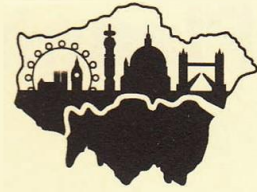


The **London Forum** of
Amenity and Civic Societies



working to protect and improve the quality of life in London

London Forum *Insights*

Issue 10, July 2022

Editorial

Welcome to the Summer '22 issue of London Forum *Insights*. As we go to press, Boris Johnson has "stepped back" but we don't know what government business will be transacted prior to the appointment of a new PM. Our assumption is that the Government will continue to press ahead with its flagship **Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB)**, now in its Committee stage. The Forum's Michael Bach spells out our position on some key issues, whilst noting that much was still unclear even before Michael Gove's departure. Forum President, Ben Derbyshire writes in support of **Street Votes** and against the **Right to Buy** for Housing Association tenants.

We feature articles from two of our most active members, Peckham Vision's Eileen Conn on **setting up a borough-wide planning network** from scratch and Barnet Resident's Association's Gordon Massey on the vexed topic of **phone masts**. Two kindred organisations have also contributed to this issue – CPRE London on the **Local Green Space** designation, and London Footways on the second edition of their **Central London Walking Map**.

The Forum's Michael Jubb draws our attention to recent reports on the **Design Coding pilots** initiated by the Government last year, and on the welcome impact of a change to the NPPF placing greater emphasis on **good design**. New recruit to our Planning, Environment & Transport team, David Kaner writes on **Freight Matters**, and Andrew Bosi contributes his regular **transport round-up**. We end, as usual,

with **Round the Societies**, our expertly curated highlights from member newsletters.

Finally, in the February issue of London Forum *Insights* I questioned whether newly appointed **Minister of State for Housing, Stuart Andrew** would make it through to the end of the year. He barely made it half-way, resigning earlier this week!

Levelling up and Regeneration Bill 2022

Michael Bach articulates London Forum's concerns

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill had its second reading on 8 June 2022. It is a massive document. Having digested the fall-out of the 2020 Planning White Paper, it sets out to amend past planning legislation and to introduce some new ideas for changing large parts of the planning system. It is not an easy read. To complicate matters, there are a lot of “placeholder clauses” - statements which merely describe what might appear in the final version, but for which no detail is available. In addition, many matters will become clear only after the Bill becomes law!

So where do we start? London Forum's main concerns are how this could affect London and Londoners. Our key concern is the future of the London Plan and Local Plans, and Londoners' ability to influence and tailor these plans to the needs of our communities.

National Development Management Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is place-independent. It barely recognises the existence of London, which means that there is major role for the London Plan and London Borough local plans. Unlike the NPPF, Londoners can have a say in these plans and ensure that plan-makers are accountable.

The London Forum is very concerned by the proposal of the Government to produce National Development Management Policies, which would replace many (or most?) local plan policies, and, would override local plans. Many of our local planning policies, well-honed through community involvement, could be replaced by national generic policies over which we have no influence. Local communities would be saddled with these policies irrespective of their suitability for local circumstances. National policies may not be amended, nor even reproduced in local plans. This contradicts the claim that the new plans would enable greater and more meaningful participation.

We consider that increased national control of local planning is contrary to the need for communities to be able to have a positive role in shaping the development of their

borough. However, if this were to happen, there needs to be genuine consultation on the form and content of these policies and the ability to scrutinise their effectiveness and appropriateness. The proposals – in Clause 84 of the Bill – have been characterised as a “land grab” by the Government.

These changes will come through a major revision of the NPPF, a “prospectus” for which will be published in later this month.

Impact on the role and content of the London Plan

The form and content of the London Plan could change. Whilst Clause 85 lists in broad terms what the London Plan must include or may include, such as it must be of strategic importance, the detail will be in regulations which will “prescribe further matters the spatial development strategy may, or must deal with”. Like a lot in the Bill, it is not clear what will be proposed. It could seek to reduce the scope of the London Plan, especially if the national development management policies take away some of the content. Fragmentation of the Mayor’s responsibilities could undermine the coherence of the London Plan, which currently ties together the spatial dimensions of the numerous strategies and policies affecting housing, economy, transport and environment. Boroughs currently need look no further than the London Plan and its 30 Guidance documents for strategic input to their own policy making. The LURB appears to put this at risk

Furthermore, the London Plan responds directly to the needs of London and has proved to be at the vanguard of planning policy development, providing leadership and innovation, for example in the provision of affordable housing and application of design codes. In contrast, the NPPF has failed to provide leadership and is slow in incorporating new policy.

Infrastructure Levy

The proposed changes to capture some of the value created through planning consent, would not only be used to support new infrastructure but also to pay for affordable housing. Few details are available at this stage, other than that the levy will be payable on completion. The fears are that this will reduce the amount of support for affordable housing, and create uncertainty as to whether it will materialise at all. Contributions to infrastructure and affordable housing need to be available before projects are completed and their value needs to be known at the outset rather than subject to negotiation once a project is completed.

Overall

Too much of the bill is still vague – only placeholder statements, or subject to further

regulations over which there is almost no scrutiny or accountability. The Bill marks a major departure from the localism agenda as a result of the “nationalisation” of planning policy. It risks undermining the integrity of the London Plan as a strategic framework for developing Local Plans, and excluding local communities from the process of tailoring planning policies to local or London’s needs. Our major concern could be addressed by requiring that Local Plans should be in *general conformity* with National Development Management Policies, and that deviations from such policies should be *well-substantiated by local circumstances*.

Peter Eversden adds:

The content of the Bill and comments by Ministers suggest that all borough Local Plans are to be rewritten in next 17 months. However:

- as RICS and others have pointed out, the new planning regime, guidance and policies, including a new NPPF will not be in place until 2024.
- New Local Plan versions (Regulation 18, 19 etc) take on average 40 weeks to go through to adoption.

So it will be many years before boroughs’ Local Plans will conform to the latest national and London Plan policies, even assuming that the resources and skills are available (which, according to RTPI, they currently are not).

London Forum President welcomes one Government initiative and lambasts another*

Forum President Ben Derbyshire has expressed strong support for the inclusion of **Street Votes** in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. In an article in Housing Today he wrote:

“Michael Gove has been flexing his ministerial muscle in ways which support more sustainable outcomes for the built environment since he took office at DLUHC. He has already made his mark, calling in schemes of dubious environmental merit or developments which he feels fail to live up to

NPPF strictures on design quality. In supporting Street Votes and suburban



intensification, he is moving away from the legacy of 20th century planning around the motor car, in a century where survival depends on us planning to use them much, much less.

This would be a plan to live in denser neighbourhoods, closer to services that can be reached on foot or by bike, in homes that are far more energy efficient, preserving the green setting of suburbia, but greatly increasing population through the application of gentle densification.”

The Street Votes initiative is strongly aligned with Supurbia, a term originating a decade ago in Ben Derbyshire’s practice, HTA Design.

By contrast, Derbyshire has nothing good to say about the Prime Minister’s plan to extend the **Right to Buy** to housing association tenants at heavily discounted prices. In BD Online he writes:

“Instead of building the new social housing we need, Boris Johnson is fixating on populist policies we already know don’t work. He will have been reminded again and again that demand-side subsidies like Help to Buy have had a massive inflationary effect on house prices. The Treasury surely won’t find money to compensate housing associations already burdened by massive costs to repair defective stock.

Young mortgage-holders will be beginning their climb up the property ladder with 90% mortgages at a time when nobody can predict how high interest rates are going to rise, and what the impact of the energy crisis and inflation on disposable income will be. Now we have the grotesque misconception that the least well-off might be able to use their housing benefit to buy their homes even as more and more join the queues at foodbanks. What is predictable though, is the flood of foreclosures these policies will bring.”

** written whilst Michael Gove was still Secretary of State*

Building a Borough-wide Planning Network

Peckham Vision’s Eileen Conn offers a roadmap for those starting from scratch

In 2009/10 several individuals met during the Examination in Public (EiP) into the then Southwark borough development plan and kept in touch with each other

afterwards. That was the beginning of the **Southwark Planning Network** (SPN) that, 13 years later, has grown to over 300 individuals belonging to over 70 active grassroots groups across the borough, and that enabled 40 local people representing many different local groups to appear at the EiP in 2021 into the new Southwark borough development plan. Further information on the SPN is here: <https://bit.ly/SouthwarkPlanningNetwork-SPN>

It was as simple as that – starting from a small email list of individuals who were interested in local planning issues, I kept the network alive over the years by circulating useful planning information that came my way, and the SPN as a structure evolved with the list. Here are some pointers on how to do it from scratch.

First steps

- take any planning issue that people become active in and start a list of their email addresses
- Email them and explain that you want to develop a link with those in the borough in grassroots groups active on planning issues in their local neighbourhoods, and ask if they will be willing to have their address on the CC list.
- At the beginning, agree to have CC emails rather than BCC so people can share in early exchanges and discussions and get to know each other.
- ask anyone else who surfaces if they will agree to join the CC list. Add to it slowly over time.

Second steps

Meetings

- If and when there is capacity, arrange a meeting, on Zoom or in-person, for those on the list to get to know each other and identify issues and topics about which people can share information, ask questions and discuss generally

- Now we have zoom, it is much easier to organise such connecting meetings. But they need to be supplemented by in-person meetings.

Communication channels

- At some stage the email list will be too large to remain as CC and will need to go into BCC.
- Now in 2022, you can use also additional ways to communicate locally through different social media.

Membership information

- Keep a basic record of individuals' email addresses as not all will be able to use the same social media or apps.
- A network is fluid, so start with individuals and not just representatives of groups. Grassroots networks live and thrive by enthusiasm from individuals rather than by representational structures.
- Keep notes of all individuals' community group memberships as they are key connectors into those groups. Some individuals will be members of more than one group, so act as connectors to several of them.

Phone Masts – Benefit or Blight? Gordon Massey, Federation of Residents Associations in Barnet Chair, outlines the issues and offers hope for the future

Phone masts can arouse strong emotions. They are an essential part of the modern economy, but they are ugly and their height can be overbearing for nearby residents and spoil treasured views. The public response can consequently be very mixed, and planning departments and the Planning Inspectorate may be inconsistent in allowing or refusing applications.

What guidance is there to help interested parties? The London Plan is helpful, but only up to a point, with Policy SI6 on page 361. This directs that development proposals must meet expected demand for connectivity, must not reduce connectivity in surrounding areas, and should explore the effective use of rooftops

and the public realm (e.g. street furniture and bins) to locate well-designed and suitably located mobile infrastructure. So the notion of facilitating connectivity by means other than masts is addressed, but the visual impact is ducked.

An important consideration is that The Permitted Development Order 2015, as amended in 2016, Section 16, does allow for masts up to 25m high on unprotected land. So most applications will be on the basis of permitted development. This presumption of approval makes refusal more difficult. However councils may still refuse due to the impact on the community provided the Local Plan is supportive. The Barnet the Local Plan (2012) is exceedingly helpful, enshrined in policy DM18. It says:

“Proposals for telecoms equipment will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- i. There is no adverse effect on the appearance of the building or the space where it is located.
- ii. Character and appearance of all heritage assets are preserved
- iii. Sharing facilities such as masts, dishes and antennae that already exist have been explored
- iv. Technologies to minimise and camouflage apparatus have been explored
- v. They are designed, coloured and landscaped to reflect their setting
- vi. There is no significant adverse impact on the visual amenities of neighbouring occupiers.”

These conditions set a high bar for masts to surmount, and it is no surprise that Barnet has been successful in refusing many applications. But even then it is not all plain sailing. One application for a 17.5m mast was refused but allowed on appeal. The Planning Inspector accepted that the mast would be visually intrusive and cause harm, but concluded the public benefits outweighed the harm because “in this locality communications would otherwise be deficient.”

So there is no simple route to reaching a conclusion on whether a mast is acceptable or not. The good news is that the potential for conflict over tall masts should diminish. Mobile service providers are transitioning from intensive use of

legacy 3G and 4G masts to those that can exclusively support 5G communications. The latter can work with considerably smaller masts that can, for example, be attached to existing street furniture. The opportunity may now exist for a local authority to press service providers to install pure 5G aerial infrastructure. With that, there should generally no need to install tall masts.

Local Green Spaces

CPRE London's John Sadler commends this underused designation

Saving unique and irreplaceable green spaces from profit-hungry developers is a major concern for many civic and amenity societies. But a highly effective method for protecting these much-loved areas remains relatively unknown and underused in London compared with other parts of the country. The Local Green Space (LGS) designation was introduced a decade ago under the The National Planning Framework to allow local communities to protect their recreation grounds, pocket-parks, community gardens, allotments, estate or neighbourhood greens, and other local valued green spaces from development. However just over 100 spaces have been formally identified as LGS within London, a lower number than any other region except the North East of England. This may be due to the relatively low uptake of neighbourhood planning in the capital. But it is still possible for the designation to be applied through local plans as has been the case in boroughs such as Bromley.

LGS can only be designated when a local plan is being reviewed or a neighbourhood plan is being produced. However, even if neither of these processes is currently underway in your area, your civic society can still start the process of identifying areas for potential LGS designation. Often local communities try to protect valued green spaces only when they're already under threat from developers. By seeking LGS designation civic societies can apply to protect these precious spaces before threats arise.

- Check if your council has guidelines or a process for applying for LGS designation and frame your application accordingly.
- Or talk to your local councillor about how to get the council to agree to LGS designation on the basis that it would be formalised at the next Local Plan review.
- The land must fulfil one or more of the following criteria: (a) Beauty, (b) Historic significance, (c) Recreational value, (d) Tranquility, (e) Richness of wildlife and (f) the land needs to be 'local in character, not an extensive tract of land'.

- It may also be worth considering applying for Fields in Trust protection as, although LGS provides the strongest protection, development can still happen in 'special circumstances'. It is worth having both where applicable.
- You could also discuss a borough-wide approach where civic amenity societies and e.g. park friends groups get together and make a case for / apply for LGS designation for a number of sites at the same time.

Areas already protected under alternative allocations and designations (such as conservation areas) may also be considered for designation as an LGS. Designation as an LGS grants the land permanent protection consistent with that in respect of Green Belt, and development is ruled out other than in special circumstances.

A useful step-by-step guide to designating LGS through neighbourhood plans can be found on the neighbourhood planning website [here](#):

A recent research report by CPRE mapping the total number of Local Green Spaces protected across England can be read here:

<https://www.cprelondon.org.uk/news/london-needs-to-protect-more-local-green-spaces/>

Photo: The entrance to the World Peace Garden. A recently designated Local Green Space in the London Borough of Camden. <http://worldpeacegardencamden.org/>



A new walking map for Central London

David Harrison, co-founder of Footways London writes

Earlier this year, Footways London launched the second edition of its walking map for central London with a walk from Kings Cross to St Mary le Strand (now standing proud in London's newest pedestrian piazza). The Footways team was joined by walking activists, our sponsors, politicians and officers from central London boroughs and transport experts, and the Mayor of London's Walking and Cycling Commissioner.

The beautifully illustrated map plots walking routes that link key destinations with attractive, quiet and appealing streets. The second edition paper map was so popular that a limited run of 10K copies was snapped up within two weeks. In response, Network Rail ordered an additional 10K copies to be distributed free from mainline stations. A digital version of the map has been viewed more than 1.2 million times.



While the map aids navigation, it also reminds people that London has many wonderful streets. Venture across polluted Euston Road, and you are soon in the quiet and improved streets of Camden. Judd St, Lamb's Conduit St and Red Lion St are all now low traffic, while Brunswick Square has been transformed.

Footways also wants to change mindsets. Most 15-minute walks in London don't take much longer than a bus, taxi or Tube trip. We want to shift habits. Walking 15 or 20 minutes would get you from Euston to the British Museum, Paddington to the Serpentine Gallery or Liverpool Street to Tate Modern.

Most importantly, Footways is campaigning for infrastructure improvement. A particular focus is around mainline stations, which is vital for integrating rail and walking. There are excellent examples. In Sheffield, the pedestrianised, tree-lined Howard Street draws you from the station to the city centre on foot. Let's apply these principles to London's stations.

The second edition paper map would not be possible without input from map users and sponsors, including Network Rail and support from TFL.

You can still get your free copy while stocks last. The map is also on sale at a few bookshops. And there is a new digital map designed by Mapbox. For more info visit [Footways London](https://www.footwayslondon.com)

Appealing Design: Forum trustee, Michael Jubb applauds a small change to the NPPF with apparently far-reaching consequences

What might have seemed a small change last July in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) appears to have had a significant and welcome effect. Until a year ago, the NPPF stated that: *“Permission should be refused for development of poor design”* (para. 64, 2012). Since 20 July 2021, it has stated that *“Development that is not well designed should be refused”* (para. 134, 2021).

The test is thus now whether a development is ‘well designed’ rather than seeking to avoid those that are ‘poorly designed’. This is particularly welcome since a [Housing Design Audit for England](#) in 2020 found that three-quarters of new housing developments were mediocre or poor when assessed against a basket of urban design considerations. A Place Alliance [report](#) in 2019 suggested that one reason for the preponderance of poor design has been the reluctance of councillors and planning officers to refuse consent on design grounds for fear of appeals: *“There is no point in turning down on design grounds as an inspector will overturn on appeal”*.

But a new Place Alliance report [Appealing Design](#), suggests that the new wording in the NPPF has already had a significant effect. An analysis of a sample of appeals in 2021 - most of them in London and the South East - where design was the major ground for refusal, shows a marked difference before and after the change in wording. Before 20 July, in a majority of cases, Planning Inspectors clearly prioritised housing numbers despite the poor quality of design. Councils lost more than half (59%) of the appeals against refusals on design grounds. But from 20 July onwards, they lost only a third (35%) of such cases. Inspectors began to consider design on equal terms with other factors, with regular references to the changed policy position in the NPPF, as well as guidance in both the [National Design Guide](#) and [National Model Design Code](#).

Design quality seems no longer to be set aside in favour of other factors, such as housing numbers or viability concerns. All the design-related appeals in the last five months of 2021 were decided on their design merits with quality considered on equal terms to quantity. Planning authorities need no longer fear that fighting the battle against poor design will lead inevitably to timewasting and costs against the Council. Let's hope that London councils get the message.

Lessons from Design Code Pilots: Michael Jubb summarises early experience with the National Model Design Code

Government policy is laying increasing stress on design codes. But a [study](#) of the development of pilot codes in 16 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) - only one in London, in Southwark - finds that to produce codes using the methodology in the National Model Design Code (NMDC) involves a steep learning curve. Few LPAs yet have the skills and capacity to deliver codes in-house, and most will need external support.

Codes must sit within the context of policies in the Local Plan, and a crucial decision for LPAs is the scale at which coding is conducted, from site-specific to authority-wide coding that sets generic principles. LPAs using authority-wide coding need to determine whether to focus on area types at a detailed level, or on higher-level flexible guidance, or simply on strategic issues such as location, green space, transport links, and so on. Character areas and area types are often complex and overlapping. Analysis must therefore capture the fine-grained complexity and constraints of many urban areas, with overlapping layers of character, rather than defining self-contained areas.

Local character is a fundamental concern for local communities and must be captured, and community engagement is an essential part of the process. The pilots showed the value of early engagement, but also that building trust with communities is time-consuming. Engagement must go beyond simply asking what people like or

dislike and involve a journey of education (in both directions) from analysis, to vision, to coding and testing of codes. Communities were interested in whether codes would have teeth, and their future trust in the process is likely to be dependent on that.

Over-reliance on passive engagement led to lower response rates and to less useful insights. By contrast, combining traditional and technological means of interactive engagement around issues of public interest brought wider and more inclusive engagement. This focused on overall design vision for places rather than on technical and delivery concerns; and on tangible issues such as landscape, density, height and building line rather than intangible concepts such as beauty.

The pilots showed that design codes are not a single tool or process. More important than the precise form coding took was the journey coding teams and communities embarked on to get there. Coding focused on engagement between community and professional audiences can result in readable, precisely-worded and attractive design codes, containing enough detail to support decision-making and emphasising 'must-have' design principles.

Are holiday and short-term lettings affecting your neighbourhood?

If so, your amenity or civic society might wish to respond to a new Government consultation on **Developing a tourist accommodation registration scheme for England**, see [here](#). The consultation is open until 21st September 2022.

Save the Dates

24th August 2022, 18.00 – 19.45: London Forum Summer Reception on the roof terrace at 75 Cowcross Street (weather permitting)

12th October 2022, 18.30 onwards: London Forum Annual General Meeting, on

Zoom

Further details in due course.

Freight Matters: David Kaner, latest recruit to London Forum's panel of topic experts, introduces himself

I have recently been asked to join the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee as an "expert on Freight & Servicing". I am not sure about the title of expert, but I have a professional interest in the area as a Supply Chain Consultant and am a member of TfL's Freight Policy Advisory Group. Like many West End residents, I also suffer from the cursory attention given to freight and servicing issues in the Planning process.

Every building has deliveries and collections. Freight and servicing vehicles represent 19% of the vehicle kilometres traffic on London's roads and they are regarded as essential traffic. They are also something of an afterthought in the



planning process. Large developments in London are required to produce a Transport Assessment but 90% of this document is focussed on how people get to the site, and only 10% on how goods are delivered and waste removed, even though these activities, once a building is operating, often have the greatest impact on neighbours. The Transport Assessment is then reviewed by planners and traffic engineers who are not experts in freight issues. The result is that even when

conditions are imposed to manage the impact of deliveries and collections are imposed they are frequently unworkable and are rarely enforced.

It is also an area where no-one is directly responsible. Responsibility for the rules is split between DfT, TfL and local boroughs. Delivery companies try to follow the rules whilst meeting the requirements of their customer (who is usually not the business receiving the delivery). This results in a lot of buck-passing whenever there are issues.

When a Civic/ Amenity Society reviews a Planning Application it is worth examining what is proposed to manage deliveries and collections. A few things to look out for are:

- Do the numbers of deliveries make sense? – compare assumptions with other applications
- What use is assumed? Class E(b) (the old A3) has **12 times** the deliveries of Class E(g (i)) (the old B1)
- Where will deliveries park – is there enough spare capacity or is it already used by other businesses in the area?
- Who might be disturbed by noisy deliveries and collections? Waste collections are a particular issue, especially when glass is involved.
- Should deliveries be restricted by Planning Condition, eg time of day, location, number?
- Is a Delivery & Servicing Plan required by the S106?

Most boroughs are in the process of producing an Action Plan covering Freight and Servicing. TfL have also published one which can be seen [here](#). If your borough is doing this, it is worth making sure that they are considering the impact on residents from delivery vehicles, and also the need for residents to be able to receive deliveries themselves.

We often don't think about how goods arrive and waste gets taken away, it just happens. But when we are disturbed in the middle of the night, we want it to

change. The best way to avoid issues is to consider “freight matters” early in the planning process.

Transport News: Andrew Bosi’s regular round-up

The Elizabeth line finally opened through the central section of what had been Crossrail on May 24th, with trains running from Paddington to Abbey Wood. Bond Street station is not yet open: this is scheduled for the Autumn, when the awkward interchanges at Liverpool Street and Paddington will no longer be required and there will be through services to Shenfield in the east, and Reading & Heathrow in the west.

TfL is utilizing the advertising space for which there are still no commercial takers to publicise the opening, but passengers are left to their own devices to work out which end of the quarter-mile trains they require, the best way of interchanging to other lines, or indeed the best point of access/egress at stations with these at either end. TfL has underplayed this benefit – Moorgate can be accessed from Liverpool Street station for example. They may be anxious to discourage people from alighting at Dean Street (Tottenham Court Road station) in order to access the Victoria line at Oxford Circus, for fear of overcrowding.

The funding row rumbles on; a temporary agreement made soon after the Pandemic was declared in Spring 2020, originally until October 17th of that year, has now been extended nine times. The drawback of this piecemeal approach is that there is no scope for long term planning and no capital programme beyond what was already committed (new trains for the Piccadilly line, Crossrail, Northern line extension, Bank station). This may seem a long list in comparison to the thin gruel offered for levelling up the north, but given the gestation period of these projects it is necessary to be working on the next ones. In particular, it is ludicrous that new trains designed to operate with a more efficient signaling system on the Piccadilly line are being introduced without it.

TfL has been pressured into reducing the number of higher paid staff and in the long term this has financial benefits, provided that it can continue to operate without replacing them. In the short term, redundancy costs will eat into the savings achieved through the [Central London Bus Review](#), which is out to consultation until 7th August.

Rather than comment on individual routes, the Forum's response will focus on the underlying principles and any low-cost mitigation measures that might be introduced. We would advise member societies to look beyond their Region before responding. If you are a Society in the North of London, there will be impacts on your local routes which are detailed in the West section, for example.

The Forum is likely to press for same stop interchange where a change of bus becomes necessary, or a limit on the distance between stops; provision of shelters and Countdown at interchange stops; restoration of lost bus lanes to improve reliability; and safer provision for pedestrians approaching bus stops.

Round the Societies: Michael Hammerson and Helen Warner raid members' newsletters for items likely to be of wider interest

Newsletter Editors – this column relies entirely on you. Make sure you email a copy of your newsletters to Michael Hammerson michael@hammerson.me.uk or post to London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. If you send them, we will use them!

Across London we read about approvals for high-rise housing despite local objections about design quality, not meeting local needs, and increasing pressure on already over-stretched infrastructure. The **Enfield Society**, speaking for many, expresses concern that Councils missing Government housing targets over several years are vulnerable at Appeal. And the **Brixton Society** is not alone in highlighting

the challenges for Councils' Climate Action Plans with developments that risk overloading the sewer system, undermining efforts to boost biodiversity and increasing flood risk.

Collectively societies, within the London Forum, do (probably) make a difference. The **Barnet Society** and the **Highgate Society** are amongst those that feel the time and efforts they took to respond to the previous iteration of the Planning White Paper have influenced Government, as several proposals to which they objected have been dropped. The **Highgate Society** were quoted several times in the LUHC Select Committee final report.

The **Barnet Society** say that they, and other objectors, persuaded Hertsmere Council not to build on 10% of its Green Belt but that Green Belt areas in Enfield were still at risk. The **Open Spaces Society** expresses disappointment at only £30 million proposed by the Government for securing improved access to green spaces.

The **Thorney Island Society** note despite the questionable need for new office developments, yet more are underway in the Vauxhall area. The **Greenwich** and **Westcombe societies** express worries about the seeming lack of teeth in Enforcement, with many examples of breaches of planning permissions cited at the Greenwich Planning Alliance. **The Kensington Society** report that the Council has agreed to set up Development Forums for large projects, involving the developer, the council, and the community.

The **Kew** and **Richmond Societies** observe that, while the expansion of Heathrow has been set back several years by the Covid pandemic, plans for a third runway have not gone away, and would jeopardise the Council's target of net zero by 2025. Several societies note the opening of (Crossrail) the Elizabeth Line in May including the **Ealing Civic Soc** as 'transforming connectivity to central London' and halving some travel times. The **St. Marylebone Society** study of nitrogen dioxide concentrations around six schools showed a reduction of 40% in the 2019/20 lockdowns, but levels have since crept up again. The Council have now installed

new sensors near six schools, and levels are currently below the legal limit, in contrast to 2018 when the GLA ranked the two schools closest to Marylebone Road ‘the worst polluted schools in London’.

The **Mill Hill Preservation Society** note that a recent High Court ruling on upward extensions may make it more difficult for developers to rely on permitted development rights, and enable local authorities to apply wider ‘prior approval’ considerations about the impact on the locality. **Peckham Vision** celebrate the completion of the Townscape Heritage Initiative. Started in 2011, it brought over £2m into Peckham to pay for restoration of 10 historic buildings on the High Street.

The **Barnet Residents’ Association** undertook a litter pick with their local MP and Councillor and are hoping that the outcome will be improved provision of litter bins along the High St. The **Westcombe Society** note that volunteers at the small Mycenae Gardens have labelled the 36+ varieties of trees for the information of users.

The **Sydenham Society** report that the March gales revealed an unknown ventilation shaft outlet for the Penge Tunnel, opened in 1863 and two unexploded WW2 bombs were found in a garden in Dulwich. A controlled explosion of one on Dulwich golf course was almost 78 years to the day since a V1 bomb destroyed the clubhouse! The **Dulwich Society** also congratulate the Horniman Museum on being one of the five finalists for the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022, the world’s largest museum prize.

The full-length version of this round-up can be found [here](#)
