

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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The London Plan review – your chance to comment

London's growth continues at a fast pace. Will the Mayor's new powers be satisfactory?

Changes in the planning system seem to be never ending! I hope those of you in the communities can find the resources to be involved in all that is happening locally and at regional level.

London's sub-regions

We had just got used to the five sub-regions detailed in the London Plan and now find that the Mayor has proposed to change them. The latest alterations for the London Plan issued for consideration by the Assembly Members include five new sub-regions that are radial. The previous Central one is to be split into the other four.

It will be interesting to see what the boroughs and the Assembly conclude this Summer about the new sub-regions. Initial reactions are that they will introduce problems by dividing major development zones such as the Thames Gateway.

Editions of newsforum in the past year have covered the consultation process on the development frameworks for the five sub-regions (SRDFs) described in the current London Plan. The final versions of those SRDFs were published recently and would be worth examining. The Mayor wrote that they "make many suggestions to boroughs and others on the issues that should be addressed in implementing the London Plan." They should influence the reviews of regional and borough planning policies. You can see them at www.london.gov.uk/mayor/

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planning/srdf/index.jsp and printed copies can be purchased.

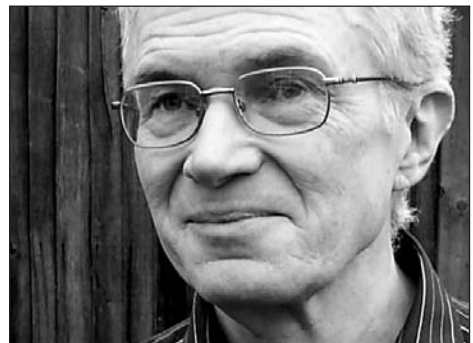
Our members should consider the issues identified for their sub-region and the descriptions of the areas for opportunity and intensification development. Those should be taken into account in the preparation of the content of the Local Development Frameworks that will replace borough UDPs. Details about those were in previous issues and can be supplied on request.

If the changes in boundaries are implemented, there could be new SRDF documents but the issues and descriptions of areas within the current versions would still apply in general terms.

Major development areas

Masterplanning of the opportunity areas has commenced and frameworks will be produced for them. The first is for the Lower Lea Valley and consultation on it continues until 1st September. Details can be obtained through www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning/lower-lea-valley.jsp

Civic and community groups are advised to contact their Council to enquire how and when the development frameworks will be prepared for other Opportunity Areas. Particular attention should be given to the way in which the land will be used for housing and for related additional infrastructure and how that can benefit those who live around the OAs.



London Plan review

The alterations to the London Plan arose from the outcome of the SRDFs, changes in development requirements, new housing number targets, the requirement for policies on waste and climate change and the obligation on the Mayor to keep the spatial development strategies for London up to date.

Early alterations were subjected to an examination in public by Inspectors in June and the London Forum participated in all sessions. Recommendations by the Panel are expected in September and we will see how many of the changes that we sought are endorsed.

The full alterations are now with the Assembly Members for consideration – over 420 pages (3.57MB of text and pictures). Members should use the opportunity in the next few months to consider that early version. It can be seen at www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/further-alts/docs/further-alts-all.pdf

Powers of the Mayor and Assembly

As I write this piece, the Government has announced changes in the powers and roles of the GLA Mayor and Assembly Members. Details are on the GLA web site. We will assess the implications and issue an email bulletin or an extra edition of newsforum. If you are not currently receiving bulletins, please let us have an email address for future contact.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

Housing and sustainability: claim and counterclaim

Housing in the South East

The Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee on Sustainable Housing issued a damning report on Government housing policy just as Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for the new Department for Communities and Local Government, signalled her strong support for the building of an extra 200,000 housing units a year in England by 2016. How do the empty homes in London fit in to policy-making?

The Fifth Report of the Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee, on Sustainable Housing, delivers a scathing critique of Government housing policy. It makes 48 conclusions and recommendations, of which the last is perhaps the most damning: "The need to build new homes is seen as an absolute imperative and is used by the Government as a mandate to sweep aside any concerns that people may have about the environmental impacts of those plans. We find it deeply worrying that there is no appetite within ODPM to take on the building sector and guarantee that these homes will be built to sufficiently high energy efficiency and environmental standards. What we find reprehensible is the clear signal from Government that it really does not matter that these homes are going to be built before supporting infrastructure is in place. And we reject the implication that the people for whom these new communities are intended will be so grateful to have a home that they will be prepared to put up with substandard communities rather than sustainable communities."

Its conclusions must be of major concern to Forum members, who are urged to ask their MPs to press the Government to take on board the Committee's findings. The following extracts convey the main thrust.

Extracts from the Select Committee Report

The Code falls far short of what is needed to ensure that future housing development is sustainable. It is intended only as a voluntary measure relying on developers to gradually begin to "do the right thing". One of the Home Builders Federation's concerns about the Code is that it might in the future become mandatory. This does not promote any confidence in the willingness or ability of developers to adopt a voluntary Code. Its effectiveness will be diminished if it can be largely ignored by the Private Sector, responsible for the vast majority of new builds. The fear that developers will find the Code too difficult, and so not comply with it on a voluntary basis, is no reason not to make it mandatory; in fact quite the opposite.

Superficial reference to the environment.

There is a fundamental lack of urgency in the Government's approach to ensuring that

new housing and new communities are truly sustainable.

Consideration of the environmental impacts of new housing ranks below other economic and social factors, with very limited and superficial reference to the environment.

Given the dire state of water resources in the South East, ODPM has not made increased levels of energy and water efficiency compulsory. It has set minimum standards but does not specify what they will be and when they will come into effect. Level One of the Code is not consistent with the BRE Ecohomes "Very Good" standard and is, at best, little better than the existing Building Regulations.

The role of the Treasury

We find the Treasury's desire to be "proportionate" and its reluctance to impose "a high administrative burden on Government agencies" not only strategically short-sighted but woefully inadequate. It would also appear to contradict the Prime Minister's views on tackling climate change.

HM Treasury should reduce both Stamp Duty and Council Tax for homes built to high environmental standards and revise the VAT rules concerning both new build and refurbished homes built to high environmental standards.

The South East cannot cope

With only ten years left before the Government's own deadline of 200,000 new homes per year by 2016, to delay discussing how to fund the infrastructure for much of that development until the Comprehensive Spending review in 2007 represents a massive planning failure. We cannot help but be deeply worried about the South East's ability to cope with the increased water demands as a result of the Government's intention to build 200,000 new homes per year by 2016. If ODPM remains wedded to this target, it seems clear to us that the necessary water infrastructure will not be ready in time. The answer to the problem of homelessness, etc. is not to throw up badly constructed houses in areas which are poorly supported by infrastructure.

Report by the London Assembly: Families shut out of affordable home scheme

A report, "Size Matters, The need for more family homes in London", issued by the London Assembly in June, reveals that a

"The need to build new homes is seen as an absolute imperative and is used by the Government as a mandate to sweep aside any concerns that people may have."

shortage of affordable family-sized housing the capital is resulting in overcrowding. It finds that the type and mix of affordable housing being built does not match the needs of Londoners. In order to meet their 'affordable units' targets, house-builders often supply only the smallest properties as they are the cheapest. There is a surplus of around 12,000 one-bedroom properties, but a shortfall of over 28,000 two, three and four bedroom dwellings.

Call for the Mayor to change his plan

Tony Arbour AM, Chairman of the Assembly's Planning and Spatial Development Committee said: "Our report calls for changes to the Mayor's London Plan – his blueprint for the capital – to better incentivise the building of homes with more bedrooms."

Members of the Committee recommended that Londonwide targets for affordable housing should be more closely aligned with meeting the mixed needs of Londoners, while boroughs should do more to match housing provision to local demand. The report is available on the website www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/plansd.jsp#affhousing

90,000 empty homes in London

Meanwhile an article in the *Financial Times* on July 9th told of a new generation of young professional squatters, unable to afford their own homes, taking over and maintaining empty properties. The Empty Homes Agency claim on their website that there are over 600,000 empty homes in the the UK which could be put to use.

In London there are 90,000 of these empty homes, 9,800 of which are in local authority ownership.

None of this is considered in Kate Barker's report which appears to form the only basis for government policy, despite considered and well informed representations by organisations such as CPRE ■

Housing Continued

New Empty Dwelling Management Orders

From July 2006 local authorities will be able to use new Empty Dwelling Management Orders to bring long-term empty private properties back into use to meet local housing need. These new powers will be additional to the already existing compulsory purchase orders. Small print in this controversial new guidance has caused concern: A home will not have to be run down or uninhabitable to be seized, merely empty for six months.

The new rules will not apply to empty homes or properties owned by public sector bodies (no matter how incompetent or inefficient they are!). However there is apparently the power of a Public Request Ordering Disposal, by which a member of the public has the power to request the disposal of such a property.

London has a significant empty homes problem and a huge need for new housing. Better information on the numbers of empty homes in London is needed.

For more information see the Empty Homes Agency website www.emptyhomes.com

New Secretary of State confirms housing plans

Despite all this Ruth Kelly, Secretary of State for the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), successor to the now-defunct Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), signalled her strong support for ensuring the planning system delivers an extra 200,000 housing units a year in England by 2016. She also pledged a major drive on affordable housing and improving the condition of existing housing stock, and promised increased house building would be delivered "in ways which protect our valuable countryside and respect the environment". She acknowledged the contribution of Kate Barker's work on housing supply and said she was "looking forward" to Barker's current work on land-use planning and options for reform. Kelly also hinted at possible changes to the government's Housing Markets Renewal programme which has been criticised for being too demolition-driven ■

Heritage – the worrying case of the Commonwealth Institute

A leaked letter from the Foreign Office and DCMS

Angry reaction to a proposal to change the law.

There has been angry reaction from across the heritage and conservation sector to a leaked letter from the Foreign Office and DCMS proposing to change the law in order to make it possible to demolish the Grade II* listed Commonwealth Institute in London.

Simon Thurley, of English Heritage, said; "This proposal to alter the law in order to make de-listing the Commonwealth Institute possible is not only muddled and dangerous but completely unnecessary. Historically priceless buildings occupying valuable sites everywhere would be put at risk from demolition if it could be shown that maximum profit could be achieved for any good cause. This is a proposal for a demolishers' charter. It undermines the fundamental principle that the country's best and most culturally valuable architecture is worth keeping.

"Listing does not stop a building being altered or demolished. There is already a democratic way of resolving cases like this. Forcing through a bill in the face of opposition would be an unacceptably rash destabilisation of the planning system. English Heritage has offered detailed guidance, sympathetic to the owner's concerns, on how to develop the site for the best outcome. The Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport herself argues that it is still worthy of its Grade II* status. To engage in a fundamental change to the law undermines the whole system of protection in England."

The Civic Trust has issued a Press Release reacting with dismay to the proposal and its implications for Listed Buildings nationally, and has urged the Government not to adopt the proposed measures.

The Text of the leaked letter

The letter, from DCMS Minister Tessa Jowell and Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett to DCLG Minister Ruth Kelly, reads:

Dear Ruth,
Legislation to De-List the Commonwealth Institute Building, Kensington, London

- 1 We have recently considered a report from a Cross Government Working Group, established by the Cabinet Office and with input from No 10, to determine how to assist the Commonwealth Institute to achieve maximum potential value from the sale of their property in Kensington, London.
- 2 We believe that Government support is

needed as the Commonwealth Institute is in a unique situation. All the countries of the Commonwealth are Members of the charity; its intended beneficiaries are all Commonwealth countries, including the United Kingdom, but its assets are tied up in the Kensington property.

This property is no longer appropriate for the Commonwealth Institute's changed objectives and for the educational priorities it wishes to pursue to the benefit of all Commonwealth countries.

- 3 The Commonwealth Institute Trustees have therefore decided to realise the value of the property to ensure the long-term sustainable future of the Commonwealth Institute's educational work. The Commonwealth Institute believe that substantially greater value could be realised if it were possible to alter the building substantially or demolish it altogether.
- 4 The building is currently listed at Grade II* and is within a conservation area. Accordingly, alteration or demolition requires Listed Building Consent from the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The Trustees of the Institute are unwilling to rely exclusively on this procedure because the unique conditions that arise in this case cannot be taken into account by the LPA.
- 5 The Group has concluded that the risks to the Trustees could be substantially reduced if the building were de-listed. This can only be brought about through primary legislation. After careful consideration of the options, we are minded to bid for parliamentary time in order to introduce the necessary legislation. This would require a short Bill, which would be likely to be hybrid and which could attract some controversy from petitioners which we would be need to be ready to manage. We would wish to bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity.
- 6 We will put proposals formally to LP Committee once we have an initial view from you but felt that it was right first to seek your views on this approach. As we need to move swiftly, we are today writing in similar terms to Jack Straw, Leader of the House to advise him of how we would like to proceed. This letter is copied to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretary, LP Committee, DA Committee and First Parliamentary Counsel ■

Sustainability in London

The London Plan Review – Waste disposal and London's polluted air

David Lewis rounds up recent reports.

Review of the London Plan

Ken Livingstone wants to use a 'tightly focused' review of the London Plan to fight global warming. His Statement of Intent published in December identified climate change as a challenge that has become much more pressing since the London Plan was drafted in 2002. The first text of the review*, published at the end of May, contains, alongside many minor refinements and updates, 33 Londonwide policies which are either new or presented as involving major change.

Of those, 10 are a response to climate change. Meanwhile the Mayor has just published (two years late) Supplementary Planning Guidance on Sustainable Design and Construction based on the original London Plan. Alongside 'essential standards' for the environmental performance of buildings enforceable through legislation, this guidance sets out more stringent 'Mayor's preferred standards' which he wants all major developments in London to adopt.

The changes being proposed to the London Plan also embrace policies on town centres, sustainable communities, quality of new housing provision, affordable housing, employment opportunities, airports, security and resilience, casinos, the Olympics, children's play, trees and woodland, geological conservation, London's countryside, and the quality of the public realm.

Having commented at length on the Mayor's Statement of Intent for this review the London Forum will be looking carefully at what has emerged to see how far our points have been met. We shall prepare a comprehensive response when a draft text for public consultation is published at the end of September. We expect this will result in an invitation to participate in most or all of the Examination in Public of the proposed changes by an independent panel in spring next year. If they survive that process, the changes will be adopted early in 2008.

Peter Eversden and David Lewis have been participating in the Examination in Public at City Hall of what are now called the Early

Alterations to the London Plan, a much more limited exercise covering housing provision targets and policies for waste and minerals.

Change is also afoot on another front. Having belatedly published the five Sub-Regional Development Frameworks required by the London Plan, the Mayor is now proposing to divide London up in a different way. Few tears will be shed for the original set of sub-regions, which were borrowed from the Learning and Skills Council. But such a disruptive change after such a short time is a blow to sub-regional planning within London, which will be vitally important but has yet to establish its credibility. Despite past representations from the London Forum, Central London remains a 'Central Activities Zone', now containing parts of all the five sub-regions ■

* Draft Further Alterations to the London Plan (Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London). Initial draft for consultation with the London Assembly and GLA Functional Bodies, 449 pages. On the 'Planning and Development' section of the Mayor's website.

Loads of rubbish

The increasing amount of rubbish produced by London households has mostly been dumped outside the capital, much of it on the Essex marshes, some of it in brickfields in Buckinghamshire. A fifth of it is burnt in two large incinerators, at Bermondsey and Edmonton.

Now a European Directive requires landfilling of biodegradable wastes to be phased out, on pain of large financial penalties. Moreover, London has to become more self-sufficient in the way it manages its wastes, because the two neighbouring regions are increasingly unwilling to accept them. The Mayor thinks over 300 new plants will be required within London. How many of these can be accommodated on the sites which are used at present to send wastes outside London? Is there enough surplus industrial land, in the right places, to accommodate the rest? Who is going to build and operate these plants? And can they be available in time?

Many of the plants will separate out paper, plastics, metal and glass for recycling. The target in the London Plan is that the proportion of household waste recycled

will increase from 17.5% in 2004/05 to 33% in 2015. Experience seems to show higher rates of recycling are achieved if recyclable waste is sorted centrally, rather than collected in separate streams. Reprocessing the recovered materials for reuse will require yet more plants, either in London or elsewhere. Other plants will compost organic wastes or (although that is more expensive) use anaerobic digestion to turn them into one or other form of fuel.

Opposition to a new incinerator in Bexley

That will still leave large amounts of household rubbish to be dealt with in other ways. Despite strong opposition from local people over many years, the Department for Trade and Industry has now approved a new incinerator at Belvedere in Bexley, which will supply 72MW to the National Grid. The Mayor, who dislikes incineration, argues that this will in effect replace the Edmonton incinerator, which he claims will reach the end of its life in 2014. He prefers either alternative high-temperature processes or mechanical and biological

treatment. All these processes produce residues which will have to be landfilled outside London unless markets can be found for them; but that will be permissible because they will have ceased to be biodegradable.

In the debates on London's waste the London Forum has stressed the following points:

- there should be much stronger emphasis on minimising amounts of waste produced (for example, by eliminating unnecessary packaging)
- public support for recycling and new waste management facilities must be enlisted by setting out a clear and credible strategy
- large numbers of relatively small plants may not be the most sensible and economical approach
- conflicts must be minimised by setting locational criteria for new waste management facilities and preventing incompatible uses encroaching on existing facilities
- transport of wastes should be by water or rail wherever possible ■

Sustainability in London Continued

The UK's most polluted city

The Mayor's Transport and Air Quality Strategies.

The London Forum responded in April to draft amendments to the Mayor's Transport and Air Quality Strategies.

Worst air quality in the UK

London is no longer the smog-choked city of myth. But it continues to suffer from unacceptably high levels of air pollution in less obvious forms. The worst air quality in the UK, and among the worst in Europe, is estimated to cause around a thousand early deaths in London each year, plus a similar number of hospital admissions.

London fails to meet European Union (EU) limit values for the concentrations in the atmosphere of particulates (PM10) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2). It will fall short by an even bigger margin when more stringent standards for NO2 take effect at the end of 2010. The government hopes to avoid the large fines the European Court of Justice could impose for this, not by achieving the standards, but by being able to demonstrate that it has taken 'significant action' towards doing so.

Road vehicles are the largest source both of PM10 and of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and the highest concentrations recorded in London are close to the main road network.

More stringent EU standards

Progressively more stringent standards

imposed by the EU on emissions from new vehicles ('Euro standards') will make the main contribution to improving air quality. But that is a slow process because so many older vehicles remain in use.

The action the Mayor proposes to speed up the process is to make London a Low Emission Zone, in which a charge would be levied on the use of any commercial vehicle which does not meet the current Euro standard. This would create a financial incentive to operators to buy new vehicles or fit pollution control equipment to their existing vehicles or use their newest vehicles for trips within London.

The London Forum accepts a Low Emission Zone is a sensible idea in principle. But discussions about it have been going on for five years already. Detailed proposals have yet to be produced. And, even if this approach works, it will not be a complete solution: modelling indicates that the people removed from exposure to excessive concentrations of PM10 and NO2 will be far fewer in number than the people who will remain exposed to such concentrations.

More radical measures needed

We have therefore called for further investigations into more radical measures to bring about more thoroughgoing improvements in London's air quality ■

The new Licensing Act – assessing the impact

Make your views known

The Civic Trust have been asked to sit as a key stakeholder on the DCMS committee for reviewing the Guidance to the 2003 Licensing Act.

This is an opportunity to help change the way the Licensing Act is implemented and to represent Civic Society concerns at the highest level.

The group's remit will be to consider and advise on issues in the Guidance, such as the definition of 'in the vicinity', which were raised during the initial review, but were considered too contentious at the time.

The Trust wants to learn how Local Authorities are applying the definition of "in the vicinity". For example, is your society

prevented from making objections to a License application because your chairperson does not live within a certain radius of the premises in question?

Please send all views and suggestions to:

Hannah Mummery
email: hmummery@civictrust.org.uk
Telephone: 020 7539 7908.

Late-night noise from pubs and clubs

Defra is seeking views on the new regulations under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, as well as on proposals for the permitted level of noise for licensed premises at night. The consultation is available at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/noiseact-guidance ■

London views

Protection of London views

Visions of London: competition and consultation.

The draft Mayor's Views Management Framework aroused controversy at the Examination of the draft London Plan several years ago because it removed protection from some views that LPAC had proposed and which communities felt were important. The Greater London Assembly Planning & Spatial Development Committee would like to know Londoners' opinions of current policy. What do you think of the views that are to be protected by the Mayor's Guidance? Where should the balance lie between meeting the development needs of London, and preserving our enjoyment of the city's heritage? To contribute to this investigation, please send your comments to visions@london.gov.uk

A photographic competition

The Committee is also giving the public the opportunity to photograph and submit views that they want to see protected. If you have vistas in your locality that you do not want to see adversely changed, please enter photographs of them. It could make it a little more difficult for them to be changed by tall or ugly buildings if residents let the Assembly Members know of them. You may be able to convince the Assembly and the Mayor that protection should be extended to additional views of value to Londoners.

The deadline for submissions

to the Visions of London competition is Friday July 28th 2006. Prizes include a Sony digital camcorder and photographic vouchers of £100 and £50.

How to enter

Send your photographic print or digital image on CD of your favourite view to: Visions of London Competition London Assembly Planning, and Spatial Development Committee, 6th floor – post point 10, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA

The full competition rules and entry form

can be accessed on www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/planning-views-comp-rules.jsp

Spotlight on a member society

Spotlight on Greenwich Society

Defending a World Heritage Site threatened by a surge of riverside development.

Amenity society members may complain about their councils' planning policies (or lack of them), and often justifiably – but things were once much worse. Take Greenwich in the mid 1950s. The old Metropolitan Borough of Greenwich was not only earmarking Georgian terrace houses for slum clearance, but had its eyes on delightfully meandering Crooms Hill, with C17 and C18 houses on one side and Greenwich Park on the other. It wanted to widen this street – admired and praised by Pevsner – by taking a swathe out of the royal park. Worse, it had plans for a relief road bang through the park.

The locals were not amused. 1950s Greenwich might be down-at-heel, but its potential was in caring for and repairing what it had, not destroying it. The Greenwich Society was formed to fight the Crooms Hill plan and duly saw it off. It has been fighting ever since for the town's conservation and enhancement, and today – with a World Heritage Site at its heart and a surge of development along the riverside – is facing a very different set of challenges.

For many of those years, architect and London Forum stalwart Ursula Bowyer led the fight as the society's chairman. She is now its (very active) president; barrister Tim Barnes, whose stuccoed late C17 house looks one way towards Greenwich Park, the other out on to Blackheath, is chairman. (Barnes and Blackheath Society chairman Frank Smith have regular, amiable meetings). Greenwich's secretary Lesley Hodsdon now has the support of a paid administrator; and its formidable performance in reviewing and commenting on planning applications owes much to the presence on its committee of both Ursula Bowyer and John Franklin, architect and sometime assistant borough planning officer.

Commercial takeover thwarted

One of its notable successes was (with other objectors) forcing a retreat by the Thatcher government on its plan to hand over to commercial interests Greenwich's great architectural set-piece, the old Royal Naval College. Instead the government set up a charitable foundation with overall control. The Greenwich Foundation has greatly increased public access, and found itself two highly suitable tenants for the main buildings: Greenwich University and

Trinity College of Music. The whole complex is now full of life, has been comprehensively restored and is looking more attractive than it has for at least a century.

Today the Greenwich Society has certainly more influence on, and better relations with, its local authority than in the 1950s. It has seen off two successive planning applications for the crucial but long derelict Lovell's Wharf site, a mere 400m downstream from the Naval College. They would have been colossal over-development of the site and the twin 36-storey towers originally proposed would have seriously impinged on the World Heritage Site. A third scheme by the same developer cuts down the towers, reduces the content, and Barnes is hopeful that a third application will prove acceptable.

Dialogue with developers

But, he explains, the society would much rather not actually get into a fight, preferring to have talks with developers before they have committed themselves to a damaging scheme. This approach has worked well with another key site about 400m upstream of the town centre. Greenwich Reach is the name given to a large and empty site forming a peninsula between Deptford Creek and the Thames. The developer, London Regional Properties, has, says Barnes, "had a very real dialogue with the society" and the scheme now about to be built meets many of its wishes and criticisms. It is mixed use, not excessively high, and promises to deliver a generous and well-landscaped riverside walk with a footbridge across the mouth of Deptford Creek. To the delight of many Greenwich households it will also include a different kind of amenity – a Waitrose supermarket.

Securing a better outcome on individual development sites is, however, only part of the picture. The society has become increasingly concerned at the council's failure to produce any overall strategy for the cumulative impact on environment of the estimated 10,000 new homes recently completed, under construction or proposed between Deptford and the north Greenwich peninsula. How will roads already jammed at peak times cope? And are there going to be enough school places or medical facilities? Dealing with planning applications on an ad hoc basis, says Barnes, is no substitute for an overall strategy.

Benign bypass stymied

Traffic is indeed a heavy burden for Greenwich to bear. One of the society's big disappointments was that a scheme it pioneered – for a bypass running under the shingle foreshore in front of the Naval College – foundered for want of government support. It would have removed through traffic from the Georgian town centre, and consultants appointed by Greenwich council found a route which involved almost no demolition. But at that time Greater London had no Mayor or regional government and Whitehall did not see relief of Greenwich town centre as a priority. It did not help that Greenwich's own MP, Nick Rainsford, was unenthusiastic. Yet for traffic to grind through the heart of a World Heritage Centre is surely unacceptable. Tim Barnes admits he is sometimes tempted to say, "Let's just shut the place to through traffic and never mind the consequences".

Another disappointment is a partly empty site straddling the railway at Stockwell Street, close to St Alfege Church. What many people thought a good scheme built on extensive consultation recently failed to secure planning permission. It wasn't perfect, as the society made clear, but it had met most of the society's criticisms, and Barnes personally regrets that it was refused – especially with less attractive and well thought out schemes recently gaining consent.

Part of the trouble stems from something familiar to quite a few London Forum member societies: blanket densities in a UDP. The society has argued strongly for lower densities for defined areas, notably where they impinge on the World Heritage site, the town centre, and Georgian west Greenwich. The council was not convinced. Anyway, says Barnes, London's new planning structure gives more power to the London Mayor, who is keen on high densities and higher buildings and less likely to accept the case for lower-density zones.

Threat to Greenwich market

Prominent among the society's current preoccupations is Greenwich's historic covered market, a roofed courtyard that sits within John Kay's 1830s town centre redevelopment. It is owned by a charity called "Greenwich Hospital", which operates from central London and has no immediate links with the local community. There is one



Tim Barnes – Chairman

Greenwich Society

Contact Lesley Hodsdon.

Telephone 020 8858 1674

email secretary@greenwichsociety.org.uk.

 www.greenwichsociety.org.uk

trustee – the Secretary of State for Defence. Its charitable objectives involve supporting a public school in Suffolk whose naval links are increasingly tenuous. Recent newspaper coverage has alarmed both traders (who have lately been faced with stiff rent rises) and local residents by references to redevelopment.

These concerns have been exacerbated by the Director of the Greenwich Hospital's reluctance to give a public commitment to the future of the market in its present form on its present site. Although the surrounding 1830s buildings are sacrosanct, there is acute anxiety that the cobbled market square and the shops around it should remain as they are. The Society will do everything in its power to ensure that that happens.

Biggest challenge yet

A few years ago, with the Dome and other developments on the North Greenwich peninsula in mind, the society took the decision to include the peninsula within its declared area of interest. Its boundaries are Deptford Creek to the west, the Thames to the North, the Millennium Village to the east and the A2 across Blackheath to the south. The decision to include the peninsula was a rational one – it and historic Greenwich share infrastructure; the development proposed there is huge and the area has no existing amenity society to champion environmental quality. But it could be the society's biggest challenge yet ■

“1950s Greenwich might be down-at-heel, but its potential was in caring for and repairing what it had, not destroying it.”

Part of Crooms Hill



Society profile – Greenwich Society



Age: 50; born 1956.

Circumstances of birth: council plans to widen historic Crooms Hill and drive a relief road through Greenwich Park.

Biggest successes: (1) Successfully opposing the above. (2) More recently, fighting successive schemes for gross over-development on a key riverside site and welcoming an amended scheme. (3) Achieving dialogue with developers before they become committed to a scheme. (4) With others, seeing off government plans to turn the Royal naval College over to commercial exploitation.

Biggest disappointments/frustrations: (1) Failure to get government backing for a submerged bypass under the Thames foreshore. (2) Lack of progress in securing redevelopment of key town centre site at Stockwell Street. (3) Not persuading Greenwich council to specify lower housing densities in sensitive areas close to Greenwich's heritage core.

Present preoccupations: (1) Obtaining some lasting improvement in traffic congestion in Greenwich Town Centre and along Trafalgar Road. (2) Worries about the cumulative effect of riverside and other development and the council's lack of overall strategy to ensure the infrastructure can cope. (3) Securing real long-term benefits for Greenwich from the Olympics. (4) Defending Greenwich Market from the worryingly unclear development ambitions of the charity which owns it. (5) Securing better train services to central London. (6) Wish to revive the Greenwich & Docklands Festival, now a shadow of its former self.

Working details: Executive committee of around 15, including representatives of the university and the national maritime Museum. Sub-committees: planning & regeneration, events; planning applications group, Olympics group. Five or six events a year, including annual lecture, cricket match against Blackheath Society, and concert in partnership with Blackheath Society and Trinity College of Music. About 900 members; subscription £12. Very active anti-graffiti team.

Last word: “We work to enhance Greenwich as a place to live and work, and aim to maximise the society influence in order to achieve those ends.”

Environment and sustainability

Parking Mad!

The loss of front gardens to parking spaces is a great concern for London Forum members says London Forum Vice President **Bill Tyler**.

On 23 January *The Times* reported a campaign launched by The Royal Horticultural Society to halt the conversion of green front gardens to hard paved parking areas, and asking the Government to change the law to insist on planning permission being obtained. **newsforum** highlighted the problems of water run-off created by paved over front gardens last winter (No. 45, 2005, Newsbriefs). Recent research shows that London has lost 14% of 'green' front gardens in the past 25 years, not the two-thirds figure then being reported. This figure seems realistic given the vast numbers of London terraced houses and the outer suburban houses built with garages at a time when car ownership was becoming a reality for many. Outside London the proportion is much higher.

I circulated details of The Times article (www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2005517,00.html) to groups and contacts known to be concerned about the loss of front gardens, albeit more specifically because of the impact on the street scene rather than from just the 'greening' viewpoint. This produced a flurry of emails which showed a considerable degree of confusion about what controls a local planning authority (LPA) has to prevent front garden hardstandings being formed. Change of law, or regulation, can be a lengthy process, and even if the RHS campaign, which I hope others will endorse, is eventually successful we will have to live with the present regime for some time to come.

General Permitted Development Orders

The regulations that set out all the categories of development that are permitted, i.e. do not need planning permission, are contained in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order [GPDO] 1995. The categories of alterations and development affecting dwellinghouses are found in Parts 1 to 33. In this context a dwellinghouse (no hyphen in the GPDO!) is a house in single occupation. Within each Part there may be one or more Classes setting out exactly what is permitted development and also what is not, or what may be, permitted in certain circumstances.

All the 33 Parts are in Schedule 2 of the GPDO and Part 1 sets out what is or is not permitted development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse; it does so under a series

of classes of development running from A to H. Class F allows as permitted development "The formation within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such". There are no limitations or provisos.

Schedule 1 lists special areas of land and countryside where restrictions apply to certain categories of permitted development. Article 1(5) land includes conservation areas.

Article 4 directions

The only bar to the enjoyment of permitted development rights is through the imposition of Article 4 direction. The rules for Article 4 directions are in the Application section at the commencement of the GPDO and are quite complex. There are consultation and advertisement requirements, time scales for different stages of implementation and so on.

Article 4 (1)

The two types of Article 4 direction – 4(1) and 4(2) – have quite distinct applications. 4(1) can be used anywhere to stop types of development to groups of buildings or a single building, or indeed the carrying out of works, that would otherwise be permitted. An LPA can impose a 4(1) direction for a maximum of 6 months, by which time it must either be disallowed or approved by the Secretary of State (SoS). The SoS can approve a direction with or without modifications.

Article 4 (2)

An Article 4(2) direction can only be used in a conservation area and has limits on what it may cover, but that does include hard standings. Again, the LPA can impose it for a maximum of 6 months initially during which time there must be local consultation. It can approve the direction subject to taking into account representations made during the consultation period. It does not have to go to the SoS for approval.

Demolition of front boundary walls in conservation areas is dealt with in the GPDO in an amendment to Part 31 and does not protect anything less than 1m in height. UDP or SPG policies on front garden hardstandings only relate to houses in multiple occupation. Local plan policies cannot override national policy as set out in the GPDO.

LPA's are reluctant to make Article 4 directions because there can be quite substantial cost implications. The removal of permitted development rights means that fees cannot be charged for applications that would otherwise not be necessary, similar to the listed buildings situation. There will be an increase in workload because more applications will be made and there is also the cost of the initial consultation process. The possibility of compensation arises if a direction ultimately is not approved, for instance if a property sale falls through because of the 'threat' of a direction being made.

Pavement cross-overs

Pavement cross-overs are entirely a Highways matter and will usually not be refused, other than on safety grounds where too close to a junction or visibility may be poor, and the council gains from a charge for the construction. However, where there are parking restrictions, such as in a CPZ, there may be operational and income-generating reasons for maintaining kerbside bays. Some authorities have a view that each cross-over should be resisted because of the reduction in the availability of on-street parking for everyone else and, since it is not a planning matter, there is no right of appeal.

It is said that there is nothing anyone can do if you park in front of a crossover, subject to any other parking restrictions, when the car space is empty - it is only when you prevent the car from leaving the forecourt that you are in trouble!

Afterthought: if hard paving and consequent water run-off causes drying out of sub-soil and leads to foundation subsidence, are insurers liable for the cost of underpinning? ■

John Prescott "on the job"

A letter to *The Times*, July 8 2006.

Sir,
In an interview with John Humphrys (July 6) John Prescott said that he should be judged by his performance "on the job". Really?

Planning – Crown immunity

New legislation ends Crown Immunity

Crown immunity from English planning law ends under legislation that came into force on 7 June. The Crown will now have to apply for planning permission from the Local Planning Authority, like any other developer, and will be subject to the same rights to appeal. A change to the General Permitted Development Order gives the Crown a new set of permitted development rights similar to those enjoyed by local authorities and relevant statutory undertakers.

Occasionally, permission will be sought for more significant developments that could impact on communities or the environment, or those with national security implications. In these cases:

- Crown developments will have to comply with the EU Environmental Impact Assessment Directive to screen the effects of significant developments on the environment.
- Where a Crown body does not disclose full details of a development on the grounds of national security, and they believe that the local planning authority would turn down the application due to lack of information, they will ask the Secretary of State to call the application.
- Where a development is of national importance and needed urgently, they may apply directly to the Secretary of State and timescales prior to a public inquiry will be shortened. Representations from all parties will still be considered and the local planning authority will be consulted.
- A new Use Class is created for secure residential institutions such as asylum and immigration removal centres and prisons. Existing residential institutions will not be able to convert into secure establishments without seeking planning permission, ensuring local consultation.
- LPAs will be able to issue enforcement notices against Crown bodies for breaches of planning control, but will not be able to enter Crown land without permission or prosecute a Crown body for failure to comply ■

English Heritage and CABE

New arrangements and new faces at English Heritage

London Forum Officers recently met Drew Bennellick, new Head of Regional Partnerships at English Heritage, and his Senior Planner, Alan Byrne. Drew is responsible for dealing with external organisations, like CABE, GLA, the Environment Agency, national amenity societies, and federations like the London Forum. He manages EH projects, landscape architecture, urban design activities and policy, archaeology, planning and regional policy. Alan Byrne drafts EH responses to regional policy consultations.

The EH London Region now has no Regional Director, just two "Heads of...". Former Director Philip Davies is now Director of a large South-East Sector, of which the London Region is a part.

Patrick Pugh is EH's London Head of Regional Advice and Grants. He has two team leaders covering the London boroughs: Mike Dunn covers the City, Westminster and North London, and Sarah Buckingham covers the South, East and West. They have historic buildings staff and casework officers, advisers and inspectors.

"We raised members' concerns at the interventions of CABE in planning decisions and that John Prescott had expressed his view that their opinion is what matters to him."

Forum concern at CABE influence

We signalled our disappointment with EH on the Kew Bridge Road Site Brief and on the related St George West London proposal, as well as with their and other organisations' (Environment Agency, Port of London Authority) reluctance to defend their policies at public inquiries. We raised members' concerns at the interventions of CABE in planning decisions and the way John Prescott had expressed his view that their opinion is what matters to him. CABE, like EH and other statutory consultees, as well as the London Mayor, in our view too often relax their original objections to a scheme after discussions with a developer, without achieving all the improvements that they should ■

CABE guidance, new and revised

Design at appeal: Planning Inspectorate backs new CABE guidance

The Planning Inspectorate has backed new CABE guidance on dealing with design in planning appeals, which can be read on www.cabe.org.uk/AssetLibrary/8034.pdf. The guidance, Design at appeal, offers advice to those involved in appeals, providing guidance on how to deal with design at appeal stage, how to present evidence, the importance of advice from qualified practitioners, and the vital role well-structured design policies play. It sets out to ensure that design is given proper consideration during appeals.

CABE drew up the advice when it found that many planners do not think that planning refusals based on design will be supported at appeal, despite the fact that the Planning Inspectorate is committed to good design and planning policy says 'Good design is indivisible from good planning'. It sets out

to puncture the myth that design-based refusal will not be upheld at appeal. In fact, poorly designed schemes are regularly dismissed at appeal. The aim is to encourage local authorities to take heart from this and refuse planning permission when the design of a scheme isn't good enough.

CABE/EH Guidance on tall buildings revised

The CABE/EH Guidance on tall buildings is being revised and London Forum urged that it is kept robust in its criteria for context sensitivity. We have used those criteria, which are a material consideration, in evidence at public inquiries. The CABE/EH standards should be used to strengthen the Design section (4B) of the London Plan. We are currently working with the Mayor's planning team to try to achieve that as the London Plan is reviewed this Spring ■

Round the Societies

Round the Societies

A round up of news from our member societies.

By **George Parish**.

Green Belts Under Attack Again

The Vice-President of the London Green Belt Council, whose "Notes" are required reading for connoisseurs of such matters, has drawn attention to an article by the Vice-Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Association in the RTPI magazine "Planning", arguing, yet again, that Green Belts are outdated and should be replaced by some other policy. An attempt, however, to precis the article in question for the LGBC's minutes failed due to "the fact that it had no coherent argument; just a series of non-sequiturs based on unsubstantiated assertions."

RAF Bentley Priory

The Stanmore Society is disappointed to learn that the National Trust has declined on grounds of expense to acquire for the nation the former Headquarters of RAF Fighter Command. The Priory itself is in excellent condition and includes the virtually untouched office of the Air Chief Marshal. Numerous campaigners have pledged to do their best save the site from redevelopment and further meetings are planned.

A Bad Decision in a Poor Cause

Vodafone Ltd have won an appeal (conducted by written representations) against Barnet Council's refusal of a mobile phone base station on the north side of the Ridgeway. The site is close to a number of schools and playgroups and is in the Green Belt, a Conservation Area and an Area of Special Character. It is one of the most sensitive sites in the borough and the council has consistently refused masts in such positions. The Inspector noted the fears of local parents and teachers but did not think they outweighed recent technical advice and current national policy. The Mill Hill Preservation Society thinks this a bad decision in a poor cause, a dangerous precedent and a snub to local democracy.

College Farm

The plight of College Farm and its long term future has concerned the Finchley Society for over thirty years. Following an announcement by the Highways Agency (the owner of the land) that it is no longer in negotiation with the College Farm Trust, the Society has now established a steering group with the object of securing the educational and recreational use of the farm and its historic listed buildings for the enjoyment of the community of North London and beyond.

The Mayor and the Watchdogs

The SEBRA Newsletter includes as a regular feature a detailed, somewhat critical but very well-informed commentary on the latest goings-on at City Hall. Emphasis is laid on "the Green effect", ie the ability of the two Green Party members of the Assembly to block moves by other parties to reject the Mayor's budget and the extra £22 million this support has secured for green causes this year. It is unclear whether the writer considers this a bad thing.

Bandstand Restoration

The Clapham Society's annual party on 5 July celebrated the opening of the restored bandstand on Clapham Common, a project undertaken by Lambeth Council over the last two years with Heritage Lottery funding and the enthusiastic support of the Clapham Society. A programme of events centred on the bandstand is being organised by the Council.

More Like A Train Than A Tram

The Camberwell Quarterly reports that a Tram Group, comprising representatives of The Friends of Burgess Park, the Camberwell and Peckham Societies and 15 tenants' and residents' associations, is concerned at the effects of the proposed Camden to Peckham Tram on the area, first from its routing across the widest part of Burgess Park and secondly from the proposal that the main tram depot should be on a site in Peckham which would require extensive demolitions. If Croydon Tramlink is any guide, the impact of the scheme, with its double track, power stanchions and security fences, would be more like a railway than a tramway, both in visual and in severance terms, and the promoters are being urged to consider alternative solutions.

News From Brixton

The Brixton Society's Spring Newsletter featured a tribute to Victor Mishcon, the famous solicitor and London politician, and an article on the origins of the Rush Common Land, which makes such an important contribution to the character of Brixton Road and Brixton Hill.

Greenwich Riverside

The Greenwich Society has commented on the latest proposals for the enhancement of Greenwich Pier and Promenade and of the Cutty Sark Gardens. Their main concern is that these two riverside areas are being treated separately despite being part of the same continuous space. For example, there is apparent duplication of restaurant provision at the expense of circulation space for the large numbers of visitors using the pier.

Sydenham Greats

Together with a wide range of planning news, the Sydenham Society's Spring newsletter carries references to three famous local residents; Eleanor (Tussie) Marx, Karl Marx's youngest and favourite daughter, whose brilliant life ended tragically in Jews' Walk, Sydenham; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and resistance hero, who was a pastor of the German Church in Dacres Road in the thirties; and Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the St Christopher Hospice movement, for whom a service of thanksgiving was held in Westminster Abbey on 8 March.

Arcadia

The Richmond Society Quarterly Newsletter provides a progress report on the Thames Landscape Strategy's three year Arcadia project to restore the view from Richmond Hill. Works began in March 2005 and well over £15 million of projects, funded from the Heritage Lottery, are now completed or underway ■

Round the Societies Editor's Note

There is still a marked imbalance between the number of magazines I receive from North and South London. I must be missing a lot of important stories from the north. Also please note that my postal code changed many years ago from CRO 5JQ to CRO 5LD.

News briefs

newsbriefs

News from the Mayor and Assembly and other key issues of interest and concern to note.

London's new sub-regions

As part of the review of the London Plan the Mayor has proposed a new division of London into sub-regions (Chapter 5 of the Plan). There will no longer be a 'Central London' sub-region. Because the new sub-regions are a closer match to some longstanding groupings of boroughs it is likely they will be adopted for some purposes even before the London Plan is amended formally early in 2008.

The proposed new sub-regions are:

North London Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Westminster

North East London Barking and Dagenham, the City, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest

South East London Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark

South West London Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth

West London Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea.

Managing the Night Time Economy

The Mayor's draft Best Practice Guidance on Managing the Night Time Economy has been published for consultation. It provides advice to local planners, licensing officials and others concerned with the management of areas where there are concentrations of bars, clubs, pubs and restaurants. The document can be downloaded from the Greater London Authority Website at www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/bpg-nighttime-economy.js. Comments on the draft are invited; the deadline is 22 September 2006.

Later Tube running

Following consultation in 2005 showing that most Tube users wanted later trains on the weekend, the Tube will run later on Friday and Saturday nights, leaving central London stations at around 01:00 instead of 00:30 on Friday and Saturday nights, and start one hour later on Saturday mornings from May 2007.

LU is working with the British Transport Police to ensure that enough officers are available to police the Tube at the later time. London Forum member societies along the elevated track from Hammersmith to Acton Town are worried about the 'clackety-clack' disturbance later into the night, as the rails have not been improved by Metronet as much as had been expected.

Heritage Works!

Drivers Jonas, the British Property Federation and RICS teamed up with English Heritage to produce Heritage Works, a toolkit to promote and support the development of expertise in heritage-led regeneration projects. Copies can be downloaded from the Drivers Jonas website, www.driversjonas.com/?_Caller=576,5902&doc=16421 or the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.6136

Draft London Freight Plan

The Draft London Freight plan was launched at City Hall in June. The consultation period is to 4th September. The Plan's vision statement features "quality of life" as one of its aims, but the body of the document effectively limits this to the issue of reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries in freight related accidents. It is available at www.freight@tfl.gov.uk

Paddington Basin – public or private?

There is much concern about the 'privatisation' of Paddington Basin by British Waterways. The basin was originally private with no public access so the development of the area was hailed as a great success by the developers and BW as having opened up the basin to the public. Yet local people have been stopped from taking photos on the grounds of security and terrorism and told that it is private land. Recently BBC and Channel 4 film crews were kicked out, although they still used the footage of the basin that they had shot.

Have the waterways lost out on the deals? What are the public rights and access around the basin and environs and what deals have been done?

Results of consultation on the National Lottery

There were over 11,000 responses to a recent DCNS consultation on what proportion of Lottery money should be allocated to the arts and film, sport and heritage after 2009, and what the policy should be on how Lottery money is spent in each of these causes.

They found:

- overwhelming support for what Lottery money is used for in the arts and film, heritage and sport;
- very strong support for the existing share balance;
- people believe very strongly that each cause is important and want stability and continuity.

National Lottery Shares 2009 Consultation results

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced that:

- the current Lottery shares for arts and film, sport and heritage will be retained for ten years from 2009–2019.
- the Olympic funding package will remain: £750m from new Lottery games and £410m from existing games after 2009.
- concluded that there is no case for changing the current, population based, arrangement for Lottery funding for arts and sport between the home countries of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- the UK Film Council will in future take on all film funding from Arts Council England with the same budget (£3 million a year).

The main priorities from 2009 to 2019 will include:

- Increasing participation
- Inspiring young people
- Involving local communities.

Enquires: 020 7211 6372

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News briefs Continued

newsbriefs

The new Department for Communities and Local Government

The organisation of the new department

Number 10 Downing Street announced the creation of a new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 5 May 2006, under Ruth Kelly's leadership.

The DCLG has taken on an expanded role from its predecessor, the ODPM. As well as local government, social exclusion, regeneration, planning and neighbourhood renewal, it has responsibilities for communities, race, faith and the voluntary sector previously divided among a number of Whitehall departments.

Yvette Cooper remains as minister for housing and planning along with Baroness Andrews as parliamentary secretary. New ministerial colleagues include Phil Woolas, Angela Smith and Meg Munn. David Miliband is now Secretary of State at DEFRA, while Alistair Darling has moved to DTI; his replacement as Transport Secretary is Douglas Alexander.

Empowering local people?

In a press release issued on 28 June 2006, Ruth Kelly claimed that barriers between the public and government institutions are being broken down. She praised schemes working "to give residents more control over their communities" and renewed her department's commitment "to ensuring residents are involved in shaping local policies".

"The Government is committed to empowering local people to shape local policies. I want to see more people being able to have their say in the decisions that have such a profound effect on what matters to them and their communities. It will breathe life into our democratic decision making."

Last year, we are told, a document called *Together We Can* set out a cross-government action plan to improve the way people engage with local and central government. "This is helping ministers to join up initiatives across government". Progress on the 65 point action plan can be found at the *Together We Can* website www.togetherwecan.info

Meanwhile the reality is, that far from "having more control over their communities" or being "involved in shaping local policies", civic societies and community groups all over the country are having to fight through the courts to get their voice heard at all. Certainly Ms Kelly's statements are contradicted by the findings of Helena Kennedy's *Power Commission Report* ■

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Publications and events

The London Open House 2006

The London Open House Annual Event for 2006 will take place over the weekend of 16–17 September. For information on how to participate and events programme, contact Jeni Hoskin on 020 7383 2131, or ejhoskin@openhouse.org.uk

Exhibition: Future City; Experiment and Utopia in Architecture 1956 – 2006

An Exhibition dealing with urban planning, utopian visions of the city and radical architecture, opened at the Barbican Art Gallery on 15 June 2006.

The 2006 Europe Nostra Awards

The 2006 Europe Nostra Awards aim to recognise and promote high standards of conservation practice that contribute to the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in Europe. They are open to individuals, public bodies and non-governmental organisations. There are six prizes of 10,000 Euros, and medal and diplomas.

For full details of 2006 categories, see www.europanostra.org/lang_en//index.html

Whitehall to Townhall – Strengthening Democratic choice

Whitehall to Townhall – Strengthening Democratic choice is the title of a report by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU).

The report contains a survey, finding that most people want their local services run by elected councillors or local people, not quangos.

Jo Dungey, author of the report is quoted in *The Times* (June 27th, Public Agenda) as saying: "People want local control and they support the principle of council decision-making. They don't support the level of national intervention that exists at present"

There are over 5000 quangoes running services across the country. Dungey says they create many problems, in particular, a lack of democratic accountability.

newsforum

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