

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



working to protect and improve the quality of life in London

London Forum *Insights*

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London Forum News

This issue has been produced by our Guest Editor and focusses mainly on issues of member interest arising from the General election and a new Labour government. Major legislation on these changes have been announced regarding Planning processes, housing and infrastructure development, designed to encourage the building of more homes. Our members need to be aware of these, especially in planning processes and housing targets for Borough councils.

For London Forum to continue its effectiveness we are looking for more active member involvement and the appointment of new trustees – **please try to help!**

Refreshing the pool of trustees

Peter Eversden has contacted larger member societies to seek their help in combatting an existential threat to the London Forum, namely the impending depletion of our pool of trustees and subject experts.

The Forum, as I'm sure you know, is entirely run by volunteers, almost all of whom have been (and many still are) officers of their local civic or amenity society. Three of our Executive committee of trustees will leave London Forum at our AGM in October, and some have more than 20 years of service. We are dependent on you to encourage suitable candidates from within your ranks to take an interest in the work of the Forum, and to put themselves forward as possible trustees or subject experts for our Planning, Environment and Transport committee. We currently need:

1. A Treasurer to take over from the incumbent who is stepping down for health reasons;
2. Someone who can help maintain the Forum's website, familiar with WordPress, database management and e-mail systems;
3. Someone experienced in public relations, social media and dealings with the press;
4. Someone with a wide interest in civic society and with involvement in administration;
5. Someone with expertise in environmental matters – especially subjects included in the Mayor's [Environmental Strategy](#) (air quality • green infrastructure • climate change mitigation and energy • waste • adapting to climate change • ambient noise • low carbon circular economy) and planning policies to protect the Thames from unsuitable development.

Many of our volunteers are in their 70s and we urgently need to bring in new people to augment or succeed them. It is especially important that a new Treasurer is found before the AGM in October.

Please give this matter some urgent thought, in discussion with your colleagues. You may have people on your committees, or among your membership, who could help London Forum or who have held similar posts in the past. If each of our 10 largest societies could come up with one name, our problems would likely be solved. We would be very happy to discuss suggestions you may have, or to have a preliminary discussion with anyone interested.

[Please contact us](#) to see if we can move this forward urgently. If we don't, then London Forum faces a very uncertain future with people having to cover more than one responsibility and possibly without the experience needed.

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For Your Diary

Summer reception

20th August 18.15

On the rooftop of 70 Cowcross Street – Meet other members and enjoy the spectacular view

[More details on the website](#)

Annual General Meeting

20th October 18.30

70 Cowcross Street

[More details on the website](#)

At the AGM trustees will propose the adoption of a [revised constitution](#) that removes the requirement to notify members of the AGM by post and updates some of the language.

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General Election

From Peter Eversden and other contributors

When Tony Blair won the 1997 election for Labour with a landslide Commons majority of 179 seats, the world was largely at peace. New vistas in international relations had opened up following the end of the Cold War, pointing the way to a stable international order: there was talk of Russia joining Nato, the PM went to St Petersburg and Vladimir Putin chose Britain for his first official visit to the West.

Sir Keir Starmer is the current Labour Prime Minister following the July 2024 general election with his majority in Holborn and St Pancras halved. Labour has a 174 majority in a Commons with 335 new MPs of whom 18 are under the age of 30. Labour won two-thirds of the seats in the House of Commons with one-third of the votes. The new PM has several international and domestic issues to face.

There are now only nine Conservative MPs in London after Labour took seven of their 2019 seats and the Liberal Democrats one, bringing their total to six London LibDem MPs. In London's 73 new constituencies, sixteen had the Greens in second place.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP, has outlined Labour's agenda aimed at boosting the UK economy and addressing critical housing challenges:

- a commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over five years,
- a commitment to introduce cross-boundary strategic planning,
- a pledge to develop a ten-year infrastructure strategy with a new infrastructure government agency,
- a promise to deliver more social and affordable housing via 'strengthened' planning obligations and with changes to the Right to Buy rules,
- a promise to sanction local planning authorities that fail to update their local plans,
- a promise to abolish compulsory purchase order (CPO) 'hope value' with landowners awarded fair compensation rather than inflated prices based on the prospect of planning permission,
- multiyear funding settlements for Councils and an end wasteful competitive bidding,
- solutions to unlock the building of homes affected by nutrient neutrality without weakening environmental protections,
- a [5-point plan](#) to breathe life into Britain's high streets,
- reforming the national planning policy framework, and
- reinstating mandatory housing targets.

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner as Secretary of State for what will be known again as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will lead efforts to review green belt boundaries in collaboration with local councils and planning authorities. The goal is to prioritise brownfield and "grey belt" land for sustainable housing development, while safeguarding the environmental integrity of green spaces.

Some Bills were ditched in the 2024 Parliamentary 'wash-up'. They included the Renters (Reform) Bill, the Criminal Justice Bill and the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill. The Labour Government may reintroduce some of them.

Planning decisions by Labour ministers on called-in applications and recovered appeals for developments will set the direction of travel for the new government's approach on housing and planning policy.

Kings Speech

A [list of forty Bills](#) in the King's Speech for the first year of the Labour Government has been made available by the Labour List website.

The new Employment Bill is to be introduced in the Government's first 100 days. It will be interesting to see the priorities the Government will apply to others.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is the one most likely to affect London and our members and it will give London Forum a lot of work in the passage of the Bill through Parliament, as happened with the LU&R Bill.

We compiled a letter to the Mathew Pennycook MP Minister of the re-named Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government to point out that any imposition by Government of housing targets for London, even down to borough level, would be unrealistic before a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has been conducted. Michael Bach has written to London borough planning officers to reinforce that message.

The Great British Energy Bill may set a date for the phasing out of gas boilers used in homes.

The Renters' Rights Bill could help people in the private rented sector in London and should include the ending of unfair evictions.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill will be interesting to see how it deals with pollution of rivers and streams.

The Government is to nationalise the railways, secure economic growth, introduce an Industrial Strategy Council, get approved housing built, extend devolution of decision making, grant more powers to Metro Mayors, add more restrictions on smoking and the use of vapes, improve the NHS and reduce waiting times, reform apprenticeships, conduct a defence review, tackle anti-social behaviour and improve trade with the EU.

A lot will depend on the success of the National Wealth Fund in attracting private capital.

There was nothing said about social care, the two child cap on benefits nor voting at 16 years of age. Near the end of the King's speech there was reference to the introduction of "Other measures".

The Government has published a [briefing on the King's speech](#).

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

This will accelerate housebuilding and infrastructure delivery by:

- streamlining the delivery process for critical infrastructure including accelerating upgrades to the national grid and boosting renewable energy, which will benefit local communities, unlock delivery of our 2030 clean power mission and net zero obligations, and secure domestic energy security. Simplifying the consenting process for major infrastructure projects and enable relevant, new and improved National Policy Statements to come forward, establishing a review process that provides the opportunity for them to be updated every five years, giving increased certainty to developers and communities.
- further reforming compulsory purchase compensation rules to ensure that compensation paid to landowners is fair but not excessive where important social and physical infrastructure and affordable housing are being delivered. The reforms will help unlock

more sites for development, enabling more effective land assembly, and in doing so speeding up housebuilding and delivering more affordable housing, supporting the public interest.

- improving local planning decision making by modernising planning committees.
- increasing local planning authorities' capacity, to improve performance and decision making, providing a more predictable service to developers and investors.
- using development to fund nature recovery where currently both are stalled, unlocking a win-win outcome for the economy and for nature.

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London Votes!

Mayor re-elected but voting system under scrutiny.

Andrew Bosi

The elections for the Mayor and Greater London Assembly produced very little change, with Sadiq Khan becoming the first Mayor to serve a third term. The make-up of the Assembly is hardly altered with just one Reform AM replacing a Tory. It is now Labour 11, Conservatives 8, Greens 3, Liberal Democrats 2, Reform 1.

Before the election, much was made of the change back to the first past the post as the means of electing the Mayor. Previously there had been the opportunity to express a first and second preference. Although every elected Mayor in previous polls has been ahead on first preferences, there was a fear within the Labour Party that votes for left leaning candidates could be split three ways while the right wing vote would coalesce around the Tory candidate. In the event, this did not happen. Reform and other pro-motorist candidates polled enough support to reduce the Tory vote, and enough Liberal and Green supporters were persuaded not to risk voting for their favoured candidate. However, it was frustrating for those who wished to express support for road pricing or opposition to the Silvertown tunnel who could only do so if they were willing to forego a meaningful vote to determine who would be Mayor. The same applied to anyone opposed to the ULEZ within the north and south circular roads.

The discussion of the voting system for Mayor has rather turned the spotlight from the way in which the Assembly members are drawn together. The fourteen super-constituencies comprising two or three Boroughs each have hitherto only returned members from the two largest parties. The eleven top-up places are then filled on the basis of a third ballot for a particular party, using the D'Hondt system. D'Hondt has been described as the least proportionate system of the many ways of achieving proportional representation. It is said to favour larger parties or pre-election coalitions of parties, but it has been modified in London to encompass the results in the super

constituencies. The Party votes are devalued for every AM elected to a constituency seat. This year the Liberal Democrats took a constituency seat for the first time (South West) which had the effect of reducing the value of their Party vote by 50%. Labour gained a tenth seat and the value of its Party vote fell accordingly, but the Tory Party vote was now worth 25% of full value rather than one-sixth as a consequence of their two lost seats. The overall effect was to cost both Labour and the Liberal Democrats a top-up seat, while the Tories gained a top-up seat despite the fall in support. The Labour loss is particularly disappointing to the London Forum because the member concerned had been working with the Forum to understand its concerns about housing policies and the reasons why policies designed for the rest of the country can be counter-productive in the capital.

For the Assembly to have any power requires a two-thirds majority. Any form of PR is unlikely to prevent the Mayor from mustering support from at least nine members, so effectively the role of the Assembly is reduced to that of a Select Committee in Parliament or a Scrutiny Committee of the Council. While a degree of turnover is healthy, this role necessitates a degree of expertise and it is for this reason that voluntary organisations like the Forum give their time to working with Assembly members. The last term, truncated by Covid, was disappointing. With the government calling for tinkering at the edges of the London Plan, and the Forum's firm belief that a new plan must be prepared, we can only hope for more progress this time round.

The General Election result, in which Labour gained over 200 seats despite attracting fewer votes than in 2019, is likely to spur renewed calls for a proportional system in the Westminster elections. Even allowing for tactical voting to remove unpopular Tories, the massive majority of seats is at odds with the number of votes cast. There are 335 new MPs; there may well be a similar churn next time round.

London's Representation in the New Government

Peter Eversden

You may have seen in the latest edition by the London Communications Agency of LDN the details below which demonstrate the remarkable strength of London MPs' representation in the new Government.

As well as Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** (MP for Holborn & St Pancras), so far twenty of London's 59 Labour MPs have bagged ministerial jobs in the new Government. Three sit around the Cabinet table – Tottenham's **David Lammy** is Foreign Secretary, **Wes Streeting** is Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, and Streatham & Croydon North's **Steve Reed** takes over at DEFRA. Ealing North's **James Murray** and Hampstead & Highgate's **Tulip Siddiq** move into key roles they both shadowed in opposition as Exchequer Secretary and City Minister respectively. Lewisham North's **Vicky Foxcroft** is also a Government Whip.

In a surprise move, three newly-elected MPs skip the traditional backbench apprenticeship jumping straight to the frontbench. **Georgia Gould** (Cabinet Office) and **Miatta Fahnbulleh** (Energy Security and Net Zero) become Parliamentary Under-Secretaries, with Finchley & Golders Green's **Sarah Sackman** appointed Solicitor General.

One appointment so far missing is Minister of London.

The Shadow Secretary of State for DHCLG (was DLUHC) is **Kemi Badenoch**. Hornchurch & Upminster's **Julia Lopez** becomes Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

The Labour Party's website has the [full list of cabinet members](#) and responsibilities.

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May Open Meeting Report

Our May Open meeting was on Thames-side Development and the London Plan. If you weren't able to attend [the report](#) is on the London Forum website.

- [Presenters' slides](#)

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Points of View

London's Lost Generation

Eric Leach

Rachel is a graduate and recently began a teaching job. She lives with her parents in West Ealing as she can't afford to pay rent and certainly can't afford to purchase a home. Her dad is English. She sees little hope that her situation will get any better in London in the years to follow. Owning/renting a home, having kids seems an unlikely future possibility.

Joe is in his forties. Up until recently him and his dad ran their own decorating business. His English dad recently passed 70 and decided to retire. Joe after living in a small room in a house in Ealing for years married his Lithuanian girl friend and moved to Lithuania. They felt job prospects were better there and they would have a better chance of a home under a secure tenancy.

Rachel and Joe's names are not their real names - I need to protect their identities.

Of the 9.7 million residents in London, just how many Rachels and Joes are there? 1,000s or 10,000s? Is there any good reason why this 'lost' generation in London will not increase? Is their only chance for secure accommodation to leave London? Is this Government policy by default?

The Office of National Statistics reports that the average annual salary of 22 to 29 year olds in London is £35,386. For all ages it's £44,370.

I know of one small, 10 year old residential development in West Ealing where all the houses, bar one, were purchased by a Hong Kong property company. In a large new development in Hanwell on just one floor all the residents bar one are not British and at least one resident speaks very little English. Just how many new private flats are being marketed overseas and are being snapped up as investment 'units' by foreign property speculators? As the developments are private, public information on ownership is hard to obtain.

All London based British baby boomer parents like me must take responsibility for this social restructuring in suburbs like Ealing. It has happened on our watch. What can be done to retain our bright sons and daughters in London? Is it only those with rich mums and dads who can remain in Ealing? None of the candidates for MP in my constituency of Ealing Southall mention helping this lost generation in their election material.

'Ealing Matters' - the Ealing resident groups' alliance - recently went through every planning approval for major housing planning applications in Ealing since March 2020. An astonishing 17,390 housing units have been approved for development in just four years. The vast number of these will be private sale flats in 10+ storey tower blocks. The next type of tenure will be the Government's style of 'Co-operative' ownership. The former will be outside the reach of those Londoners on an average annual wage.

As for Co-operative ownership, it's a flawed offering. Firstly it's not 'ownership' in a strictly legal sense. Co-op residents do enjoy security of tenure and a low entry price for a small percentage of 'ownership'. However (like many flat leaseholders) they have no control over management/service charges. It's also complex trying to upgrade percentage ownership. However often the real nightmare comes when trying to 'sell' the property. The process is in the hands of the Housing Association (HA). The HA sets the price and controls the whole sales process.

HAs appear to operate in a completely unregulated fashion and don't appear to be effectively accountable to anyone. Officially HAs are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. In 2020/21 this body employed just 169 staff to regulate over 1,300 HAs. Some new legislation is on the way, but has yet to being enacted - The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. This will support those co-owners with health hazards in their properties (e.g. damp and mould). It is

dubbed Awaab's Law, after the resident who campaigned for it. However, there's still a long way to go to make the Government's version of co-ownership sustainable and risk-free with predictable costs.

In 2014 Ealing Council set up a wholly owned home building subsidiary called Broadway Living. Other London boroughs have set up similar 'arms length' companies. Ealing Council has loaned Broadway Living (BL) £400 million. Ealing Council loudly trumpeted in 2018 its plan to build 2,500 genuinely affordable homes by 2022. Helping this along were two grants from City Hall totalling some £300 million. However, the two largest BL residential development sites have hit problems. The Perceval House development proposals collapsed in April 2023 when Ealing Council and developer Vistry both abandoned plans to build 477 flats (along with a new customer centre, Council offices and a new library). As for Gurnell Swimming Pool, the initial proposal for 600 flats was comprehensively refused by the Council's Planning Committee in March 2021. New proposals are currently subject to an extended public consultation period – with 284 objections already registered by 11 July 2024. Matters deteriorated when in June 2023 one of BL's builders – Henry – went bust. 12 months later a half-finished BL, residential tower block sits inert in Dean Garden's car park. The BL web site is completely underwhelming with no homes available. All it describes is a small development of 16 co-ownership homes being built at Buckingham Avenue, Greenford. See: <https://broadwayliving.co.uk>

- Although trumpeting how it has met its 2,500 genuinely affordable new homes 2017 – 2022, Ealing Council has still not published a list of the completed developments to back-up their claim.
- Ealing Council's definition of genuinely affordable is a complex one. It can include Social Rent, London Affordable Rent, London Living Rent and Discounted Market Rent. As for the maximum affordable monthly rent it quotes broadly one third of a household's gross income. At 29 years old average gross salary for London is £35,386/year. A third of this is £11,795.33 so the genuinely affordable rent would be £982:94 /month. One wonders whether many folks are paying this low amount of Social Rent. The big Ealing Housing Associations e.g. Clarion and A2Dominion don't freely publish Social Rent details. It's also common knowledge that the waiting time for a Social Rent in Ealing is 18 months. So it's more like genuinely not available.
- So what hope is there for Rachel and thousands of her peers about finding secure, affordable accommodation outside the family home in Ealing? Close to zero I would think.
- What could/should be done about this? Give me your thoughts at leachericalan@gmail.com.

Planning Issues

No 1 Undershaft

Ben Derbyshire

At no 1 Undershaft presently stands a four-square building designed by Gollins, Melville Ward and completed in 1968. Obviously influenced by Mies van de Rohe, with an evident nod to the Seagram Building, the Commercial Union building, as was, latterly the Aviva Building, stands back from Leadenhall Street behind St. Helen's piazza right at the heart of the City of London's dense Eastern Cluster.

Some remarkable architecture frames this space - the Leadenhall Building to the west, Lloyds to the south, both by Richard Rogers, and on the east side is the 15th Century church of St Andrew Undershaft, a survivor of the Great Fire of London and the Blitz. The piazza is regarded as "a really important convening space" according to Bruce Carnegie-Brown, Chair of Lloyds.

Long before Palumbo and the battle for a posthumous building by Mies himself on the site of Mappin & Webb, London got its little bit of Chicago right here, and it works. The piazza mediates between the buildings that bound it on all four sides, affords the prospect of great architecture, and the stark simplicity of GMW's building operates emphatically to create a sense of organisation amongst its diverse neighbours.

When Aroland first commissioned a scheme by Eric Parry here, the resulting design successfully emulated the calming effect of its predecessor, despite rising to 73 floors (50 floors higher!), its rectangular geometry was confined more or less to the footprint of the original. Parry's sleek obelisk, tapering gently towards the top as an elegant apex to the Eastern Cluster, was supported by Historic England and approved by City Planners in 2016.

A shame, then, that things did not stop there. Now the developer has ambitions for an even bigger building. Height is limited by the western approach to London City Airport, so the search for yet more floorspace pushes the footprint well forward into the piazza and the revised tower design steps back to the north as it rises.

To compensate for the loss of public open space, the developers propose elevated gardens at each set back, the lowest of which, ten floors above ground, projects forward as a huge, tongue overhanging the much diminished public space below. Instead of cool Miesian geometry creating a sense of calm amongst its stylistically diverse neighbours, this structure only adds discord.

Heritage significance is very heavily impacted by setting. Think of cities as theatre, so that if we destroy the mise en scène of a historic asset, its meaning drains away. In just this way, over sailed by a huge cantilever, the medieval tower St. Andrew Undershaft no longer reaches for the

heavens, becomes critically diminished, and the Grade I listed church loses the status it has enjoyed for half a millennium.

The City's primary concern in deferring judgement on the new scheme appears to be anxiety about the loss of accessible amenity space for city workers. I'd add that a new 'public open space' ten floors up is no substitute when the public have the right to access all areas at ground level with their feet firmly to the pavement. Viewing platforms are frequently offered as compensation for harm caused by development but how many such vantage points does the City actually need?

Just as importantly, heritage adds value, it is an asset, not an obstacle in the creation of wealth and wellbeing. The extraordinary catalogue of listed buildings with provenance spanning 500 years to be enjoyed at St. Helen's piazza is a prime example. I hope the City of London Planners will now weigh this civic value appropriately against the worth of extra square feet of lettable floorspace in development that threatens to consume it at ground level and block out the sky above.

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Andrew Bosi's Transport Round-up

Members may be interested in the score and trends of their borough in this year's Healthy Streets Scorecard report using the following links:

- Review the [results](#);
- Examine the [graphs](#);
- Check how [your borough](#) compares;
- Read the [media release](#);
- [MTS Progress Report](#);
- [Tweet thread](#) on the MTS report.

I've given some further thought to the issue of bus journey speeds and the incomplete picture they give of what matters most - the total time it takes a passenger, including walking time.

Transport for All members may log journey times from door to door and may be able to highlight if there is a trend in either direction. However, they would be a self-selecting group and a small proportion of total passenger numbers.

I also would have thought TfL should have data on bus stop closures, and the length of time for which they are closed, and whether a dolly stop replacement is offered. They also should have data on diversionary routes taken, and the distance from bus stops by-passed as a result.

Labour government transport agenda

Transport Secretary Louise Haigh, who has shadowed the post for three years, announced five pledges in her first week of office:

- improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform;
- improving bus services and growing usage across the country;
- transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality;
- delivering greener transport;
- better integrating transport networks.

Great British Railways, the organisation proposed by a review started in 2018, finally looks like happening as its creation is included in the King's Speech. But the appointment of Lord Peter Hendy (the hitherto cross bencher and brother of a Labour Peer) has strengthened the view that it might be more of a Network Rail take-over than Williams-Shapps envisaged. Legislation to renationalise as franchises come up for renewal is set out in a separate Bill.

The King's Speech also includes a "Better Buses Bill" but this is unlikely to impact on London, as its purpose is to bring the rest of the country in line with London and Manchester, where bus routes are franchised by a Regional elected authority.

It has been rumoured that, although the PM has pledged to work with Metro Mayors (and the Better Buses Bill reflects that), he is resistant to giving powers to Sadiq Khan to expand London Overground and will insist that lines remain within GBR. However, there could be measures to keep the Bakerloo Line extension (BLE) ticking over and that might include handing over the Hayes line. Along with the West Ealing to Greenford line these are the remaining London only lines outside London Overground: the lines to the south and south-west which terminate in zone 6 are integrated with longer distance services.

It is unlikely that BLE will happen during this Parliament, but there are hopes for the West London Orbital and a DLR extension to Thamesmead. The Mayor has indicated that it should include passive provision for an extension from Beckton to Barking Riverside.

The appointment of Lord Peter Hendy has fuelled fears that HS2 might be revived. It is pretty clear that it is unsustainable in its present form. Money is too tight though, and the emphasis on tackling regional inequality should ensure priority for east-west links in the north and Midlands. The Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, clearly has a better understanding than most and his advocacy of east-west first, and then some alternative solution to the Birmingham-Manchester issue might silence the clamour for Old Oak Common to Euston. It is unclear how the Chancellor's reported enthusiasm for a third runway at Heathrow sits with regional equality and greener transport.

Transport Choices Challenge

Ed Lamb and Roger Geffen

Joint co-ordinators, Low Traffic Future Alliance

The [Transport Choices Challenge](#) is an invitation to councils and mayors to follow the examples highlighted above. They can sign up to the challenge at bronze, silver or gold levels, depending on the scale of their ambitions to reduce motor traffic, and how many of the 10 Challenge Policies they are willing to adopt. This reflects the fact that it is easier for city authorities to be ambitious than for rural counties, and they are all currently limited by uncertainties about future funding. Yet every authority that signs up to the Challenge also sends a clear signal about the funding and policy that LTAs will need from the new Government, to realise their ambitions.

We also invite local campaigners and campaign groups to take up the Challenge of persuading your local authority to sign up! To find out more about the Challenge, and/or to request paper copies of our 4-page A4 leaflet about the Challenge to send to your councillors or senior council officers, fill out the form at the bottom of <https://lowtrafficfuture.org.uk/challenge/>, or email me at ed@lowtrafficfuture.org.uk.

Good luck in getting your local authority on board! - and please email if there is anything we can do to help.

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Round The Societies

Michael Hammerson and Helen Warner pick out some key items

The big issues for our societies remain the same. A key one is permissions for high-rise housing. With insufficient attention to local infrastructure needs and small percentages 'affordable', societies are worried about the precedence approvals may cause locally; the too often poor design and poor quality of builds. For example, the **Ealing Civic Society** report that the Council approved a 16-storey development on St James Avenue, against local opposition and in excess of the height considered acceptable. The trend looks set to continue. **Peckham Vision** urges local people to get involved with the redevelopment of the Aylsham estate - 14 new buildings of up to 20 storeys with the majority of the housing unaffordable. The **Streatham Society** have a fourteen-story tower coming to Streatham Vale, the "stark centre piece" on former Homebase site, in an area not designated as appropriate for tall buildings. The planning officer held that Streatham Vale has "never been identified as inappropriate for tall buildings". It is feared it will open the floodgates. The **Sydenham Society** continue to object to the Barratt London development on the former gasholders at Bell Green as completely out of context with the local

surroundings. The Society has been an active participant in two public inquiries so far. And literally towering over these, the **Greenwich Society** report on the clusters of housing blocks rising to thirty-six storeys along the river at Enderby Place and Morden Wharf, all with permissions based on the needs of the now defunct cruise liner terminal and within sight of the Maritime World Heritage Site and Greenwich Park. This area of Greenwich will be radically changed (a Manhattan skyline is one description), with inadequate infrastructure to support a significant rise in population, should the units be sold. With a large number of other developments in the borough, they also raise the loss of biodiversity.

Although the Bio-Diversity Net Gain (BNG) change to Planning Law came into force in February, requiring future developers to replace 100 per cent of any cut-down trees and shrubs plus an additional 10 per cent, there are lots of exemptions and anything with existing planning permission is not covered even if construction has not yet started. It's noted that there is often a time lag of a number of years before sites are planted and of course, new saplings are not mature trees. The **Barnet Society**, formed in 1945 to protect the Green Belt and open spaces, anticipate tougher times because the new Government is looking at building housing on Grey Belt – low quality or neglected Green Belt land. Barnet is studded with sites “deliberately neglected to make them prime development land”. Most such sites aren't served by public transport and won't be developed for affordable housing. The Society also comments to Hertsmere & Enfield Councils on Green Belt applications of which there are several with potential populations of 20,000 (almost the size of Potters Bar).

Other environmental concerns are found in **Brixton** following the “near catastrophic damage to Brockwell Park” following Brockwell Live this year. The society see a “reckless attitude” resulting from heavy pressure from the Council's Corporate section to generate income from open spaces by increasing numbers of events. The **Hammersmith Society's** nomination for a Wooden Spoon 2024 is the planting at the new Premier Inn on Talgarth Road, with small almost bare beds. By contrast 188 Hammersmith Road is nominated for a Tom Ryland Award for Conservation, as “a joy to walk by. The small Wildlife Garden is very well tended and is a great addition to having some plants and greenery to admire along this road.”

Wandsworth Council is going to ban the abandoning of e-bikes on the pavement once it has finished installing 111 parking bays across the borough.

Lastly, perhaps in a scene from *The Birds*, the **Dulwich Society** report that crows have been attacking cyclists and pedestrians. Thought to be protecting their young, they swoop down to fly close to, and even claw, the heads of passers-by!

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The London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

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