre proposals, which would have an even greater impact than those which created the office block Croydon of the 50s and 60s. There are two rival schemes (with or without an arena) for the Gateway site next to East Croydon station, two competing schemes centred on a new Allders store, the larger of which would transform the Central Croydon Conservation Area. and an ambitious master plan for the intensive redevelopment of the Fairfield Halls, Croydon College and College Green.

Croydon's designation in the London plan as a preferred location for very tall buildings gives extra credence to these nightmare visions. No wonder that the Public Inquiry into the draft Croydon Plan has now slipped by several months.

George Parish ■

Editor's note: *George apologies for the strong South London content of this report; this is because so few of the Societies north of the river have sent him their newsletters! All societies are asked to send a copy of their newsletters to George Parish at 9 Willow Mount, Croydon, Surrey CR0 5LD.*

newsbriefs

Some key issues of concern to note.

The latest government planning guidance

PPS 6: Planning for Town Centres

The ODPM Select Committee published its Twelfth Report on "Draft Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres" on 15th September. The full text is on www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/odpm/odpm_reports_publications.cfm or hard copy from The Stationery Office. Telephone 0870 600 5522.

PPSs 11 and 12

Recently published Planning Policy Statements 11 (Regional Spatial Strategies) and 12 (Local Development Frameworks) explain how the new plan-led system should work rather than detailing the policies themselves. Both apply throughout England except for London, where the Mayor is responsible for preparing a spatial development strategy. Both documents refer to PPG15 and 16, still part of the old-style suite of Planning Policy Guidance and which are awaiting revision.

PPS12 does however give the procedures for producing Statements of Community Involvement. London Forum members should ensure that they are familiar with these and that they are involved from the earliest stages with their local authorities in the consultation process which will lead to the production of their own Boroughs' SCIs.

Both statements can be seen on the ODPM website: www.odpm.gov.uk

Local Development Documents guidance

Further guidance on the preparation of the new style local plans is being prepared by ODPM, the Planning Officers, Society, a joint exercise by the Countryside Agency, English Nature, Environment Agency and English Heritage. Heritage Link, of which the Forum is a member, will be producing guidance to encourage local amenity societies to get involved in the process for Local Development Frameworks later this year.

PPS22 on renewable energy

Published by ODPM on 9th August, this sets out the Government's planning policies on the development of renewable energy resources in England, replacing PPG22. It covers energy flows such as wind, the fall of water, the movement of oceans, from the sun and biomass, the biodegradable fraction of products, waste and residues, but not offshore sites. Targets for renewable energy generation should be set out in Regional Spatial Strategies which should contain policies designed to promote and encourage rather than restrict the development of renewable energy resources. Sites "of international importance for nature and heritage conservation" will require that "an assessment has shown that the integrity of the site would not be adversely affected" or "where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

The criterion for national designations is that "planning permission should only be granted when it can be demonstrated that the objectives of the designation of the area will not be compromised." Local landscape and local nature conservation designations, however, come bottom of the list and "should not be used in themselves, to refuse planning applications". They should be assessed against policies set out in local development documents. The full text is on the ODPM website www.odpm.gov.uk.

"Access to the countryside provides essential emotional, spiritual and physical well-being to millions. Visiting the countryside is a vital counterbalance to the stresses daily life. Peace and quiet, fresh air and getting close to nature are other important benefits."

Planning Officers Society guidance

Adding to the various advice notes for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, the Planning Officers Society has published draft guidance, with backing from ODPM, LGA, and RTPI, as a consultation document. It deals with spatial planning, plans and policies; gives good practice pointers and tips on writing spatial policies. Download from www.planningofficers.org.uk/article.cp/articleid/22. The next version, taking account of feedback, will be published early in 2005.

Planning help

Help with all this can be found on the CPRE's new website aimed at providing advice and information for groups and individuals wish to become involved in the Planning System. Find it on: www.planninghelp.org.uk.

A tree and woodland framework for London

The G.L.A.'s 54-page Consultation Draft was issued in July, with responses required by 29th October. At first reading, it seems to be a worthy, if dull and uninspired, and somewhat repetitive, document. It appears to regard trees as little more than a part of the planning system and tools for regeneration. Members are encouraged to send their own responses; copies can be obtained from the GLA website (hard copy is £10), www.london.gov.uk/gla/publications/environment.jsp. You can be reassured, however, that it is printed on Sustainable Forest Elemental Chlorine Free Pulp.

Natural Trust

MORI research commissioned by the National Trust reveals the pivotal role that wildlife and the countryside plays in the life of the British public. It confirms that access to the countryside provides essential emotional, spiritual and physical well-being to millions: a "Natural Health Service."

Visiting the countryside is a vital counterbalance to the stresses daily life (80%); Peace and quiet, fresh air and getting close to nature were other important benefits (over 50%). Equally important, people value country areas and parks close to where they live which they can enjoy every day, even more than spectacular landscapes particularly for those aged 25 to 44, the group most likely to have young children. Almost half those surveyed believed that the Government should do more to protect local countryside sites.

Development and urban sprawl are seen by the public as the biggest threats to Britain's countryside, closely followed by environmental impacts such as pollution and intensive farming. See www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/landscape_survey.html.

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newsbriefs

Parks Need People Need Parks

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Space's review of green skills comes in response to the Egan Review of skills for Sustainable Communities, published in April. Corroborating the above MORI findings, over 2.5 billion visits are made to parks by over half the UK population, but there are fewer people with the skills to look after them.

Parks Need People Need Parks shows that parks departments face a serious skills shortage at all levels. Few apprenticeships and other training opportunities exist, and careers prospects are poor, with low pay and poor public image. Only 7 of over 400 park-managing authorities were able to achieve Beacon status for their parks service. The report calls on Government to recognise the urgency of the crisis in green space skills, and to make them a central component of a national skills strategy, to help attract people to plan, manage and maintain green spaces. A summary appears on www.cabespace.org.uk/publications/index.html For further information contact CABE Space on 020 7960 2400 or enquiries@cabe.org.uk.

The reviewers reviewed

Meanwhile the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Committee on Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions has announced an inquiry into the role and effectiveness of CABE itself. It will look at CABE's overall priorities for investment and development, the work of its design review panel in terms of (a) the criteria used in reviewing schemes, (b) the consistency in the application of the criteria and (c) the choice of schemes reviewed, (d) CABE's relationships with other national and local agencies and (e) its future role.

National Heritage and debate

8th December: Lord McIntosh, Heritage Minister and Don Foster, Culture Spokesman for the Liberal Democrats will speak at Heritage Link's National Heritage Debate at Christ Church Spitalfields, E1 when the participants will give their views on the five priorities for the sector.

London's environment

The Natural History Museum hosted a joint conference with the Government Office for London on the future of London's environment and public involvement. For further information email w.purvis@nhm.ac.uk.

For information about the London Forum contact:

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Registered Charity Number 1093134

An urgent appeal secretarial and other help

London Forum Secretary – Urgently needed

As a result of illness and other problems, the Forum has lost several active members who were invaluable in helping us with our administrative workload – At our AGM in September only half the committee members we need were nominated.

We currently have no 'Hon Sec' and too few people for our administration and publications. I know many societies are in similar positions but please consider if you can suggest anyone who could help us or any jobs for which we could share someone. Minute taking, organising meetings, visiting our office to check and allocate correspondence, maintaining our membership database and giving advice for a website are all things that could help us.

Spotlight – help!

After eight years of writing our popular 'Spotlight' feature, Tony Aldous, taking up a trend currently fashionable among Government Ministers, has decided to retire in order to spend more time with his family. We are immensely grateful to him for all the time and work he has given to the Forum in making this regular feature one which our members always look forward to reading, and which provides an important link between all our member societies. This means that a new 'Spotlight' editor is needed. If there is anyone who would like to take up the challenge, please contact Michael Hammerson on 020 8341 1437. In the meanwhile if any society has a profile of their organisation that they have developed we would be pleased to consider it for publication.

If you, or someone in your society or group, would be willing to help in any way with this vital work, please contact the Chairman, Peter Eversden, urgently ■

Crossrail and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link

**Open meeting – all welcome – £3 to non-members
Tuesday 16th November, 6 for 6:30pm to 8:30pm at the Gallery,
70 Cowcross Street, EC1. Very close to Farringdon station.**

There will be talks given by both organisations on the progress towards these rail services and the benefits. There will be time for questions and discussions about the impact of these schemes, particularly the construction work and the building and positioning of shafts for ventilation and emergency access.

Come along and reinforce any proposals you made in response to the Crossrail consultation that ended in October.

newsforum

Editorial team Michael Hammerson, Helen Marcus, George Parish, Tony Aldous
Design Ross Shaw
Print Express Printing. Telephone 01733 230 800
Published by the London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. Telephone 020 7250 0606

Member societies are encouraged to use London Forum news in their own newsletters.

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