

newsforum

The London Forum working to protect and improve the quality of life in London



The London Forum of
Amenity and Civic Societies
Founded 1988

In this issue

Spotlight on
Barnet Society
Page 06

02 The London Cultural Strategy

Talk by Lord Smith

03 Update on installation of telecommunications equipment

03 News from the London Parks and Gardens Trust

04 The Walter Bor Media Awards

05 Update on the Mayor's SPGs

05 The CPRE Manifesto for the Thames Gateway

06 Spotlight on Barnet Society

Fighting for green spaces and local amenities

08 Report of London Forum meeting with TfL

10 Round the Societies

11 News briefs

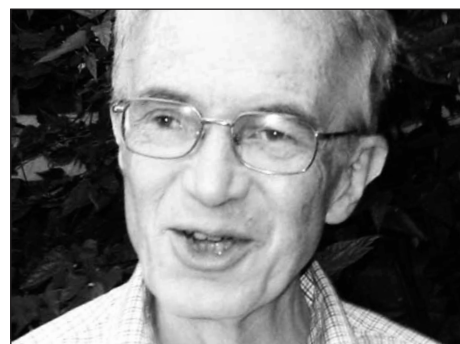
12 London Forum Events

issues of concern; meetings and exhibitions to note
Forthcoming attractions

Chairman's remarks

"Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance"

Richard Rogers' latest report confirms the key issues. Can they be overcome?



Lord Rogers reunited his 1998 Urban Task Force to check progress after six years and found failure to deliver the right quality of housing with local infrastructure and transport in place.

The issues

He writes "the need for more houses is overtaking the need for good houses" and warns of the Thames Gateway having "ineffective partnerships at local and sub-regional levels", with inadequate transport funding. Concerns are the way ethnic polarisation in the poorest areas has intensified and that Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Barking exemplify this process with strongly growing ethnic minority communities, causing major community tensions and the rise of extremist groups.

Issues are summarised as the challenge of climate change; that middle class families are moving out of towns in search of better schools, less congestion and a safer environment and that social housing supply is too low. There is a risk of increased ghettoisation between market and subsidised housing.

New housing projects are criticised as being thoughtlessly laid out groups of cheaply built, fragmented residential units relatively isolated from surrounding communities. These often lack the core social and commercial institutions that sustain urban life and any sense of place or beauty.

Recommendations

The report suggests local authority-led Local Area Agreements can clarify management responsibilities for delivery, allowing partners to work together more effectively. It recommends a strengthening of design advice to ministers, mayors, local authority leaders and cabinets.

Proposals for social well-being are the encouragement of communities of mixed tenure, income and ethnicity by increasing the supply of affordable rented and owner occupied housing in sustainable buildings within existing built up areas close to local amenities and better managed open space. In-fill development is recommended.

A target is recommended to transform all social housing estates into mixed tenure communities by 2012. The Task Force calls for the use of three-dimensional masterplans, character assessments and recognition that transport lies at the heart of regeneration.

There are many proposals for environmental responsibility and a recommendation to review local authorities' land-use designation in areas in close proximity to sites of special amenity value, such as rivers, canals, and parks.

Reduction in VAT on all repair and renovation is called for.

The authors warn that community groups and local representatives are still excluded from the decision-making process, are not adequately supported and are rarely involved by client groups in the development of design briefs and selection panels.

Planning in London

The challenge now is to influence spatial planning, regeneration policies and development control to meet the aims of the Task Force, with which we would all agree.

That will require development agency funding to be directed to regeneration, as well as economic development. Area master planning will be important.

The Mayor's SPG on Housing has just been issued with new targets for boroughs.

The sub regional development frameworks are being finalised for updates on issues and actions in January 2006.

Some amendments have been published for the London Plan. Before the end of 2005, a 'Statement of Intent' will be published by the Mayor to introduce other alterations and to detail the stages towards a new plan.

The Mayor is seeking greater control over planning in the capital and that is a cause of concern when one considers the type of criticised developments that have had his approval.

The London Forum will explore these issues at open meetings early next year – see back page – and will cover them in our email bulletins and future newsletters.

Seasons greetings and every good wish for your urban renaissance, where appropriate, in the future.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

London Cultural Strategy – Talk by Lord Smith

Heritage and The London Cultural Strategy

On 6th October 2005. **Lord Smith Of Finsbury** (Chris Smith) gave a talk to a joint meeting of The London Forum and The Standing Conference On London Archaeology. Alan Baxter hosted the meeting which was jointly chaired by Peter Eversden (London Forum) and Peter Addyman (SCOLA). **Peter Pickering** reports.

Lord Smith began by mentioning the nearby Bevin Court, a tiny part of London's heritage, whose architect, Lubetkin, had declared 'Nothing is too good for ordinary people'.

As Chairman of the London Cultural Consortium (LCC) whose purpose was to push the Cultural Strategy forward, he was the custodian of the Cultural Strategy. Unlike other regional cultural consortia (funded by the Department of Culture Media and Sport to the tune of £250,000 a year), it had no money, powers or staff. It relied on its influence, and on its power to bring people together; it has twenty members, including English Heritage (EH); the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF); Visit London; the Arts Council; the Sports Council; the London Development Authority, and it was associated with the National Gallery, the South Bank Centre, etc.

The central concept of the Greater London Authority was that its role was strategic (though it had some specific powers in respect of the police and of transport). The Mayor's role in culture was therefore strategic; 'coal-face' work was for the boroughs, English Heritage, the Arts Council, etc. The Mayor's Cultural Strategy paid proper attention to the concept of heritage – the importance of built remains, and of open space; the LCC wished to improve public awareness of these.

London was one of the great cultural cities of the world; its economy was driven by creative and cultural industries (second in economic importance only to financial services, and growing at twice the rate of the economy as a whole.) Much of this strength came from London's diversity.

The co-ordinating role of the LCC was particularly significant as the Olympics approached. The Olympics would be a cultural as well as a sporting festival, but there was the danger that the focus for the next seven years would be on the Olympics and on little else.

The LCC meets every three months. Their first meeting concentrated on regeneration; their second on cultural aspects of the Olympic bid; and their third on diversity (the Mayor's

“London is one of the great cultural cities of the world; much of this strength comes from London's diversity.”

Commission on African and Asian Heritage). The next was to concentrate on the balance between central and outer London, and later ones on business and the economy, and on education. In April 2006 the LCC would hold an open forum and would ask bodies like the London Forum and SCOLA to meet them. Having a primarily strategic role did not mean that the LCC was merely a talking shop; it meant getting people into posts and doing things.

Lord Smith asked how proper concern should be paid to heritage, archaeology and open spaces. These interests had to be represented on the LCC (which he believed they were). It was particularly important to get people in touch with London's archaeological riches. He spoke highly of the Museum of London's project to provide boxes of archaeological objects to primary schools, and of the effect of the removal of museum charges on increasing attendance, and more relaxed visits. It was now important to give people a better idea of their local heritage. He hoped in the future to think about this question.

Questions and answers

The following points were raised:

Q1 Difficulties caused by the closure of libraries and the centralisation of local studies libraries?

A1 The Mayor had no locus with libraries, powers in relation to which were with the boroughs or with central government. The London arm of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (Archives, Libraries and Museums London) was however on the LCC.

Q2 What had the LCC achieved up to now?

A2 It had successfully influenced the Thames Gateway project, which had originally ignored culture, and failed to address what people would do in the evenings. There was now to be a post dedicated to culture.

Q3 How to preserve 'village communities' – conservation areas tended to be where the rich lived?

A3 This was a problem; Hoxton had been regenerated by creative people, but then house prices had gone up so that creative people could not afford to live there.

“In April 2006 the LCC would hold an open forum and would ask bodies like the London Forum and SCOLA to meet them.”

Q4. The Culture Strategy focuses on culture as a professional activity, with volunteers only assisting. The LCC seems also to be dominated by public sector organisations (the two historic environment representatives – EH and the HLF – were statutory bodies). But local civic and local archaeological societies (and similar bodies) are run by ordinary people without payment or public funding.

A4 There are some individuals on the LCC, but there were many interests with a good case for representation, and it was impossible to squeeze them all in. It was important to hear all views; the proposed open days would give bodies such as civic and archaeological societies an opportunity to be heard.

Q5 What about the archaeology and history of the Olympic site? Both must be thought about from the beginning. There was a danger that the primacy of the need to fund the Olympics would divert money from heritage.

A5 Everyone concerned was conscious of the importance of archaeology and history. There was a real danger of diversion of funds; the Stonehenge delay was very worrying. Another worry related to the position of the HLF after the next review of the lottery in 2009.

Q6 Public open spaces which lay on the edge of a borough, and perhaps benefit most the residents of neighbouring boroughs, can be denied proper funding. There were specific threats in Regent's Park and Crystal Palace.

A6 The problem would need addressing in the Local and Sub-Regional Development Frameworks. The Regent's Park case should be the subject of an approach to Ministers. The LCC might be able to look into Crystal Palace.

Lord Smith Continued

Q7 How can government be persuaded to abandon its bias towards development over the historic environment? The so-called sustainable community agenda did not mention heritage, and although public authorities may sell assets for less than the highest price if there was community benefit they are reluctant to do so.

A7 There is a problem here; Ministers want the development process to be made easier and quicker. EH's 'Sense of Place' publication should help on the other side. He would support legislation prohibiting the demolition of a building without permission for a successor; the need for this had been exemplified by the recent case of a school in Islington.

Q8 Should not the strategy take more note of religious bodies, which provided many cultural activities for the wider community, not only their own adherents?

A8 Their importance was known, though they were not represented on the LCC ■

Study of the licensing system

On 5th December 2005 DCMS published an interim report by an independent licensing fees review panel. For a final report in the Autumn of 2006 the panel will now consider:

- Licensing Authority income and costs
- Licensing Authority inspection and enforcement regimes and the variability of Licensing Authority approach
- The model for calculating fees
- Simplification and number of applications
- Temporary Event Notices
- Not-for-profit groups (including sports clubs and village halls) and events and circuses
- Large Events and Festivals

See [w](http://www.culture.gov.uk/alcohol_and_entertainment/monitoring_and_evaluation/ifreview.htm) http://www.culture.gov.uk/alcohol_and_entertainment/monitoring_and_evaluation/ifreview.htm ■

Telecommunications update

New rules for household equipment

The Government announced revised planning regulations for the installation of antennas and satellite dishes in October.

Householders 'can use a wider range of antennas and satellites in order to access digital and broadband services. The revised regulations will continue to protect the environment from inappropriate development, particularly in designated areas where there are greater restrictions on the position of antennas'. A revised Householders Guide, explaining the new regulations and encouraging people to be aware of environmental considerations when siting antennas, will be issued.

The amended regulations take account of the wide variety of antenna technology now available, so that all types of microwave antenna will be subject to the same permitted development regulations.

Restrictions on the number, size and location of antennas reflect feedback from the consultation, that the protection of visual amenity is important, and an antenna will still need to be sited in such a way to minimise its impact on the appearance of the building. Antennas no longer needed should be removed as soon as practicable.

Regulations for designated areas are more restrictive. These are those listed under Article 1(5) of Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 (the GPDO):

Further information can be found on the OPDM website ■

"Householders can use a wider range of antennas and satellites in order to access digital and broadband services."

Open Garden Squares

The London Parks and Gardens Trust

The LPGT is seeking gardens across the capital to take part in its annual flagship event, Open Garden Squares Weekend (OGSW) in 2006 and 2007. The Trust, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage, aims to develop the range of participating sites and increase the educational value of the event.

OGSW originated in 1998 to draw attention to the importance of conserving London's historic Georgian and Victorian squares. It has since expanded to include private gardens attached to historic buildings, institutions, residential and commercial settings. Public sites are also included for the specific reasons of making them better known or to highlight a recent award, restoration or redesign.

OGSW is a celebration of London's hidden green spaces in all their forms. It aims to draw attention to the value of historic gardens and the importance of their conservation, and to highlight the vital contribution which all green spaces make to Londoners' quality of life. It has until now mainly focused on central London, with 117 sites participating in 2005. LPGT aims to expand the number of sites by some 50 per cent, to reach all parts of Greater London by 2007.

The Trust also wants to recruit volunteers to help research and write a range of guided walks and cycle rides linking green spaces across the capital. The guides will highlight historically interesting gardens and open spaces, particularly in lesser known parts of London, and increase people's awareness of the stories behind the places in which they live and work ■

For more information on OGSW, go to [w](http://www.opensquares.org) www.opensquares.org. To suggest a garden or volunteer to help with publications, contact Communications Officer Sarah Jackson. sarah.jackson@english-heritage.org.uk Telephone 020 7973 3473

Walter Bor Media Awards 2005

The presentation of the 2005 Walter Bor Media Awards

Tuesday 15th November. **Tom Ball** reports.

An enjoyable evening was had by all who were at 'the gallery' for the review and presentation of the 2005 Media Awards, on the 15th November. The programme for the evening allowed time to compare notes and 'finger' the wide variety of entries under the categories of Newsletters, Annual reports, Other printed publications, Web sites and Media impact. Matters of opinion ranged between pleasure, surprise and sometimes a little disappointment, but overall a feeling of satisfaction that all our voluntary hard work in the cause of promoting the activities of societies was to a very high standard, and worth all the effort involved.

This was the theme of the illustrated talk given by Peter Murray of Wordsearch, who was Chairman of the evening, having also been Chairman of the Judging panel. His illustrations included spreading the word and showing the public at large how things could be – and be improved as well as fun. As promoter of the Clerkenwell Festival, which brought cows to the grass filled St John's Street – round the corner from the Gallery, with a series of little exhibitions and promotions, urban environment was enlivened. His fostering of the architectural exhibition and model of London, which is a must, at the Building Center, Store Street, demonstrates a passion for raising awareness and supporting 'grass root' society activities.

The Awards are named after the London Forum's founder President, and we were delighted that his son David Bor, was able to make the presentations. The winners were invited to comment for 'three minutes', which included thanks to their supporters, some advice on how to do it; and what came across always was the enthusiasm for the achievements.

A brief and witty summing up was made by Brian Waters editor of 'Planning in London', and also one of the judges. The evening was brought to an end by Peter Eversden, who congratulated all the participants. He thanked the judges panel which also included Tony Aldous, Bill Tyler and George Parish. He offered encouragement for the use of more technology through websites, and communication with and between societies, through email services.

Tom Ball ■

Images from the night



The Awards

Award Certificates were presented as follows:

Newsletter

Winner Westcombe Society
"Westcombe News"

Runner up The Friends of Richmond Park
Newsletter "Newsletter"

Annual report

Winner Thorney Island Society
"Annual Report"

Other printed publications

Joint winner Harrow on the Hill Trust leaflet:
"Discover the Hill"

Joint winner Herne Hill Society
"Herne Hill Heritage Trail"

Website

Winner Pinner Association
www.pinnerassociation.co.uk

Runner up Kensington Society
www.kensingtonsociety.org

Impact award

Winner Sydenham Society
"use of the local press on issues"

Runner up Chelsea Society
"use of the press on local issues"

Runner up Lea Rivers Trust
"use of the press on local issues"



- 1 David Bor
- 2 Peter Murray
- 3 June Stubbs, Thorney Island Society
- 4 Pat Trembath, Sydenham Society
- 5 Jack Wells, Pinner Association
- 6 Brian Waters "Summing up"
- 7 Robert Holden, Herne Hill Society
- 8 Winners display

SPGs – the Mayor's website

Planning Guidance from the Mayor

An update by **David Lewis**.

The London Plan lists a wide range of subjects on which the Mayor intends to issue either Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs) or, not so authoritatively, Best Practice Guidance. Issuing SPGs at a regional level is an innovation; no one is sure how much weight they will carry in practice. However, the proposed subjects include some of vital importance which the London Plan covered only superficially: for example, sustainable design and construction. As another example, the draft guidance on housing provision recommends appropriate proportions of housing with different numbers of bedrooms, whereas all the housing targets in the London Plan are expressed in terms of undifferentiated units.

The London Plan gave a timetable for producing draft SPGs. The tables (enclosed on a separate sheet) show the latest position. They were compiled from the Mayor's website on November 6th 2005. The Greater London Authority has fallen massively behind schedule.

The second table, on Best Practice Guidance, shows the position is no better there. The cause seems to be mainly lack of resources, but there may also be second thoughts on whether particular subjects are best covered in this way, in the forthcoming Review of the London Plan, or in other Strategies the Mayor produces (for example, his Energy Strategy).

The London Forum has submitted detailed comments on several of the draft SPGs. We wait impatiently to see, and comment on, a number of other drafts – and also to see the delayed final versions of SPGs on which we commented previously ■

The London Forum AGM

CPRE's Manifesto for the Thames Gateway

Nigel Kersey, The Director of CPRE London spoke about the CPRE's Manifesto for the Thames Gateway at the London Forum AGM.

Having spent over a year compiling CPRE's Manifesto for the Thames Gateway (Thames Gateway: From Rhetoric to Reality), I was pleased to have the opportunity to test its ideas with the assembled expertise of the London Forum AGM. The enormous political capital and public investment being put into regeneration and redevelopment here (up to 200,000 new houses by 2016) means that, if they can't get it right here, they can't get it right anywhere. The public is rightly very nervous about politicians taking the lead on mega-scale building projects and we're hearing the mantra 'not repeating the mistakes of the past' from Government and NGOs alike.

CPRE wants the Thames Gateway to succeed because we see it as a huge opportunity to help meet housing needs through urban regeneration rather than through greenfield sprawl across south-eastern England. Most significantly, we want it to be done in such a way that it remains an attractive place to live and do business. Our report addresses a wide range of issues – principally urban – that we see as having a significant bearing on the likelihood of those objectives being achieved. I hope that its 100+ recommendations will be of value to London societies.

A key area of concern is the Government's apparent reluctance to develop a transport infrastructure strategy for the area that will support the objective of realising its latent capacity to accommodate new housing. At present there is a mish-mash of schemes that are not necessarily even in line with the current proposed pattern of housebuilding. The Mayor's recent intervention to halt the development of 11,000 homes at Barking Riverside on the grounds that the Government will not commit to the DLR extension is a case in point.

CPRE's report should address the central question of where to find the money to fund the public expenditure on local public services as well as transport infrastructure that must accompany volume housebuilding. A number of schemes are being piloted in the growth areas by, for example, English Partnerships, to put the necessary funding up front and recover it when the developments generate cash. Cynics tell me that the fact that this has not been commonplace for decades has something to do with return timescales and electoral cycles!

I was also keen to address the sensitive question of residential densities and to reassure you that CPRE is not talking about radically changing the character of the suburbs. Our Bromley District Group would be the first to take issue if that were the case. We have long advocated a model of urban housing that is a modern version of the highly desirable Georgian and Victorian streets and squares that provide a high proportion of family housing with gardens and yet achieve gross densities of 80-90 dwellings per hectare. We are determined that new housing in the Thames Gateway will be exclusively urban in character and we continue to advocate that model. Tower block housing is a classic example of the 'mistakes of the past' (which usually failed to raise densities anyway). Making more efficient use of brownfield sites is an important part of protecting London green open spaces.

A high standard of urban design and centre management is crucial for development in the Thames Gateway to reach its potential and for quality of life there. I take every opportunity to emphasise the importance of the quality of architecture and the built environment as a driver of personal and economic wellbeing. Our report highlights schemes and initiatives by which local authorities can bring about a high quality and well maintained built environment in the Thames Gateway as elsewhere.

Finally, to reassure you that CPRE London continues to recognise its interest in rural issues. We see the quality of the rural environment – and the public's enjoyment of it – as integral to bringing new households, jobs and visitors into the Thames Gateway. The neglect of large areas of London's rural/urban fringe makes it easier for developers (and, regrettably, ODPM officials) to claim that the best use that could be made of the Green Belt would be as a building site. Raising residential densities, maintaining a hard line on greenfield sprawl, and holding the Deputy Prime Minister to the word of his aspirations for the Thames Gateway will help protect the countryside as well as demonstrate how to improve the whole of London ■

Thames Gateway: From Rhetoric to Reality is available free from:
office@cprelondon.org.uk
Telephone 020 7253 0300

Spotlight on a member society

Spotlight on Barnet Society

Fighting for green spaces and local amenities.

Barnet is an old town, as its 800-year-old chartered market indicates, and owes its status to its position astride the old Great North Road, providing a staging post for coaches and riders on their way to and from London. Barnet the town – as distinct from the London Borough of which it now forms part – is strictly speaking Chipping Barnet (“chipping” meaning “market”), though more often called High Barnet, the name of its tube station at the end of the Northern Line.

An unsympathetic local authority

And it is Barnet the town and its immediate surroundings, rather than Big Brother the borough, which the Barnet Society seeks to defend and improve. The task often seems uphill, and councillors and council officers at Barnet the Borough, based down the road in Finchley, unaware of or unsympathetic to the needs and wishes of Barnet the town.

Closure of local amenities

The announcement of the programme to close the town’s magistrates’ court has recently been followed, despite a strong campaign by the society and others, by the loss of its register office. This means that people needing to register births and deaths now need to journey to the borough’s one remaining register office at Burnt Oak, an orbital journey not conspicuously well-served by public transport. “Burnt Oak,” says the society’s chairman Barry Blain, “is a foreign country to most Barnet people”. On a previous occasion opposition persuaded the council to withdraw proposals to close the office, but this time, though it consulted, there was a feeling that it had made up its mind to wield the economy axe.

A further threat to an important local amenity comes with council plans to close down The Bull, a former high street pub converted into a very popular arts venue. Barnet council has recently spent a considerable sum on a larger operation, the so-called Arts Depot at Finchley. It seems to consider The Bull, which houses a theatre school and arts centre, as an unnecessary duplication. But as far as most local people are concerned, The Bull is their own local centre and travelling to Finchley for an evening’s entertainment an unattractive option.

How it all began

But 60 years ago it was a fight with a more local council, Barnet Urban District, which prompted the founding of the society. This was 1945, a drive for new homes was in the offing, and it appeared that developers were buying up land in the countryside between what was then the free-standing Hertfordshire town of Barnet and suburbs to the south such as Finchley, which though then in Middlesex had London as their postal address. The then Barnet council was dominated by shopkeepers and other businessmen who naturally saw large-scale housing development as bringing them more business. The society’s founders were determined to preserve a green breathing space for the benefit both of Barnet and the suburbs to the south, campaigned determinedly for it, and were delighted when a large area of countryside, including land along valley of the Dollis Brook, was designated green belt.

The threat of piecemeal development

“But we are not Nimbs,” insists the society’s chairman, Dr Barry Blain. Opposition to particular developments is based on solid planning objections, such as inappropriateness of design, over-development, or the inadequacy of infrastructure. This last particularly worries him and his planning chairman, architect and landscape architect David Lee. Central government is demanding thousands of new homes in Barnet and the area of Hertfordshire to its north. Already piecemeal development is increasing apace, but the society sees no sign of educational and health provision being enlarged to keep pace, let alone any adequate improvements in public transport or the area’s already congested road system.

Concern for the Town Centre

Another big and increasing concern is the state of Barnet town centre, and in particular Barnet High Street. It has, says Barry Blain, too many banks, building societies, pizza and hamburgers bars and takeaways, too few useful shops and an increasing number of ugly and inappropriate shop fascias. This has, if anything, got worse since the opening of the town’s new shopping centre, The Spires, which opens out of the high street and was meant to give a boost to high street shopping. Part of the problem is the “impermeability” of the Spires, which

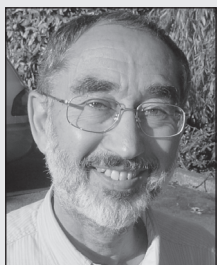
potentially provides a useful through route but which locks its doors at 8pm and for much of Sunday. Another obstacle to high street regeneration is, says David Lee, that, though Barnet has two conservation areas – Wood Street and Monken Hadley – the high street falls in a gap between them, and the society has been unable to persuade the council to extend the designation to fill this gap. Council planners appear to believe this would inhibit development; the society believes it would assist regeneration and offer a means of raising design standards. Meanwhile the high street grows dowdier by the day and its “real” shops struggle to survive.

What future for the ancient market?

Another key factor in town centre regeneration or decline is Barnet’s ancient market, which received its first charter more than 800 years ago. Originally a cattle market, it became a retail stall market in the early 1960s and is quite close to the new shopping centre, though lacking a clear, safe and attractive pedestrian link. The Barnet Society has suggested how such a link could be created, but without success. Now the private owners of the market site have sold it for redevelopment, and though the scheme which has received planning consent includes an area for a market, the fear is that it will lack the character of the old stall market and that stallholders who sell useful, down-to-earth wares like fruit and veg will lose out to retailers of more dubious utility who are willing (at least initially) to pay higher rents.

Pressure on the Green Belt

Though the green belt affords protection against most forms of development, the designation has its loopholes, including sports and recreational activities. But those who devised green belt policies half-a-century ago could scarcely have foreseen the transformation of a pitch for a football club into an all-seater stadium for a club ambitious to climb up the league ladder. Barnet Football Club is a case in point, and those who questioned the club’s latest plans for improving facilities because of their impact on the town’s green spaces risked being accused of disloyalty to “Barnet”. The society is looking warily at the club’s latest proposal and wants to be sure that



Barnet Society

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the attractive green wedge which links the valley of the Dollis Brook to the town will not be damaged. This is a cause especially dear to landscape architect David Lee, since he was the originator of a successful 1999 planting scheme which has transformed part of this link, Barnet Hill, with a splendid line of Norway maples.

Golf courses and shooting ranges also escape the full rigour of green belt constraints, even though their buildings and infrastructure grow ever larger and more elaborate, and demand constant vigilance from those who monitor plans and planning applications. Sometimes the dedicated individuals who form a thin green defensive line against bad and inappropriate development must wonder whether it's all worth it. The Barnet Society's team are clearly, against all the odds, optimists. But then amenity society activists usually need to be ■

“Opposition to particular developments is based on solid planning objections, such as inappropriateness of design, over-development, or the inadequacy of infrastructure.”

The Lees



Society profile – Barnet Society



Age 60; born 1945.

Circumstances of birth: Developers had their eyes on the green belt; it was widely suspected that local businessmen, who dominated Barnet Urban District Council, saw the thousands of new homes proposed as providing them with thousands of new customers.

Biggest successes (1) Successfully resisting that 1945 encroachment. (2) Supporting the establishment and maintenance of two conservation areas. (3) Initiating and supporting establishment of green spaces and tree planting around the town. (4) Successfully resisting many inappropriate development proposals. (5) Defending local amenities and encouraging schemes for the benefit of the community.

Biggest disappointments/frustrations (1) Chronic inability to attract younger members. (2) Failure to attract people with expertise in such subjects as architecture and planning to take over from ageing committee members. (3) Failure to prevent loss of key facilities in Barnet town, such as magistrates' court and register office. (4) Inability to halt several damaging and inappropriate developments, approved in some cases in "suspicious circumstances".

Present preoccupations (1) The decline of Barnet High Street and town centre. (2) How to retain the town's 800-year-old market as a lively and useful amenity. (3) Retention and improvement of Barnet's local theatre and arts centre. (4) Monitoring and resisting attacks on the green belt. (5) Concern about inappropriate infill and backland development, and government demands for tens of thousands more houses without adequate provision for the necessary infrastructure.

Working details: Committee of 12 meets five times a year, includes chairman Barry Blain, vice-chairman Peter Willcocks, and planning chairman David Lee, who is an architect and landscape architect. President is Barnet's former MP Sir Sydney Chapman, who is both an architect and a Barnet resident. About 400 members who pay £5 a year or £8 for a family. Three newsletters a year plus an annual report, and this year a special publication, The Diamond Collection, to mark the society's first 60 years.

Special characteristics: Barnet is a very old town which has retained its character as a town rather than an anonymous suburb. The society fights all threats to that character.

Last word: "We must ensure that Barnet remains a thriving, developing town, with its roots in history but its eyes on the future – integral to London yet distinct and with its feet in the Hertfordshire countryside.

Transport

Open meeting on transport policies

Members meet Dave Wetzel and Paul Moore. Report by **Peter Eversden**.

In July almost fifty London Forum societies were represented at a meeting at 55 Broadway, hosted by Transport for London board members, Dave Wetzel, TfL's Vice Chairman, and Paul Moore. Peter Eversden opened the evening, explaining that the subjects for discussion had been submitted by members and forwarded to TfL for comment at the meeting. There was a wide ranging discussion.

Paul Moore welcomed the opportunity to continue the dialogue with community groups. He emphasised the drive to make up for time lost in the gap between the GLC and the GLA.

Dave Wetzel commented on the previous week's bombings on the transport system and expressed sympathy for all those involved.

Transport strategy

Concern was expressed about the funding and delivery of projects in the Mayor's transport plan. Dave Wetzel gave assurances that the Mayor's new borrowing powers and the Government investment in schemes like the east London Line would secure benefits. The DLL extension to City Airport and the Thames Gateway Bridge will go ahead. More emphasis will be put on Green Travel Plans, environmental issues and relationships with the communities and local authorities. People have to be heard. Dave expressed a personal view that the Thames Gateway Bridge should be for public transport only.

Funding – PPP

There has been a battle with Government over PPP arrangements. The Mayor has made it clear that he would wish to press for renegotiation of the PPP contracts. Central funding and other investment is necessary and a lot is being achieved.

Permission has been given for the Mayor to borrow funds for transport on the open market and there is a £1M programme in TfL to reduce costs.

Buses

There has been a 40% increase in bus services and two in five of people who did not use buses do so now. The TfL focus is on big 'hardware' schemes and improving the quality of service. Paul admitted that quality has some way to go.

The ongoing bus expansion is due to the Mayor's introduction of thirty new policies

for improvement. There are 59 new bus lanes and over 200 bus priority traffic light sets. Cashless buses are being introduced to reduce stop dwell time. The capacity on buses has resulted in free travel for all those up to 16 years of age.

There will be more money for taxi-card and Dial-a-Ride by the end of 2005, with new vehicle types and improved safety. With the exception of two 'heritage routes', all Routemasters will be replaced by buses that are wheelchair accessible.

Bus Inspectors are to be given penalty ticketing powers. Cooperation of TfL and Police forces has reduced violence and vandalism and people are now obeying the rules for no stopping on bus stands. Dave Wetzel urged community representatives to seek the extra bus services and routes that are required from the Mayor.

The Countdown system

The Countdown system is based on old technology; new information and network are needed. It will definitely happen, with accessibility by mobile 'phone and displays in local shops as well as bus stops and stations.

Walking

A question was put about major projects for improving pedestrian spaces and routes. TfL is investigating lack of provision for pedestrians and is supporting boroughs in streetscape improvements, as in High Street Kensington. The pedestrian bridges across the Thames have taken considerable investment. Unfortunately the changes for Parliament Square are difficult to finalise and will be delayed. Dave Wetzel pointed out that the Underground map is a hindrance to walking as it fails to indicate how close places are at ground level.

Asked about better interchanges, the TfL representatives reported that there is a special team planning improved accessibility and there will be major schemes now at key interchanges. Members complained about the interchange distances and times between transport points and the way bus stops have been moved away from junctions.

Responses by TfL will be provided on particular issues identified.

Cyclists

Several members raised the problem of the poor behaviour of cyclists who intimidate pedestrians and road users by riding on

pavements, cycling recklessly on shared paths and ignoring pedestrian crossings, road markings, one-way streets and traffic lights.

Paul Moore admitted that some of the shared routes are not satisfactory. The Lycra-clad racers need to be brought under control and behaviour and discipline is likely to improve when more people of different age groups are cycling, as in the Netherlands. Members urged that TfL should seek through the Mayor more Police action on cyclists breaking the law.

Safety

Dave said that road crashes are caused by driver error. There should be a change from higher speed limits, like 60mph, and the use of cameras to a blanket 20mph central London speed limit, with some outer areas at 30mph or 40mph. That would reduce accidents and deaths and a return up to 70% could be achieved in health and insurance budgets. He explained TfL trials on new enforcement systems by camera, measuring a vehicle journey time through a speed restricted section. It would be better than using speed humps. Residents need to press for lower speed limits to improve road safety. Powered two-wheelers are a cause of concern. In one year 216 people were killed and over 4000 injured.

Network Rail

Integration in London of Network Rail is a priority. It is clear that people want more Underground-type services in South London but there are rails everywhere. What is wanted is a large investment in trains and infrastructure; 'overground' would be as good as the Tube. Ticketing systems need to be harmonised and that is an aim. The Government has passed legislation for Greater London's railways to pass to the Mayor. Integration and improvement of the North London Line will be first and then other sections will follow so that a modal shift of travel can be supported.

Noise complaints

Paul Moore commented that environmental noise complaints were caused by the state of the tracks and there is a lot of work to do.

Congestion charge

The CC extension was discussed and several questions were raised about the purpose of the plans and the boundary.

Transport Continued

Paul Moore expressed satisfaction with the benefits of the Central London congestion charge. Thirty percent less private cars enter the zone than did previously during the controlled hours.

There were questions about realising the benefits of the reduced traffic in central London. Paul and Dave answered that the extra road capacity would be used to improve bus reliability, provide cycle-friendly routes and pedestrian improvements. More bus priority schemes are being trialled and extra cycle routes considered with Councils who are building the network. Speed spots are under assessment. The flow of funds to local authorities is being more closely monitored and controlled now.

Congestion charge extension

It was claimed by TfL that the extension area is the next most congested after central London and that most of the traffic is not local. The 90% discount for residents is necessary. Although it will mean some extra traffic in the central area that will be mitigated by the £8 charge. A separate zone would cause double charges for those entering the centre from the west and only a single charge to enter from the east. The whole zone's finish time will be made earlier, at 6pm, if the Mayor continues with the western extension. He will consider the results of the consultation.

Congestion reduction by taxing workplace parking, as being considered in Nottingham, was suggested but Dave Wetzel said that advice was that it would be difficult in London.

The extension of fare Zone 1 to the West London Line could be considered to encourage public transport use, said Paul Moore. That line will have four trains per hour for the whole day leading to improved use of the rail network with integration of the Silverlink and Bakerloo routes.

Crossrail and orbital services

Dave Wetzel emphasised Crossrail benefits; the Bill to implement it would have its second reading in July. However, there is still no committed funding package.

A representative from the Greenwich Society called for an integrated transport strategy and increased services in that area as it faced seventeen major new developments. Dave Wetzel spoke of plans for transit services and rubber tyred trams. He thought the river should be used more

for freight as well as people but without fare subsidies water transport is unlikely to compete with bus and rail.

People from east and south-east London raised the issues of inconvenient and inadequate rail transport and sought orbital route development. On existing services the inconvenience limits the demand. Dave Wetzel said orbital services requirement was agreed by himself and the Deputy Mayor but frequency and limited stop issues would have to be addressed. A member pointed out that routes have been carved up and there are underutilised lines.

Trams

Tram policies were challenged by members, including the low benefits and adverse environmental impact of some schemes. The Burgess Park tram was one example and the Uxbridge Road tram scheme has been heavily opposed for the traffic diversions it would cause. Paul Moore said that TfL had underestimated the traffic issues. There is real discussion continuing and changes are still being made to the West London Tram proposals. The big issue is not seen by TfL as trams or new lines but integration in London of Network Rail.

Problems in Oxford Street

The problems of congestion and poor environmental conditions in Oxford Street were raised. An improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists is required. Dave Wetzel advised that the 88 bus route had been taken out of Oxford Street and the number of route 73 buses reduced. A full study is being conducted. Members pointed out the problems of taxis blocking bus stands and too many buses using one stop, resulting in long walks to a stop and problems at them.

TfL were urged by members to look again at the capacities and positioning of bus route terminus stand and turnaround space.

Freight

There was discussion about 40 ton lorries in town centres. Deliveries by large vehicles had increased with the implementation of the 'Local', 'Metro' and 'Express' type of smaller high street supermarkets. Dave Wetzel spoke of plans that the GLC had had for a 'London Lorry', stocked by loads extracted from larger vehicles at depots around the M25. Options are being examined

in a Freight Quality Partnership and that includes possible changes to the night time and weekend lorry bans.

The Olympic bid

Transport programmes were prepared to support the Olympic bid and the development plans, and will now be prioritised to make it a success. Alternative transport policies will be explored, like the special schemes for buses in Brighton and the reduction in parking provision in town.

TfL controls only 5% of the roads in London but they carry one third of the traffic. He proposed a location benefit levy to help fund transport. Land values increase when there are transport improvements: in the case of the Jubilee Line extension that had been in the order of £13M. Property values in the Games areas will soar. The increased value should be taxed. There are potential issues with the Government's proposals for a planning gain supplement which will tax development and could increase the shortage of land.

Road signage

A member pointed out that the Department for Transport had abolished the need for signs to explain the restriction imposed by double yellow lines. TfL were asked to consider the same for Red Routes.

Other local queries and requirements put forward by members would be handled by correspondence later.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

“Paul Moore welcomed the opportunity to continue the dialogue with community groups. He emphasised the drive to make up for time lost in the gap between the GLC and the GLA.”

Round the Societies

Round the Societies

A round up of news from our member societies.

By **George Parish**.

The non-appearance of this column for mysterious electronic reasons in the Summer issue, followed by a thin crop of stories received over the holiday period, has obliged me to recycle some of the less dated items from that missing draft.

Conservation Areas Appraised

The Enfield Preservation Society has given a qualified welcome to the draft conservation area appraisals for the Borough, which have been prepared by consultants, the Paul Drury Partnership. A common factor of these comprehensive documents is their perceptive analysis of the character of the different areas and their highlighting of the way this has been undermined by the cumulative effect of insensitive changes, such as street furniture or permitted developments, which cannot be controlled without Article 4 Directions. A frequent recommendation, about which EPS is sceptical, is for more buildings to be locally listed. The documents should provide a valuable tool for development control but for maximum impact will need real and consistent commitment on the part of the powers that be.

Moles in Pinner

The Pinner Association is intrigued to learn that, 50 years ago, Soviet Intelligence was recommending its operatives to rendezvous with their contacts at the Old Oak Tea-rooms in Pinner and similar respectable and inconspicuous establishments in Richmond and Acton, rather than 'unsavoury' areas like Soho and Bloomsbury. Ten years later the Executive of the Pinner Association (none of them, we understand, Soviet spies) also used to meet in the same tea-rooms.

Pub Wars

Several pages of the Heath and Hampstead Society's September Newsletter were devoted to their vigorous response to the new Licensing Act. Their initial view that it was a most irresponsible piece of legislation has now been qualified in two respects. First, for a community like Hampstead that is sufficiently well-prepared, motivated and determined and has an effective local authority, the act may eventually prove to have been quite effective in controlling unacceptable disruption. But many communities are not so fortunate. Secondly, the campaign against irresponsible landlords can have the welcome positive result of galvanising the community and strengthening its local organisations.

North Circular

Reactions in the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association to TfL's latest plans to improve traffic flows along the North Circular Road between Bounds Green and Green lanes have been mixed. Some fear that, after years of construction chaos, the scheme will not deliver the improvements claimed, while others are delighted that something is at last being done.

Housing Heritage

The Camberwell Society reports on the six year campaign by tenants against Southwark Council's proposal to demolish six structurally sound blocks on the East Dulwich Estate - one of the classic former LCC estates built to exceptionally high standards in the 1930s in the

typical style of that period. The only logic to the proposal appeared to be the requirement of the Government's Capital Finance Regulations for a minimum 50% private sector contribution to any regeneration scheme. But this requirement has now been removed, while an independent ballot has shown 71% of residents to be opposed to the scheme. Nonetheless Southwark has decided to approve it. The conclusion to be drawn is that Southwark Housing needs to change its culture fundamentally if public consultation is to be meaningful.

Crossrail

The SEBRA Summer Newsletter contained a short report on the progress of the Crossrail Bill through Parliament. It broadly welcomes the scheme but foresees a number of problems, mainly of construction noise and vibration, which should be mitigated to a much greater extent than is so far proposed.

Culture and the Olympics

The Waltham Forest Civic Society has emphasised the importance of 'the cultural framework' of the successful bid for the Olympic Games. Unlike the other four Olympic boroughs, Waltham Forest has no cultural infrastructure to speak of - certainly no theatre, arts centre or cinema.

Night Flights

The Clapham Society is concerned about the increased number of night landings over London. The northern runway approach to Heathrow passes over the north side of Clapham Common whilst the southern approach passes just south of Clapham South tube. Alternate landings between these two approaches are intended to give relief but many more Clapham residents are overflowed by night flights than, say, those in Berkshire. The Society therefore backs HACAN's demands, which include an immediate ban on flights between 11.30 pm and 6.00 am.

Brunswick House

The Vauxhall Society understands that the Brunswick House saga has been resolved by an architectural antiques company, who intend to restore it for use as their London showroom. They have no plans to move it to Camberwell!

An Open or Shut Case

The Putney Society has consulted its members on whether the Robin Hood Gate to Richmond Park should remain closed, be reopened as before or be opened after 10 am. I recall 30 years ago, when the use of Richmond Park by through traffic first became an issue, the GLC engineer for southwest London saying that if the park did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it. Do local government officers still quote Voltaire?

Closure

After 60 years, the Malden and Coombe Civic society is to close at the end of the year. Its membership data will be transferred to the Kingston upon Thames Society. Members who become active in this much larger society will find plenty of issues to grapple with, especially in the town centre ■

News briefs

newsbriefs

Some key issues of concern to note.
Meetings, exhibitions and consultations.

News from The London Thames Gateway Forum October E-Bulletin (www.ltgf.co.uk)

Olympics could delay Crossrail

As the Crossrail tunnels – to be completed by 2013 – are to surface at Pudding Mill Lane, only metres from the media centre built for the games, some East London Councils fear that the Treasury may use construction work as an excuse to delay a Crossrail funding package.

Further delays to talks on funding for Crossrail

The ODPM has announced that Sir Michael Lyons would be given another year for his review of local government shape and finance, postponing talks on who will pay for Crossrail as discussions will not be held until Lyons reported. The government has suggested that business rates could contribute between £2 and £3 billion to the east-west London line.

Crossrail to reduce capacity across the network

Train operators claim Crossrail could reduce the capacity of the entire national rail network. A petition against the Crossrail draft bill has been issued by The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), in which it expressed its concerns at prioritising track access out of Paddington and Liverpool Street stations for Crossrail services that could result in longer journey times or delays to long-distance services. A total of 358 petitions have been submitted over the Crossrail bill so far.

Demolition of Aylesbury estate approved

Southwark council has approved the demolition of the 2,800-home Aylesbury estate in south London, one of the largest estates in Europe, despite earlier opposition by residents to redevelopment and the proposal of an alternative refurbishment option rejected as too costly. The plan is for the homes to be demolished in stages during the next ten years and the estate rebuilt to form a mixed-tenure development with 2,200 social houses and around 2,700 homes for sale or shared-ownership.

Pilot programme to reclaim derelict land

English Partnerships has chosen 22 developers for its pilot programmes to bring 64,000ha of brownfield land back into use. The pilots involve 14 local authorities, including Barking and Dagenham and Tower Hamlets.

Powers of the Corporation for Thames Gateway

The powers of the Corporation for the Thames Gateway are set out on the OPDM website: Two extracts are as follows: 'The transfer of planning powers to the Corporation will not affect the Mayor's planning powers. Where the Corporation becomes the local planning authority it will be subject to the same relationship with the Mayor as the local authority would have had. 'Ministers decided that the Corporation will not be given planning powers in either the Olympic zone or in respect of the proposed Stratford City development. A map has been agreed by the relevant agencies designating the areas to be covered by the Corporation's powers, which accompanies the Order'. For further information:

http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_communities/documents/divisionhomepage/041561.hcsp

LDF preparations

The ODPM has launched a three year project to monitor some LDF preparations and to communicate lessons and advice to all local authorities. Details can be seen at http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_609950.pdf

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act

A Government consultation on guidance, regulations and code of practice for aspects of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 can be seen on the following link; responses are due by 2nd January, 2006

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/clean-neighbourhood05/index.htm>

The future of Waterloo

The Strategic Rail Authority's proposals for the future of Waterloo station can be seen at http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_railways/documents/page/dft_railways_609903.pdf

Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

The ODPM has published A practical guide to the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', providing information on how to comply with EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain projects on the environment, known as the SEA Directive. It can be seen on www.info4local.gov.uk/searchreport.asp?id=26068&heading=e-mail+alert

New government climate change advisor

Sir Nicholas Stern FBA, Second Permanent Secretary at HM Treasury, has been appointed as Adviser to the Government on the economics of climate change and development, reporting to the Prime Minister.

CPRE London Planning Guide

CPRE London has re-published the London Planning Guide, which has been updated following the creation of the GLA and the recent changes to the planning system. It provides both basic and more detailed guidance on how the planning system works and – most importantly – how the public can engage with it to improve the quality of planning decisions in their area. It is available free in electronic format (email request to office@cprelondon.org.uk). Paper copies are available for £5 (please contact Nigel Kersey on 020 7253 0300)

Affordable Housing levels disregarded?

In the Evening Standard of 28th October it was stated that the Mayor has allowed Arsenal to provide only 55 out of 711 new flats in the Highbury Stadium development as affordable homes. He is said to have allowed the exception to his 50% rule because they are providing 27% of affordable homes "across its wider redevelopment of the area." Local MP Jeremy Corbyn has criticised the decision.

➔ *Continued on page 12*

newsbriefs

Threats to parks and playing fields

34,000 playing fields in Britain – 45% of the recreational space have been lost since 1992. We hear that Fulham Football Club are seeking permission to build a floodlit pitch in the Grade II Bishop's Park, Fulham; Holland Park School wishes to sell off its sporting facilities to pay for rebuilding works; Olympics development will lead to more loss of playing fields on Hackney Marshes.

Out of the mouths of...?

"Only some ghastly, dehumanised moron would want to get rid of the Routemaster" Ken Livingstone, in 2001.

Go ahead for Battersea Power Station

Permission has at last been given for work to go ahead on Battersea Power Station. Developer Victor Hwang said that he regards the iconic building as a 'sculptural masterpiece'; its irreparably damaged chimneys will be replaced with replicas. The scheme will include a hotel, offices and residential, with a high-level observation area.

Bentley Priory to be sold off

The Government has announced its intention of selling Bentley Priory, Stanmore, the home of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. The Listed Priory was designed by Sir John Soane. The Battle of Britain Association is seeking to persuade the Ministry of Defence to donate the building to it.

Front garden parking contributes to flooding?

Recent reports suggest that two-thirds of all front gardens in London have been paved over for parking spaces within the past 25 years. In Croydon there have been 6,800 applications to create crossovers since 2000, and over 1,000 a year in Brent since 2000. There is concern that this has been a contributory factor towards the increased incidence of flash flooding in London, as the run-off adds to the already-overtaxed drainage system instead of soaking into the ground. Thames Water maintain that, under such conditions, the average patio can produce 100 litres of run-off a minute, the equivalent of waste water from 200 houses. The Government is being pressed to require all crossovers to need planning permission ■

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Upcoming Meetings

The Mayor and the London Plan

Open meeting

February 2006, The Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, London near Farringdon Station EC1

Speakers will update members and discuss the development of the London Plan and associated guidance.

Amendments to the London Plan have been published for consultation, the Sub Regional Development Frameworks are being finalised and the Mayor is seeking more control over the planning and implementation of major developments in London. How will all this affect you and your Council? Details of the meeting will be published soon.

Housing in the capital

March 2006 open meeting

In March 2006 the London Forum will hold an open meeting to review and discuss the implications of the recent publications of policy and guidance for housing in London. New targets have been set for boroughs on the housing they should provide. However, Richard Rogers has reminded us recently in an Urban Task Force update of the problems in achieving well designed homes, family accommodation, adequate transport and sustainable communities with the appropriate facilities.

Watch for details in the New Year

Dates and details for our events will be issued by post and email. If your organisation has not let us have an email contact address, please send us one to email@londonforum.org.uk

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