

# 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  
[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

## In this issue

Spotlight on  
Richmond Society  
Page 10

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1 <b>Housing White Paper</b>                                 | England   | 14 <b>Heathrow</b>                                    |
| 3 <b>A City for all Londoners</b>                            | 8 <b>Open meeting</b> 50 years of<br>Conservation Areas | 15 <b>Facts, figures on the housing<br/>situation</b> |
| 4 <b>Open meeting:</b> towards the<br>London Plan            | 9 <b>Converting to a CIO</b>                            | 16 <b>Planning and development</b>                    |
| 5 <b>Dame Jennifer Jenkins ; London<br/>Mayoral call-ins</b> | 10 <b>Spotlight: Richmond Society</b>                   | 18 <b>Round the Societies</b>                         |
| 6 <b>50 years of Conservation Areas in</b>                   | 12 <b>Finsbury Park –Who Cares?</b>                     | 19 <b>News briefs</b>                                 |
|  | 13 <b>Heritage and open space</b>                       | 20 <b>Events and meetings</b>                         |

## Housing and Planning Bill

# Fixing our broken housing market

**The Housing White Paper** - a summary by **Peter Eversden**

The paper's 104 pages are divided into four chapters plus an Annex with further details about additional papers and consultations.

Consultation on the document ends on 2nd May 2017.

The Prime Minister's Introduction states: "Our broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today. Whether buying or renting, the fact is that housing is increasingly unaffordable.

"I want to fix this broken market so that housing is more affordable and people have the security they need to plan for the future. The starting point is to build more homes"

### The Executive Summary

identifies six groups of interest:

- local authorities
- private developers
- local communities
- housing associations and other not-for-profit developers
- lenders, institutional investors and capital market participants
- utility companies and infrastructure providers

### Chapter 1:

#### Planning for the right homes in the right places - Local plans must be up-to date

The Paper sets out a requirement for all local authorities to be covered by a local plan that is amended every five years. The government will "intervene" if necessary to ensure plans are put in place.

#### Brownfield land and small sites

Local authorities must make more land

available for homes by maximising the contribution from brownfield and surplus public land, regenerating estates, and releasing more small and medium sized sites.

#### Green belt

"Existing strong protections for the Green Belt," will be maintained and "Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances: when local authorities can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options or where it contributes to the delivery of starter homes and there is no substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt."

Any loss of Green Belt must be offset by compensatory improvements to existing green belt land.

Neighbourhood plans may determine changes to green belt boundaries where a local or strategic plan has demonstrated the need for such changes, but would not be able to change the general extent of the Green belt.

The Annex details changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which will ensure that "authorities can continue to protect valued areas of open space, the character of residential neighbourhoods and stop unwanted garden grabbing."

#### High density development

High-density will be promoted in areas well served by public transport. continued on page 2

## The London Forum 2017 Awards

will celebrate

### Amenity Society Achievements

especially the impact you are  
having on your local  
community.

### Entries

will be needed by

**August 31st**

### Awards

will be made at

**London Forum's AGM  
in October**

**Details of how to enter will be  
available in May**

**Look out for more information on  
the London Forum website**

**Flier enclosed**

# The Housing White Paper (cont)

Planning policy will be amended to ensure that low-density development is avoided in areas where there is a shortage of land. This could include replacing, or building over, low-density uses like car parks, or building on top of existing buildings.

## Chapter 2: Building homes faster

Developers will be held to account for the delivery of new homes, and local authorities through a new housing delivery test which will reduce the scope for local and neighbourhood plans to be undermined.

The government expects developers "to build homes swiftly where permission is granted" and will tackle unnecessary delays caused by planning conditions, facilitating the strategic licensing of protected species and exploring a new approach to how developers contribute to infrastructure and deal with skills shortages.

Measures to improve local authority capacity and capability include: improving the speed and quality with which planning cases are handled; deterring unnecessary appeals and delays caused by planning conditions - these will have to meet the national policy tests; ensuring the necessary infrastructure and utility connections are provided in the right place at the right time through a £2.3bn Housing Infrastructure Fund.

## Planning Fees to rise

From July, local authorities will be able to increase planning fees by 20% if they commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning department and secure skilled professionals of the quality needed. Consultations have found support for this from all sectors.

The Government will consult on introducing a fee for making a planning appeal.

## Compulsory purchase powers

Local authorities will be encouraged to make "more active use of compulsory purchase powers to promote development on stalled sites" where developers have planning permission for housing and do not build out. New guidance to local planning authorities will be prepared, and the Government will investigate whether such sites could then be auctioned off to other builders and the money used to pay compensation to the original developer.

## Chapter 3: Diversifying the market

The Government will look at measures to modernise the housebuilding industry, boost productivity and innovative methods of construction, and support new investors and providers so as to diversify the market.

The Paper signalled support for small and medium sized builders by announcing that 10% of all sites allocated for development must be half a hectare or less in size, and that local authorities must work with developers to divide up larger sites; it will "promote more modular and factory built homes." (see page 16)

## Backing for Build to Rent (BTR)

Planning policy will be amended to allow local authorities to plan for BTR schemes, and make it easier for developers of purpose-built developments for the rental market to offer affordable private rented homes instead of other forms of affordable housing.

A consultation document published alongside the White Paper says that a revision to the National Planning Policy Framework will make it explicit that "affordable private rent can count as a form of affordable housing, and that it is also particularly well suited to Build to Rent". The government will also consult on plans for three-year tenancies to be offered on all BTR schemes. The Homes and Communities Agency will be relaunched as Homes England.

## Renting to be made fairer

Renting is to be made fairer for tenants, and family-friendly tenancies of three or more years are to be made available for those tenants that want them on schemes that benefit from these changes. The Government is working with the British Property Federation and National Housing Federation to consolidate this approach across the sector.

## Chapter 4: Helping people now Starter Homes requirement dropped

The Government has "listened to concerns" about the impact of introducing a mandatory requirement for Starter Homes on developments over a certain size. There will now be a general duty on councils to promote the supply of starter homes and local authorities will be encouraged to deliver them as part of a mixed package of

affordable housing that can respond to local needs and local markets. It will be for local areas to work with developers to agree an appropriate level of delivery of starter homes, alongside other affordable home ownership and rented tenures.

## Reducing speculation

There will be a 15 year repayment period for a Starter Home so when the property is sold on to a new owner within this period, some or all of the discount is repaid. This, along with the mortgage requirement, will reduce the risk of speculation,

A council tax premium of up to 50% (on top of the council tax bill), may be imposed on properties that have been empty and substantially unfurnished for more than two years.

## Annex with further detail

The Annex provides further detail of the changes to planning policy and legislation needed to implement the proposals in chapters 1 and 2; and sets out consultation questions where new proposals are being made

## Additional documents

### Upward extensions permitted - development right ruled out

The government will not bring forward a permitted development right to make it easier for developers to add upward extensions to buildings in London. Instead, it says, the National Planning Policy Framework will be amended to "support the delivery of additional homes by building up", across the country, not just in London.

## CIL shake-up

A review recommends that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be replaced with a "hybrid system" of a low level tariff for all developments and section 106 for larger developments. The "options for reforming the system of developer contributions including ensuring direct benefit for communities" will be examined and an announcement made at Autumn Budget 2017. ■

*The White Paper is available on the government's website by typing in 'Fixing our broken housing market'*

# A City for all Londoners

The London Forum welcomes this document setting out the Mayor of London's values and forshadowing his strategies, prior to his review of the London Plan. He sets out a challenging agenda for translating those values into planning policies, especially at the neighbourhood level. **Michael Bach** summarises London Forum's initial reaction

(This article first appeared in *Planning*)

The Mayor has introduced new dimensions that will shape the new plan and provided a vision for London that now needs articulating through the London Plan and the Mayor's other strategies.

The link between the London Plan and London Borough Local Plans is essential. The new London Plan should contain for each appropriate Mayoral policy clear guidance to Boroughs both for local policy making and for decisions. The GLA should ensure that Local Plans do use the London Plan to shape their plans, should ensure general conformity and, where appropriate, should ensure the London Plan is used in assessing proposals for development.

## London Forum's key issues include:

- ensuring that in accommodating growth and raising densities we create a city where local communities are comfortable with the scale and nature of change in their neighbourhood. This may set limits to the scale of intensification and the acceptability of new tall buildings
- ensuring that "good growth" with higher densities is used creatively to make more sustainable neighbourhoods, more accessible and affordable housing and is able to support a wider range of accessible local services
- making inclusive, accessible, walkable, resilient neighbourhoods the building blocks for supporting London's local communities
- planning for objectively-assessed need for employment land in the right locations, especially offices
- delivering enough homes to rent at prices each section of the community can afford.

## Mayor's Foreword

This emphasises creating opportunities, tackling inequalities and the strain that growth has placed on housing, transport, health and education. Creating a better city for all means not only providing access to jobs and culture, but also strengthening local neighbourhoods by creating access to essential social infrastructure - primary schools, GP surgeries, local shops, local open spaces. There must be greater equality of access to opportunities and

---

*The London Forum's key issues include ensuring that in accommodating growth and raising densities we create a city where local communities are comfortable with the scale and nature of change in their neighbourhood.*

---

essential day-to-day services and opportunities for participation will be crucial. The Mayor must provide the lead – the boroughs need to deliver sustainable, accessible neighbourhoods.

## Executive summary

The rate of change – growing population, increasing diversity, the uncertainty of Brexit and the effects of climate change – are major challenges that set the tone and the direction of travel. The need is to bring all of the Mayor's strategies forward as an integrated response.

## Context

The policies of the London Plan and its targets will need to be phased through the period it covers due to the current backlog of housing need and the uncertainties caused by the EU referendum result and the Government's options for exit from the EU. Changes in the economy could be as important as changes in population and they are related.

## Part 1: Accommodating Growth London Forum supports:

- accommodating as much of London's growth as possible within London
- protecting land for employment across the city, especially in the central area – but we also need to plan for objectively-assessed need for employment land in the right locations, especially offices.
- intensifying development around stations and well-connected town centres, but not just for housing – these are preferred locations for employment, especially offices

- mixed-use development
- better access to affordable housing, jobs, culture and social infrastructure, to support local communities and strengthen neighbourhood and town centres
- the environment being protected and enhanced.

## Part 2: Housing

### London Forum recognises that:

- housing completions have failed to meet both need and demand for housing
- this is a perennial problem to which there is no quick solution
- developing TfL and other public sector land could help, but it must be at existing land values, not sold to developers for profit.
- there is need for a variety of affordable housing types, but the Mayor's wish to approve all developments delivering 35% affordable housing would make it difficult for boroughs with a 40% or 50% target of their own to achieve their aims on some new developments. Also, the Mayor must define the descriptions and sizes for the three types of affordable housing he has indicated as a requirement and set targets for each.

## Part 3: Economy

### London Forum supports:

- preserving and enhancing London's global competitiveness
- delivering world-class transport infrastructure, but also much better and imaginative management of demand
- protecting our environment and world-class culture
- promoting economic activities across London, day and night and, in particular, taking account of the needs of small businesses
- encouraging businesses to choose London, but also increasing opportunities for all Londoners.

We support all that is proposed for London's economy, but light industrial land must be better protected than in recent times. The introduction of housing into such business areas too often results in displacement of remaining industries that cause any noise, traffic or odours.

continued on page 4

## A City for all Londoners (cont)

### Part 4: Environment, Transport and Public Space London Forum supports:

- tackling threats from climate change
- improving the health and wellbeing of Londoners, especially by greatly improving air quality - the Mayor's initiatives to date are welcome
- protecting and enhancing London's environment
- reducing traffic and encouraging cycling and walking on "Healthy Streets", but securing parity of support for pedestrians and cyclists - initiatives already taken on fares, the night tube and Hopper bus ticket are strongly welcomed
- protecting the city's heritage and culture
- promoting good design in public spaces, but giving more emphasis to creating places that people can enjoy.

### Part 5: A City for all Londoners

#### London Forum supports:

- promoting social integration through addressing inequalities, tackling disadvantage and discrimination
- promoting full participation in the life of our city, particularly at the local community level
- providing affordable, accessible transport,
- improvements to health to reduce health inequalities
- ensuring the city's cultural offer continues to thrive
- promoting social cohesion.

The London Forum looks forward to commenting on the Mayor's detailed strategies.

See more at

<http://bit.ly/2n6VjFx> ■

# Open meeting: towards the next London Plan

Wednesday 30 November; **John Lett**, Strategic Planning Manager, London Plan Team at the GLA, gave a presentation on the progress towards the next London Plan **Peter Pickering** reports

The new Plan looking forward to 2041 will be based on forecast growth of some 70,000 individuals - 44,000 households - a year; with the backlog of housing need, that would mean 65,000 new dwellings each year - the Mayor's aim was 50,000. Employment in Greater London was also growing, by 100,000 a year (though 70,000 jobs had been lost in the recession). A draft will appear later this year.

The 2011 Plan had been amended when it became evident that the population of Greater London had been rising, and was continuing to rise by substantially more than had been assumed. The forecasts were based a combination of natural increase (excess of births over deaths) and of net migration (more people coming to London - from the rest of the UK and from overseas - than leaving it) - of these natural increase was the more significant. The presumption was that London should 'consume its own smoke' - that is, though there could be informal arrangements with other authorities in the South-east, London would accommodate its own population growth without intruding on the Green Belt.

### The new Mayor's vision

Of the components of economic growth in London, the new Mayor's vision singled out culture in the widest sense, as nowadays the most important, concentrating on people and growing London's talent.

Roads had a role in his long term transport policy but he emphasised air quality; he wanted a new footbridge at Rotherhithe.

Housing density would have to increase; he was not against tall buildings provided they made a positive contribution; heritage he saw as an economic benefit. He was anxious to increase the proportion of affordable housing from 35% to 50% and wished to stop council house sales. He wanted more fiscal devolution and sought new players in the housing market.

### A new focus on town centres

There would be a new focus on town centres. Structural change in the retail market meant problems ahead for district and some major centres - there would have to be partnerships, denser housing located above ground-floor retail, intensification in some suburbs and conversion of family houses into flats as happened in Edwardian inner London. An attractive environment with much greater densities than at present was possible. Construction had to be speeded up; there was a real but very complex problem with

unimplemented planning approvals; to enact 'use it or lose it' might be necessary. There might have to be compulsory purchase.

Another problem was land used for employment: affordable business spaces should be protected as far as possible, but perhaps industry should be relocated outside London.

### Open discussion

#### Questions and points raised by members

Why could those who were simply waiting for prices to go up not be pressurised into implementing the permissions they held? Mr Lett said that this was now being taken more seriously than before, but no solution was without difficulty: it was hard to remove a permission just because it had not been implemented and the private sector was very hostile to any suggestion of levying council tax in such circumstances. Birmingham were looking at the problem and the results would be informative. The GLA was urging Transport for London to develop partnerships with small and medium builders who are less likely to land bank. He suggested that the Forum should make representations on this subject to the Mayor's new 'Homes for Londoners' board.

Attention was drawn to the gaps between the Government and the GLA, and between the GLA and the boroughs; it was after all the boroughs who had the prime responsibility for development control. Mr Lett said that Mayor Livingstone had tried to address the second one with sub-regional plans, but they had not really been effective: he emphasised, however, that there was quite close working and regular conversations between the GLA and the boroughs, though some boroughs did try to play the GLA off against the Government. Peter Eversden (Chairman) suggested that with the new appointments - Gavin Barwell, MP for Croydon, Minister for Planning, Housing and London, and two ex-borough officers as Sadiq Khan's deputies - the gaps might close and a better understanding between the three sectors might arise. He hoped boroughs with out of date Local Plans would get on with updating them with their communities.

Bill Linskey (Brixton Society) said that Lambeth was destroying mixed and diverse communities; London was becoming like Paris (a high-class central area surrounded by 'banlieues'). Developers ran rings round councils, with their claims that affordable housing was 'unviable'. Several members agreed; some boroughs do not have the staff to examine applications properly; Ealing now had only one conservation officer part time when they used to have four; will London's

## Open meeting (cont)

reliance on continuing growth lead to a fate like that of Mexico City or Tokyo. Mr Lett said that Mayor Khan wanted to change the nature of the land market, and increase the affordable housing requirement. Two specialist surveyors will fight 'unviability' appeals; the 'build to leave' problem was being studied. The success of the London economy was driving population growth with productive individuals coming in to London.

Mr Eversden wanted to see councils building houses again. Mr Lett said that this was unlikely in its old form, but some boroughs were thinking of partnerships.

### Lack of outside space

Two members commented on lack of outside space: developments on the Greenwich peninsula had nothing but houses with no amenity space; to count space on balconies as 'amenity space' was very damaging. Mr Lett admitted that this might have been an error in the London Plan.

### 'Predict and provide' criticised

The 'predict and provide' methodology being used was criticised - it smacked of discredited road-building policies and failed to recognise that supply could lead to demand. Did housing need calculations take into account that people were staying longer in their houses than previously.

Mr Lett replied that household sizes were continuing to decline, and the NPPF required councils to meet objectively assessed need; though the Government seemed to be weakening on this. It would annoy London's neighbours if its excess population went to the rest of the South-East. The GLA would be talking with outer London boroughs, and boroughs would have to plan in conformity with the London Plan.

### Reducing the need to travel

Comment was made that reducing the need to travel and 'reverse commuting' - from inner to outer London - would help transport congestion; one of London's strengths was its flexibility; people chose where they wanted to live and work. Mr Lett accepted the force of these propositions, but pointed to the economic benefit of high value agglomerations; a problem was to reconcile transport with density. ■

## London Mayoral call-ins

The Mayor of London has intervened in two high-rise housing projects after local authorities in Tottenham and Wealdstone refused planning permission against officers' recommendations for approval - his first call-ins since becoming Mayor last year.

Mr Khan's decision on these proposed developments will indicate how he intends to use his powers to balance the need for more affordable homes against the competing desires of local residents.

### Haringey

Haringey councillors had rejected a proposal including 12 buildings ranging from four storeys to a 21-storey tower at Hale Wharf in Tottenham, on the edge of the green belt. They said the design would be too tall, would result in "an overly large and discordant mass", and would adversely impact green belt land.

### Harrow

Harrow councillors turned down plans for five buildings, up to 17 storeys tall, comprising 186 homes, in Palmerston Road, Wealdstone. They said the proposal was "an overdevelopment, with excessive and overbearing height, bulk, mass, scale and intensity, to the detriment of local character".

Mr Khan said the developments "have the potential to bring real benefits as part of the wider regeneration of both areas including hundreds of genuinely affordable new homes". His officials said the Harrow site was "highly accessible yet underutilised" while the Tottenham one was "suitable for tall buildings".

Both sites sit within designated Opportunity Areas and Housing Zones - areas of land that are considered appropriate for development. The Palmerston Road site already includes 41 per cent affordable housing.

Mr Khan said he wanted his planning officials to negotiate with the developers to secure as much affordable housing as possible at both sites; change the design of the buildings while addressing the concerns of local residents, and protect the green belt. The mayor will consider both schemes at hearings later in the year. ■

## Dame Jennifer Jenkins

1921-1917

Dame Jennifer Jenkins who died on February 2 aged 96 and has been a Patron of the London Forum for most of its existence.

She will be remembered as one of the most important figures in the conservation movement over the last half century.

Her many achievements include securing protection for hundreds of miles of coastline, in particular the White Cliffs of Dover, and many town centres and villages, historic buildings and London parks.

She campaigned to stop civil servants using Horse Guards Parade as a car park; for the scheme that pedestrianised much of the area in front of Buckingham Palace, and the safeguarding of the former Royal Naval College in Greenwich.

In the course of a career spent mostly in the voluntary sector she was, as the Evening Standard reported on her 80th birthday, "a member of more public bodies than anyone may care to count"; among them the Historic Buildings Council, Ancient Monuments Society, Royal Parks Review Group, Heritage Lottery Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund, British Standards Institution, Design Council and the Courtauld Institute.

She was head of the Consumers' Association for 11 years; chairwoman of CPRE, and of the National Trust for five years from 1986, and also a director of Sainsbury's and the Abbey National building society.

Her father, Sir Parker Morris, was Town Clerk (chief executive) of Westminster for 20 years from 1929, and devised what later became the standard minimum dimensions of postwar council housing. Her mother was one of the first woman reporters on the Manchester Guardian.

She read history at Girton College, Cambridge and was married to Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, the former Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, deputy Labour Party leader and European Commission President. ■

# 50 years of Conservation Areas in London

This summer marks fifty years of Conservation Areas in England. The first one was designated in Stamford in 1967 and the country now has more than 10,000. It is perhaps the heritage designation that the public most identify with.

By **Rosemarie MacQueen**

Conservation Areas form the backdrop to so much of our lives – many of us live, work, shop and spend our leisure time in them – not because they are Conservation Areas but because they contain buildings, spaces and activities that are attractive, varied and stimulating.

The idea of the Conservation Area was introduced into legislation as a Private Member's Bill by Duncan Sandys MP as part of the Civic Amenities Act in the summer of 1967. The Civic Trust, of which Sandys was Chairman, was instrumental in pushing forward the idea and local communities and societies have played an ever-increasing role in their identification, assessment, management and celebration. The Act placed a duty on every local planning authority to "...determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Designation emerged as an important way to limit the damage being done by the particular enthusiasm in the late 1960's for the large-scale sweeping away of the old by Councils. The fashion was for new bypasses, ring roads, shopping centres, so called 'slum clearances' and other large-scale development. There was a public backlash to what often appeared to be an arbitrary loss of familiar places and communities and a desire for refurbishment, which led to the introduction of grant-aided General Improvement Areas and Housing Action Areas.

The designations of Conservation Areas were a timely and clever way to value and protect the traditional 'fine grain' of much interesting and architecturally valuable urban townscape and both the consistency and the variety of use and built form in so many and so varied a range of places up and down the United Kingdom. The Historic Buildings Council at one point introduced the concept of 'Outstanding' Conservation Areas and some London CA's were so accoladed.

For me, the great success of the application of the Conservation Area concept is that it has become the most community-focussed form of heritage protection. Unlike many other categories

## Conservation Areas in London

The following table, published in Historic England's 'Heritage Counts', shows the total number of Conservation Areas by London Borough across London in 2016.

Barking & Dagenham	4
Barnet	17
Bexley	23
Brent	22
Bromley	45
Camden	40
City of London	26
Croydon	21
Ealing	29
Enfield	22
Greenwich	20
Hackney	30
Hammersmith & Fulham	45
Haringey	29
Harrow	29
Havering	11
Hillingdon	31
Hounslow	27
Islington	41
Kensington & Chelsea	38
Kingston	26
Lambeth	62
Lewisham	27
Merton	28
Newham	9
Redbridge	16
Richmond	72
Southwark	48
Sutton	15
Tower Hamlets	58
Waltham Forest	14
Wandsworth	45
Westminster	56

of heritage, they are designated by local authorities not by central government, so they can truly reflect what local communities think is special and worth looking after particularly carefully. Of course, the majority are commercial and residential areas which incorporate the finest and more formal buildings, but there are also many simpler and also quirkier areas, such as canals, former industrial sites and Battle of Britain airfields. They also vary greatly in size from the quite

small to the very large. It is that sheer variety which makes them endlessly fascinating. Importantly, each is a focal point for the local authority, local civic societies and residents' groups to work together constructively to identify, understand, protect and enhance an area and in many cases, bring about and contribute to the regeneration of local places and the wider context of village, suburb, town or city. With falling local authority staffing and loss of appropriately trained officers, the voluntary sector is taking an ever-increasing role in shaping the futures of these areas.

London's Conservation Areas are wonderfully varied and may include World Heritage Sites, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, rivers and canals. Some are made-up of one character: a planned garden estate, a cemetery; others cover an historic village boundary containing distinctively different architectural and use characteristics. The legislative framework, which began by recording areas and later allowed positive management by controlling demolition and some alterations and requiring the drafting of management plans, deserves celebration. The Government's Best Value Performance Indicator 219 promulgated Conservation Area Appraisals. Many Conservation Areas have attached Article 4 Directions restricting some Permitted Development Rights, others have a schedule of Locally Listed Buildings to further delineate the perceived value of the area. Without these mechanisms the diverse character and complex visual value of London could have been diluted or lost. Instead incremental and managed change has occurred which has delivered growth without sacrificing London's 'unique selling point'. A well known example is the phenomenally successful and internationally renowned Covent Garden Conservation Area.

London currently has 1026 Conservation Areas - around 10% of the national total. By comparison London has only around 5% of all Listed Buildings. Some central London Boroughs have a significant area of their land designed as Conservation Areas. However, these areas are more likely to be at risk in London than

in the country as a whole. Some 70 areas (7%) in London are on the Historic England *Heritage At Risk Register* compared to the national average of 6% and while the national figure fell last year, the number of areas at risk in London rose. The reasons for them being at risk are varied, but the pressure for new and speculative development is increasingly strong in London.

Some of the Conservation Areas listed in the table opposite date from the very early days of designation. Indeed there is a rivalry as to which Conservation Area was designated first in London. St John's Wood CA claims a designation date of 1967, maintaining it would have beaten Stamford CA were it not for delay while seeking legal clarification as to the role of the GLC in the process. Blackheath CA maintains it was the first designation being a joint designation by Greenwich and Lewisham in 1968.

### Variety and richness

By choosing just one Conservation Area designation from each of the London boroughs it becomes easy to understand how their variety and scope underpin the richness of identity of individual places in London: Barking's Chadwell Heath Anti-aircraft Gun Site CA, Barnet's Cricklewood Railway Terraces CA, Bexley's Red House Lane CA, Brent's Paddington Cemetery CA, Bromley's Chislehurst Village CA, Camden's Highgate CA, City of London's Temples CA, Croydon's Central Croydon Town Centre CA, Ealing's Bedford Park CA, Enfield's Enfield Lock Canalside CA, Greenwich's Royal Park CA, Hackney's Clissold Park CA, Hammersmith & Fulham's Imperial Square and Gasworks CA, Harrow's Harrow School CA, Havering's RAF Hornchurch CA, Hillingdon's Harmondsworth Village CA, Hounslow's Strand on the Green CA, Islington's New River Head CA, Kensington & Chelsea's Thurlow Estate and Smith Charity CA, Kingston's The Groves CA, Lambeth's Clapham Common CA, Lewisham's Blackheath CA, Merton's Wimbledon Windmill CA, Newham's Three Mills CA, Redbridge's Barnardo's Village Homes CA, Richmond's Royal Botanic Gardens Kew CA, Southwark's Trinity

Church Square CA, Sutton's Sutton Garden Suburb CA, Tower Hamlet's Brick Lane and Fournier Street CA, Waltham Forest's Walthamstow Village CA, Wandsworth's Alton Estate CA and Westminster's Whitehall CA.

These examples cover inner city housing and country villages, planned estates and open parkland, waterfront and woodland, industrial and commercial holdings, architecture from the mediaeval to the late 20th century.

### Growth of democratic engagement.

Alongside the making of Conservation Areas came a growth of democratic engagement. Many Borough Councils accepted the setting-up and active role of Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAAC's) made up of residents and commercial interests; some boroughs had a single one, while others had several CAAC's covering separate Conservation Areas. They played an active role in policy formulation, boundary reviews and advising the decision makers on development proposals and other relevant matters. With the advent of Neighbourhood Planning some CAAC's and amenity societies have considered the mechanisms of developing into Neighbourhood Forums.

### Current threats

From the start there have been detractors as to the value of Conservation Areas, suggesting that they stand in the way of regeneration, new architecture and modernism. Recent think-tank polemics and draft Central Government consultations have made suggestions ranging from the need for de-designation, extended permitted development rights, upward extensions, building on green-belt and open space and dramatic densification including height and bulk increases.

Revisions to the London Plan call for significant increases in housing units and employment floor-space. The current Mayor has suggested growth could be in town centres and close to transport hubs. In many instances these happen to be designated Conservation Areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) suggests the need to care for

---

*Alongside the making of Conservation Areas came a growth of democratic engagement.*

---

heritage assets, Historic England's advice in 'Conservation Principles' and its advice on Tall Buildings and Local Authorities' Conservation Area appraisals have a shared baseline of expecting acknowledgment of context. Increasingly, development decisions seem to ignore adopted policies requiring protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Unfortunately, optimising development and profit on a site has frequently and seemingly inexorably moved towards maximising development. This can leave the conservation values at risk of being over-ridden by pressure for increased financial viability and a greater quantity of unit provision, which will also bring in revenue to the cash-strapped Local Council, leaving local politicians with a decision making dilemma.

Critics of Conservation Areas will opine on the lost opportunities that designation has stifled, whether it be curtailing delivery of new-build Grade A office floorspace or stopping intensive residential flat building. Counter-intuitively, the Conservation Area with its make-up of older, smaller floorplate buildings has often provided economically accessible, multi-tenanted buildings that have supported and increased the diversity of London's economy. They have provided the characterful townscape where bars, restaurants, clubs, independent retailers want to locate. They have delivered a local identity and community status contributing to residential wellbeing. There can be few Conservation Areas where property values have decreased in the long-term.

While there is much to celebrate in the anniversary year, we all need to find ways we can help make sure that change to those Conservation Areas that we know and love in London is managed in a positive way, so that their characters are preserved and enhanced. Future Central Government legislative changes, especially in the context of 'Brexit', Local Authority policy reviews and Neighbourhood Plans need to be encouraged to recall and take account of what Conservation Areas have delivered and what is irreversibly at risk if they are devalued. ■

*Facts/Figures provided by Duncan McCallum  
Director of Policy, Historic England*

# Conservation Areas after 50 years

**Open Meeting, 1st March 2017** Guest speakers included **Emily Gee**, London Planning Director, Historic England, together with a team of colleagues from HE; **Christine Cowdray**, St John's Wood Society and **Professor Barry Redding** from the Chislehurst Society **Peter Pickering** reports

Emily Gee explained what Historic England (HE) were doing nationally and in London to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first conservation area (CA). There would be a wide range of guidance, including an owner's manual, and conservation areas would feature heavily in the next edition of 'Heritage Counts'.

In London, there were more CAs than listed buildings. Threats included particularly the damage to the Chiswick riverside by the proposed Chiswick Cube. 'At-risk' conservation areas could be revitalised - Noel Park was an example. There would be a 'Heritage Action Zone' in Sutton next March. Both she and London Forum Chairman Peter Eversden said there was much civic societies could do to help understaffed local authority departments, in particular enriching the Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest list, much of which was now distinctly outdated, and helping in the revision of Local Plans.

**Rosemarie MacQueen** emphasised the importance of background in CA appraisals and list descriptions; she quoted in particular Soho. Michael Bach asked if this meant that social history was now more relevant than when the aesthetics and architectural history of buildings and areas were paramount. Ms MacQueen and Ms Gee said that heritage was now seen to have a social aspect - that meant more of a role for local people. Mr Eversden gave as an example the need for trees in CAs to harmonise with the architecture - for instance if broadleaved trees had to be replaced it should be with broadleaved trees and not with flowering cherry.

**Ian Harvey of CivicVoice** had been due to give a presentation, but the trains from Liverpool were not running, so Peter Eversden spoke to the slides he had provided. CivicVoice had initiated a 'Big Conservation Area Conversation' with a list of ten ways in which CAs could be celebrated. A launch event would be held on 10th June in Birmingham. There was interest from politicians and Conservation Areas would be the main theme of Civic Day on 17th June.

The opening slide showing two conservation areas, each with a prominent modern building, provoked discussion, since the general perception of CAs was that their ambience was primarily historic. Many in the

audience did not believe that the two buildings on the slide contributed to the basic concept of 'enhancement', and wondered why CivicVoice had chosen them. Ms Gee said that HE gave advice on the style of new buildings appropriate to a conservation area.

**Professor Barry Redding** from the **Chislehurst Society** described the Chislehurst conservation area and the activities of that Society generally - including how a large bequest had enabled them to acquire a derelict chapel and convert it into premises for their own use and for hire.

The conservation area was originally designated in 1972, adjusted on occasion and then bureaucratised and 'repaginated'. It is large (some 600 hectares) and irregularly shaped. A study compiled by a society member in 1992 was now out of date, which is serious because it is used by appellants as a ground for appeals. The Society is therefore currently preparing an update with no help from Bromley Borough Council. Much historical research and fieldwork is being undertaken. They were basing this work, with permission, on the Oxford City Council Character Appraisal Toolkit.

**Christine Cowdray** of the St John's Wood Society described the St John's Wood CA, the first to be designated in London. It had been originally part of an mid-nineteenth century integrated scheme with a notably arcadian character. It had declined seriously after the war, and there was indeed a threat to redevelop it totally. As a CA its combined importance is greater than that of individual buildings. The main problem now faced by the area was 'over-investment' - people who wanted to make their small house more impressive; they tried to do this incrementally, by stealth, one minor application followed by another. There are now so many cases that the Society's planning committee meets weekly. They try to build good relations with the major local institutions (Lords Cricket Ground, the big hospitals, etc.) they would like to have a full photographic record of the area.

Mr Eversden said that the slogan of the **Bedford Park Society** was 'from knowledge comes care'; they had prepared a history of each Grade II listed house in the conservation area, and gave each owner a copy.

**Further discussion points**  
**Telegraph Hill Society**, a small society with

limited funds, found it difficult to get residents to realise they were in a conservation area; many were ephemeral, or second homeowners. Lewisham council provided no help and was not consistent in its planning decisions - an application had been refused and the refusal was supported on appeal; but an identical application next door was allowed. Suggestions made included an approach to the Heritage Lottery Fund for one of their small grants with which to undertake leafletting. Ms Gee said that the council ought to have a Heritage Champion - HE provided training for such people.

Ms MacQueen reminded the meeting that in 1967, the Civic Trust had obtained the right for civic societies to be consulted on planning applications. She asked if there was any conflict between civic societies and neighbourhood forums. The St John's Wood Society said that they had set up a neighbourhood forum in order to forestall other local interests who might have had other motives; there was, nonetheless, some confusion.

**Kingston-on-Thames** had a rolling programme of neighbourhood planning, with conservation areas in it.

Mr Bach said that to many people getting a conservation area was an achievement; getting a management plan a further achievement. But they did not give their minds to enhancement.

Michael Coupe suggested grading of CAs, some of which were of genuinely national importance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is not positive enough about CAs and needs improvement. Mr Eversden thought that issue should be raised during the review of the NPPF.

**St. Marylebone Society** raised the problem of access to archives and Historic Environment Records, which might require resources which neither the authorities nor civic societies had. Could HLF help? Alan Baxter's had all the Civic Trust records, which CivicVoice was trying to digitise with volunteers.

**The Old Chiswick Protection Society** had been looking at old records and realised how much had been lost in the last fifty years. Proper records had to be kept. Ms MacQueen said that all areas were facing fast densification; should it be accepted or resisted?

**The St John's Wood Society** said that civic societies must be open to change. ■



# Converting to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

**Tony Allen**, London Forum's Treasurer and Chair of the **Chislehurst Society** describes how the Society managed its conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

The village of Chislehurst lies within the London Borough of Bromley. The Chislehurst Society started life as the Chislehurst Ratepayers Association in 1934. In 1945 it changed its name to the Chislehurst Residents' Association. In 1988 it joined the Civic Trust movement, and changed its name to The Chislehurst Society. In 1989 it registered as an unincorporated charity. One-third of the households in Chislehurst, comprising over 4,000 individuals, are members of the Society.

## The reason for the change

In 2015, using a bequest from a former member, the Society purchased a near-derelict former chapel in the heart of Chislehurst, which it has restored for use as its offices and community hall. The particular issues arising from this transaction highlighted the shortcomings of the Society's unincorporated status. The Society could not own property in its own right (so it has had to be put into trust for the time being), contracts had to be entered into by trustees individually, and it could not employ staff. Trustees were nervous that with its wider range of activities, there was an increased risk of legal claims against the Society.

The Society's executive committee carried out extensive research into the types of corporate vehicles that might be appropriate, and after taking legal advice concluded that the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) model was best suited to our type of organisation and addressed most, if not all, of the issues it had encountered operating as an unincorporated body.

## The process

The CIO vehicle was introduced in 2013 to enable a charity to benefit from an incorporated status (that is to say, it has a legal identity in its own right) without having to become a limited liability company. As a result, a CIO:

- is regulated only by the Charity Commission and not by Companies House;
- only files accounts, reports etc. to the Charity Commission;
- affords trustees and members limited liability against claims against the Society;

The process of review, taking legal advice, and reaching our decision, took us 12 months and cost £5,000 in professional fees. Despite some concerns about the added complexity of operating as a CIO, our executive committee recommended to the Society's members in April 2016 that we convert. Our members voted unanimously for the change.

## What issues have we had to deal with?

**Creating a new constitution.** In order to register as a CIO the Society had to create a new constitution, but based on our existing charitable objects. Its 1989 constitution was, in any event, out of date, but the model Constitution required by the Charity Commission is a lengthy legal document in its own right.

**Transfer of assets.** As part of the transfer, all the assets and liabilities of the Society had to be identified and recorded, and deeds of transfer or indemnity effected.

**Members' rights.** The Society adopted the 'Association Model' because we wanted to preserve the voting rights of our members as far as possible.

**Members' obligations.** A requirement in the model constitution is that members have a 'duty to further the purposes of the CIO'. Concerns that this imposed some over-riding evangelical activity on members, were overdone; it is now clear that the duty only applies when members are acting on Society business, when, for example, they are voting at a general meeting.

**Membership records.** Our membership records have had to be overhauled. In addition to names and addresses, contact details etc., we must now record the date of becoming a member, and the date of ceasing to be a member. We are required to update our records within 28 days of being notified of changes, and we must keep the records in such a way that they can be sorted. Details of former members must be retained for ten years. Any member will now be able to ask for a copy of the register of members, but access to membership records is not available to the general public.

**Existing bank mandates.** A CIO is a different legal person from the pre-existing charity, with a different charity registration number, even though the Charity Commission regards the process of conversion to a CIO as a merger. Banks have indicated that they will reduce to a minimum the administration required to continue banking services. We are being cautious about this, and expect that when our CIO becomes operative later this year we will have to go through a process of providing a new bank mandate.

**Gift Aid.** HMRC has also indicated that it will allow existing gift aid mandates to the Society to carry over to the CIO, but again we are cautious, and ready to act if we are required to ask members to provide a fresh gift aid mandate.

**Bequests.** We were concerned that incorporation may threaten the validity of any pre-existing bequest to the Society. We are now advised that once the incorporation has taken place, an entry is made on the Register of Mergers held by the Charity Commission. If an individual had left a bequest to the Society in their will, which was made prior to incorporation, then on their death after incorporation that bequest will automatically be treated as a gift to the CIO. The only circumstances in which this would not happen is where the gift is expressed to be payable to the Society with the caveat "if it still exists at the date of my death", in which case the gift would lapse. More in hope than expectation, we are reminding members to review the wording of their wills.

So, was this worth all the effort?

Yes. The trustees of the Chislehurst Society are more confident about their personal liability, and the Society itself can own property, and enter into contracts on its own behalf. As far as the outside world is concerned this has been largely invisible, so that the Society will be regarded as continuing, as before, to provide a valuable service to its members and indeed to all residents of Chislehurst in a professional and responsible way. ■

The Charity Commission's guidance can be found at <http://bit.ly/2m6SaEL> ■

# Spotlight on Richmond Society

## Sixty years of hard work

Chair, **Ian Bruce**, celebrates 60 years of local people protecting and developing Richmond as a good place in which to live, work or visit

We started like so many voluntary groups, because of outrage at bureaucratic insensitivity which rapidly turned into organised opposition. In spring 1957 our Council was planning to replace some historic street lamps with out of place modern lighting. Having been a local government officer I know how easy it is for a Council's good intention to turn into a bad act. This tendency is one of the most important reasons we need local civic societies. So, being Richmond, within two months we had our inaugural General Meeting with John Betjeman and Lord Mottistone, then chair of the London Society, as speakers. Within six months membership passed 400 and the modern lighting avoided.

Those were heady days, fuelled by founding enthusiasm: within 10 years membership reached 1,000; planning issues grappled with included the publication of the Darbourne Report (The Richmond Study: a new approach based on environmental management, 1967), a new swimming pool and baths, a public inquiry into a 100 flat development, and town centre redevelopment; and the Society had its first engagement with the negative environmental impact of Heathrow – a portent of things to come as we celebrate our Diamond Jubilee this year.

### Many successful activities

In the intervening years Richmond Society has had its ups and downs. Difficult periods have been when we have not had consensus over important developments – for example the replacement of the world famous Richmond Ice Rink (1992) with housing, and broken promises of a replacement rink. Successes have been many, for example the regular monitoring of planning applications and riverside activities; and the proposal by Paul Velluet and adoption in 1977 of annual Development Awards to stimulate and recognise contribution to amenity (praising quality helps to counteract the perception that we are always opposing/complaining about developments); and examples of other successes have been on the boundaries of our core planning and development mission – for example our guided heritage walks each summer; the

---

*Annual Development Awards stimulate and recognise contribution to amenity – praising quality helps to counteract the perception that we are always opposing/complaining about developments.*

---

spinning off of our history and archaeology sections into two independent organisations; the early introduction of talks which now attract 150 plus members and feature a wider range of subjects than just the environment.

### Policy and practice for new challenges

A trend we, like many civic societies, have had to engage with is the springing up of more localised societies within our original catchment area of wider Richmond – many of these societies supported and encouraged by us and our members. Some civic societies across the country have responded by keeping their wider boundaries and adopting a generalised coordinating role over the many newer more localised civic societies. Richmond Society has responded differently, reducing its geographic boundaries to a tighter radius, in effect the heart of Richmond, with a prime catchment area of circa 25,000 population. This strategic decision has been taken I suspect as much for pragmatic reasons as any others. *De facto* the Society had always had to concentrate on central Richmond and its riverside where the majority of significant developments have been concentrated; and being realistic it is not easy to take a detailed interest in wider Richmond, an area covered by nearly 200,000 people. So we have long since stopped covering for example Kew and Ham.

### The impact of Heathrow

One policy and practice issue which does have a wider catchment area is the impact of aircraft flying over us, as we are directly under the landing flight path of Heathrow and are also affected by take offs in some areas. The presenting problem is noise, whose impact is almost always underestimated by those who don't suffer from it. Heathrow is by far the noisiest airport in Europe. For many of us noise is so great that when a plane flies over a garden the sound is so loud that conversation has to stop because it is obliterated by the noise. Planes fly over every 90 seconds and their roaring engine noise lasts approximately 45 seconds, so it is 45 seconds noise followed by 45 seconds quiet – very stressful. Less obvious is the impact on health. Studies have shown higher illness levels than might be expected under/near flight paths. So as you can imagine, Richmond Society has been hugely active opposing a third runway, standing shoulder to shoulder with Richmond Council.

The runway will allow an increase in annual flights from approaching 500,000 to a massive 700,000 plus. Joining with Kew Society and Friends of Richmond Green some ten years ago we set up the Richmond Heathrow Campaign which has exposed the "alternative facts" of the expansion arguments. Most people do not realise there is spare capacity across London's existing six airports. In short a third runway is not necessary. It will suck in massive taxpayer subsidy for additional public transport to and from the airport, and draw in more business turnover from outside London. This will damage the rest of the country, will consequently give London bad PR because "yet again" London will appear to have its nest feathered, but this time to the detriment of those who live here, and against their wishes and those of the elected London authority, the GLA.

### Responding to a changing community

Another strategic issue we have had for a while and are still grappling with now, is the extent to which we see our objects as embracing the social environment as well as the physical environment. We have a



## The Richmond Society

**Contact:** Ian Bruce  
**email:** chair@richmondsociety.org.uk  
**website:** www.richmondsociety.org.uk

Professor Ian Bruce CBE,  
 Chair Richmond Society

long tradition of monitoring and attempting to restrict the extension of pub licensing into the early hours, and the trend for planning use transfer to A3, both of which influence the social environment. But to what extent is the social environment per se the subject of Richmond Society? The more that people and families are atomised in an urban commuter community, the less interest and support a civic organisation may have for its work.

Like some other London boroughs Richmond has large numbers of people renting short term to work very long working hours in central London for one or two or three years only.

Long term residents can feel isolated. Indeed a common remark I hear from some people long involved locally is that the community has changed and that there is less local loyalty. I suspect it is the same in other London boroughs. That is not to say there isn't appreciation of Richmond from virtually everyone who lives here.

We are lucky, it is a lovely place to live with many large local parks, the Thames, two local theatres and central London only 20 minutes train ride away. But there is a significant number of people who would like to reach out more and meet others in a social environment and who would give support to the objects of the Richmond Society. This is borne out by the way our membership has risen since we introduced more social welcoming of new members and more social elements to our talks. Previously membership was below 900 and dropping. Now it is over 1200 and rising. While it is not easy to recruit people into formal positions on committees for example, we have well over 100 people who volunteer to help the Society. I am optimistic about the future as well as enjoying the present. ■

Top right: **OldTown Hall staircase:** Richmond Society campaigned to stop the OldTown Hall from being gutted – a view of part of what was saved

**Richmond onThames** showing the riverside development strongly influenced by Richmond Society and in the foreground, one of the bridge lampposts which they helped save



**Age:** 60

**Circumstances of Birth:** 28 March 1957 at a public meeting to discuss opposition to several Council proposals on traffic management and street lighting.

**Biggest Successes:** remaining continuously active and vibrant over 60 years; regularly commenting on planning proposals and being pro-active with proposals of our own; campaigning successfully to prevent a road being driven through the heart of the town; influencing the design of the riverside frontage and campaigning successfully against the gutting of the OldTown Hall; giving birth then independence first to the Richmond Archaeology Society and then to the Richmond Local History Society; undertaking a string of restoration projects; supporting the establishment of Conservation Areas and helping achieve more listed buildings; providing narrative information boards around Richmond of quality to last over 30+ years; and running an active tree planting programme.

**Biggest Disappointments/Frustrations:** the weakening of local Council power over planning implementation; the continuing shift away from locally "useful" shops to more fast food chains and alcohol licensed premises; the relentless expansion of Heathrow with its broken promises, first on Terminal 5 and now a third runway; and the pressures on infrastructure through budget cuts eg lack of proper public conveniences.

**Present Preoccupations:** maintaining and strengthening all our core work; making Richmond Society more inclusive in reality and perception, in particular ensuring foreign residents feel welcome; making membership more enjoyable; continuing to expand (paid up) membership; celebrating the 100 plus active volunteers, but having to work hard to find those who want to take on leadership/project management roles.

**Working Details:** newly registered as a charitable incorporated organisation; 1,230 paid up members; five Patrons; nine person Executive Committee with four sub-committees and 100+ volunteers; communications – quarterly, primarily printed, newsletter plus emails, twitter and [www.richmondsociety.org.uk](http://www.richmondsociety.org.uk) but not Facebook.

**Last Word:** we should like to have advice from any other societies, on how you recruit new volunteers especially for significant responsibilities; if any of you are using an online platform to allow members to post their backgrounds/interests/"CV"s; and any particularly successful methods you have of helping members get to know each other. ■

# Finsbury Park – Who Cares?

Highbury Community Association and other local groups continue their efforts to rescue Finsbury Park from its “guardians”

Diane Burrige reports

Haringey Council continues to see Finsbury Park as a ‘cash cow’. For nearly half of 2017 the Park could be used for events, often involving electronic music. Add to that the time needed for the setting up and taking down of equipment - involving traffic movement and its concomitant noise and pollution. Nine applications had already been received by January 2017, for a total of 151 days over the year, to use this amount of Park area: 10% for 74 days, 27% for 18 days (the Wireless Festival), and 5% for 59 days. And applications continue to come in.

## The most contentious event

The most contentious event planned is the Wireless Festival organised by Festival Republic during June and July 2017. It will use 27% of the Park, and 40,000 people are expected per day at each event. Owing to serious disturbances in 2015, last year this Festival had dog patrols, watch towers, CCTV, and a high-walled tin shield with an external perimeter moat – encasing the whole area. Multiple security companies were employed, each with a specific zone to patrol. Such measures are planned again for 2017 - in this key London Park serving one of the most deprived areas of the city. The main entrance for events in Finsbury Park is located where two boroughs meet: Hackney and Islington - where there is a high proportion of flats, mainly social and privately-rented. Most events are planned for during the summer months just when families want to go out for peace, play and to have fresh air in green open spaces.

Haringey Council is aiming for an increase of £600,000 income from these events in Finsbury Park to March 2018 which will go towards the core Parks Service budget, once savings targets are met. Most income raised will benefit other parks in Haringey, so no complaints there from many Haringey residents perhaps? In response, the Highbury Community Association, which covers the area of Islington most affected by these events, has again submitted an objection to the planned Wireless Festival in 2017. Only ten days were allowed for responses to Haringey Council, and only from invited ‘stakeholders’, not local residents. Haringey cites the fact that they have an Outdoor Events Policy which suffices as consultation.

---

## *Section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 confers broad, freestanding powers on local authorities to use parks as they wish*

---

Will Parkes, writing on behalf of the Highbury Community Association in January 2017, stated that: “The Association is happy to see events organised that are accessible to all who want to use the Park; and promote the diversity and inclusion of the local community in a variety of different types of event. We do not support the use of the Park for events that are disproportionate in scale, cause annoyance, are not properly organised, involve a loss of amenity to local residents or prevent their enjoyment of the Park.

“The Highbury Community Association believes that the proposed length of disruption/closure of a large section of the Park for the Wireless Festival - for two and a half weeks - represents a significant loss of amenity over too long a time period. The Highbury Community Association also believes that this proposed closure of a large section of the Park in the height of summer is a disproportionate inconvenience to local people.”

## Judicial review challenge dismissed

As previously reported in Newsforum, the Friends of Finsbury Park launched a judicial review against the Council, in March 2016. They felt that the Council had acted unlawfully in granting Festival Republic permission to hire Finsbury Park to host the Wireless Festival, citing the Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Act 1967, which limits the number of days a park can be used for enclosed events, and limits the area that can be hired to event promoters.

Mr Justice Supperstone dismissed this action and ruled in favour of the Council, citing the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report of 17 October 2016 to the effect that the Council is empowered

to hire out Finsbury Park for an unlimited number of days and is able to determine how much of the park can be hired, under section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972 which confers broad, freestanding powers on local authorities.

## A dangerous precedent

This judgement, confirming local authorities’ powers to use parks as they wish, bodes ill for other parks around the country. The Friends of Finsbury Park are now considering appealing against it if funds can be raised.

## Select Committee Enquiry

Parks are being bled for income generation, and voices of concern have become so widespread that finally, in July 2016, the Communities and Local Government Committee held a Select Committee Enquiry (see last Newsforum No. 74). Nearly 400 formal written submissions were made, and 13,000 surveys were presented. Research highlights that 87% of people overall use their park or open space more than any other public service (CABE Space 2010 Report: Urban Green Nation); and 54% of families and households with children under five and a half use their park at least once a week (Heritage Lottery Fund report: State of UK Public Parks, 2016).

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS), the umbrella organisation of over 6,000 local Friends of Parks groups, called for Government action to reverse the current under-funding which threatens the future of the UK’s public green spaces.

The NFPGS Chair, Dave Morris, an expert witness at the first public hearing, asked that MPs implement the recommendations of the previous Select Committee Inquiry in 2003, which called for a long-term funding programme for parks, and for their care to become a statutory service. A 270,000 strong petition to the Committee (organised by the ‘38 degrees’ lobby group), and 75% of respondents in an opinion poll, backed this call for statutory recognition of parks:

<http://www.hortweek.com/survey-finds-75-want-parks-statutory-duty/parks-and-gardens/article/1410395>

# Finsbury Park (cont)

## No statutory duty to protect parks

In the 170 years since Joseph Paxton inaugurated the world's first publicly-funded civic park, in Birkenhead, Merseyside, Britain has acquired 27,000 parks - but, tragically, no statutory duty for protecting these was enshrined in legislation.

After years of decline at the end of the 20th century, £800 million of lottery money was used to kick-start a renaissance. But these lottery grants were one-offs, not revenue funds, and in the past decade hundreds of local authorities have drastically cut their parks' budgets. And parks are being privatised at an alarming rate: Horticultural Week, early 2017, reported that in 2016, nearly 50% of local authorities had disposed, or transferred the management or ownership, of some of their green spaces in the past three years.

Meanwhile back in Haringey, Finsbury Park continues to be an easy income-earner, particularly in the area facing onto Islington and Hackney residents. Yet again, local residents have to battle to keep parks as parks, not as venues for noisy and polluting events over many months. What do all these developments say about how much we care for our children's, let alone others' health and well-being? ■

# Heritage sell-off

## Whitehall's property sale

According to a report by the Cabinet Office nearly £1bn has been raised by selling off 468 government properties in the first year of its programme to reduce the number of government office buildings by 75 per cent across the country during the next decade. These included Admiralty Arch and the Old War Office, which will be developed into luxury hotels and apartments. It is claimed that this is saving £150m a year in running costs.

Civil servants are being relocated to "hub" locations around Britain. The first two, at Canary Wharf in east London and Croydon in south London, will house 8,000 staff who will move from Whitehall this year and next.

A new government property unit will aim for a more commercial approach, with ministers paying substantial rents for buildings their departments occupy.

Local councils will also be pressed to sell property and land with the aim of building 25,000 homes and raising £415m in capital receipts by 2019-20.

Government agencies that have already relocated are the Charity Commission, the Export Credit Guarantee Department and National Savings & Investments. The Department for Work and Pensions reduced its holdings by less than 2 per cent, while the second largest, the Ministry of Justice, cut its property occupancy by 7 per cent. ■

## Is this the end for Hatton Garden?

First it was the Cork Street galleries; now yet another historic London quarter, Hatton Garden, home of the diamond and jewellery industries since the mid-1800s, may find itself pushed out by climbing rents. When the new Crossrail railway link at Farringdon opens in 2018, Hatton Garden will become one of the capital's best-connected areas. The number of visitors is expected to at least triple.

While this may be good for Hatton Garden retailers it is not good for the area's network of small workshops. Craftsmen are faced with a huge jump in rents and landlords are converting premises into offices, according to the local property consultancy Farebrother. This is threatening to push out much of the old trade in favour of more modern tech and creative businesses.

It is a low-margin co-dependent business where earning potential is limited by how long someone needs to spend working on each intricate stage of making a piece of jewellery, from cutting diamonds to making a ring; from polishing to fixing gems in place. The manufacturing process entails pieces passing back and forth between different trades.

Victoria McKay, chief operating officer of the London Diamond Bourse said "You've got your bullion and diamond dealers, people who sell jewellery, a mounter round the corner, a polisher round another corner. Ultimately it ends up in a jewellery box; we even have people who make those." If the workshops go, the diamond dealers have a problem: the rest of the work process may start to fall apart.

Some say the writing is on the wall, as it was for Billingsgate fish traders or the Covent Garden flower market, and the solution is to relocate en masse to a cheaper neighbourhood.

Ms McKay said even her bourse, which functions as an industry association, is likely to have to move when its own lease expires in two years. It is in discussions with several developers working on urban regeneration schemes, including one at Brent Cross in north London.

Some of the businesses are looking at working with the local council to require developers to include a proportion of low-cost workspace in new developments. ■

## Crossrail: a Long-lost brook and a Tudor treasure trove

Another book has been published about the treasures being unearthed at archaeological digs at Crossrail sites.

The course of the long-lost Faggeswell Brook, a tributary of the Fleet River was uncovered in 2012 beneath 8-10 Hayne Street under Crossrail's eastern ticket hall at Farringdon. The items were unearthed in 2013 and have now being documented in a new book, 'Charterhouse Square: Black Death cemetery and Carthusian monastery, meat market and suburb' by Sam Pfizenmaier, a senior archaeologist at Museum of London Archaeology MOLA.

The finds include a large quantity of remarkably well preserved medieval clothes, textiles and leather shoes worn by noble families, and waste created by butchers working at nearby Smithfield market. Some of the finds are now on display in the *Tunnel: The Archaeology of Crossrail* exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands until September 3.

The Museum is also preparing to put finds from the Crossrail excavations at its Docklands branch, near Canary Wharf. ■

# Heathrow

Judicial review fails; but a new consultation is launched amidst continuing widespread criticism of the project. **Helen Marcus** reports on the latest developments

In January the judicial review challenge against the Government's Heathrow decision, by Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead councils and Greenpeace UK (see last Newsforum, No. 74) was struck out by Mr Justice Cranston. Lawyers for the Transport Secretary argued that the judicial review should not be heard until after the consultation on the Government's National Policy Statement (NPS) on aviation. The judge agreed: "Once the Secretary of State adopts and publishes an NPS the court will have jurisdiction to entertain the challenges the claimants advance. For the present this claim must be struck out."

## National Policy Statement

The paper in question – the Draft Airports National Policy Statement – was launched a few days later on February 2nd. Subject to a four-month consultation – although the purpose of this, in the light of the government's already stated preference, is not clear – it will consider new runway capacity and infrastructure at airports in the South East of England. Responses must be in by 25th May 2017, and the expansion plans will ultimately be put to a vote of MPs by the end of this year or early 2018. Heathrow would then submit its own detailed planning application.

However a separate study by consultants said that the biggest threats posed by the expansion plans were poor air quality, the demolition of homes and

excess noise from traffic and aircraft which would harm the health of thousands of people while breaking air pollution limits for years. It is hard to see how a third runway is compatible with government commitments given that the current level of activity already exceeds agreed air quality targets, and noise impacts extend beyond the consultation area.

## Environmental Audit Committee criticism

This was followed on 20 February by more criticism from Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee's *Airports Commission Report Follow-up: Carbon Emissions, Air Quality and Noise*, accusing the Government of using out-of-date measurements of noise impacts, failing to guarantee quiet periods for residents under the flight path and watering down plans for an independent aviation noise watchdog.

Mary Creagh MP (Labour), Chair of the Committee, warned: "If the Government wants to get Heathrow expansion off the ground it needs to show that a third runway can be built and run without exceeding legal limits on air pollution or breaching our carbon budgets." "We have seen little evidence of the 'step change' in the Government's approach we called for in our previous report."

The report finds that, worryingly, the Government looks set to water down both the limits on aviation emissions recommended by its own climate change advisors, and the powers it intends to give

to a new noise oversight body. "Mitigating the air quality, carbon and noise impacts of a new runway cannot be an afterthought." Measures such as Heathrow's "no more cars on the road" pledge are not clearly set out. Such measures will only have credibility if they are legally enforceable.

"The business case for Heathrow expansion must be assessed against a cost/benefit analysis which uses realistic carbon policy assumptions. The figures used by Ministers for the costs and benefits of expansion are based on a hypothetical international framework to reduce emissions which does not yet exist"

As the conditions attached to the permission for terminal 5 have never been implemented, there can be little confidence in any conditions attached here.

Willie Walsh, chief executive of International Airlines Group, continues his criticism of Heathrow's plans. He warned last November that a third runway would price out most airlines and that high landing charges made it impossible to deliver an increase in domestic air links. ■

## Details of the Government's consultation

and how to respond online can be found at: [www.gov.uk/dft/heathrow-airport-expansion](http://www.gov.uk/dft/heathrow-airport-expansion)

**Responses** can be made by

Email: [RunwayConsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RunwayConsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk) and

Post: Freepost RUNWAY CONSULTATION (no stamp or further address required) ■

## Proposals to overhaul flight paths will increase noise pollution

The National Air Traffic Services (Nats) a coalition of airlines, airports and air traffic controllers, launched a campaign in December called The Sky's The Limit, to promote what they call the importance of modernising airspace. They admitted it was likely that the number of households affected by aircraft noise will rise sharply under the plans

The plans envisage more flight paths for the biggest airports, including Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, to accommodate additional flights and cut delays.

There are at present 600 dedicated flight paths in operation – 300 for departures and 300 for arrivals. The proposals call for about 50 per cent more aircraft to access British airports by

the end of the next decade. Nats claims this is necessary to avoid delays. They estimate that the 2.1 million passenger aircraft flying to and from British airports last year will grow to 3.1 million by 2030. In 1961 the figure was 440,000.

## Consultation will be held this year

The Department for Transport is set to produce a consultation this year followed by detailed flight path routes drawn up by Nats and the Civil Aviation Authority in coming years. New routes will be finalised within five to seven years, Nats said. ■

*See also comments made by Professor Ian Bruce, Chair of Richmond Society, in Spotlight on page 10*

## HS2 clears final stages

### Andrew Bosi reports:

The hybrid Bill to inflict HS2 on a reluctant public has cleared its final stages in the House of Commons.

It received minimal press coverage, as it again clashed with a Brexit debate in the Other Place.

However the draconian powers of compulsory purchase of land adjacent to the line, that might be useful for ancillary development, have been withdrawn. ■

# The housing problem

More facts, figures and opinions; and the purpose of the Green Belt  
A personal view by **Helen Marcus**

The new Housing White Paper continues the assumption that the price of houses is out of reach of most ordinary buyers because there is a shortage; and that the only way to solve this problem is to build hundreds of thousands more of them.

With astonishing conviction, and in the face of evidence to the contrary, Secretary of State Sajid Javid MP, asserts in his introduction to the paper: "This country doesn't have enough homes. That's not a personal opinion or a political calculation. It's a simple statement of fact." The trouble with this "simple statement of fact" is that figures issued by the National Audit Office for his own Department for Communities and Local Government in January, completely contradict him\*. Its 2015 figures for England show:

- total number of homes 23.5m
- total number of households 23.0m

As in all the official documents on this subject these two numbers are kept well away from each other, presumably in case someone might notice the fallacy in the shortage theory.

Increasing numbers of academics are pointing out the fallacy but so wedded to their ideological groupthink have its proponents become that they no longer appear to hear what anyone else says. Javid continues by saying "Soaring prices and rising rents caused by a shortage of the right homes in the right places." That is part of the problem: what are the "right places"?

Ian Mulheirn of Oxford Economics, who contributed to the Redfern Report (see last Newsforum No. 74), was asked in a recent interview on Radio 4's today programme if the solution to the problem was building more homes. He replied: "The answer is no". He said the evidence seems to suggest there are enough houses, and that it is a distributional problem. He stated that there is in fact a surplus of housing not a shortage.

Danny Dorling, social geographer and Professor of Geography at Oxford makes similar points. "We have never had as much housing as we have now. We should have enough housing for everyone" ... "At the heart of this is a country skewed"... "a wildly bloated London dwarfing the rest of the country ... the simple demand to "Build more!" comes with no guarantee of solving it – quite possibly the reverse" "...housing is

central to environmental sustainability. "...we need to build for the very long-term"

More and more people are saying we need to rebuild the stock of social/ council housing and not sell it off. Affordability is the real problem. As Cllr Vincent Carroll of Haringey said in a letter to the FT 14 Feb "All manner of housing experts have told successive governments what needs to be done to solve the crisis of affordability: build large numbers of council houses that stay in public ownership through the removal of the destructive right to buy policy. So have many developers and land buyers, who have nothing to gain from such policy"

Dorling suggests that those in receipt of government help to buy should have to sell their houses back to the state when they move on. The Government appears to have introduced something along these lines in the White Paper

## Siren calls to build on the Green Belt

One of the most destructive elements of this perverse misrepresentation of the real problem - affordability and a skewed market - is increasing siren calls to build on London's Green Belt, such as this from Tim Montgomerie recently in The Times: "We could turn this situation around if we were willing to build on a fraction of ...so-called...greenbelt land that, despite its name, is often post-industrial scrubland". He claims that we are in the "exceptional circumstances" that would justify this. Interestingly even he acknowledges that "The continuing reluctance of the government to enable more social housing is also disappointing."

But he and others like him do not understand the purpose of the Green Belt policy. It is well summarised by the Planning Officers Society in a paper of August 2015 under the heading: *We need to talk about the Green Belt.*\*\*

"...there will be suggestions that some bits aren't green so could be built on without causing harm". But in 1947 the Minister indicated that "even if ...neither green nor particularly attractive scenically, the major function of the Greenbelt was ...to stop further urban development.

"...the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence." "What the Green Belt is not, is an environmental policy targeted at

protecting high quality landscapes."

"It is vital that this fundamental position is not lost. It doesn't matter what condition land within the Green Belt is in" whether it is greenfield or brownfield, in good or poor condition "that does not undermine its fundamental role to prevent urban sprawl by being kept permanently open. Land within the Green Belt is not protected for its landscape qualities.... Openness is not the same as landscape character."

"This has been a central feature of the policy and must remain so."

## Serious implications for London

Meanwhile recent reports throw further doubt on the whole "shortage" theory. The Times ran a front page headline on Feb 18: "Housing market slumps". The Financial Times reported on March 6 that there is now an oversupply of luxury homes. Molior London, a market researcher, said there were about 11,000 unsold homes under construction, almost double the figure from two years previously. Developers are also pulling back from converting central London offices into residential homes.

It now seems there are so many houses in London that no-one can sell them and prices are falling. As of October 2015 the number of long-term empty properties is still 22,000 of which, astonishingly 7,500 are council homes - and that's before one even considers developers' unbuilt permissions (see White Paper p.1).

Perhaps someone would care to explain to us what has happened to the "shortage" since it is in the name of this much touted phenomenon that the planning system is being dismantled, town cramming is the order of the day and our precious green spaces are being gobbled up.

If Government persists in focusing on the wrong problem it will continue to get the wrong answer. ■

\* **Housing in England:** overview 19 January 2017: page 4: Key facts Housing in England 2015: total number of homes in England 23.5m page 17: Figure 4 Growth in population and households since 1981 Households: 23.0m It can be downloaded from the web

\*\* **Planning for a Better Future** Our planning manifesto for the next government Available to download from the web as a Pdf. ■

## Prefabs – but not as we know them

According to recent newspaper reports the idea of modular building has begun to attract interest. But it has certainly moved on from the cheap prefabs built after the Second World War to replace bomb damaged housing. Modular homes are now often of a higher quality, are more ecologically sound and even more luxurious than many houses built in the traditional way, and can be quicker to build, from popular Cape and ranch styles in the United States to the modernist Huf Haus from Germany. Though the costs are comparable with traditional methods, it is claimed that they will become cheaper as output accelerates.

Berkeley Group housebuilders, usually associated with the luxury London market, is putting up sixteen factory-built three-floor pre-fabricated houses at a site in Kidbrooke Village, Greenwich. Berkeley claims that they look exactly like a traditional home and customers will not be able to tell the difference. It has another fifty in the pipeline and aims to open its own dedicated factory in the near future.

Legal & General, the insurer, is building a big modular factory in North Yorkshire, hoping to produce 3,000 homes a year. China National Building Material Company is building six modular housing factories in Britain in a deal with the housing association Your Housing. Pocket Living is taking pods built in Bedford and transporting them to London to be bolted together. ■

## Basement wars

Two cases hit the headlines late last year.

Camden council's decision to allow a Kentish Town resident to excavate using permitted development rights rather than going through the formal planning process was successfully challenged in the High Court by a neighbour. Mr Justice Cranston ruled that the council had misdirected itself in its decision by ruling that the development did not constitute a separate activity. The council "needed to address the nature of the excavation and removal of the ground and soil and works of structural support to create the space for the basement".

The ruling is likely to have implications for other basement applications as it will require local authorities to consider the engineering aspects of an extension separately from the main development plan and so mean many basement proposals are likely to require planning permission.

### Celebrity battle in Richmond

Over in Richmond a couple have been given permission for a 1,700 sq ft basement despite over 100 objections from residents in a high profile campaign involving several celebrities - a children's author, an ex-England

footballer, a television presenter, a composer and a former Queen's Marshal - against a wealthy business executive.

### The Party Wall Act

Meanwhile those suffering from the nuisance of a neighbour's basement works may have found that a solution has been at hand all along in the long-established legal code - the Party Wall Act - which gives neighbours a right to require a security deposit in case the build goes wrong. The number of neighbours demanding a deposit - and the amount required - has risen sharply. Unfortunately the Act does not make clear what risks the deposit is there to forestall. The Financial Times cited a case of a two-storey luxury basement in Kensington — where the owner offered a deposit of £350,000, but the neighbour demanded £3m. An independent arbitrator settled on £1.75m, prompting the owner to take his appeal to court. The case was later settled at an undisclosed lower sum. ■

The Camden judgement can be found at: <http://www.landmarkchambers.co.uk/userfiles/documents/Eatherley%20Judgment.pdf> ■

## The continuing march of the skyscrapers

Another heavily criticised redevelopment is One Leadenhall, a 37-storey tower that has been given the green light by City of London planners. It will replace a 1970s seven-storey postmodern office block on the corner of Leadenhall Street and Gracechurch Street.

A public terrace will overlook the roof of the adjacent Grade II-listed Victorian Leadenhall Market. Construction is due to start next year and the building is expected to open in 2021.

The new building has been strongly criticised by conservation groups. Alex Bowring of the Victorian Society said: "We feel a skyscraper is not appropriate for the site" It "would mark an absolute break in the skyline and therefore significantly harm the streetscape and leave the lively Leadenhall Market looking like a lost relic."

If nothing else, the location should prove fruitful for archaeologists. The site is right on top of the ancient Roman Forum, which was the biggest building in Londinium. ■

## Shortage of land for commerce

The rush to build new homes is leading to a shortage of land for fast-growing e-commerce hubs in London. About 100 hectares of industrial land is being released for other uses each year, which is almost three times greater than the 37-hectare annual target set out in 2010, according to the Greater London Authority.

Businesses and industrial property developers have warned that London's industrial land is disappearing at an alarming rate and have called on London Mayor Sadiq Khan to review the city's strategy on designating land for industrial use.

Industrial sites which were once used for heavy industry and manufacturing are being used for housebuilding, and because of the house price boom, residential developers are often able to outbid other potential buyers. ■



# What future for two former Royal Mail depots

Contentious redevelopment schemes at Mount Pleasant and Paddington where local groups have both won awards for presenting alternative proposals

**M**ount Pleasant, the old Royal Mail post office depot, on five hectares of Farringdon, has planning permission for a scheme drawn up by AHMM, Allies & Morrison, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios and Wilkinson Eyre. There would be 700 homes in blocks of up to 15 storeys, with only 24% affordable housing. It was granted by former London Mayor Boris Johnson in October 2014, despite the opposition of local residents and Camden and Islington councils, who argued that the scheme does not provide enough affordable homes.

## Alternative community plans

The local community formed the Mount Pleasant Association (MPA), and their professional team, headed by architect Francis Terry and Create Streets, has drawn up their own alternative plans for the site helped with funding from the Greater London Authority. Their scheme won a community engagement Excellence Award from the INTBAU World Congress. It offers more homes in blocks of up to eight storeys, more affordable housing, more public space, and better planned streets.

A Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Forum (MPNF) was established last September and submitted a Community Right to Build Order (CRtBO) for 125 homes on a portion of the site. Following extended public consultation, Camden planners recommended approval in January this year. The MPNF is now working on a Neighbourhood Plan which will give the community statutory powers and a legal

status in the planning process. Royal Mail has now put the site up for sale, a move welcomed by the MPA who are considering putting in their own bid for it. They hope that other developers might be attracted to work with them on plans which are supported by the local community.

James Murray, then Islington Council's executive member for housing, condemned Royal Mail's plans at the time describing Boris Johnson's decision as 'wrong for London'. He is now deputy mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development. Sadiq Khan, the new London mayor also previously praised the MPA scheme. Edward Denison of the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Forum has said "the fate of the site ultimately rests with Royal Mail and who they choose to sell it to". We will watch this space!

## Paddington Cube - an Article 31 stop

Here too a charrette of local people and businesses supported by Create Streets and the Civic Voice proposed an alternative scheme. But following his withdrawal of a 72 storey "pole" last year, due to overwhelming objection, Renzo Piano came up with a monstrous 14-storey Cube for the former Edwardian Royal Mail sorting office next to Paddington Station. The plans include a new public 'plaza', and some 7,500sq m of retail and restaurant space over five levels. The deal also includes a new station for the Bakerloo underground line and a new road for ambulance access to St Mary's Hospital funded by the developers. Despite equally

fierce opposition from heritage bodies - Marcus Binney described it as "outrageously and gratuitously overscaled" - the scheme was given initial planning permission by Westminster Council in December.

But conservation groups including SAVE Britain's Heritage, the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society urged Communities Secretary Sajid Javid to launch an independent public inquiry. He has now stepped in with an Article 31 direction, preventing Westminster City Council from formally finalising the planning permission. Historic England, the Government's statutory adviser, also remains unhappy with the new proposals.

An Article 31 holding direction (under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) is an unusual step normally reserved for complex applications that require greater scrutiny. SAVE's deputy director Mike Fox said: "we can't read too much into it" but it is hoped that it may lead to a public inquiry at which all the issues can be examined, and tested.

SAVE has also raised a question over the role of Robert Davis, chair of Westminster Council's planning committee until December last year. He had publicly voiced his support for the scheme in the media and SAVE accused him of presenting the scheme to the committee in a 'partisan one-sided manner'. They pointed out that such support amounted to 'predetermination' and should have debarred him from taking part in the decision. Davis remains Deputy Leader of the City Council. ■

## Heygate estate - regeneration for whom?

When Southwark Council backed the plans to demolish the 1974 Heygate estate, as part of a £3bn regeneration programme it stipulated in its strategy documents that "at least 35% of new units must be affordable".

It transpires that local residents and objectors were right to be cynical. They have discovered that Far Eastern investors are snapping up the homes that were intended to help first-time buyers.

The scheme has been marketed in Singapore and registry documents obtained by the group 35%

Campaign, which is lobbying for more affordable housing, show the vast majority of new buyers officially recorded to date at South Gardens in the Elephant Park development, which has only 25% affordable housing, are from the Far East. Prices start at £550,000 for a one-bedroom flat.

Lendlease, the developer, successfully argued it was not financially "viable" to build more affordable homes. ■

## Too many estate agents

Westminster council has decided to take action to reduce the number of new estate agents, saying they threaten to "overrun" high streets. Planning permission will now be required for change of use from retail to professional services, such as an estate agency or employment agency.

But planning policies will protect businesses in areas such as medical clinics in Harley Street, tailors in Savile Row, and art and antiques dealers in Mayfair and St James's. Some financial services, like local bank branches, which provide valuable local services, will be encouraged.

Westminster council said a sharp rise in estate agents - a 27 per cent increase last year - had made areas less attractive to shoppers, even putting the character of some centres at risk. ■

# Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Diane Burridge**

## Joint action in Isleworth

The **Isleworth Society** is actively involved in the rapidly expanding G15+ association. This comprises 25 resident groups from across the borough which have come together to discuss issues of common interest and gain more influence with the local authority. The Borough's Resident Associations' Forum, as a result of these meetings, has been recently established. The G15+ association aims to work with the borough to improve its infrastructure and preserve and enhance Conservation Areas and heritage. Open and transparent decision-making processes, which encourage residents and community groups to offer views, knowing that these will be taken into account, are also being called for. LB Hounslow's Resident Association's Forum is allowing all residents to hold the Council to account.

## Greenwich Park's hidden gems for 590 years

As Greenwich Park approaches 590 years since it was enclosed by Henry V's brother (the Duke of Gloucester) in 1433, the Royal Parks is launching Greenwich Park Revealed. This multi-million pound project aims to uncover some of the Park's hidden gems for the 4.8 million people who visit each year. The project will improve viewing points, educational opportunities, as well as plant disease-resistant trees. The **Greenwich Society** is supporting these developments, including advertising public meetings and the on-line suggestion box.

## Sydenham cycling and walking masterplan

Heavy traffic and the railway line present significant barriers to the ease of movement in Sydenham. With the **Forest Hill Society** and SEE3, the **Sydenham Society** is preparing a cycling and walking masterplan which will identify where people want to walk or cycle, and areas for safe routes to schools. This work is being carried out at an opportune time - Lewisham Council is adopting its first Borough Cycling Strategy and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, wants to fund a cycle scheme in each borough.

Community workshops are being run to invite residents and workers to design the masterplan, with the support of Lewisham Cyclists and Lewisham Living Streets.

## Vigilance on planning in Haringey

The Environment Committee of the **Highgate Society** met recently with senior Haringey Planners to discuss some recent decisions which are contrary to local and national policy, setting dangerous precedents and causing huge local damage.

Massive rebuilds involving basement developments, for example, have resulted in some aggrieved residents registering complaints with the Local Government Ombudsman. The Society asked Haringey to follow Camden Council's introduction of an Article 4 restriction, which takes basements out of permitted development rules.

Concerns were also raised about Haringey's poor record in requiring archaeological excavations, and allowing sub-standard conversions into multiple-occupation housing in the Archway Road area. The proliferation of new crossovers, paving-over of front gardens and loss of street parking were also discussed. The Environment Committee delegation finally asked that Haringey Council give feedback to them when their detailed comments on applications are ignored.

## Belgravia Ark competition for school children

All school children in Belgravia were invited by the **Belgravia Society** to send ideas on what wildlife they would like to see in their area to encourage them to think about nature more, and how humans can live in harmony with it.

Submissions suggested could be very varied, including having a great crested newt, to a hedgehog in a hedgerow, growing a mini meadow or a green (plant) wall, having a Belgravia fox, bat, bug hotel or window box filled with butterflies and bee-friendly items. Competition photographs could be uploaded to Instagram or added to the Flickr gallery. Children were also invited to draw or paint wildlife, trees and plants in and around Belgravia's parks, gardens, terraces and balconies. Ideas had to be submitted by the end of January 2017, with Nature Awards presented at the Society's forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

## Redevelopments in Peckham

**Peckham Vision** has been encouraging residents to respond to three recent major developments in the area, the main one being the redevelopment of the Aylesham Centre and Morrison's. Secondly, the Peckham Library Square is being redeveloped, involving the demolition of the Arch, and the building of a four to six storey modern block on the historic Peckham High Street. There were over 100 objections. (See the Council planning report: [w http://www.goo.gl/8oYdaL](http://www.goo.gl/8oYdaL)) Thirdly, three large separate sites are being redeveloped for housing in one cluster at the south of Rye Lane. Together these will transform that part of the Rye Lane Conservation Area by towering over the three storey buildings on Rye Lane. See details in the planning officer's report: [w http://goo.gl/kAWUqc](http://goo.gl/kAWUqc)

## Controlling licensees in Covent Garden

The **Covent Garden Community Association** has worked to strengthen Camden's review of their Licensing Policy, which came into force in January 2017, lasting for five years. It is now more difficult for licensees to argue for 'exceptions to policy'. Camden agreed to put more emphasis on mitigating noisy deliveries and waste collections taking place at night - issues often overlooked by licensees. It will now be easier for the Association to argue for restrictions on out-of-hours collections and deliveries for any new or varied licences, and to review a licence and have conditions imposed, if needed.

## Wimbledon Society's future plans

The **Wimbledon Society** organised its first Away Day in 2016 with 30 volunteers, including members of the Board and the three committees: Museum, Planning, and Activity Committees. The President, Norman Plastow, opened proceedings followed by John Mays, the Chairman, who emphasised that, while the Society's finances, governance and volunteering presented a picture of a strong vibrant Society, there were problems of an ageing membership and a lack of strategic direction.

The Society agreed to aim to increase its membership to 1,500, establish links with other societies, form sub-groups (for example, on transport issues), explore fundraising opportunities and seek more engagement of the membership, for example with more Away Days. The progress of these plans may be of interest to other societies. ■

# newsbriefs

News and issues of interest and concern to note.

## Highgate Society celebrates its 50th anniversary with a new Book

To celebrate its 50th anniversary last year the Highgate Society published *The Story of the Highgate Society* about the history of the society. The Society was formed in 1966, in the early days of motorways, with threats to turn Archway Road into a one-way system, and designs to turn old houses into modern flats.

Over the years the Highgate Society has been the consistent voice of the local community. One of its most memorable recent campaigns was to save Athlone House. Together with the Heath & Hampstead Society and other local groups the society fought against the plans to demolish the historic former hospital and RAF base. The society spent 17 years fighting against these plans and just last year the High Court ruled that the development will not take place. London Forum committee member Michael Hammerson is vice president of the Highgate Society

## David Hockney to design Queen's Westminster Abbey window

Artist David Hockney is to design a new stained glass window in Westminster Abbey to celebrate the Queen's reign. He has "planned a landscape full of blossom that's a celebration every year". The 20ft (6.1m) x 6ft (1.8m) window in the abbey's north transept will be known as The Queen's Window. The cost is being covered by two anonymous benefactors.

## Neighbourhood Planning Bill amendment

The House of Lords has voted to amend the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Bill with an amendment (18, clause 13, page 14, line 5), moved by Lord Stunell. It would ensure that the government cannot prevent local authorities from attaching conditions to planning permission where those conditions meet the policy tests in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Unusually, the Archbishop of York took part in the vote and voted for the amendment. The House of Lords Library briefing paper makes clear that the Government sees the Neighbourhood Planning Bill's primary aims as: "To identify more land to build homes on" and "To speed up the delivery of new homes". More information at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/LLN-2017-0001>

## Housing group mergers

In response to Government funding cuts for social housing there has been an increased drive by housing associations to merge. Peabody announced a merger with Family Mosaic; together they will have more than 55,000 homes. Affinity Sutton and Circle Housing, which have a total of 125,000 homes, completed a merger last November. L&Q and East Thames, which have 90,000 homes, merged in December.

The number of affordable homes being built in England has dropped to its lowest level for 24 years. Some communities have taken matters into their own hands and there has been an increase in the number of people forming community land trusts, which build homes for sale or rent at prices linked to local wages.

## London Forum Awards - What impact does your society have on the local community?

Are you using fresh approaches to make your society more effective? London Forum Awards aim to seek out and publicise new initiatives and make them better known. The flier with this issue has some examples of the sort of things some societies are already doing or considering. Tells us what your society is doing. Entry forms and full details will be sent out in May, and reminders will be on the web and email. The Awards will be made at London Forum's AGM in October.

## New GLA assistant director of planning,

Juliemma McLoughlin the director of planning and growth at the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has been appointed a new Assistant Director of Planning at the Greater London Authority to replace Stewart Murray, who left last year. She will start in the role in April. She will lead City Hall's planning team delivering the Mayor's manifesto pledges on planning and development across the capital.

## The Whitechapel Bell Foundry closes

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry that made Big Ben and the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia is to close. It can trace its history back more than 400 years to 1570 when it was established in the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1st. It is believed to be the oldest manufacturing company still operating in Britain. Beset by falling trade, in May it will leave the premises in the East End of London that it has occupied since 1738; it will mean the end of the last bell foundry in London.

Two of the bells of Westminster Abbey, which were cast by the foundry in 1583, are still used daily, distinguishable by the company's three-bells manufacturer's mark. Others include the Bow Bells, the "Oranges and Lemons" bells at St Clement Danes on the Strand in London and bells made for a church in St Petersburg in 1746.

While the foundry uses modern equipment for tasks such as tuning, some of the methods are no different from those of medieval times. The moulds for large bells are still made from sand, clay, goat hair and manure: goat hair and manure are used because when they burn away they provide a network of tiny air passages so that the gases from the hot metal can escape.

Alan Hughes is the fourth generation of his family to run the business. They have owned it since his great-grandfather Arthur, who had been the works manager, took it over in 1904. After the Second World War business boomed as churches damaged by the bombing were rebuilt, but demand gradually fell off. In the foundry's heyday it was not uncommon to turn out a complete peal of church bells every week but last year it made just one. But they are presently working on a new peal of bells for St Albans.

The business has faced two critical challenges. Bells, unlike modern devices, are made to last centuries; and their main customer, the Church of England, is in decline with churches closing. While the business may continue making small bells elsewhere, the premises are to be sold to developers. The only other bell foundry left in the country will be John Taylor & Co of Loughborough. ■

# Dates for your diary

## London Forum events

### If you have any items of interest for the Newsforum

the Editor will be pleased to hear from you at:  
admin@londonforum.org.uk

### Membership renewal

As you all know, London Forum relies totally on Members' subscriptions for its budget.

Please do use the new membership renewal process on the web site and make sure to amend your data so that the right people are receiving post and email bulletins, otherwise societies might not be kept informed.

The way in which members can amend their details is secure as is the information we hold.

**Queries** can be sent to admin@londonforum.org.uk  
Or contact Bill Linskey, (see details below) ■

### Delivering Newsforum by email

We currently send you Newsforum by email in the form of a PDF as well as posting you a hard copy.

For most of you the PDF is the most useful form as it can be widely distributed at no cost. It also has the advantage that web links can be accessed directly.

We have reduced our costs by sending the summer edition in PDF form only. It is environmentally more friendly, saving paper, and it also saves London Forum a great deal of expense. With the enormous increase in the price of postage this is now becoming a major consideration.

If you do not keep your hard copy and feel you could do without it, relying on the PDF, please let us know via one of the email addresses below, giving your Society name as well as email address, so that we could reduce our postal mailing list and save printing and postage costs. ■

### For information about the London Forum contact:

[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

**Peter Eversden** Chairman  
London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street,  
London EC1M 6EJ  
Telephone: 020 7993 5754  
email [chairman@londonforum.org.uk](mailto:chairman@londonforum.org.uk)

**Bill Linskey** Membership Secretary  
email [membership@londonforum.org.uk](mailto:membership@londonforum.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1093134

### London Forum Open Meetings 2017 Save the Dates

#### Wednesday 29th March

GLA officers will discuss policies by Transport for London for 'Healthy Streets'

#### Wednesday 10th May

Controlling advertising in the public realm

#### Monday 26th June

The Mayor's Transport Strategy

**Watch out for emails and consult the website nearer the time for more information** ■

#### Meetings are held at The Gallery,

75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EL, (Farringdon station)

**All meetings begin with refreshments at 6pm**

**for a 6:30pm start** ■

### London Forum on Twitter

#### Don't forget the London Forum Twitter site.

Stories; updates on the latest news as it comes in; useful web addresses.

Do pass on the address to all your amenity society contacts.

Twitter can reach far beyond London Forum's e-bulletin list of contacts.

[http://twitter.com/London\\_Forum](http://twitter.com/London_Forum)

NB - note the underscore: \_ in the name ■

### newsforum

**Editor** Helen Marcus

**Editorial team** Diane Burrige, Derek Chandler, Peter Eversden, Peter Pickering

**Original design** Ross Shaw

**Original Spotlight concept** Tony Aldous

**Print** Express Printing. Telephone 01733 230 800

**Published** by the London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. Telephone 020 7993 5754

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

While the London Forum is concerned that the views written in articles are relevant and honestly held by the contributor, the opinions stated by individuals may not necessarily be held by the London Forum Executive, who are not in a position to vouch for their factual accuracy.