

The **Richmond Society** has produced a four-page *Manifesto for Richmond* which can be seen on their website at www.richmondsociety.org.uk

The Brixton Society report that the Covid-delayed Brixton BID vision for the shopping centre re-opened the debate this autumn, with more realisation than before of the need to balance delivery provision with a more attractive street scene, and the loss of workspace from the Brixton area, mostly displaced by new housing.

Earlier this year Lambeth Council approved the demolition and replacement of 12 homes in Ropers Walk, opposed by the Society and many other local organisations, objected to these proposals because of their damaging impact on heritage assets. In Lambeth Council took the extraordinary step of quashing its grant of permission following a Judicial Review which ruled that Lambeth's decision was flawed because it had not taken account of the likely impact on local heritage assets, including "non designated heritage assets" – the Cressingham Gardens Estate, which is not listed as heritage asset, but meets the criteria for recognition as a conservation area, either in its own right, or as part of the Brockwell Park Conservation Area. The High Court order records that "[Lambeth] acknowledges that its Planning Committee was wrongly advised that the Estate was not a non-designated heritage asset solely on the basis that it had not already been identified as one by the Defendant". A new application has been submitted.

The Barnet Society reported during the summer on the pivotal four-day inquiry to decide the future of the Whalebones woods and farmland. The Society and other locals argued that the need for new housing should not take precedence over protecting one of High Barnet's most historic green spaces in the Wood Street Conservation Area. In an important decision, the Inspector has dismissed the appeal, and the society's next newsletter will doubtless provide the detail, which should be of relevance to other Forum members. For those of you anxious to see if the decision document is of relevance for your own efforts, the appeal number is APP/N5090/W/21/3273189

They also report that, after closing four years ago, High Barnet Police Station is up for sale, just one of many London police stations which have been lost, said by the mayor's office to be "no longer needed nor fit for purpose". They note that only one police station remains open to the public in each London Borough; in some, rather than see them turned into flats, several are being converted into schools no other community uses. The hope is expressed that the option of finding a community use for the building might well arise during consideration of the Barnet Local Plan. Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers has launched a petition to keep the police station. In justifying the closure of 37 police stations across London in 2017, the Metropolitan Police argued that there had been a dramatic fall in the number of crimes being reported in person at police stations.

They also report that refusal of the two zombie telecom hubs in the High Street last year has been appealed by JC Decaux, who have also applied for a third. They public phones are entirely superfluous, and their advertising would add visual clutter they have been fighting for years.

Following refusal, the developers have revised aspects of their designs for Victoria Quarter, New Barnet and have listened to some of the Society's objections to the rejected scheme, reducing the number of homes has been reduced by 15% to 554, and the height of some blocks has been lowered. But the type of housing and its monolithic design are still worse than the plans approved four years ago, so we will object.

The Barnet Residents Association report a welcome slight lull in the avalanche of applications; with more than 8,000 a year, Barnet has the second largest number in London, and more than Liverpool and Manchester combined. A bad recent application was the proposal for two extra floors to Richard Court in Alston Road under new permitted development rules, which the Council rejected under the few grounds available. Barnet, like other councils around the country, appear to universally find this type of proposal abhorrent and are rejecting them, though some have recently been overturned on appeal. There have been reports in the national press of the misery inflicted on occupiers whilst work to add additional floors has been going on, and the value of some flats has been reduced. In Australia there is provision for existing flat owners to be compensated. Another regrettable change of use under permitted development rules was the loss of the former Arthur Murray dance studio in the High Street. They hope that other recent successful battles might convey the message that being in a Conservation Area means that owners are not free to alter or replace buildings just as they please.

The site of the proposed Premier Inn on the former market site, in the Conservation Area, owned by Aberdeen Council, is now for sale. The Council issued a demolition order for the new building at 70 High St which does not reflect the approved plans; the developer's appeal was heard on 28 September and the result is awaited.

Against Barnet's target of 35,000 new homes over the next 15 years, planners have been avidly recommending approval for several large schemes, such as 1049 flats up to 18 storeys on the former B&Q site in Cricklewood, despite over 2000 objections, and the replacement of 217 homes on the Douglas Bader Estate in Colindale by 753 new homes, and 130 flats on the green space adjacent to Finchley Memorial Hospital, despite an assurance when built that this would remain an open space. However, though officers recommended approval for 307 flats on the former North Finchley Homebase site, councillors on the Planning Committee disagreed, and the resultant gruelling appeal was dismissed, the Inspector being decidedly critical of the scheme. **The Finchley Society**, they concede, put in an immense amount of work on the appeal and this is a terrific success for them.

Dulwich Society report that a planning notice has appeared outside the increasingly derelict Grove Tavern. Southwark are effectively taking away permitted development rights on the site which means any proposals would have to go through the full planning process.

Hillgate Village Residents Association welcome the government's decision to extend existing night time restrictions on Heathrow flight paths until October 2024, banning the noisiest aircraft between 11.30 pm and 6 am. This will help reduce the impact on residents significantly affected by night-time aircraft. They have objected to the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Listed Tabernacle in north Kensington, arguing that panels resembling roof tiles or slates would be more appropriate. They have been active with other local groups in opposing the unpopular cycle lane proposals in Holland Park Avenue.

The Kew Society are delighted that the Mayor of London turned down applications for the redevelopment of the Stag Brewery, citing inadequate levels and type of affordable housing and the unacceptable impact of the height and massing on historic buildings, riverside views and residents. They have asked the Secretary of State to call in the Homebase / Tesco development at Gillette Corner, approved by Hounslow and the Mayor, which would harm an almost unspoilt view from Kew Gardens across the Thames to Syon Park.

The Pinner Society congratulate the council for promptly addressing graffiti and fly-tipping. They express concerns at the growing impact of permitted development rights and highlight three applications for Prior Approval which would have a damaging impact.

The St. Marylebone Society headlines the first entry into Marylebone Society of a battery / diesel hybrid train. When nearing stations and passing through densely populated areas, it operates by battery with zero emissions and significantly less noise, while its new Euro-V compliant diesel engine is said to reduce emissions significantly. The trains have enhanced acceleration and lower maintenance costs through reduced wear on brakes. Westminster's plan to divert Oxford Street traffic around Oxford Circus, to create more pedestrian space, has been shelved following resident's objections, and new proposals are expected. Westminster have refused the redevelopment of Paddington Green Police Station with buildings of 15, 18 and 32 storeys. While providing 556 new homes, including 38% affordable, and recommended by officers, it was refused by councillors on grounds of height, bulk, and impact on residential amenity and heritage assets such as the Royal Parks. It will now be referred to the Mayor of London. A range of organisations have objected to over-tall redevelopment proposals for Church Street, which will impact on the market – a main attraction to the area – turning the street into a dark canyon.

The Open Spaces Society flag up growing commercialisation of commons and open spaces in South London. Parts of Clapham Common are closed to the public for weeks because of its use by Lambeth for large-scale events which cause serious damage; the Council have now accepted that it needs the Environment Secretary's permission for structures on common land, but nevertheless went ahead with a major music festival, arguing that retrospective permission would suffice. Wandsworth propose granting a 25-year lease of part of Tooting Bec Common to a developer to build four enclosed and floodlit football pitches and charge for their use; they ignored the huge number of objections but public anger has caused the Planning Inspectorate to call a public hearing.

The Friends of St. James' Park and The Green Park regret the Government's approval of its own proposal for a Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Gardens, the Inspector deciding that the public benefit outweighed the considerable harm he admitted would be caused and the fact that it went against

planning policies, including the requirement to preserve open space. The London Gardens Trust is crowdfunding for a judicial review of the decision. More encouraging is the growing opposition in Government circles to the replacement of the listed Richmond House in Whitehall with “an utterly undistinguished building” to temporarily house the House of Commons during restoration of the Palace of Westminster.

The Isleworth Society echo the experience of many with a Low Traffic Zone in Hounslow which has merely diverted traffic from one set of residential streets to another, against traffic officers’ forecasts but which Hounslow have nevertheless decided to make permanent.

The London Gardens Trust newsletter reports on the progress of the Wild West End Partnership, established in 2016 to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity as a partnership between London’s largest property owners – the Church Commissioners, the Crown Estate, Grosvenor Estates, Great Portland Estates, the Howard de Walden Estate, and Shaftesbury. This is supported by eight Business Improvement Districts, the Greater London Authority, the London Wildlife Trust and Arup London. The aim is not only to increase the total area of green spaces, but ensure that existing and new open infrastructure can benefit biodiversity, climate, microclimate, and well-being. For more information, see www.wildwestend.london

The Mill Hill Preservation Society await an application for retirement homes at Watchtower House, The Ridgeway. Within the Green Belt and Conservation Area, but classified as ‘previously developed’ land, it offers some opportunity for redevelopment but the proposed scale is excessive. It is acknowledged that 80% of the site should be retained as Green Belt and that only 18% (1.7 ha.) is suitable for development, but proposes 224 dwellings. The society anticipates a battle ahead.

The Greenwich Society played an important role in the creation of the Greenwich Planning Alliance in late 2019. It includes 14 civic societies and community groups and its aims are to support local bodies in commenting on major applications and to influence planning and conservation policies. They oppose schemes of excessively high density, very tall buildings, under-provision of affordable housing and inadequate infrastructure provision – in which, they note, few schemes are satisfactory, other than housing schemes being carried out by the council itself. They have regular meetings with the Chairman[sic] of the Planning Board, the cabinet member for Environment and Climate Change, and the Director of Planning, and are encouraged by the openness shown by council representatives. They are at one with the council on the government’s proposal planning reforms that the low house building rate is not the fault of the planning system, which is in fact delivering far more housing than is implemented, deplore the proposed limitation of community involvement, and even venture to opine that “Mr. Gove is wise to review the government’s reform plans.” Problems resulting include empty flats being bought for investment, the extension of permitted development rights, and the fact that too much public consultation on major schemes is taking place after the details have already been settled in pre-application discussions. Form members who suffer an attack of *déjà vu* after reading this are recommended to take a short tea break.

Much of the **Charlton Society’s** work focuses on applications for the Riverside area, where new housing might eventually add up to 20,000 units. One, an exclusively affordable housing scheme by Optivo, which the Society broadly supported was, to their surprise, refused. They opposed another, by Aitch, as too dense and abusing the height restrictions set by the Riverside Masterplan, was also refused. They are pleased by the approval of the Meridian home Start sheltered housing scheme by Peter Barber, which they describe as “the absolute opposite of the mass housing that currently dominates... Riverside,” respecting the scale and ambiance of the village and generally only two storeys high. By contrast, their approaches to Charlton Academy to seek a better design for their new building were in vain and the Conservation Area has been blighted by the new box-like structure. They add that they have waited many years for a 20 m.p.h. limit through the village and are grateful that it has finally happened, though the opportunity for proper landscaping and tree planting was not taken.

The Islington Society is fighting new proposals for the redevelopment of Regent Quarter in King’s Cross. A successful early 2000s development, the developers want to increase the heights of some buildings and the amount of retail space, which the Society believes will destroy the spirit of the exiting Quarter and threaten other successful areas nearby.

The Enfield Society highlight the threat to Green Belt and the open parts of Enfield Chase posed by the Local Plan, which runs to 413 pages, available only on-line, is not written in plain English, has no summary and includes low-quality maps. In addition, no public engagement events are proposed, and the Council will not commit to making responses public. The threats include extensive development of Crews Hill, Vicarage Farm and other Green Belt land, and the Plan shows no recognition of the historic and

heritage value of Enfield Chase, The Society are also concerned at the proposed effective privatisation of public land by their proposal to allow Tottenham Hotspur F.C. to take over part of Whitewebbs Park for a new Women's and Girls' Football Academy. While public access to much of the open space will be retained, the woodland and parkland must not be fenced off and the improvement of the publicly accessible land must be an integral part of the scheme, not an afterthought. Pages 14 & 15 of their Autumn newsletter carries an interesting feature on historic buildings of Chase Side.

The Knightsbridge Association here surprised when the application for the highly controversial South Kensington Station redevelopment, which was due to go to Committee in June, was withdrawn. Disregarding over 2,000 objections to what is feared will be a damaging overdevelopment, officers recommended approval, despite acknowledging that it would harm the Conservation Area. A new application is anticipated, but local groups have made clear that mere cosmetic changes are unacceptable and that a fundamental reassessment is needed, in terms of design, height and massing. Other major developments in the area are less controversial; the current phase of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Knightsbridge Estate between Brompton Road and Sloane Street, behind the retained and restored historic façade, is complete and includes public realm improvements. A well-designed addition to the Peninsula Hotel at Hyde Park Corner is close to completion, as is the restoration and rebuild of 55-91 Knightsbridge. Commenting on the problems from criminal use of e-scooters, the Society notes that they are illegal unless used on private property; many users are unaware that they are only allowed on private land, not on pavements or the road. Users must also have a driving license and insurance. The only exceptions are rented e-scooters involved in Government trials, which can be used on the road and in cycle lanes only and do not need separate insurance. RBKC have installed several acoustic cameras, triggered by loud noises, which send warning letters and fines to owners of noisy vehicles. Due to a combination of factors including Covid lockdown, Brompton Road complied for the first time with the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines.

The Highgate Society are fighting a significant overdevelopment off the High Street, at Townsend Yard. Despite widespread and detailed objections, Haringey granted permission for a terrace of houses which would completely obscure the important historic view of one of Highgate's oldest buildings, the Listed 1722 Shepherd's Cottage, despite the case officer's astonishing statement that it would not harm the cottage's setting because it was not visible from the public. It would also make it impossible for emergency vehicles to reach the cottage and would prevent two large local businesses from reaching their premises during the construction period. Fortunately, thanks to an unaccountable error, the developers omitted to make – and Haringey forgot to request – an application for Listed Building Consent, since the development would involve the demolition of buildings attached to the Cottage, so the Society and other objectors believe they have a second chance to get the development refused and scaled down. For this, they feel so strongly that they have taken on a top planning barrister to prepare an objection which will hopefully stiffen Haringey's spine sufficiently to persuade them that they can refuse the LBC application after having mistakenly permitted the development. Should Haringey remain obdurate, the Society will investigate the possibility of a Judicial Review. They are also angered by several other poor decisions, including permitting the demolition of one of the last remaining C.B.Quennell Arts and Crafts Houses in the area, on the grounds that it is not worth restoring and a new pastiche will enhance the Conservation Area.