

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 SAVE
Page 08

02 **The Barker Review of land use planning**

04 **Wiping out the wildlife**
Ecological impacts of the Olympics

06 **Greening our homes**

07 **Sustainability** Streets, gardens and climate change

08 **Spotlight on SAVE**

Small, fast and loud

10 **Skyscrapers**

The controversy rumbles on

11 **Heritage** The Middlesex Guildhall,

Travers report on museums, Heritage White Paper

12 **Tourism**

Come to sunny... Neasden?

13 **Planning enforcement**

Update on Heathrow

14 **News briefs**

Key issues of interest and concern

16 **Obituary: George Parish**

Chairman's remarks

SAVE loses Middlesex Guildhall appeal; Heath & Hampstead Society wins signal victory

Proposals and decisions by Government and Court judgements endanger local democracy.

Government set to destroy historic Grade II* listed interiors

The appalling decision on the Middlesex Guildhall allows the Department of Constitutional affairs to strip out fine original furnishings and woodwork from three courts which English Heritage described as "unsurpassed by any other courtroom of the period in terms of the quality and completeness of their fittings".

SAVE's president Marcus Binney said "The Lord Chancellor has set the worst possible example to owners of listed buildings. There is a real danger that other Government Departments will seek to alter or demolish major listed buildings as an easy option, claiming their proposals are of national importance and overriding the usual presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings".



The High Court enforces planning law

Meanwhile the Heath & Hampstead Society members were more fortunate. They took Camden to the High Court in April, for a Judicial Review of their decision to grant planning permission for a vastly larger replacement house on a designated MOL site in the Vale of Health on Hampstead Heath.

Mr Justice Sullivan delivered a long and comprehensive judgement which found in the Society's favour. He was very critical of the officers' report and on the manner in which the presenting officer had failed to instruct the committee on the vital questions of appropriateness and 'materiality'. The form in which the judge is required to give reasons for refusing leave of appeal to the Interested Parties is a damning indictment of Camden's entirely mistaken approach to replacement buildings on MOL:

"The Interested Party's case is hopeless - there was a most egregious misdirection by the officer as to whether or not the proposal was "appropriate" in MOL."

The Society was awarded £18,000 in costs. The owners request for leave to appeal was refused. Camden made no such application, although they could do so later.

What price democracy?

These two decisions in the High Court give cause for grave concerns: the real issue is why should Societies have to go to law to ensure that stated government and local authority policies are adhered to?

Marco Goldschmied former president of RIBA and Vale of Health resident told the local newspaper, the *Hampstead & Highgate Express*: "What is scary is that there must be hundreds of cases where residents aren't as organized and cannot raise the £50,000 needed to fight the case. It is scandalous." Our experience tells us he is right.

Such cases as these make nonsense of all the fine words put out by various government departments in recent years about giving local communities more say in the decisions that affect them. When local authorities frequently flout their own policies, and even going to court does not necessarily provide justice for 'local communities', as in the SAVE and Lotts Road cases, one is fearful for the future of democracy and the ability to protect the environment.

Other concerns dealt with in this issue add to these fears: the Barker Report, the Heritage White Paper and the Mayor's drive for more skyscrapers. They will require close scrutiny in the context of the next stages of the Government's proposals for changes to Local Government, the new GLA Act with increased planning powers for the Mayor and Planning Gain Supplement.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

The Barker Review of land use planning

Following her highly controversial previous report reviewing housing supply by former Treasury Economist, Kate Barker, **Michael Hammerson** gives a stark warning on the new report by Barker, reviewing the UK's planning system, commissioned by the Treasury.

This article is not for those of a nervous disposition. However, you need only read the review (180 turgid, but frightening, pages) and the Civic Trust's response (see below) to appreciate why Barker can only be described in alarmist terms, why it must be fought vigorously, and why its chief inspiration may have been Alice in Wonderland.

Flawed economic arguments.

Many organisations, including the Civic Trust, view its recommendations focussing on reforming the planning system for the benefit of businesses and development, with great concern. Many appear to be predicated on hypothetical or flawed economic grounds and discount any but economic arguments.

Major inconsistencies

If the new Planning White Paper, expected at later this year, follows Barker's recommendations, it will result in a planning system where in order to speed up major regional and national projects, economic interests take priority over social and environmental ones. They would reduce communities' rights to have a say in the development of their local areas or their ability to protect the built and natural environments. It would substantially weaken Green Belt protection.

Most of the 31 recommendations set alarm bells ringing; six in particular, listed on the next page, give cause for great worry.

While economic development is a perfectly valid priority for local authorities, Barker appears to have no concept of the need to balance this with other community needs and ensure that all receive equal treatment in the planning system. There are major inconsistencies over the links between regional and local policies.

For instance while the "Town centre first policy" remains, abolition of the "needs test" - the obligation to justify an out-of-town retail development - would increase the dominance of supermarkets in town centres at the expense of local shops and encourage out of town developments accessible only by car.

The proposals on Green Belts will ensure that development and urban sprawl will become significantly more difficult to resist and talk of "proportionality" in any heritage policy arouses great concern.

A dangerous, indeed astonishing, presumption is introduced that an application should be approved if the local plan is out of date. It may still be appropriate. This will encourage exploitation of the system to force through unacceptable developments.

A proposed Independent Commission

While a body to help local authorities deal with large-scale developments, particularly with cross-border implications, such as new roads, airport extensions and power stations, is desirable, there are major concerns about an Independent Commission's role, how its members would be appointed and public consultation carried out, to whom they would report and be accountable. The CPRE is quite clear that this would remove these major planning decisions from democratic scrutiny and reduce people's right to have a say in decisions that affect their local environment

Section 106: promoting a two-tier system

Although it is desirable that developers should contribute to the cost of the planning process and make Section 106 contributions, this proposal seems at best naïve and at worst dangerous. It appears to promote a two-tier system where businesses who can afford it will effectively turn planning authorities from a public service into private planning consultants. The suggestion that it would in effect be acceptable to "bribe" the community into accepting inappropriate developments is inimical to good planning, ethically questionable and likely to encourage corrupt practices.

United opposition

Such is the concern nationally about Barker that a coalition group (including the Civic Trust, CPRE, RSPB, Friends of the Earth, Transport 2000 and the New Economics Foundation) representing some 5 million members has formed to campaign against it. It recently held a parliamentary reception, hosted by Paul Truswell MP, and has its own dramatically-titled website, www.planningdisaster.org, which includes a standard letter of concern which it is urging its members and their individual memberships to sign and send to Gordon Brown.

A shocking admission

There are signs that the initial reactions against Barker have made some impact.

This is the most urgent planning issue to have faced local communities in recent years. It is imperative that all London Forum member bodies feature this as prominently as they can in their newsletters and lobby their MPs.

After the first wave of criticism, DCLG Minister Ruth Kelly distanced herself from the Green Belt recommendations and emphasised that the Government did not accept them. At a recent London conference, Kate Barker herself conceded that she may have been wrong to recommend ending the needs test. She said: "I think it's possible that I and the people who advised me didn't realise the extent to which planners seem to rely on it. I must say it wasn't a point I felt particularly strongly about and the argument is very much up for grabs." If she admits to not understanding something as basic as this, this must cast doubts on many of the other premises on which her recommendations have been based.

In addition, she said, she did not mean to suggest that there should be a presumption in favour of development in areas not covered by a local plan. "What I mean is there should be a clear-eyed look at the costs and benefits of a development in the absence of a plan. The actual wording in the report may have been a bit strong, and there will be plenty of negotiation about this." If she didn't mean it, then, why on earth did she say it?

At an RTP1 reception, Environment Agency chief executive Barbara Young also criticised Barker's call for a presumption in favour of development, warning that the "fine work" on sustainability featured in PPS25, PPS23 and PPS1 must not be lost. It would be a mistake to reduce the potency of the planning system which had been successful over the past 50 years. "A presumption in favour of development has a lot of baggage as a term and I don't think we should use it. We must make sure that all the gains in sustainability must not be lost in the interests of development. We must not go back to the bad old days of the 1980s." She added that

it was no secret that the UK's environmental infrastructure is "pretty crap" as a result of underinvestment in water supply, drainage and waste disposal.

The new Planning White Paper,

A White Paper was due to be published before Easter, but Government seems now to recognise that some form of consultation is required. The timescale has also lengthened; taking any legislation into the next session.

Although it is difficult to know the extent to which criticisms will be taken on board in the White Paper, the main battleground will be the proposed independent commission for determining Major Infrastructure Projects, to which the Government is committed. New nuclear build and airports are driving the agenda; the need for them, and how that need is established, will be the core issue.

We must therefore hope that the growing recognition of the report's many flaws may result in at least its worst aspects being put into cold storage. The Civic Trust and others will continue to campaign hard, but it is imperative that their grass-roots members lend their support and that all London Forum member bodies feature this as prominently as they can in their newsletters and lobby their MPs. Therefore:-

– Visit the coalition website

www.planningdisaster.co.uk and ensure that your individual members send the letter of concern to Gordon Brown. This is very important; it is essential to drive home to Government that large numbers of voters are very unhappy with their proposals;

– Lobby your local MPs.

Urge them to sign one of the two Early Day Motions against the report – one (Conservative) by Caroline Spelman and the other (Lib Dem/Labour) by David Drew, and keep them informed of concerns.

This is the most urgent planning issue to have faced local communities in recent years. If modifications are not secured, then it may not be too much of an exaggeration to say that we may as well all go home, as community ability to have meaningful input into the planning system will be fatally weakened ■

The Civic Trust's summary and detailed responses to the Barker Review can be read at www.civictrust.org.uk (Policy and Campaigns section)

You can also request paper copies from: hmmumery@civictrust.org.uk, and contribute any ideas of experiences to their PR officer Steve Rackett, srackett@civictrust.org.uk or 020 7539 7910.

The full report is on:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/barker_review_land_use_planning/barkerreview_land_use_planning_index.cfm

Update: See latest details on the Planning White (or Green) Paper in News briefs on page 15. Do make sure you get involved!

Recommendation 1: "DCLG should revise the Policy Framework for decision-making... to make clear that where plans are out-of-date or indeterminate, applications should be approved unless there is good reason to believe the costs outweigh the benefits."

Recommendation 4: "Wider planning policy should be made more responsive to economic factors, this should include:

..... review of heritage policyemphasising the critical importance of viability and proportionality, and by facilitating modernisation that does not damage the historic or architectural significance of buildings. Supporting the "town centre first" policy and the impact and sequential tests that help to deliver it, but removing the requirement to demonstrate need (the "needs test") as a part of the planning process;

Recommendation 6: "Regional and local planning authorities should make planning for economic development a higher priority:

Recommendation 9: In the light of growing demand for land and the need to ensure areas of high profile public value (such as sites with important or endangered wildlife) ... are adequately protected: ...planning authorities should review green belt boundaries to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate, given the need to ensure that any planned development takes place in the most suitable location. Local planning authorities should ensure that the quality of the green belts is enhanced through adopting a more positive approach towards applications that can be shown to enhance the surrounding areas through, for example, the creation of open access woodland or public parks in place of low-grade agricultural land; and The Government should consider how best to protect and enhance valued green space in towns and cities. In this context, the Government should review the merits of different models of protecting valued open space, including the green wedge approach.

Recommendation 10: To improve the framework for decision making for major infrastructure...: A new independent Planning Commission should be established which would take decisions on major infrastructure applications; The Planning Commission would be comprised of leading experts in their respective fields. Proceedings would be based on a streamlined public enquiry model.... Full community consultation would be carried out and decisions would be taken in a fair, transparent and even-handed manner; and Decisions which are of local importance only... should continue to be made by the local planning authority.

Recommendation 31: Business should make use of the potential to offer direct community good-will payments on a voluntary basis when this may help to facilitate development.

Wiping out the Wildlife

The Ecological Impacts of the London Olympics.

By **Annie Chipchase**.

The site selected to host the Olympic Games in London in 2012 has been described as a 'brownfield' site, i.e. one that has previously been developed. Described in the early days of the bid to host the games, as 'the brownfield site near Stratford', the site is neither brown nor unused. Employed by politicians and developers to insinuate that a site is worthless and ripe for development, sparing 'greenfield' land, the word simply serves a political purpose providing no indication of the current use, appearance or ecological value of a site. A host of issues indicate that the location is far from ideal. Its long history of use and abuse pose major infrastructural problems for the siting of the games.

Industrial heritage

The Bow Back River and the River Lea with its upstream tributaries, form a network of waterways and open spaces that permeate an area housing 300 businesses, including railyards, bus garages, scrap metal yards, waste transfer stations, chemical processors, old industrial buildings, new business parks, nature reserves, football pitches and allotments, as well as residential buildings and traveller's sites. It has highly toxic industrial pollution emanating from a 150 year old oil storage depot, a Berks Spencer chemical plant, factories producing tar, soap, matches, inks, dyes, paraffin, rubber, creosote and varnish, as well as bone rendering. The radioactive waste buried during the 1970s is the icing on the cake of contamination.

An important flood plain

The site lies in a flood plain draining a large proportion of East London. The current flood relief system was constructed in the 1930s and extended northwards following major floods in 1947. British Waterways proposes to build a lock at Prescott Channel to enable barges to transport materials onto and off the site. The Old River Lea follows the original course of the river and has natural banks, unlike the other waterways in the area. The impoundment of a major flood relief system which will change the ecology of the remaining tidal stretch of the old river, would appear to be unwise, given climate change and rising sea levels. Currently flushed by daily tides and a flood relief channel, the river will be reduced to a stagnant wetland fed by water, classified as poor, from the

Lea Navigation. Its gravel substrate, which provides an important fish spawning area, will be lost.

Two sewage works, at Abbey Mills and Deephams, affect the site. Both have both been responsible for releasing large quantities of untreated or partially treated effluent into the Lea following high rainfall. The Northern Outfall Sewer (renamed the Greenway), runs through the Olympic 'precinct' carrying London's sewage out to Beckton. It is a testimony to Victorian engineering but is it up to supporting Olympic concourses carrying hundreds of thousands of people to and from the site?

An ecology of urban habitats

The ecology of the area resulting from the plethora of land-uses, and their colonisation by a host of plants and animals, has created truly urban habitats which in the context of east London are extremely valuable. Throughout are pockets of 'wild' open spaces associated with the waterways, providing rich wildlife communities increasingly appreciated as more people discover their treasures.

There are grasslands, scrub and mature trees; reedbeds and willows fringing the waterways; and marginal habitats where early successional species have started to colonise the most hostile substrates. Native and exotic plant species include such specialties as Mexican tea, warty cabbage and ground elder.

The area is host to a number of rare invertebrates as well as more familiar species such as kingfisher, heron, cormorant, coot, moorhen, greater and lesser-spotted grebe, swans, mallards, teal, gadwall and kestrel. The River Lea is an important migratory route for birds and, therefore, very popular with birdwatchers. The grasslands support a small mammal population, including field vole and wood mouse, which are unfortunate enough to provide food for the kestrels that are frequently seen hunting overhead. The habitats have attracted thousands of volunteers who have given their time to improve the area since the early 1990s.

Destruction of open space

The proposed Olympic development, with its stadia, walkways, coach parks, a media centre and 'back-of-house' facilities, will destroy a large proportion of the existing habitats and green open space, and entail

Described in the early days of the bid to host the games, as 'the brownfield site near Stratford', the site is neither brown nor unused.

the loss of a large number of mature trees. Green spaces to be affected include, East Marsh (designated as Common Land and Metropolitan Open Space) in Hackney: 16 ha of football and rugby pitches fringed by numerous mature and specimen trees; the Arena Field, Site of Borough Importance, a recently reinstated playing field with a dense bank of scrub adjacent to the Lea Navigation; and Morris and Weekes Fields – fragments of Hackney Marshes cut off by road development, but supporting grassland and tall herbs with an assembly of rare invertebrates.

In Newham there are the Eastway Cycle Track and Bully Point Nature Reserve a designated Site of Borough Importance, Grade I: 27 ha described as containing 'a valuable mix of scrub, grasslands and wetland habitats, supporting an interesting diversity of birds and invertebrates' (Archer and Yarham, 1991); the River Lea system and Stratford Marsh, initially designated a Site of Borough Importance and now part of the River Lea Site of Metropolitan Importance. Manor Garden Allotments are to be 'relocated' from a site they have occupied for 80 years. These designations recognising the value of sites for wildlife and people, are clearly of little consequence when major development looms large.

Designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

British Waterways and Lea Valley Regional Park Authority have waxed lyrical about the area in their publicity to attract more visitors. In 1991 the London Ecology Unit, now subsumed within the GLA, produced Ecology Handbook No.17 'Nature Conservation in Newham' (Archer and Yarham, LEU 1991), describing the sites and their designation as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. But the lack of any publicly voiced concerns during the bid process from these organisations, about the negative impacts on the wildlife and the loss

of publicly accessible open space, has been noticeable. Claimed to be a 'green' games, we hear about the technical fixes – energy-saving, recycling etc. etc. – no one mentions the loss of green open space, which is in excess of 60 ha. Not bad for a 'brownfield' site.

Valuable recreation resources

The area provides an attractive and well-used environment for recreation in close proximity to homes and workplaces. Walking, jogging, cycling, fishing, birdwatching and boating are all popular activities, as well as the more organised football that currently takes place on East Marsh. Informal, healthy activities are being sacrificed for a few weeks of sports ■



Old River Lea in winter



Old River Lea in spring



City Mill River

Notes

Sites of Metropolitan Importance 'those sites which contain the best examples of London's habitats, sites which contain rare species, rare assemblages of species, or which are of particular significance within large areas of otherwise heavily built-up London' (GLA 2002).

Sites of Borough

Importance 'sites which are important on a borough perspective in the same way as Metropolitan sites are important to the whole of London. Although sites of similar quality may be found elsewhere in London, damage to these sites would mean a significant loss to the borough' (GLA, 2002).

The proposed Olympic development will destroy a large proportion of the existing habitats and green open space.

The lack of any publicly voiced concerns during the bid process from relevant organisations, about the negative impacts on the wildlife and the loss of publicly accessible open space, has been noticeable

Greening Our Homes

David Lewis.

What we do in our own homes is the cause of more than a quarter of carbon emissions nationally, and almost two fifths in the case of London. The average energy used in a home has actually fallen, as households have got smaller and their arrangements for heating (the major energy use) have become more efficient. But the total amount of energy used in this sector has nevertheless risen, because the number of homes has increased.

An opportunity to create energy efficient buildings

It is estimated that the homes built between now and 2050 will by then make up as much as a third of the national housing stock. The difficulties of finding satisfactory sites for so many new homes are well known; but this is also a massive opportunity to create buildings that will use energy much more efficiently, and therefore contribute much less to global warming. The Government's ambitious target is that as soon as 2016 all new homes will be 'zero carbon'.

The London Forum has recognised the need for urgent action on this front, but emphasised that energy-efficient homes must also be sustainable in other ways (1) – if they turned out to provide an unsatisfactory quality of life, and had to be rebuilt or replaced in a relatively short time, the environmental advantages would not be obtained.

The Code for Sustainable Homes

Ecohomes is a well established standard, but has been applied mainly to publicly funded housing; there has been little impact on the private sector. It is being replaced by the Code for Sustainable Homes (2). This covers a wide range of features, including cycle storage and (to reduce commuting) a room usable as an office. Designers have flexibility over which features to include; but there must always be high standards of energy efficiency and water conservation.

The six levels of the Code chart how the Government intends to make Building Regulations progressively more stringent. But the Code is also intended to influence buyers: from 2008 all new homes will have to be assessed by reference to the Code, and in the longer term this requirement is likely to be extended to sales of existing homes. More stringent Building Regulations,

the Code and a new Planning Policy Statement (3) form a package of measures – ranging over the whole of the built environment, but with homes the major focus of government policy for the moment.

'Zero carbon' homes will have to incorporate new methods of construction in order to achieve very high levels of insulation (perhaps concrete panels instead of blocks and bricks). Their massing and their orientation in relation to the sun will also be significant factors. In the face of higher summer temperatures, cooling them may become as important in an energy context as heating them.

Problems of existing housing stock

The existing housing stock is very much larger. Its insulation and airtightness can be improved, but not sufficiently to gain 'zero carbon' status. However, the other major aspect of 'zero carbon' status, local generation of electricity, is also applicable to existing housing. When the amount generated exceeds local requirements, it can be exported to the grid to offset energy the properties in question need to import at other times.

There are various technologies, some of which (wind turbines and solar panels) can be visually disfiguring. Government policy now weighs heavily in favour of allowing such installations on buildings, and some of them may become permitted development. The draft guidance tells planning authorities to 'avoid policies that set stringent requirements for minimising impact on landscape and townscape if these effectively preclude the supply of certain types of renewable energy, and therefore other than in the most exceptional circumstances such as within nationally recognised designations, avoid such restrictive policies'. 'Nationally recognised designations', however, include conservation area and listed buildings (4).

Masterplanning of large areas

A better alternative, technically as well as aesthetically, may be to provide a green energy source for a large residential area, for example one large wind turbine or a district cooling, heating and power system. That makes the case for masterplanning of large areas of new housing even stronger. But existing housing is a more difficult proposition.

The London Forum has recognised the need for urgent action but emphasised that energy-efficient homes must also be sustainable in other ways – if they turned out to provide an unsatisfactory quality of life, the environmental advantages would not be obtained.

The Mayor's Green Homes Programme

On February 27 Ken Livingstone published his own action plan (5). This includes a target for reducing the emissions of existing homes by 2025, and calculates that half the necessary saving can be obtained if two thirds of Londoners 'make simple behavioural changes and put some basic energy efficiency measures in place'. Experience shows this kind of thing is easier said than done. And that would still leave the other half of the reduction to be found, and the need for further reductions beyond 2025.

In the Mayor's Green Homes Programme the most tangible measure for private housing is a subsidised scheme for loft and cavity wall insulation. Achieving the necessary improvement in the energy efficiency of existing housing is a massive task, and neither the Government nor the Mayor has yet come up with the answer. More details can be found at

www.climatechallenge.gov.uk

Notes

- 1) In commenting on *Building a greener future: towards a zero carbon development*, a consultation paper published in December 2006 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 2) DCLG. *Code for Sustainable Homes: a step-change in sustainable home building practice*. December 2006.
- 3) DCLG. *Consultation: Planning and Climate Change* (Supplement to PPS1). December 2006.
- 4) *Planning Policy Statement 22, Renewable Energy*, paragraph 11.
- 5) *Action today to protect tomorrow: the Mayor's Climate Change Action Plan* ■

Ungreening our streets

A salutary tale from Greenwich with a disturbing conclusion.

Under the heading: "They're taking the green out of Greenwich, Jane Shilling, Times columnist, told of her attempts to stop the council felling all the trees in her street. (*The Times* Friday March 23rd). One by one the trees disappeared. At first she wasn't unduly troubled - it is a conservation area. Surely the council could not destroy the character of a street without consulting its residents. She assumed that in due course the trees would be replanted. But time passed and more trees were cut down.

When she rang the council she was told "Only Cabinet members are allowed to speak to the press". But that was not so simple either: council taxpayers cannot just speak to Cabinet members. There are procedures. She had to submit her questions in writing. No reply came to her emails so she tried her local councillor who got a statement saying that "the tree" had been removed "because of damage to the footway. In these situations we do not consult with residents unless we are removing a large number of trees." So apparently a whole street of trees could be removed without any consultation so long as the Council did them one at a time, an extremely worrying situation.

This set Ms Shilling musing: she quotes English Heritage's statement about how "small-scale piecemeal change can erode the local character and distinctiveness of an area". She links this with a recommendation in a DEFRA - funded report advising councils who want to reduce rubbish collection from weekly to fortnightly, to do so in winter so that "resistance has faded by the time summer comes".

She remarks: "This fading of resistance is something government at all levels relies on when introducing measures that will make administration easier while subtly degrading the quality of individual lives." She mentions spy cameras, lotteries for school places and the fiasco of the computerised appointments system for doctors: "All rely on the reluctance of individuals to make a fuss". She warns that "People's lives get worse by tiny degrees, but at last there comes a tipping point" and ends by suggesting that listening to the electors "would be an innovation" ■

Help save London's gardens

The London Wildlife Trust has launched a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of London's gardens.

Private gardens make up around a fifth of Greater London. They are essential habitats for wildlife and act as stepping stones for species moving throughout the capital. But they are under threat.

London's gardens are at the front line of potential development. For planning purposes gardens are classified as brownfield sites making them highly vulnerable to developers seeking building permission. Front gardens are being paved over increasing the risk of flooding as London's Victorian sewerage system struggles to cope. Valuable wildlife habitats are being lost.

The importance of our gardens in relation to climate change cannot be underestimated. Together with London's parks and public spaces they act as natural 'air conditioners' for the city and reduce the rate and volume of water run-off during heavy rainfall.

The Trust's campaign has three elements: they will be taking a wildlife garden roadshow across the capital; they will run a major wildlife garden survey this summer; they will be lobbying MPs and other policy makers for gardens to have greater protection from the threat of development.

To do all this London Wildlife Trust needs to raise money.

If you would like to be involved or to help please contact:

London Wildlife Trust
Tel 020 7261 0447
email: enquiries@wildlondon.org.uk
The website can be seen at
www.wildlondon.org.uk ■

London's gardens are at the front line of potential development. For planning purposes gardens are classified as brownfield sites

What is the Government doing?

Climate Change

Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change – the latest consultation

DCLG's latest consultation sets out how spatial planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change and take into account the unavoidable consequences.

The consultation forms part of a wider package of actions to help deliver the Government's aim of achieving zero carbon development.

This includes the **Code for Sustainable Homes** and a consultation document, **Building a Greener Future**

For further information visit

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2320

Development and flood risk

Planning Policy Statement 25 Development and flood risk

PPS25 sets out Government policy on development and flood risk. It aims to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk.

Where new development is necessary in such areas, policy aims to make it safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, reducing flood risk overall.

It replaces PPG25: *Development and Flood Risk*.

It can be downloaded from

www.communities.gov.uk/pub/955/PlanningPolicyStatement25DevelopmentandFloodRisk_id1504955.pdf

Spotlight on SAVE

“Small, fast and loud. We know we have nothing to lose”.

London Forum's neighbours at Cowcross Street are typically small organisations that “punch above their weight”. That certainly is true of SAVE, a national organisation with powerful national influence which operates with a staff of just two – Secretary Adam Wilkinson and buildings at risk officer David Plaisant. Yet now as always it is battling on several fronts at once to save valued but endangered buildings.

SAVE was founded in 1975 in the wake of the V&A exhibition *The Destruction of the Country House*. That exhibition, curated by Roy Strong, architectural writer Marcus Binney and architectural historian John Harris, revealed the shocking loss of one category of beautiful and historic buildings which seemed to have lost their purpose and were either falling victim to ball and chain or simply crumbling into collapse.

But for Binney and a small group of determined individuals – including fellow-journalists Simon Jenkins and Dan Cruikshank – that was not enough. There were many other categories of undervalued old buildings at risk from neglect, ignorance or greed. They as well as stately homes required focused action to defend them and demonstrate how many of them – perhaps most – could have a useful and economic role by means of adaptive conservation.

The journalists in that small founding group knew how to use the media effectively. Their approach was to shock and shame. This was after all 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year, and how was Britain celebrating it? By knocking down some of our best old buildings. They targeted local papers and local radio and TV stations, judging correctly that they would relish material that embarrassed local councils and companies carrying out or complicit in needless destruction. But from the start they were careful to offer alternatives – credible and costed plans for the re-use of the threatened buildings.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund

Wilkinson makes the point that sometimes the shock was late in coming – an aftershock following failure of a campaign. Thus in 1977 the contents of Mentmore, a Grade I mansion in Buckinghamshire built by Paxton for Baron Mayer de Rothschild, were sold for £6m and dispersed from the house with which they formed an aesthetic unity. But the wave of

protest which followed led to the setting up of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and funds from the NHMF enabled to National Trust to buy and conserve the early c18 Calke Abbey in Derbyshire and its contents.

A David and Goliath victory at Billingsgate

SAVE was never just about stately homes. One splendid David and Goliath victory came after the closure as a fish market of Sir Horace Jones's splendidly cheerful 1870 Billingsgate Market on the Thames at Lower Thames Street. The owners, the City Corporation, wanted it down for office redevelopment and argued that re-use was not practicable. Once the ice in the basement cold store melted, the whole place was liable to collapse, they warned, the city surveyor talking ominously of “the corrosive effect of fish juice”. A SAVE study showed that the building was sound and adaptable, and its refurbishment and conversion could be afforded if combined with a new office block on adjacent land. They won the argument and the Richard Rogers practice carried out the scheme, preserving a fine building and a key piece of Thameside townscape.

One of the biggest disappointments

One of SAVE's biggest disappointments was the loss of No 1 Poultry, the ornate Victorian Mappin & Webb building which was such a landmark at the western corner of the Bank of England crossroads. Here the City Corporation, to its credit, turned down a scheme by the ambitious modernist developer Peter Palumbo, but - despite a SAVE scheme which showed how the building could be adapted for mixed uses with very similar public realm gains, despite also government planning policy requiring proof that re-use was not viable – the inquiry inspector perversely came down in favour of a James Stirling design which “might” produce a modern masterpiece. No 1 Poultry was demolished and replaced by what one can only call a weak post-modern curiosity.

One of the biggest successes

One of the biggest successes was to save most of the striking collection of buildings which made up the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. They had been sold by the Ministry of Defence to Slough Estates, and when buildings earmarked for grade 1 listing were

downgraded to II*, II* to ii, and II left unprotected, prospects looked grim. But not only did SAVE manage to get the grades originally proposed reinstated, but it carried shock tactics into the developer's very boardroom. Its chairman thought SAVE's representatives were there to make suggestions about public art; instead they offered him £32m for the complex and showed him how they would enhance the quality of the development by adaptive re-use of both listed and unlisted buildings. He didn't sell, but he did buy their arguments – and broadly that is how Slough Estates are developing RAE.

The case of the fourth span at Paddington

Quite often the organisation has been told by the Great and the Good that their ideas are commendable but just won't work in practice. This was the case with the so-called fourth span at Paddington. This huge roof at the eastern side of the station is, unlike the other three, not by Brunel but an Edwardian addition designed by another, later Great Western engineer, WY Armstrong, to match and complement the Brunel spans, and rightly sharing their Grade I status. Span 4 has been invisible behind scaffolding for some years; Railtrack and its successor Network Rail wanted to demolish it and redevelop, arguing operational needs but also relishing the funds which would accrue from commercial redevelopment above this part of the station. Westminster city council and English Heritage accepted this argument. But under pressure from SAVE Network Rail have accepted that the development cannot take place until Crossrail is complete, so that the case for demolition is fatally weakened.

Two current battles

Two current battles are very much in progress. One of them, the General Market Building at Smithfield, brings SAVE once more up against the City Corporation, which wants it replaced by an office block. Save argues that, refurbished, it could house a vital and viable mixture of uses, assist the already burgeoning regeneration of the market area, and leave the skyline uncluttered by high-rise.

An even more David and Goliath struggle saw SAVE currently seeking judicial review against the government as a result of its plan to house the new Supreme Court in Middlesex Guildhall, whose superb and



Adam Wilkinson

Save Britain's Heritage

Contact: Adam Wilkinson, secretary

Telephone: 020 7253 3500

email: adam@savebritainheritage.org.uk

www: www.savebritainheritage.org.

thoroughly ergonomic court interiors would be torn out so as to accommodate the Law Lords' preferred informal setting. No other owner of a Grade II* listed building would be allowed to strip out interiors of this quality, argues SAVE. Ministers have adopted this destructive solution in order to avoid the expense of a purpose-designed new building. They are wrecking these interiors to get a supreme court on the cheap. [see more on pages 1 and 11]

SAVE's two-man band is backed by its board of trustees headed by Marcus Binney as president, and by an advisory group including architects, planners, journalists, architectural historians and the odd lawyer. Its independence is bolstered by its not taking regular handouts from either government or English Heritage; and while it has no membership as such it does have "Friends" (800 of them, who each fork out a suggested £25 a year) as well as friends with influence in all sorts of high places. One of them, Griff Rhys Jones, is the guest speaker at a SAVE event on 11 April.

But such events, while useful, are peripheral to its bread-and-butter business of fighting to save all manner of threatened buildings. And the tactics have remained the same, says Adam Wilkinson. "We are small, fast and loud. We often get results because of our complete lack of fear. We know we have nothing to lose" ■

The journalists in that small founding group knew how to use the media effectively. Their approach was to shock and shame. This was after all 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year, and how was Britain celebrating it? By knocking down some of our best old buildings.

Middlesex Guildhall interior One of a series of photos taken in difficult circumstances by Mr James Mortimer, who was allowed little more than an hour to photograph three of the finest Edwardian interiors in England. No time was allowed to even tidy the rooms. But SAVE is thankful they were able to take them at all.



The Old Billingsgate Fish market on the Thames

Age: 32; born 1975.

Circumstances of birth: the exhibition The Destruction of the Country House at the V&A, curated by Roy Strong, Marcus Binney and John Harris, had made a wider public aware of how historic buildings were undervalued and being relentlessly destroyed. Binney and a group of likeminded individuals decided to do something about it.

Biggest successes: (1) Persuading National Trust to take on Calke Abbey (a house where time had stood still) and the National Heritage Memorial Fund to provide funds towards its preservation. (2) Saving and securing the re-use of Billingsgate Fish Market. (3) Saving the listed and unlisted buildings at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, (4) Securing Network Rail's tacit acceptance that the Edwardian fourth span at Paddington Station should be retained and restored.

Biggest disappointments: (1) The destruction of No 1 Poultry. (2) The loss of another splendid City building, the Baltic Exchange. (3) The sale and dispersal of the contents of Mentmore Towers. (4) Loss of many splendid and historically important industrial buildings which in the 1970s and '80s were not considered a significant part of Britain's built heritage.

Frustrations/ worries: (1) Ken Livingston's obsession with tall buildings as a supposed economic regenerator. (2) Suggestions that the Mayor might gain exemption from controls over demolition/redevelopment. (3) A government whose emollient words about built heritage are not matched by effective action.

Present preoccupations: (1) Saving the General Market Building at Smithfield. (2) Saving the interior of Middlesex Guildhall. (3) Campaigning with local residents groups to refocus "Pathfinder" housing programmes in northern England on to refurbishment, not mass demolition.

Working details: A charity run by a board of trustees, assisted by a strong advisory group including architects, planners, journalists, architectural historians and the odd lawyer. President: Marcus Binney; secretary Adam Wilkinson. No membership as such, but a Friends organisation with 800 members who pay a suggested £25 a year. No regular support from government or English Heritage.

Special characteristics: Use of the media and shock tactics to avert loss of valued buildings; commissioning of carefully costed alternative schemes for re-use of threatened buildings.

Last word: "We are small, fast and loud. We often get results because of our complete lack of fear. We know we have nothing to lose".

Skyscrapers and the London skyline – the controversy rumbles on

Court judgements endanger local democracy; **Helen Marcus** reports.

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century published in March, is the first heritage white paper for 40 years. Amid growing concern about London's changing skyline, Britain's 24 world heritage sites, including the Tower of London, Westminster Palace and Greenwich are to be given buffer zones preventing developers from building skyscrapers in the vicinity. In particular it could have an impact on proposed new skyscrapers in Southwark, Victoria, Westminster and Greenwich favoured by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.

The move follows criticism last summer by Unesco, the UN's heritage body, which warned that the UK was failing to protect important London views. Unesco will decide in June whether to put the Tower on a list of endangered heritage sites.

The "Walkie Talkie" Tower

The so-called "Walkie Talkie" Tower by Rafael Vinoly, proposed for 20 Fenchurch Street, symbolises the current clash of interests, pitching English Heritage, Unesco and other cultural and heritage groups against the Mayor, leading architects, developers and the City of London. Approved by the City planners, the scheme was called in by Ruth Kelly last October, acting, it is thought under pressure from Unesco.

CABE, the government's architecture quango has praised the design but Paddy Pugh of English Heritage has described it as "London's ugliest and most oppressive building". English Heritage has called for a veto on new skyscrapers within a so-called "Sky Gateway" between the City of London and Canary Wharf.

Ken Livingstone told the public inquiry into the "Walkie talkie" Tower, which began in March, that planning consent should be granted because it is an "innovative and unique design". Despite the fact that an EH survey a few years ago found widespread public opposition to skyscrapers, CABE's leading lights, Lords Rogers and Foster, claim that this tower has "overwhelming support". They give no indication from whom, apart from themselves, other luminaries of the architectural world, such as Frank Gehry and Eugene Kohn, who have also expressed their support for the building, and the developers who stand to benefit from it. They go on to describe the present skyline as "drab and uneventful"!

Giant towers in Victoria

Another area of contention is in Victoria where there are plans for two giant towers that will loom over Buckingham Palace, part of a seven building revamp of the area around Victoria Station. Mike Hussey of Land Securities is reported to have said that a changing panorama was the price to be paid for improving a run down corner of the West End; the scheme would remove "tired and neglected buildings" of little architectural merit. It is hard to imagine which area of Belgravia is so run down as to require such drastic rebuilding and in any case the assumption that the replacements must be skyscrapers is questionable.

Much is made of the effect of skyscrapers on views. Equally important is the way they change the character of their surroundings, overlooking and wind generation, causing very bad turbulence at ground level. At a time when we are all being encouraged to walk more, is it appropriate to introduce changes which will have a highly detrimental effect on the pedestrian environment? Portland House owned by Land Securities is in text books as an example of such problems, as are conditions in adjoining Cardinal Place.

Mr Hussey is reported as saying that the tall towers were "essential" to achieve density. Essential to whom? What evidence is there to show that anyone apart from profit-driven developers would welcome such increased density? Is policy now to be driven by such motives?

Viewing corridors reduced

Even if Westminster reject the Victoria Towers the decision could be overruled by Mr. Livingstone. The controversial new powers envisaged for the Mayor, who backs such projects and sees skyscrapers as "icons" of a modern city, will enable him to override councils and push through such projects. His draft supplementary planning guidance on strategic views, containing plans to reduce the "viewing corridors" of St. Paul's and the House of Commons, were published with little fanfare in early March. Government Office for London said that ministers were minded to go ahead with them.

The Financial Times pointed out that "developers have been waiting for months for the changes, aware they would suddenly free up patches of central London for towers that would under current regulations, be banned.

Consultative and collaborative?

How does all that fit with the government's commitment, as stated on the Parliamentary website in the introduction to *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century*, to: "create a more consultative and collaborative protection system; maximise opportunities for inclusion and involvement; support sustainable communities by putting the historic environment at the heart of an effective planning system", and "recognise the need to improve the process of designating historic assets by involving the public in deciding what is protected and how."

New Consultation on Tall Buildings

Meanwhile the Government have issued a new consultation, which urges local planning authorities to include specific policies on tall buildings in their development plans. London Forum is supporting societies opposing 15 storey housing blocks along the Grand Union canal in West London. All London Forum members should send in a response: see: www.planningportal.gov.uk/news/?1115314829623 ■

Other changes to London's skyline

- Lots Road twin towers on the Thames, Lady Dido Berkeley's legal challenge to the Minister's decisions to approve these twin towers in Chelsea failed. The development was one of several where recommendations of inquiry Inspectors to refuse planning permission were overruled by the Secretary of State.
- Vauxhall: St. George's Wharf, 50 storey residential tower. The Government's decision to overrule the Inspector's recommendations after the Vauxhall Tower inquiry and grant permission for a building that would harm the setting of the Palace of Westminster is not encouraging.
- Vauxhall Station a 46 storey residential tower
- South Bank: Waterloo: 3 towers up to 460 feet high to replace Elizabeth House near the entrance to Waterloo Station.
- Coin Street Community plan a mixed-use 48 storey tower.
- Blackfriars Bridge: 51 storey tower.

Destruction of Middlesex Guildhall interiors

SAVE has lost its application to secure a reprieve for the grade II* listed Middlesex Guildhall. The judgement, while acknowledging the damage the proposals would cause to an outstanding listed building, said Westminster City Council Planning Committee lawfully decided to approve the proposals on the basis that Westminster City Council did not err in law in accepting that the Supreme Court at this location of national importance.

SAVE'S president Marcus Binney says "No private owner of a Grade II* listed building would be allowed to make such damaging alterations if the building was in good repair and active, beneficial use. The Middlesex Guildhall has been a very busy criminal court since extensive restoration and refurbishment in 1989". The judgement allows the Department of Constitutional affairs to strip out fine original furnishings and woodwork from three courts which English Heritage described as "unsurpassed by any other courtroom of the period in terms of the quality and completeness of their fittings".

Frank Field MP put forward an Early Day Motion (607) to try to save Guildhall. It read: "That this House expresses grave concern about the Government's proposals to destroy the outstanding Edwardian interior of Middlesex Guildhall in order to create a new meeting place for the UK's supreme court; believes that the most challenging task for any body or organisation serious about protecting the very best of the UK's heritage is to ensure the adaptation of existing buildings and furnishings to meet current needs with only the very minimum intervention of the building's historic fabric; recognises that the Middlesex Guildhall was restored and refurbished as recently as 1989; and calls on the Government either to house the supreme court in this building with minimum alterations or bow to the substantial body of informed opinion, both legal and architectural, that believes a new supreme court should be housed in a distinguished new building specifically commissioned for the purpose with the supreme court in the meantime operating in the accommodation used by the law lords."

More information can be found on:
[www.edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMList.aspx](http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMList.aspx)

Travers Report on museums

A key to a creative economy.

At a time when the British Library is threatened with severe budget cuts, a new report, *Museums and Galleries in Britain: Economic, Social and Creative Impacts* by Tony Travers of the London School of Economics, finds that 'the UK's museums and galleries could, with greater capacity to expand and improve, allow this country to be a world leader in creativity and scholarship.'

It finds that Britain's museums and galleries are among the best in the world: 'There is no other country in the world with such a powerful museum and gallery grouping within such a relatively small space'. Seven of the top ten visitor attractions in the UK are museums. The economic benefits of the UK's major museums and galleries are estimated to be £1.5 billion per annum. New museums and galleries have contributed to the economic and social regeneration of industrial cities.

3,000 volunteers and 140,000 'friends' linked to museums make a major contribution to civic engagement. There are over 42 million visits each year to major museums and galleries, more than attended league football matches in 2004-05. Regional museum visits by people from lower socio-economic groups and by black and minority ethnic groups increased by 15.2% and 60% respectively in 2002-04. It concludes that museums and galleries are fulfilling their original functions, while also acting as institutions of learning, mass tourist attractions and civic partners.

But the report also sounds a warning note. Capital expenditure has dropped sharply since 2001-02, the amount spent on museum acquisitions is very small, in some years less than £20 million, and income has not been rising as fast as staff and other inflationary costs. The availability of resources for investment in museums and galleries seems to be unrelated to the needs of the sector.

The report is available from
www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/pr_travers_report.html

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century

The White Paper on the future of the Heritage Protection System, *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century*, was announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, David Lammy on March 8.

The paper sets out a vision of a "unified and simpler" heritage protection system. It claims that it will:

- give more opportunities for public involvement and community engagement;
- be more open, accountable and transparent;
- offer all those with an interest in the historic environment a clearer record of what is protected and why;
- create a more consultative and collaborative protection system;
- maximise opportunities for inclusion and involvement;
- support sustainable communities by putting the historic environment at the heart of an effective planning system.

Inclusion and Involvement

Mr Lammy said:

"We recognise the need to improve the process of designating historic assets by involving the public in deciding what is protected and how. In order to do this we must have a system that is open, accessible and efficient. That is why we will create new Registers of Historic Buildings and Sites of England and Wales to replace existing lists and schedules, and introduce simpler and clearer designation records that will be available to the public online. We will also open up the system by introducing new or improved consultation and appeal processes, and ensure assets are protected when decisions are being made by introducing interim protection."

Heritage Protection for the 21st Century
 ISBN 010 1705721

Open House London 15 – 16 September 2007

Project Manager Jeni Hoskin would be pleased to hear from Societies who have any suggestions for suitable buildings in their area to open during the Capital's architectural festival. Buildings range from historic, pre-fab, Arts and Crafts to modern; from private homes to workspaces to City banks. The guide will be available from mid-August.

Contact Jeni Hoskin on 020 7383 2131 email: jhoskin@openhouse.org.uk

www.openhouse.org.uk

Come to sunny... Neasden?

The real potential of London's historic suburbs
by **Michael Hammerson**.

Tourism is the world's largest industry and a huge factor in the UK's national economy. In 2000 tourists brought £14.9 billion to London – representing 12% of its GDP and supporting 13% of its workforce. 45% of all overseas visitors to the UK visit only London, a high proportion attracted by its history. Once there, they enjoy all the facilities, ancient and modern, which the City has to offer, but it is London's historic character which lures them here.

But where do they actually go once they arrive? There is little detailed analysis of UK tourism revenue, but few venture beyond the prosperous central core, the heavily-advertised traditional historical attractions of the City and the West End. Beyond that lies dreary low-density inter-war and post-war developments which epitomise and indeed reinforce the image of boring, unsustainable suburbia, hiding the fact that a fascinating historic landscape survives here.

London's distinct towns and villages

London is surrounded by numerous historic centres which, before they were swallowed up by the expanding metropolis, were distinct towns and villages set in agricultural countryside. Many still retain their historic village character – Pinner or Highgate for example. Churches, farm buildings, industrial archaeology, country mansions, even ancient woodlands and hedgerows dating back to Saxon times or beyond, still exist in some profusion, as do a wide range of local museums and galleries. Yet this untapped, potentially immensely valuable, asset has so far languished unrecognised and neglected.

Both local authorities and tourism agencies have largely failed to value these historic village cores as a focus of local identity and pride, or to appreciate their potential for social and economic regeneration. Insensitive developments, ill-informed planning policies, inflexible highways regulations and streetscape management policies have contributed to the loss of their character and individuality, as well as many of their historic buildings. Their populations, to a great extent mobile and transitory, mainly regard them as little more than somewhere to come home to at night. Some remain prosperous and desirable places in which to live, while others are in a condition of serious social

and economic decline. All, to a greater or lesser extent, are gradually becoming less sustainable in terms of population density and facilities. The issue is of great concern to local communities, and many examples have been highlighted in, for example, the Evening Standard's Save Our Small Shops campaign.

While the Tourism Pounds pour into central London, there is a desperate need for regeneration in its many declining outer areas.

What can be done?

Surely an excellent way to kick-start the regeneration of declining suburbs would be to develop a Historic London Villages Tourist Trail, encouraging tourists to visit the enormous historical and cultural resource represented by all these villages, and to spend some of their huge tourist revenues in them? All these historic villages were swallowed up as the suburbs grew because they were on the radial rail, bus and underground transport routes which still link them to central London, and which could be a factor in their regeneration, rather than merely a means of conveying their residents to and from their inner-city day jobs.

Local authorities should be helped to develop regeneration policies which will secure the repair and restoration of historic village centres. A day's easy travel by public transport could take tourists around a fascinating and, as yet, little known cultural resource, the development of which could be a catalyst for regeneration. It would spread London's immense tourism revenues beyond the centre, boosting local business and employment; it would open up a new and valuable local educational resource; and it would be a catalyst for reviving civic pride, local identity and community cohesion.

Disused or under-used local historic buildings, particularly those on English Heritage's At Risk register, could be used as hotels. An example of a local authority taking the initiative to use their historic environment for regeneration is the London Borough of Bexley, which is developing a Visitor Strategy to maximise tourism potential; the promotion of Bexley's historic attractions is an integral part of this.

The Hindu Temple in Neasden



“Tourism is the world's largest industry and a huge factor in the UK's national economy. But where do they actually go once they arrive?”

A London Historic Villages Tourist Trail

Such an initiative would be unlikely to achieve a miracle change by itself, without improvements in suburban public transport, higher-density housing in the suburbs served by the villages, and so on. However, by awakening both Londoners and visitors to the fact that the outer London suburbs are not a boring and featureless dormitory for the centre, but an integral part of it and its history, a London Historic Villages Tourist Trail could be the spark which sets off the long-needed regeneration of our suburbs.

A long weekend break in historic Neasden, anyone? ■

Cuts to the British Library

The British Library and the Public Sector Spending Review

Large-scale cuts in funding to the British Library will have a grave impact on London's world-class institution.

The Library has set up a supporter's forum to keep everyone informed and engaged with developments. They have already received many messages of support. They are working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to “assist them to make the best case for the British Library in the current comprehensive spending review. They continue to press our case to the Treasury, but all commentators agree that this will be a tight spending review”.

They have appealed for support: We hope you will visit regularly. If you want to support us please let us know why the British Library is important to you and give us permission to use your message name and organisation to help us make our case. Please email: supporters_forum@bl.uk

Airports Policy – Government faces mounting opposition

In spite of pressure to rethink the Government has stuck to its original expansionist plans in the Aviation White Paper. Update from **HACAN**.

In December the Government published its review of its 2003 Aviation White Paper. The implications are:

- An almost trebling in number of passengers using UK airports by 2030;
- Confirms aim for 3rd runway at Heathrow;
- Consultation on ending of runway alternation
- Economic justification of aviation industry expansion proposals
- Unspecified proposals for an 'Emissions Cost Assessment'.

The 2M group: Local Authorities Win Judicial Review on Night Flights

Opposition is mounting to expansion at Heathrow; the Government will face what HACAN has described as 'the mother of all battles' if it proceeds with any further expansion at Heathrow. Local authorities in West London, together with key local authorities in Berkshire, have formed the 2M group to oppose expansion at Heathrow, named for the 2 million people living under, or close to, the flight paths which the authorities represent. They have launched a High Court Judge has given permission for a judicial review to try and overturn the current night flights regime at Heathrow Airport. It is set to be heard in the High Court in May or June.

Others opposing expansion

- NOTRAG (No Third Runway Action Group)
- The vast majority of the areas MPs
- Local and national environmental groups including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the National Trust
- The Liberal Democrat and Green Parties
- Environmental activists and direct action networks across the UK
- The Mayor of London; Policy 3C.6 states: *"The Mayor strongly supports the Aviation White Paper's conclusion that, based on current evidence, any proposal for additional runway capacity at Heathrow should not be progressed unless the adverse impacts on air quality and noise can be sufficiently mitigated, and public transport access improved. On current evidence, adequate mitigation of these issues and of climate change impacts is not possible, and additional runway capacity at Heathrow is therefore opposed. "Airport operations should also give high priority to sustainability, including... taking*

full account of environmental impacts when making decisions on patterns of aircraft operation."

Timetable

- Summer 2007: Publication of Project Heathrow Study into future air pollution levels around Heathrow.
- Autumn 2007: Consultation on a 3rd runway, 6th terminal and proposals to end runway alternation, the system whereby planes landing over West London switch runways at 3pm to allow residents a half day's peace and quiet. The Government wants to end this in order to make fuller use of the existing runways. It could eventually mean residents having a plane landing noise virtually throughout the day
- Winter 2007: BAA expected to move towards a Public Inquiry into a 2nd runway at Stansted.
- March 2008: Terminal 5 set to open at Heathrow. (Potential doubling of the flight numbers: 720,000 flights a year, up from 473,000 in 2005; the Government cap was 480,000)
- Late 2008: BAA moves towards Public Inquiry into 3rd runway at Heathrow?

For more information see www.airportwatch.org.uk or www.hacan.org.uk

Enforcement Guidance

The Best Practice Guidance Note on Listed Building Prosecutions seeks to increase awareness of councils' powers. It is intended to help local authorities take enforcement action against those who ignore or flout the rules protecting historic buildings. The Oxford Brookes Study in 2004 showed that many local authorities do not have enough heritage cases for a dedicated heritage enforcement officer and that planning lawyers may also not have a specific expertise in heritage cases, resulting in inconsistency in prosecution practice. The guidance can be found at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504932

Interesting planning appeal cases

Hambleton District Council's development control committee have succeeded in enforcing a demolition order on a five bedroom house in Ingleby Arncliffe - a village near the western edge of the North York Moors National Park. The owner's appeal was dismissed by a planning inspector, who agreed with the council that the house was "dominant visually, intrusive by virtue of its height, bulk and colour" and "not in keeping with the general character of this part of Ingleby Arncliffe". The developer had been through three applications, three site visits and two appeals and had been refused on each occasion. He persisted with the building, ignoring stop notices, and then applied for retrospective permission. Geoff Ellis, Chairman of the development control committee said "This sends out a clear message to all developers – we will take action when properties are built without permission"

Wigan Council took enforcement action after it discovered that developers had built a block of flats in a luxury housing development more than one and a half metres higher than permitted. Alternative proposals to alter the structure within the same overall height were rejected by the planning committee and both decisions have now been upheld on appeal. The inspector said that it made the development "incongruously conspicuous" and "materially harmful to the character and appearance of the area."

Councillor John O'Neill, chairman of the planning committee, said: "We are delighted that the inspector has supported our stance on an important point of principle. Developers cannot simply ride roughshod over the wishes of local authorities and the communities they represent." The block is to be demolished. For more details, see www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1115314755752.html

newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

London Plan: Examination in public

Further written evidence on the final list of subjects published by the Panel must be submitted by mid-May. London Forum trustees will be participating in the discussions with the Panel of Inspectors in June on key topics. We have been seeking more coverage for transport, design, views protection, Blue Ribbon policies and quality of life. Comments will be sought from members on some of the questions the Inspectors pose. Details of the of the alterations and examination for the London Plan are on the GLA web site at www.london.gov.uk/london-plan-eip/index.jsp

Heritage Link on English Heritage funding

In her Chairman's review, Anthea Case of Heritage Link drew attention to the extraordinary statement, in the Government's Response to the Select Committee's Report on Protecting and Preserving the Heritage, that English Heritage "was funded at a level sufficient for it to discharge its responsibilities and to deliver to a high standard". This is so clearly inconsistent with the evidence submitted to the Inquiry that Heritage Link have written protesting directly to the Secretary of State.

GLA Heritage Diversity Task Force

The Greater London Authority has launched the Heritage Diversity Task Force, which will work across London's cultural sector to 'embed cultural diversity' in the capital's heritage infrastructure. It will build on the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission for African and Asian Heritage. Chaired by Clara Arokiasamy, Deputy Director of Operations, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Task Force and its sub-committees will focus on five key themes over the next two years, reporting on best practice. The key themes are: Diversifying collections; Governance, Equalities Strategy and Workforce Diversification; Sustaining BME heritage; Diversifying Audiences and Equitable Partnerships; and Heritage and Education. Further details at: www.mlalondon.org.uk/news/index.cfm?ArticleID=1205&NavigationID=5

CABE guide to the identity of the Thames

In 2005, CABE were asked to lead on a project on the identity and character of the Thames Gateway. In November 2006 it published a *Guide to the Future Identity of the Thames Gateway*. Saying that the Thames Gateway needs a strong identity to realise its potential and attract investment, but that there is a substantial gap between the Gateway economy and the rest of the south east and negative perceptions of the region persist. London needs to hold its own in a global market and the Gateway needs to move into a better position to support this. For further information visit <http://cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1569>

Development plan documents not up to scratch

Communities Secretary of State Ruth Kelly has criticised the standard of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and complained of planning authority delays in preparing new local plans. See www.planningportal.gov.uk/news/?1115314829613

Green Belt Statistics

Local Planning Authority Green Belt Statistics for England have been published and can be studied on www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/2854/5532

Planning Aid offers free professional advice

Planning Aid England is a national service that provides free professional town planning advice for those who cannot afford professional fees including advice on urban design and conservation matters. Anyone can access 15 minutes of telephone advice, whilst eligible cases may be allocated a volunteer chartered planner to assist them. The service also undertakes community planning projects, aimed at hard-to-engage groups, particularly in areas with high deprivation indices. These vary from providing input into regional spatial strategies to localised initiatives such as place-checks. The service also delivers education and capacity building programmes for local communities, some of which have had a specific design and heritage focus. For more information and contact details, see the Planning Aid web site at www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk. The national helpline number is 0121 693 1201.

Chairmanship of English Heritage

Meanwhile DCMS is looking for a new Chairman of English Heritage. The two shortlisted candidates were Lady Cobham, currently Chair of The British Casino Association, and Lord Marland, Conservative Party Treasurer. This means that Sir Neil Cossons may stay as acting Chair past his official retirement date of 31st. It is regrettable that DCMS should allow this situation to arise at such a sensitive time, with the Comprehensive Spending Review and Heritage White Paper imminent.

Review on Future of Volunteering

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering is due to present its findings in autumn 2007. It asks if volunteering means the same to everyone? Should we expect people from all cultures and backgrounds to volunteer? Are government initiatives in the sector helping or hindering? To contribute to the inquiry, evidence forms can be obtained from www.volcomm.org.uk or by writing to Commission on the Future of Volunteering, c/o Meta Zimmeck, Volunteering England, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints St, London N1 9RL. The closing date for comments is the end of May 2007

Standard Planning Application Form (1APP)

From October 2007 the National Standard Planning Application Form (1APP) will become the only official method of submitting a planning application for most types of consent (except for Minerals consent and building control applications) for all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England, as part of Government proposals to make the planning system simpler, faster and more certain. At present each LPA produces its own planning application forms which differ in style, content and the information required.

A phased implementation between February 2007 and September 2007 is proposed, allowing LPAs to trial the new application service. In addition, copies of the "migration toolkit" (i.e. how to make the changeover!) will be distributed to LPAs shortly.

newsbriefs

It will be available electronically on the Planning Portal as well as optionally through local authority websites, and also in hard copy from LPAs. It will cover Householder Applications, Planning Permissions, Listed Building consent, Conservation Area consent, Tree Applications (inc. Tree Preservation Orders and Trees in Conservation Areas) and Advertisement consent.

Historic Environment Champions

English Heritage are encouraging all local authorities to appoint one Member as a "Historic Environment Champion", to promote heritage and historic environment issues and to press for them to be an integral element of planning and other policies. There is a list of local authorities who have appointed HECs. Reports suggest that their effectiveness depends entirely on the dynamism, interest and commitment of the individual. If you have heritage and historic environment issues, you should ask your representative to take them up for you, and urge your borough to appoint one if it has none. The current (February 2007) list will be sent out in the next London Forum email bulletin.

Casinos

The furore over the Lords vote against the proposals in March centred on plans for Manchester. Plans for sixteen smaller casinos around the UK may have to be shelved.

In London a large casino had been planned for Newham and a smaller one in Luton. The Empire cinema building in Leicester Square is due to open in May as London's largest casino with capacity for 1,700 people. It will be the eighth casino in the capital run by London Clubs International.

Enthusiasm by DCMS for casinos and all-night opening of pubs may bring more problems for some communities and the effects will be monitored and further Assembly scrutinies sought when necessary.

Petitioning the Government

The anti-road pricing lobby has certainly given a high profile to the government's website for allowing ordinary people to set up their own. Others have been set up to stop the Housing Market Renewal / Pathfinder / Housing Demolition / Community Destruction programme, and on Funding for repairs to Church Building. See on [www](http://petitions.pm.gov.uk) <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk>

Green light for home energy improvements

Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly today unveiled plans to slash planning red tape to make it easier for people to put green technology – like solar panels – on their homes and play their part in tackling climate change.

Devolution to Local Partnerships in England

For the first time, every area in England now has its own agreement on local priorities, individually negotiated and agreed with central government. These agreements set out what councils and key partners will deliver for local people and how they will collectively spend public money to do this.

Manual for Streets

The Manual for Streets is a joint publication produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Communities and Local Government. It is intended to inform the design, construction, adoption and maintenance of new residential streets, and is also applicable to existing residential streets subject to re-design. It aims to encourage a more collaborative approach between design professions and other stakeholders with people thinking creatively about their various roles in the design process:

- build and strengthen communities;
- balance the needs of all users;
- form part of a well-connected network;
- create safe and attractive places which have their own identity;
- are cost-effective to construct and maintain.

Download the pdf [www](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1509196) www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1509196

The Planning White Paper

Latest information is that this important paper – now expected to be more of a Green Paper than a White paper, following heavy objections and lobbying from the Civic Trust and the Coalition of national amenity and environmental groups formed to fight the Barker proposals, of which it is a member – will be published on May 16th, having been delayed until after the local elections. Following its release, the coalition's campaign will go into its second, more public phase, including further lobbying and the promoting of local days of action against what is still regarded as a document which will pose a major threat to local democracy. It is essential that the members and grass roots of all these organisations also lobby their MPs strongly and give the campaign maximum publicity among their members, the wider public and their local press. Civic Societies, including Forum members, are strongly urged to log onto the websites of the Civic Trust ([www](http://www.civictrust.org.uk) www.civictrust.org.uk, click on Policy and Campaigns) and the Coalition ([www](http://www.planningdisaster.org.uk) www.planningdisaster.org.uk) and participate as actively as they can. We cannot sufficiently emphasise the importance which is attached to all Forum members playing their role in securing changes to proposals which will drastically change the balance of the planning system in favour of development ■

Recent submissions by the London Forum

The London Plan – further alterations

The submission by the London Forum to the London Plan Further Alterations deposit draft contained over 200 observations in 25 pages. The full response can be sent to you as a PDF version 235kb, a WORD version 301kb or a WordPerfect (original) at 174kb. You can search any of them for words and references that are of interest to your group.

Additional powers and responsibilities for the Mayor and Assembly

An electronic copy of the Forum's response to a consultation paper on changes to the Mayor of London's order 2000 is available on request ■

George Arthur Parish (1929–2006)

Courteous, knowledgeable and gently persuasive, his personal contributions always serious and to the point and spiced with delicate and ironic humour. He will be greatly missed.

We record with great sadness the death of George Parish, Vice-Chairman of Croydon Society and a long-term member of London Forum's Executive Committee.

George brought to these roles the experience of a professional career with the former London County Council, and its successor the Greater London Council, during the years when their housing and architectural achievements were at their peak. His colleagues included Robert Matthews and Leslie Martin, architects of the Royal Festival Hall and many housing schemes; and Edward Hollamby, owner of Red House, Bexleyheath, prior to its acquisition by the National Trust, another London Forum stalwart.

George and his wife Barbara were early residents of Park Hill, known in those days as Park Hill Village, the title indicating community aspirations which he shared but were not to be realized.

George's contribution to the Croydon Society was outstanding and he was able to draw on his considerable experience of planning and urban design matters. A Committee member from 1990, he became Vice-Chairman in 1997. His contribution was principally in the field of Planning and Urban Design, making representations to the Council and to Public Inquiries both on individual cases and on successive Development Plans. He was an influential member of the Mid-Croydon Conservation Area Advisory Panel. In 2004 he took over as editor of Croydon Focus which flourished under his leadership

After his retirement from the GLC due to its abolition in 1986 by the government of the day, George was an invaluable member of the London Forum Executive Committee. He was on the panel for the Walter Bor media awards. His column for **newsforum**, "Round the Societies" was a popular feature, the latest version being written by him shortly before his death and circulated shortly afterwards.

George was invariably courteous and gently persuasive, his personal contributions always serious and to the point and spiced with delicate and ironic humour. He will be greatly missed ■

For information about the London Forum contact:

Peter Eversden Chairman
London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street,
London EC1M 6EJ
Telephone: 020 7250 0606
email: chairman@londonforum.org.uk

Haydn Mylchreest Membership Secretary
email: membership@londonforum.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 1093134

Round the Societies

Haydn Mylchreest, London Forum's new membership secretary, has very kindly agreed to take on the 'Round the Societies' column. Please send all societies' newsletters and other periodic publications and event information to him in future. There is no need to send a copy of those also to the London Forum office at Cowcross Street. Email bulletins will continue to be issued to the appointed contact in our member organisations and those will include news from societies that others may need to know before the next publication of our newsletter. Publications, queries and other important news should be sent to:

Haydn Mylchreest

45 Riverside Court, Nine Elms Lane, London SW8 5BY
or by email to membership@londonforum.org.uk
Haydn can be contacted also by telephone on 020 7720 2429

The Walter Bor Media Awards 2007 advance notice

These awards were set up in 1998 in honour of our founder president to encourage our member societies to communicate and promote their work more effectively; we hope even more societies will participate. You will be receiving full details in May. The 5 categories will be:

- 1 – Newsletters
- 2 – Annual Reports
- 3 – Other Printed Publications e.g. membership brochures guides, histories, town trails, posters etc
- 4 – Websites
- 5 – Media Impact to show effective use of outside media to promote activities

The deadline for entries will be in September and judging and presentation of awards in November.

Marin Harvey ■

newsforum

Editorial team Michael Hammerson, Helen Marcus, Tony Aldous
Design Ross Shaw
Print Express Printing. Telephone: 01733 230 800
Published by the London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street,
London EC1M 6EJ. Telephone: 020 7250 0606

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

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