

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
www.londonforum.org.uk

In this issue

Spotlight on
Alan Baxter Page 8

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Spotlight on the London Forum | 9 The Thames Tideway Tunnel | concerns to note |
| 3 London Forum AGM -celebrating 21 years | 10 News from the Mayor and GLA | 16 Civic Society Initiative |
| 5 Walter Bor Media Awards | 12 Planning issues | |
| 6 Spotlight on Alan Baxter | 13 Heathrow Update | |
| 8 The British Museum | 14 Round the Societies | |
| | 15 News briefs: key issues and | |

Celebrating London Forum

Spotlight on The London Forum

Twenty-one years old and fighting as hard as ever for a better London

By **Tony Aldous**

At first sight, there might seem something slightly indecent, almost incestuous, in London Forum's newsletter carrying a Spotlight on the Forum itself. But when the occasion is the Forum's 21st birthday, and the writer is a semi-detached, more or less objective observer, this may be forgiven.

The Forum came into being in 1998, the main thrust being that abolition of the GLC had left London, alone among Europe's capital cities, without a democratically elected strategic planning authority. There was also encouragement from the Civic Trust which was encouraging civic societies to form federations to represent their interests regionally.

That it made its mark as swiftly and strongly as it did was in large measure due to its energetic founder chairman Marion Harvey, and its founder president, the eminent architect planner Walter Bor. I got involved when Marion, improbably, asked me to be Forum's first vice-president, which I soon detected meant not just a name on headed notepaper but an odd-job man. The first odd job soon followed, Walter Bor being temporarily hospitalised, it fell to the founder vice president to chair the inaugural meeting.

One of the early successes was an ambitious conference Tale of Two Cities, in which planners from Paris's regional planning authority, explained how it worked and those attending were able to contrast it with the vacuum that GLC abolition had left in strategic planning. During this period we established firm links and cordial relations with the advisory body that was meant to fill the gap,

LPAC – the London Planning Advisory Committee. This rested on the understanding that, though they might disagree on some points, basic objectives – the enhancement of London as a place to live, work and spend leisure time – were the same and they could respect each other's professionalism.

London Forum's current chairman Peter Eversden makes the point that relations with the GLA have been much helped by the fact that some LPAC officers hold key positions at the GLA – for instance, Giles Dolphin, head of development control decisions. Peter also attests to his predecessor's methods of recruitment. Having taken early retirement after a career in IT, he offered to put his skills at the Forum's disposal. Marion said fine, but she thought he ought to be on the executive. He agreed and found at his first meeting that he was being nominated as honorary secretary.

Though very much operating on a shoestring, London Forum impressed by its thoroughness and by having a number of professionals on board. These included several transport and town planners belonging to a ginger group called LATA, the London Amenity and Transport Association – people such as architect Harley Sherlock, journalists-turned-consultants Judy Hillman and Terence Bendixson, and others who knew and were known in the relevant corridors of power. It also helped to have the civil servant who had written a key planning policy guidance note, Michael Bach, hovering helpfully in the background. LATA later decided to merge with London Forum, bringing with it a useful dowry.

*Celebrating
London
Forum's
21 years of
achievement
and keeping
you up to date
with the latest
news and
developments
in London*



Marion Harvey

One early battle was to protect the organisation's very identity. First, central government thought the name London Forum would suit a body it planned to set up. The Forum argued that all London MPs and local authorities received our newsletter and identified the name with us. For the Department of the Environment to use it would cause immense confusion. The DOE backed down. Then Lord Archer thought he would establish a London Forum of his own. We protested, and a delegation went to see him in his Albert Embankment penthouse. He promised to use another name, but then curiously seems to have forgotten, which had the odd result of a firm of solicitors urging us to accept money he had received as speaking fees. Perhaps prudently, we didn't.

Peter Eversden took over from Marion Harvey in 2001, but although she now spends most of her time in Shropshire rather than Islington, the Forum has not lost her formidable energy. While careful not to get in Peter's way on policy issues, she has, with a group of her fellow vice-presidents, busied herself with important Forum projects like the Walter Bor Media Awards (now in their fifth round and tuned increasingly to the electronic age), and, if sponsorship can be found, a London Forum Book Award to mark out the best fiction and non-fiction books which celebrate our city.

That leaves chairman and Policy Committee battling to keep abreast of a flood of planning policies coming out of City hall and Whitehall. Peter has, by his steadfast attendances and pertinent interventions at the London Plan examination in public and key appeal inquiries, ensured that the Forum is known and respected, even though it is often in the position of appearing to win the argument but seeing the changes it urged slip from its grasp. It grates that the Forum can have an inquiry inspector who has heard all the evidence agree with its arguments and dismiss an appeal, only for the Secretary of State, on the advice of an anonymous civil servant, to overturn the inspector's recommendation.

As with the previous mayor Ken Livingstone, our chairman finds Boris Johnson's performance on planning

London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Contact: Peter Eversden: Chairman

Telephone: 020 7250 0606.

email: chairman@londonforum.org.uk

web-site: www.londonforum.org.uk

Last word: faced with a welter of new strategies the Forum and its members will unite to demand sustainable development and improved quality of life for all

"good in parts" but worryingly inconsistent. "Too often he seems to be ignoring his own policies." This is true of tall buildings, some of which seriously threaten the status of two of London's World Heritage Sites, Palace of Westminster and Tower of London. He points out that, whereas the Kew Gardens WHS has a very good management plan, scandalously neither the Westminster nor the Tower sites have one at all.

The Forum is also gravely concerned about housing densities, with some schemes approved by Boris breaching his own maximum levels. Cramping people into sub-standard "affordable" housing with small rooms, windowless corridors, and inadequate play space could, in pursuit of housing numbers simply be stoking up future social problems. We are in danger of creating the first slums of the 21st century.

But Peter, whose home patch and local involvement have since the 1970s been in Chiswick, is in no danger of forgetting that the majority of London Forum member societies are not in central or even inner London. Like the majority of Londoners, they are based in the suburbs – and the suburbs, though we celebrate and cherish them, are by no means immune to 21st century troubles. So Peter's appointment, on a personal rather than representative basis, to the GLA's Outer London Commission, was most appropriate and welcome. For most of the GLA's short life, its emphasis in planning has been on the centre. The suburbs now need help, and they need understanding. Who understands them better than London Forum's member societies? ■

Profile

Age 21, born 1988

Circumstances of birth: abolition of the GLC had left London as the only capital in Europe without its own city government - and without democratically controlled strategic planning. At the same time the Civic Trust was encouraging amenity societies to form regional umbrella bodies

Biggest successes: (1) Getting established as the representative body for amenity societies across London and accepted as such by central and local government and business organisations such as London First. (2) Defending the name "London Forum," which both Whitehall and Lord Archer wanted to use. (3) Using regular surveys of member societies to ensure that the Forum really represented their aims and wishes. (4) Through the quality of its written comments on the GLA's London Plan, getting selected to argue its case before the inspectors and having them adopt some of its amendments and quote its supporting arguments.

Biggest disappointments/ frustrations:

(1) Despite generous support from societies such as Gidea Park, Forum has never attained real financial security; and the burden of running it has always fallen on too few shoulders. (2) Forum's arguments in favour of giving London Assembly a more powerful role fell on deaf ears. (3) After convincing a planning inspector to refuse a bad development, seeing the Secretary of State overturn that recommendation. (4) Seeing successive Mayors of London disregard their own policies on, for instance, tall buildings and over-development.

Present preoccupations: (1) Worries about replacement of PPGs (planning policy guidance notes) with much less firm and specific PPSs (planning policy statements). (2) Worries about government's and London mayor's failure to protect World Heritage Sites

Working details:

Membership: 130 amenity societies large and small across London plus 45 non-voting associate members

Committee structure: Executive Committee; Policy & Transport Committee

Annual subscription: sliding scale according to societies' membership

Publications: News Forum, electronic bulletin, numerous reports

Activities: meetings to brief members on, for instance, changes in planning system; media awards to celebrate and encourage societies' use of the media;

Special characteristics: London Forum exists to represent its members on pan-London issues and to keep them informed of changes. Its activities rest on a continuous two-way dialogue with its members. ■

Celebrating in style

Following its AGM this year, London Forum celebrated its 21st Birthday with a splendid party

Marion Harvey reports

The Forum celebrated its 21st Birthday in style, attracting well over a hundred guests. Joining members and associates of the Forum were representatives from London-wide and national organisations including Paddy Pugh, the Director of Planning and Development for English Heritage London Region, Steve Whitbread (CPRE London branch), and Tony Burton (formerly of the National Trust) who is leading the Civic Society initiative.

We received congratulations and warm good wishes from Mayor Boris Johnson, Simon Hughes MP, Lord Smith of Finsbury, and from London Assembly members Jeanette Arnold, Len Duval Jennifer Jones as well as GLA officers. All sent their regrets at being unable to join us.

The speakers

Introducing the speakers, Tony Aldous spoke of the Forum's achievements, commenting that we were 'London Societies at large'.

He singled out Joyce Leicester, of Gidea Park for the contribution she and her late husband Laurence, had made. They supported the Forum from the start, persuading Gidea Society members to raise £300 - and sometimes more - annually to help fund it. Laurence was an invaluable member of the Executive Committee until 2002 and has left us a lasting legacy of outstanding archives of all our meetings in that period.

Tony also drew attention to the splendid exhibition highlighting the Forum's 21 years of achievement designed and made by Tom Ball.

Sir Richard MacCormac, our distinguished president, showed tremendous support in making a huge effort to join us as he already had a prior engagement at the Royal Academy. He spoke of his admiration for the effective energy of Marion Harvey in developing the Forum and of its being continued so successfully by Peter Eversden.

Darren Johnson, chair of the Assembly and leader of the Green Party, vividly recalled how Marion Harvey bombarded the Mayor and newly elected Assembly members in July 2000, showing the strength of the Forum as the grass roots voice for London (over 120 Societies and 40 Associates). This led to him inviting Marion to represent the Forum when he became chair of the Mayor's Policy Commission for the Environment. He went on to say how much Peter Eversden had continued to increase the Forum's role, for example being invited to sit on the Mayor's Policy Commission for outer London.

Guest of honour

Tony Aldous then introduced our Guest of honour, invaluable Forum friend and benefactor, Alan Baxter (see Spotlight page 6). Alan generously commented that he considered that the Forum had still not received due recognition and urged us to take on the new challenges ahead.

Presentations

A presentation was made to Alan by Peter Eversden and Marion Harvey on behalf of the Forum as a token of our appreciation. Peter Eversden was also recognised for his outstanding contribution.

Above all this was a party in a wonderful ambience, with delicious food, wine and fellowship.

Warmest thanks must go to the working party, led by Marion Harvey, who organised it: Lee Abbott, Maryse and Martin Jones. There was help also from Moira Forrester and Helen Marcus, and the wonderful assistants Lee Abbott brought in from Bexley.

A great night with great support from ex London Amenity and Transport Association (Lata, who merged with us in 1994).

The last word

Steve Whitbread of CPRE, whose desk is opposite the Forum's in Alan Baxter's offices, gave an appreciative verdict:

"Members really respect need and appreciate what you are doing"

What better tribute than that? ■

Below: Alan Baxter addressing the audience with Sir Richard MacCormac on his right and Tony Aldous on his left



Top: Alan Baxter
Middle: Sir Richard MacCormac, London Forum President,
Above: Peter Eversden London Forum Chairman



London Forum celebrates

Pictures by Tom Ball



*The 21st
birthday
party*



Top left: Marion Harvey making a presentation to Alan Baxter with. L.to r, Peter Eversden, Sir Richard MacCormac and Tony Aldous

Top right: The cake

Left: Darren Johnson, chair of the London Assembly, addressing the audience, with Tony Aldous

Below: The buffet spread

*The Walter Bor
Media Awards*



Right Peter Murray, Chairman of the judging panel

Below: The audience of Society members at The Gallery



Presentation of the 2009 Walter Bor Media Awards

by Marion Harvey

It is ten years since we set up The London Forum Print Awards, which in 2001 became The Walter Bor Media Awards, in honour of our founder President who was keen to promote Society publications and networking.

I think its significant that this year Peter Murray, our distinguished chairman of the judging panel, could comment on the ever-rising and often professional standard of society publications, and particularly remarked on the increase in both quality and quantity of website entries. The wide divergence of views among the judges reflected the general high standards.

An innovation to our panel of judges this year was the inclusion of a representative from last year's prize-winning Society Wandsworth,

Publications

The publications category ranged from membership leaflets, local cards, annual reports to books on the local area, such as Newington Green's "The Village that Changed the World" and the Blackheath Society's "Guardians of the Heath". It was so diverse that Peter Murray recommend we put books in a separate category in future.

Peter Farrow drew attention to the wide disparity of resources among societies, a number having an office and paid administrator and others raising money through advertising in a widely circulated and frequently published paper.

Peter Murray praised our own newsforum, particularly for changing the front page to focus on news stories with more eye-catching headlines, rather than a Chairmans' Report, and recommended this to all societies. He noted that active sentences, as in "Society stops building demolition" are much more interesting than too much use of the passive tense: "building demolition is stopped by society"

Websites

Judy Hillman recommended looking at Societies' websites, which she found illuminating, showing importance of colour, use of photos and breaking up text and of course updating events. Even though the quality of design varies, this is a category that has come on in leaps and bounds in recent years. Most of the navigation is pretty good, and most of the sites are simple to get around

and find what you want. Perhaps one of the biggest problems, and very understandable in voluntary societies, is maintenance and the need to keep up to date.

Media impact

Enfield Society won the Award for the category Media impact, for their regular column in the local press. There were few entries in this category but we discovered this was not because there are few major campaigns in London but because societies were too busy campaigning to spare the time to enter! We were therefore delighted that two of them did make time to come to the meeting and update us on progress.

News of Camden Civic Society's campaign over the British Museum, (see page 8) and the Tottenham Society versus Tottenham Hotspur developments made fascinating listening.

Support from SAVE

Both societies are getting support from SAVE whose Secretary William Palin rounded off a very interesting evening with slides on some of SAVE's recent campaigns, focusing on London.

General high quality

Judges would like to congratulate all those who entered. The quality was generally very high this year and there were instances where the judges found it very hard to decide – but their task was very enjoyable - fascinating to find out what everyone is up to.

Our warmest thanks go to Judy Hillman, urban affairs writer (a London Forum Vice-President), William Palin, Secretary of SAVE, Oliver Guy, freelance journalist, and

Peter Farrow editor of the Wandsworth Society's Newsletter.

Special thanks to Tom Ball, for designing the Forum Award certificates, and finally warmest appreciation to Dame Jennifer Jenkins, our patron, who presented them.

Special Award to Tony Aldous

We were delighted to present a Special Award to Founder vice-president Tony Aldous, for many years the News Forum editor. He created Spotlight in 1994 and personally interviewed a wide range of Societies and Associates. His farewell Spotlight on the front page of this issue is the London Forum itself.

We would like to thank all those Societies who submitted entries, and who supported the awards evening. Peter Eversden thanked all those involved, particularly Peter Murray for chairing the Judges, and the speakers for their very interesting talks. ■

Below: Dame Jennifer Jenkins making the award to Enfield Society representative

Bottom: The line up of award winners with Dame Jennifer



Spotlight on Alan Baxter Associates

Lateral thinking and lodgers at 75 Cowcross Street

by **Tony Aldous**

Number 70 Cowcross Street, which has been London Forum's home since 1996, is unique. It provides shelter for more than 50 organisations concerned with the built environment, ranging from ABA itself, 130-strong, through architectural and town planning practices, to quite small and shoe-string bodies like London Forum, SAVE and the Twentieth Century Society. It offers them not only a roof over their heads but a networking opportunity par excellence, and a lively challenge to engage in creative lateral thinking.

Looking wider and further

For though their genial landlord Alan Baxter himself graduated from Bristol University as a civil engineer, the practice he established in 1974 has always looked wider and further than just engineering. It includes people with degrees in not just engineering but architecture, landscape design, town planning, social sciences, even architectural history. "Multidisciplinary" might be the way to describe it, except that Alan himself prefers to say "undisciplined"! "They're not allowed to say what discipline they're from," he says. They're all lateral thinking members of a team.

The practice's approach follows from that. Rather than saying: "Here is the site; how do we make a building stand up on it?"; ABA's approach is more to say, "Why is this site as it is? Let us understand its existing and historical context, and try to design a building that fits in with it." But this at first sight almost quixotic approach evidently pays off: ABA has grown steadily and is currently involved in some 500 projects. For thinking wider and deeper can help clients avoid belated and expensive complications. For instance, at Royal Mint Square near the Tower of London, ABA were able to point out to the GLC of all people that under this site lay a C15 graveyard it didn't know about.

The firm moved into an 1870s building at 14-16 Cowcross Street in 1979. The area was down at heel and Alan's accountants advised strongly against his buying it, but his gut instinct proved right. As the firm grew, he sought overflow space and found it across the road at No 75 – a 1925 clear span office block built for Thomas Cook with, behind it, a yard and a warehouse

70 Cowcross Street is unique. It offers not only a roof over their heads but a networking opportunity par excellence, and a lively challenge to engage in creative lateral thinking.

used for storing trunks. But ABA's landlord was a developer who bought in the 1980s property boom and went bust in the ensuing slump. Faced with leaking roofs and very absentee successor landlords, they decided the only solution was to buy the building.

It was, of course, too big for the practice alone, so Alan hit on the idea of taking lodgers. No 75 Cowcross Street is now owned by a trust which charges ABA and other commercially viable lodgers an economic rent, allowing others space on its large open-plan floors at what it thinks they can afford – which, in the case of London Forum and a number of other ill-heeled organisations, is zero. Surpluses from rents go to educational and research projects. There are no subsidies for ABA or other major lodgers – "because they'd get soft", says Alan.

The Gallery

Another key ingredient of the Cowcross Street story is The Gallery. When ABA took control of No 75, the basement was a mess. Clearing it out and opening it up with a new outside entrance from the south created a space which could be used for meetings, exhibitions and other activities. London forum held meetings there for its members societies well before it moved in as a "lodger"; as well as lodgers, some 30 or 40 outside organisations use the space for meetings. Evening use, by insiders and outsiders, is important, says Alan. Most office buildings are underused because they go dead at 5 or 6 o'clock. And three times a week ABA's own staff and guests meet for

lunch, networking and discussion. "We serve more lunches than many restaurants," he says. (I can vouch for the food being excellent!)

The wisdom of investing in a then-down-at-heel Cowcross Street is now very apparent. This area of Clerkenwell, close to Farringdon tube station, has boomed, with both backland redevelopment and conversion of empty buildings into offices with café and restaurant use at ground floor level. And the future promises an even bigger boom. Farringdon station is currently being rebuilt and extended to be the hub at which Thameslink – now being expanded at a cost of £5.5bn – will connect with the £16bn Crossrail scheme. This will make it the best connected hub for access to airports, with direct connections to Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton and possibly Stansted. A lot of people will be using Farringdon, and not all of them simply changing trains. Very appropriate, then, that the GLA should have commissioned ABA to look into the impact on the Farringdon area of all this activity.

A master plan for London Bridge station

The later stages of Thameslink, due for completion in 2015, include a radical rebuilding of London Bridge station. The master plan for this is ABA's and Alan counts it as one of the firm's major successes. Other, earlier successes include its part in Crown Reach, architect Nicholas Lacey's housing development near Vauxhall Bridge which broke fresh ground by making full use of river views; and New Concordia Wharf, a mixed use warehouse conversion downstream from Tower Bridge, which understood and exploited the essential character of this C19 building.

One pleasing and unexpected project ABA is currently supporting is the Euston Arch Trust. After the destruction of the classical arch which formed the entrance to the old 19C Euston station, the stones were stored for some time by the demolition contractor. Later they disappeared and until recently had been thought lost beyond recall. But in clearing a section of an East London canal recently, British Waterways discovered them. The Trust – now a Cowcross Street lodger – aims to re-erect the arch at Euston, for which an opportunity

Alan Baxter & Associates

Contacts

Tel: 020 7250 1555 ;

email: aba@alanbaxter.co.uk

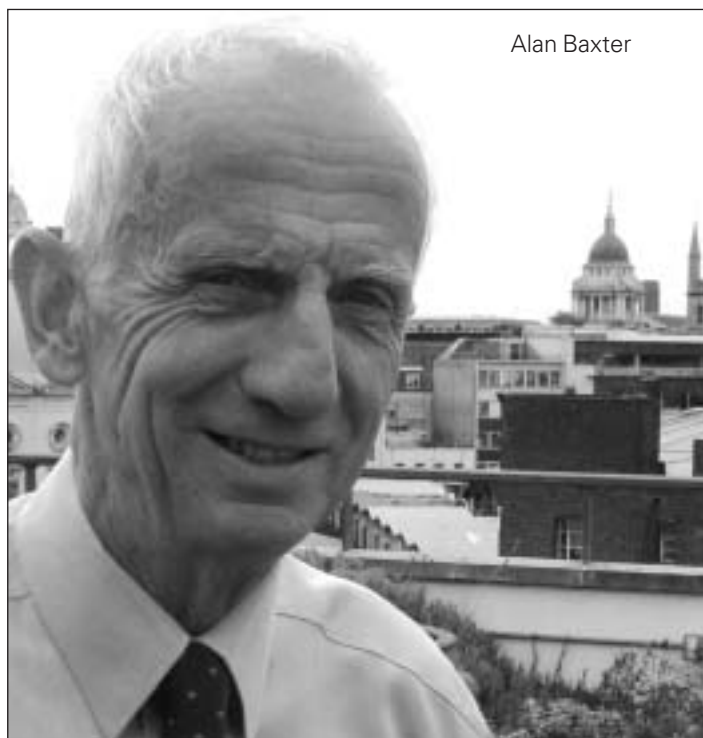
website: www.alanbaxter.co.uk

More clients, public and private, are giving the firm work because they see its broader, lateral thinking approach works.

should occur with the proposed redevelopment of the existing, 1960s station.

Not everything ABA touches is a success. As part of the renaissance of Cowcross Street, the firm and a number of other property owners put together a pot of money, including government grants, to repave the street in a seemingly, civilised fashion using (expensive, absolutely right) York stone slabs. It looked splendid. Then came the "statutory undertakers," ripped it all up to sort out their pipes or cables, resurfaced in tacky tarmac, and heaved the stone slabs into skips. What a waste! And how blind to real quality and local character! The culprits demonstrably showed a total lack of any wider vision beyond the narrowly-defined job in hand.

This sad affair is, says Alan Baxter, an example of "the inadequacy of much present-day city management." But blinkered thinking is not a trap ABA is likely to fall into. The good news is that more and more clients, public and private, are giving the firm work because they see its broader, lateral thinking approach works. Vivat ABA! ■



Alan Baxter

Profile

Age 35, born 1974

Circumstances of birth: Alan Baxter, having worked in someone else's engineering practice for several years, thought it was "time for change"

Biggest successes: (1) playing key part in numerous developments including (a) Royal Mint Square, redevelopment working with historic context; (b) Crown Reach, a Thameside building fully exploiting riverside location; (c) New Concordia Wharf, conversion of warehouse to mixed use keeping character of the building. (2) Use of spare space in its Cowcross Street building to give houseroom to 50 smaller organisations including design consultancies and voluntary bodies including London Forum.

Biggest disappointments/ frustrations: (1) Decline in real professionalism; increasing specialisation killing off creative lateral thinking about the built environment; (2) seeing York stone which ABA and its Cowcross Street neighbours had had paid for and had laid, pitched into skips after statutory undertakers has dug up road; (3) general inadequacy of city management; ignorance of why each urban place is as it is.

Present preoccupations: ABA currently involved in some 500 different projects, including (1) invited bid to master plan controversial Chelsea Barracks site; (2) survey for Natural England of natural landscape of London; (3) redevelopment of London Bridge station following ABA master plan (4) work on the future of the suburbs; and (5) – right on ABA's doorstep - a study of the impact on the area round Farringdon of having Thameslink and Crossrail meet there.

Working details:

ABA employs 140 people from a wide range of disciplines – not just graduates in engineering but also architecture, landscape design town planning, social sciences, even architectural history. Another 350 users of the building represent its "lodgers" – smaller practices and voluntary organisations. In its basement is The Gallery, venue for a wide range of exhibitions and meetings and thrice-weekly lunches for ABA staff and guests.

Special characteristics: "Odd!" says Alan. .

Last word: "As life goes on, many professionals narrow down their outlook. I find I'm more and more stimulated by all the things that are changing around us" ■

British Museum – the concern continues

by Hero Granger-Taylor of Camden Civic Society

As reported in Newsforum 54, the Museum's first application for the North West Development was rejected by Camden on 23rd July this year. Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners have now submitted a revised application, to be decided on 17th December. In our view, the proposal is still a gross over-development, squeezed into a limited space. It will still cause very considerable harm to the setting and architecture of the Museum's Grade 1 existing buildings.

The revised scheme contains one major change, the lowering of 'Pavilion 5' from 25 m to 3 m above ground. This lessens but does not remove the harm to neighbouring houses in Bedford Square and to the interior of Robert Smirke's Arched Room. It also leaves a platform at 3 m covering almost all the exterior of the site which itself is problematic; the manner in which the terrace butts up against Smirke's fine secondary facades, severing their basements from their upper floors, is particularly objectionable.

Elsewhere, the new buildings remain at full height and any improvements are very modest. The deep slot between the main part of the extension (Pavilions 2-4) and Smirke's North Range has been increased from 2 to 3 m but the daylight reaching the windows here will still be reduced by 90%.

At JJ Burnet's majestic North Stairs, the daylight will be reduced by 2/3rds and in his long Chinese Gallery by 7/8ths. In addition, Burnet's King Edward Building will lose its transparency as viewed from Montague Place; at present, light falling on the south windows can be seen through the building from the street.

There is still no sign of a change in the attitude of the Museum authorities. Most tellingly, they have left in the revised scheme the three proposed openings through the solid wall of Smirke's Great Court north elevation, an architectural mutilation strongly condemned by all objectors. A so-called Fact Sheet recently produced by the Museum presents these openings as "Enhancing the Visitor Experience."

We have yet to see English Heritage's Advice on the revised application. In July, the Camden Civic Society and Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee jointly complained to English Heritage

The three proposed openings through the solid wall of Smirke's Great Court north elevation, are an architectural mutilation, strongly condemned by all objectors.

about the Advice provided to Camden on the original scheme; in our view, this was far too superficial and far too supportive of the application. The content of the Advice was also quite different from EH's earlier more informal comments. From documents recently released to us following a Freedom of Information request, we know that the Museum made its first application while EH's London Advisory Committee were still attempting to negotiate improvements to the scheme.

The Camden Civic Society has worked hand in hand with the Bloomsbury CAAC, firstly in trying to improve the Museum's scheme, latterly in resisting it. By the time of the meeting on 23rd July, fellow objectors included the Georgian Group, the Ancient Monuments Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage, the Heritage of London Trust, the London Society and groups and individuals local to Camden. We believe that these organisations also object to the revised scheme and have now been joined by the Twentieth Century Society.

We cannot be certain that Camden will turn down the revised application. At the meeting in July, the voting was 5-4 and many Development Control members were away. In the meantime, the Museum has been waging a powerful publicity campaign.

We would be very grateful for your support in what is likely to become a landmark case in the history of planning. The officer's report will probably be published by 12th December. Please send your objections quoting application number 2009/4638/P to the committee: Clerk of the Development Control Committee, Committee Services, Town Hall, Judd St.,

WC1H 9JE, telephone 020 7974 5980, fax 020 7974 5921, e-mail (better in office hours) DC@camden.gov.uk

For further information please contact hero@granger-taylor.com or tel: 020 7387 1731 ■

Conservation Areas at Risk

Update on English Heritage Report

The report published last year received wide coverage in the press, on TV and radio, and inspired debate in the House of Commons. Three quarters of councils participated.

English Heritage has since held meetings with regional local authority heads of planning and conservation officers in conjunction with the Historic Towns Forum, and a series of seminars for elected members and policy makers at local authorities is being planned to persuade them of the broader social and economic benefits that result from taking good care of conservation areas.

A second annual survey is under way. The results will be published at the Heritage at Risk 2010 launch on 1 July

Article 4 directions

English Heritage are also producing best practice guidance for councils on making Article 4 directions. It will be available in December 2009.

New Survey of religious buildings

The 2010 Heritage at Risk survey will include places of worship: listed churches, chapels, synagogues and mosques. The results will be announced on 1 July 2010.

For more information email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk for a copy or download the pdf from the Conservation Bulletin pages. ■

Thames Tideway Tunnel - five tunnels instead of one?

London Forum challenges Thames Water's sewer plan. Communities seek Ofwat intervention
by **Peter Eversden**

Large numbers of homes and offices are threatened with demolition to allow the construction of London's proposed new sewer tunnel under the Thames. Work is due to start in 2012, to last eight years and require some 50 construction sites within 500 metres of the river, many three times the size of a football pitch.

The London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies, an association of over 130 community groups representing over 110,000 Londoners, is calling on Ofwat to intervene to reduce the impact of the project and its huge cost to water bill payers. Ofwat decided water companies' five year investment plans on 26th November 2009.

The Thames and the River Lee are being polluted by frequent sewage discharges. The Government faces fines under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and the European Commission has threatened action for non-compliance.

What are the options?

Defra has been examining options to deal with the problem for the last seven years. Thames Water plans to build a tunnel next year from Abbey Mills pumping station to Beckton sewage treatment works in East London to store sewage currently discharged into the River Lee, for treatment at Beckton. This is expected to reduce pollution incidents by 50%.

The scheme for the Thames is highly complicated and expensive, involving a 34 km tunnel from Hammersmith to Beckton, 40 metres below ground at Hammersmith and 75 metres at Beckton. It would connect up the worst-offending 34 of the 57 Combined Rainwater and Sewage Overflow (CSO) pipes, and store the sewage until it can be emptied and treated at Beckton. There are unanswered questions about its cost, whether it will be affordable for many TW customers, its buildability and disruption to London.

Originally the tunnel was to follow the river and take up to 15 years to build but the Government asked Thames Water to find a way to deliver the scheme more quickly (by 2020), presumably to avoid fines. Thames Water proposes now to bore five tunnels simultaneously and join them. This will involve six construction sites of

The implications are considerable, involving possible compulsory purchase, demolition of homes and offices, occupation of open space and potential huge cost to water bill payers

two hectares and intermediate sites between them of almost a hectare. There would be over thirty CSO sites along the Thames to connect to the main tunnel.

Over 2.7 million cubic metres of spoil - some 270,000 lorry loads - will be produced, to be carried out by barges. The implications are considerable, involving possible compulsory purchase, demolition of homes and offices and occupation of open space for many years. There are no exemptions, either for parks, open spaces, built up land, or existing housing. After construction, there will be a need for permanent buildings for maintenance - some of which will not be neighbour-friendly, e.g. sediment removal and handling plus exhaust ventilation, with possibly, foul exhaust gases being released.

London Councils can give no information on what they are planning to do. The Chelsea Society and others wrote to their MPs in 2006 to urge this project to be finalised and commenced but there is still no decision.

No-one knows how much it will cost

TW's head of London Tideway Tunnels has acknowledged publicly that "the company has no idea of how much the project will ultimately cost". It is difficult to predetermine accurately the design and specification for such a complicated scheme, including other infrastructure requirements of acquisitions and roads. The estimated cost in 2006 was £2.2 billion.

It will be very disruptive and its cost in billions of pounds, translated to water charges, will be unaffordable for a substantial number of users.

The exceptional construction difficulties may not allow the project to be delivered

by the 2020 date.

Peter Eversden, chairman of the London Forum, said: "We are concerned about the huge cost and the highly disruptive effect the work will have on the communities we represent along the Thames and on businesses. Not enough of the design work has been done on Thames Water's proposal."

Raj Bhatia, chairman of the Stamford Brook Residents Association said "There are no unused spaces in Hammersmith within Thames Water's target distance from the Thames for a main shaft. Possible use of parks and open spaces and acquisition of properties including existing housing is worrying."

Jacobs Babbie, the consultant appointed by Ofwat, to evaluate the options, heavily criticised the selected scheme and its justification and recommended a simpler option which would intercept 70% of the overflows along the western reaches of the river only, at 52% cost of the selected scheme. Babbie's scheme will satisfy two important objectives: removing the sewage-carried litter most visible at low tides along the upper reaches of the river, and minimising health risks to users of the western reaches of the river. It could be built without acquiring any sites away from the river and within the target date of 2020. Defra rejected it.

At the end of November, Ofwat set a 3% p.a. price increase cap on TW. That would allow them to spend £1.7 billion on the tunnel but, since there is no cost evaluation yet, the total could be much greater. It seems that Thames Water have £100 million for compulsory purchase and demolition of buildings along the banks of the Thames.

London Forum will continue to seek intervention by the Government to reduce the impact of the construction of the Thames Tideway Tunnel project and its potential huge cost to water bill payers. ■

Treasury Plans to sell canal land

We hear that the Treasury plans to sell land and properties that line the 2000 miles of Britain's canals and rivers. Two years ago it was estimated that the sale of British Waterways [BW] property could raise £500M and help cut the Government spending deficit. ■

News from the Mayor and GLA

The new London Plan

The Mayor's new draft **London Plan** sets out an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital over the next 20-25 years. **Peter Eversden** reports

In October the Mayor issued a draft new London Plan to replace the one that has been in use since February 2008, plus draft strategies for Transport, Economic Development, Air Quality and Water, and a report on London's potential housing capacity and the land available to meet it.

The Economic Development Strategy (EDS)

is a "broad vision to keep London an economic success" and sets out the Mayor's ambitions for the economic development of the capital:

- promote London internationally as a city that excels as a world capital of business;
- ensure that it has the most competitive business environment in the world;
- drive London's transition to a low carbon economy and maximise the economic opportunities this will create;
- give all Londoners the opportunity to take part in London's economic success, access sustainable employment and progress in their careers;
- maximise the benefits to London from investment to support growth and regeneration, and from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and its legacy.

It is intended to provide the GLA group and other strategic organisations with "a clear vision, an analysis of the economy and policy directions for achieving our ambitions; and to clarify roles and responsibilities with other parties who make a major contribution to developing London's economy, so that together we can build London's economic future."

What is the consultation process?

The consultation closes at 5pm on Tuesday 12th January 2010. A welcome innovation to broaden its reach took the form of 21 'Roadshows' held throughout October November and December in Shopping Centres, Libraries and other public places, advertised on the GLA website.

The London Plan team, Transport for London and the London Development Agency will consider responses, so there is a chance to influence the content and policies in the strategies. The important one is the London Plan; the other strategies have to accord with it. Only the London

Plan will be examined in public, in 2010.

Selection of topics and participants will be based on the responses, so our input must be precise on which parts of the plan need to be changed, in what way and why.

Some of the proposals will require further statutory consultation after it is published. These include removal of the Congestion Charging Western Extension Zone and the deferral of Phase 3 of the Low Emission Zone.

How does this draft London Plan differ from the current one?

Its policies are structured in a new way to cover strategic direction, the basis on which Councils and the Mayor should make planning decisions and the content that should be achieved within borough Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Not all policies include the last two sections, so local development control may not be advised consistently on some policies.

There are chapters on the new context, places, people, economy, climate change, transport, living places/spaces and implementation. The problem is that in order to grasp all the policies that apply to, say, inner London or open space or social infrastructure, several parts of the plan have to be assessed. Cross referencing is poor and the Blue Ribbon Network (see below), London's greatest open space, has been reduced from a whole chapter in the 2004 plan to about nine pages in the current draft, near the end and after Burial Grounds.

How could this new plan be reviewed?

London Forum's members should consider what London Plan policies have been useful in the past and check if they are still present. Could they be improved? Do they give sufficient advice on how planning decisions should be made? Do they indicate well enough what should be in a borough's Core Strategy, Area Action Plans and other development plan documents of its LDF?

If a policy is just what you want, then say so and support it; some businesses and developers may argue to have it weakened or removed. If a section of the draft plan does not seem to cover something you need, or which has been cut, or is not strong enough, make it clear what you want the policy to be and how its supporting text could be added or improved, with reasons and examples.

Housing Capacity Study

The London-wide Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Housing Capacity Study 2009 (SHLAA/HCS) is a comprehensive technical analysis of London's potential housing capacity and the land available to meet it. The required number of homes can be achieved without building at a density above the range for each site but it will be difficult to meet social housing needs.

Blue Ribbon Network

These Policies to protect our waterways and ensure only suitable development along them, were reduced in the 2008 London Plan and have been cut further in the draft replacement version. The emphasis is now on the use of waterways, which is welcomed, but more safeguarding of facilities on the canals is needed. There should be more emphasis on ensuring any waterside development is context sensitive, does not form a barrier to the hinterland, and leaves water facilities in place and usable.

With a view to submitting evidence to the revised London Plan, Dido Berkely with the support of the Environmental Law Foundation (ELF) and London 21 Sustainability Network, has written to riparian boroughs about their policy planning for the Thames Policy Area (page 202 of the draft replacement London Plan).

What next?

Send the London Forum your issues and suggestions for the draft London Plan. It will give us a better basis for participation and negotiation in the next stages. The new Plan will be published in 2011 and all boroughs' LDF content will have to be conformant with it. Only three London boroughs have had their Core Strategy approved, so most are late. Civic Societies and other local groups should ensure their borough's policies cover spatial problems properly and address the issues identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy. They should be fully engaged with the Council's LDF preparation to make sure it will meet the policies in the draft London Plan and achieve acceptable local development, better places and improved quality of life for those who live and work in the area. ■

Other issues

Useful website addresses

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/

www.london.gov.uk/shaping-london/

The housing-capacity study reports

are on the GLA website:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning/housing-capacity/index.jsp

Clean Air in London appeal to Mayor

Simon Birkett of Clean Air in London (CCAL) has written to Mayor Johnson urging him to apply Precautionary Principle for premature deaths due to air pollution in London.

Air quality has improved since 1990 but the level of dangerous airborne particles (PM10) in London has increased at a mean rate of around 0.4% per year since the late 1990's despite public health laws requiring sharp reductions. London has the highest annual mean concentrations of NO₂ of any capital city in western (or eastern) Europe.

CCAL says Radical and urgent action is needed now to sharply reduce levels of dangerous airborne particles (PM2.5 and PM10) and other pollutants (e.g. NO₂) in London. ■

GLA Economics Unit Report

GLA Economics Unit produced an evidence base in October for consideration of the Mayor's draft replacement London Plan and associated strategies. Their fifteenth economic outlook forecast has now been published.

The full documents can be found at:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/ ■

GLA Housing company

The Mayor has announced proposals for setting up a London-wide housing company and the GLA will invite proposals from institutional investors to use GLA-owned land which could supply 32,000 new homes. The GLA would act as a shareholder in such developments and invest profits into new affordable housing. ■

What more could be done to protect London's small shops?

Assembly Update - issue 37, November 2009, concentrates on helping London's small shops.

With closures accelerating as the economic downturn bites, empty local shops have become an all too familiar sight in London. In 2007 the Office of National Statistics Annual business inquiry reported that there were 34,708 small retailers employing 102,905 people. Small retailers account for 87 per cent of all retailers in London.

The Mayor has made a commitment to protect neighbourhood centres by securing affordable retail units and toughening up the London Plan. Local authorities have also implemented a range of measures, and a number of studies and reports have put forward recommendations - but how effective have any of these been on the street?

The Planning and Housing Committee is reviewing measures designed to protect London's local shops and looking at progress on implementing planning policies to support them. The review will focus on how the planning system protects small retailers in neighbourhood centres, assessing the benefits they bring to local communities and the scale of the threats they face.

They are asking what more needs to be done through the London Plan and would like to hear from small business owners and employees. How could current planning legislation be wielded more effectively to stem the loss of the capital's small retailers?

The Committee is asking Londoners, and small business owners and employees, to send in their views on how their business or local neighbourhood has changed or struggled, and what support is needed to keep high streets thriving and diverse. The Committee will publish a report of its findings early next year. They will also feed into the London Plan review process from now until the Examination in Public in the summer of 2010.

More information can be found at

www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/planning_small-shops.jsp ■

TfL budget cuts

Boris Johnson wants to make £5bn in savings in the Transport for London budget to enable him to freeze the GLA Council Tax precept again next year.

The areas of cuts have been published as :-

- 1,000 admin jobs have gone at London Underground following the integration with Metronet, saving £570 million
- Cutting "several hundred" more posts elsewhere across TfL
- Saving £220 million from consultants' bills
- £400 million from switching to more efficient computer systems
- £130 million from moving staff out of central London to cheaper premises in Southwark and North Greenwich.
- £185 million from re-negotiating the Oyster ticketing contract alone and a further £240 million from changes to contracts linked to the congestion-charge and low emission zone
- £200 million cut in marketing and press budget, redirected to fund extra police on Tubes and buses.
- Pay for senior staff has been frozen and bonuses cut, and the pay settlement for most staff will "reflect the economic realities being faced by millions of Londoners" ■

LDA's financial prospects 'bleak'?

A recent Assembly report warned that the financial prospects for the capital's economic development body – the London Development Agency (LDA) – are 'bleak'. The Budget and Performance Committee's Pre-Budget Report said the recently identified £159million shortfall in the LDA's Olympic Land commitments has both damaged the Agency's reputation and significantly reduced its resources. The shortfall and expected cuts in government grants mean the LDA will lose more than a fifth of the resources it had expected for 2010/11 and by 2012/13 it is likely to have only around 60 per cent of the programme budget available to it last year. ■

London's skyline – two steps forward and one back

Can we trust this Mayor to make the right decisions?

Minister kills off Ugly Sisters in blow to Boris

The Planning Minister has accepted the evidence of City of Westminster and English Heritage against the development dubbed 'Three Ugly Sisters' on the Elizabeth House site at Waterloo.

The £1 billion scheme, for three towers, two of 22-stories and 28-stories for a site by Waterloo station, and a 33-storey set of apartments next to the London Eye was branded as "fundamentally unacceptable" by the Communities Secretary John Denham, in a ruling in October. He said:

It would "severely harm views of the Houses of Parliament" and "materially detract from the size and importance of Big Ben."

"Individually, the buildings would fall short of the excellence expected and, collectively, the scale of the design flaws would be heightened with far reaching concerns about the effects on the skyline, on important views and historic assets."

In July last year, Boris Johnson, whose election campaign relied heavily on his pledge to protect historic views, had blocked the project by Developers P&O Estates and Morgan Stanley, which proposed to demolish the Elizabeth House office block in York Road (See Newsforum issue 52 last Winter).

However in October he withdrew his objections and approved the development, as he has now done for the Columbus Tower at Canary Wharf.

Columbus Tower gets the go-ahead

On October 7th at City Hall Mayor Boris Johnson conducted the first case where he informed a borough that he would act as the local planning authority for the purposes of determining a planning application (under article 7 of the Mayor of London Order and

the powers conferred by Section 2A of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act).

Tower Hamlets Council had indicated that it was minded to refuse planning permission and conservation area consent for Hertsmere House (the Columbus Tower) a 63-storey mixed-use, office and hotel building in Canary Wharf.

At the public hearing the Mayor was told that the application was contrary to policies of the London Plan, the Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan 1998, and the Council's Interim Planning Guidance (2007) Core Strategy and Development Control; that by virtue of its design, scale and massing it would have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity; that so far from preserving or enhancing the surrounding built heritage, it would detract from the Area, and would cause unacceptable loss of daylight and sunlight to nearby residential properties

There were oral representations from Tower Hamlets Council, four local residents and the applicant.

It is astonishing that the GLA planning officer's recommendation was "That the Mayor agree with the recommendation as set out in the officer's report and addendum report and grant planning permission for the Hertsmere House planning application" and "That the Assistant Director for Planning be delegated the authority to agree the final terms of the section 106 agreement" and "issue the planning permission and conservation area consent"

It has been well established through various surveys that most Londoners do not like or want tall buildings. Many objectors to the Columbus Tower admired its design but it was being proposed for the wrong location within Canary Wharf.

The Mayor should uphold policies for context sensitivity. ■

Ongoing threats to green space

The Welsh Harp

Another threat from housing development to open green space looms at the Welsh Harp reservoir, on the boundaries of the London Boroughs of Barnet and Brent. The developer, Malcolm Scott, who is also the owner, has put in two planning applications, one to Barnet for 90 houses at Woodfield Nursery, Cool Oak Lane, which is Metropolitan Open Land; and one to Brent, for 71 houses at the popular Greenhouse Garden Centre, Birchen Grove.

The Open Spaces Society, together with the pressure group Save Our Remaining Bits of Green, have joined the campaign, and has submitted a strong objection to both boroughs.

Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society said: 'It is outrageous that this wonderful green lung should be desecrated with over 160 houses. This open space is of vital importance, for residents and visitors from further afield. They treasure the Welsh Harp reservoir and its surroundings, for quiet recreation and bird watching. This greenspace is invaluable and irreplaceable.'

'The Capital Ring long-distance path which goes along the edge of the reservoir would be severely and adversely affected by the development, as would other public paths in the vicinity.'

The Mayor has indicated his opposition to both schemes.

Better news at Gunnersbury Park

Campaign groups are celebrating after moving a step closer to stopping a controversial housing development at Gunnersbury Park, jointly managed by Ealing and Hounslow Councils.

In October a motion on the management of parks and green spaces was passed by Ealing that could help prevent the popular green space being sold off for residential development:

"This council is committed to preserving the borough's parks and green spaces and enhancing their role as providing amenity for the community"; and "is committed to improving Gunnersbury Park but rules out selling parts of the park to developers to help pay for it." ■

Minister blocks Ealing Arcadia scheme

Communities secretary John Denham has rejected a mixed-use development of seven blocks up to 26 storeys high, planned for Ealing town centre near Ealing Broadway station in West London, following a public inquiry earlier this year when the Planning Inspector recommended that permission be refused because the "bulk, massing and certain aspects of the design of the scheme"

Known locally as the Arcadia site, this huge scheme adjoining two conservation areas was backed by the planning authority, London Mayor Boris Johnson and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, the Government's design adviser. But the council has recently approved plans for another mixed-use scheme at Dickens Yard, also in the town centre, with 14 storey towers. ■

Heathrow - a further betrayal of trust 'Wellbeing' of Londoners ignored

Global warming dangers are being put to one side in the push for further expansion and third runway at Heathrow

When Lord Turner, Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change, announces that limits on carbon emissions would not mean cuts in air travel, then you know that the arguments about emissions and climate change will not protect us against this monster. The aviation industry is doing what it has always done: lobby ministers behind the scenes and subvert the democratic process. Those who put their faith in the strength of the environmental argument about global warming have been sadly disillusioned

It is clear that since our last report (Newsforum No 53, Spring 2009) behind the scenes lobbying of the politicians to get round the emissions problem has continued with maximum success. In September, at a UN Forum on climate change, BA Chairman, Willie Walsh, on behalf of the International Air Transport Association, announced a global plan to reduce net emissions by half from 2050. These "cuts" will be a mixture of technological developments and carbon trading schemes, and no indication of the proportions was given. But the eminent scientist, Professor James Hansen of Columbia University and NASA, has condemned carbon trading schemes as perpetuating the pollution they are supposed to eliminate. It "merely allows polluters and Wall Street Traders to fleece the public out of billions of dollars."

BAA has said that it will submit a planning application after the next election, and is continuing to "explore the expansion"; Walsh has launched a "roadshow"; speaking to UK business groups aimed at getting the Conservatives to soften their opposition to the plans.

That these strategies have succeeded became only too evident in December with the publication of the cross party Commons Transport Select Committee report, the Future of Aviation. As expected, this notoriously pro-aviation committee supported expansion at Heathrow and endorsed the Air Transport White Paper, stating that there are "economic benefits" to a third runway at Heathrow. But these so called benefits - linking business needs with flying - are entirely bogus; figures show that 75% of UK flying is for leisure reasons. New rail links are now touted as a supplement to air travel, not an alternative to reduce it.

The fact that, with or without emissions control, this scheme will cause untold misery for millions of Londoners seems not to impinge on the consciousness of our elected "representatives" - just as they "did not get" public anger over the expenses scandal.

But London Councils, the cross-party organisation which represents all of the capital's local authorities, warned that the fight is still not over.

Councillor Mike Fisher, Chairman of its Transport and Environment Committee, said:

"Heathrow expansion is unnecessary, expensive and bad for the environment. ... London Councils will continue to lobby against the expansion of Heathrow until plans have been grounded permanently, so hundreds of Londoners do not lose their homes and many more do not have their lives blighted by noise and air pollution."

It is to be hoped that they will concentrate in future on the last element of that statement. It is now clear that any arguments about the environment or alternatives to air travel will all be evaded. Will the European Commission decision in December, to reject the UK application to delay compliance with health-based air quality laws, make any difference?

The contemptuous disregard shown by these MPs for the "wellbeing" - a term introduced by this government - of the citizens they are supposed to represent is shocking. But alas, this further betrayal is not surprising from those who have shown themselves to have a different "moral compass" from the rest of us. Both the other political parties are still pledged to drop any plans to expand Heathrow. ■

Draft Planning Policy Statement 15, Planning For The Historic Environment, to be re-written

Following hundreds of replies to the consultation draft, John Healey, the planning minister has admitted that this dreadful document will have to be rewritten:

"We have had over 500 responses to our consultation on this, more than usual. The consultation shows that there is some confusion, which we will clear up before we publish the final statement."

Conservation groups across the country were dismayed that the Government described the purpose of the new rules as being to "benefit developers" and to "reduce the number of applications for planning permission rejected on heritage-related grounds". It would have given a green light for Local authorities to allow the

demolition or alteration of historic buildings where the "material harm" caused to an area's heritage was "outweighed by the wider social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposed development."

The Royal Town Planning Institute

launched an unprecedented attack on the document as "fundamentally flawed"; and "unfit for purpose". Martin Willey, its president, said: "This could prove to be a charter for people who want to knock buildings down. It assumes that heritage stands in the way of development and economic recovery, which is patently untrue. Historic buildings and places are an asset, not a burden."

The Royal Institute of British Architects'

president also attacked the policy. Experts estimated that thousands of listed and heritage properties could be demolished as a result of the proposed change.

Mr Healey said he would "redraft" new rules on historic buildings following the outcry over the original version. He said:

"To put it beyond doubt, there is no question of downgrading the protection of historic buildings. The current language in the planning policy statement is not clear enough. We will redraft it to make clear that the protection of heritage buildings will not be reduced." ■

Round the Societies

A round up of news from our member societies.

By **Haydn Mylchreest**

Thank you to all editors for sending me copies of your newsletters and journals. Please put me on your circulation list if I am not already on it. Your material provides me with a marvellous source of interesting articles on so many topics. My difficulty is always one of choosing from among the many I read.

In this edition of RtS there is a planning matter to report, then some fascinating local history. A few alarm bells are rung, too!

More Celebrations:

Sutton and Cheam Society has celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, and **Chislehurst** celebrates 75 years.

Nostalgia in Finchley

Society newsletters every so often carry a plea for information about people. The **Finchley Society** carries a request from the RAF seeking the next of kin of erstwhile Finchley resident F/Lt Patrick James Garland who served in No. 11 (Army Co-operation) Squadron and was killed in January 1945 aged 36. His wife was Mary Elizabeth. He is buried in The Netherlands. As part of its 100th anniversary celebrations in 2012, as the oldest fixed wing Squadron in the world, it will publish a book describing the events during those 100 years and is anxious to trace the family of F/Lt Garland.

Local efforts successful at Battersea

Bolingbroke Hospital has recently been listed, to the huge delight of many campaigners including members of the **Battersea Society**; this is welcome proof that local efforts can be successful if sufficient effort is devoted to the cause.

Do we really want our conservation areas?

They were introduced in 1967 as areas of special interest or appearance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and there are now over 9,300. That question is posed by **Mill Hill Preservation Society** which pleads for more interest to be taken in them; members must be alert to the threat of proposals for even minor development that can easily alter the character of the conservation areas. Other Societies including Sydenham voice the same fear that we are not sufficiently vigilant.

Meanwhile, in its September newsletter, **Isleworth Society** refers to English Heritage's *Conservation Areas at Risk* analysis which showed the main threats to be plastic windows and doors, poorly maintained roads and pavements, street clutter and unsightly satellite dishes, among others. EH is urging Councils to make more use of existing powers to protect the characteristics of Conservation Areas.

Another threatened green space at Peckham

A tribute is paid in the **Peckham Society** News to campaigners of the 1860s who secured Peckham Rye as common land. But for that campaign, Peckham Rye would probably have been lost to housing and other developments. Those thoughts are sparked by Southwark Council's apparent plan to sell off part of Lucas Gardens.

Local History

Mass Observation in 1937 in Sydenham

Sydenham Society reminds us of the Mass Observation project begun in 1937 to find out about the lives of everyday people. Diarists were recruited (500 by 1939) and they sent their diaries each month to an office in Blackheath throughout the war years and a few continued into the 1960s. One diarist in Sydenham used a pseudonym - Herbert Brush of Sydenham who can be identified from the clues he left in his writings as R.C. Harpur, a retired electricity board inspector!

Chislehurst and Hampstead linked

Chislehurst Society reports that Froggnal was the chosen house featured in the Bexley Family and Local History Fair. Froggnal was built in the 18th Century and was birthplace and residence of Thomas Townshend, a prominent statesman, later 1st Viscount Sydney, after whom Sydney in Australia was named. Froggnal is a name that features prominently also in Hampstead, where there is an area of streets that also include the name Froggnal, and where there was a Froggnal Hall. Clearly an interesting topic for some research!

Bexley Society published an article on the house we know as Loring Hall. The house was built in 1760 and provides yet another insight into local history; Lord Castlereagh (family name Stewart) the British Foreign who bought the property in 1811 and spent the rest of his life there. Goldsmiths College renamed the house when they bought it in 1939.

The Dulwich Society provides a link between steel and our national drink and gives us an insight into a lost house and former residents. The present Stonehills Court gets its name from a large Victorian house on the Dulwich Estate demolished in the 1980s. Stonehills was originally called Oakfield and was built in the early 1870s for Alfred George Bessemer, the son of Sir Henry Bessemer who made his fortune as an inventor; probably his best known invention was the steel making process that bears his name. In the 1881 census, the son was listed as having no profession; apart from having a wealthy father, he married Mary Tetley, the daughter of one of the founders of the Tetley tea empire.

London Underground upgrade

St. Marylebone Society reminds readers of the plan to have air-conditioned trains on the Circle, District, Hammersmith & City, and Metropolitan lines. The carriages will have walk-through interiors, and London Underground is up-grading the power supply between now and 2011 to meet the increased demand.

Knightsbridge Society have a point when they complain that the current plans for the Thurloe Street entrance to South Kensington tube station do not provide for step-free access to the trains; no funding is the alleged reason. This must be one of the busiest stations in London because of the nearness of the internationally renowned Museums, the Royal Albert Hall, Imperial College and so on. ■

newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

Tesco planning massive UK expansion

There are fights against Tesco stores in various parts of London. The Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group is objecting to one that could build over an historic moat of Fulham Palace. Over in East London the Highams Park Forum and the Highams Park Society are fighting a huge new development of a superstore, flats and business premises, for which they say no Environmental Impact Study has been conducted. They warn councillors that "Neither the environment nor the history of our places are yours to squander."

It is part of a drive by Tesco, according to a report in *The Times* on December 4th, for scores of new supermarkets across Britain before a proposed clampdown that would restrict its ability to expand. Ministers are apparently considering new rules that would limit new store openings by locally dominant chains. Supermarkets must at present satisfy a "needs test" and prove that they are responding to unmet demand. The large majority of Tesco's new stores in recent years have been its Tesco Express outlets which are usually too small to be covered by the test.

Tesco has lodged nearly double the number of planning applications as its two largest rivals combined, with approximately 76 outstanding planning applications, from convenience stores to hypermarkets. Most have been lodged in the past year and more than 80 per cent of the proposals are for larger stores,

The contents of *The Times* report seems to raise once again the issue, frequently denied, of landbanks being built up. A website called the Tescopoly Alliance gives details of many applications being opposed all over the country, including one in Finchley where planning permission was applied for in the name of another company. *The Times* describes these as "Trojan horse" applications.

Boroughs get new powers to control roadworks

Under tough new powers given to London councils, Utility companies face fines if their roadworks cause major disruption. The London Permit Scheme for street works has been given the green light by the government.

It allows 18 London boroughs and Transport for London to regulate the activities of water, gas, electricity and telecoms firms. London boroughs are responsible for 95% of the capital's roads and Transport for London manages the other 5%. Any company wanting to dig up a road must apply to the local authority for a permit.

Financial penalties, if permit conditions are not met, will range from up to £2,500 a day for overrunning work to £5,000 for the criminal offence of working without a permit.

Chairman of London Councils Transport and Environment Committee, Councillor Mike Fisher, has promised that: "Action will be taken against utility companies which do not meet the conditions of their permit."

For more information about London Councils, contact:
59 1/2 Southwark Street, London SE1 0AL Tel 020 7934 9999
www.londoncouncils.gov.uk

Discovering Places - launch of a new project

May Bank Holiday weekend, 1-3 May 2010, will see the launch of Discovering Places, a novel UK-wide programme which will be delivered through a partnership led by Heritage Link, CABE and Natural England. It aims to give young people the opportunity to discover and explore, and be inspired by and benefit from some of our nation's hidden gems - historic and contemporary buildings, public spaces and natural places in and around the cities, towns and villages where they live and work. It will involve open days, participation and performance events and touring exhibitions.

In Autumn 2011 it will team up with Heritage Open Days, Doors Open and London Open House for the largest-ever co-ordinated opening of buildings, archaeological sites, heritage and contemporary locations and natural spaces, including those locations which will host the UK Torch relay, of which it will be an integral part in Spring 2012. A leaflet and online guide will be produced for each of the 76 days of the Torch Relay

War memorials

In July, the London Assembly produced a survey of London's war memorials of which there are nearly 6000. Most of these are treasured but some are neglected and vandalised or left to suffer the effects of ageing or redevelopment.

War memorials are currently not adequately protected under the existing planning system, and many are being lost through redevelopment or other processes of change.

War memorials are supposedly taken into account where a building or site is redeveloped and considered as part of the planning process, but, according to the report, boroughs often do not know where memorials are, though the best have an inventory, linked electronically to asset registers, so that any planning application for a site affecting a memorial triggers notification.

The report argues that the protection and preservation of London's memorials should be a material consideration in borough planning policies and that, in the review of the London Plan, the Mayor should specifically refer to war memorials as relevant to London's built heritage.

As the report points out, the community is often the best custodian to ensure the continued protection and maintenance of war memorials and more should be done to raise awareness and educate people about them, their history, social context and preservation.

The report can be downloaded from

www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/plansd/ph-war-memorials-030709.pdf

Forum members may wish to follow up this subject locally.

Gideon Amos to leave TCPA

Town and Country Planning Association chief executive Gideon Amos is to become a commissioner at the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). He will be leaving the after nearly a decade with the organisation. ■

newsbriefs

Civic Society Initiative update

Following six months of meetings, the Civic Society Initiative has published a report: *Own the future*. They have prepared proposals in response to the ideas put forward in the recent debate.

They are looking for our views "on whether they have got them right" although the tone of the document suggests that decisions seem to have been made already.

"Many respondents wanted more information on the structure and governance of the new national body and for this to reflect the federal and grassroots principles."

"The purpose, values and name of the new national body is being developed with civic society volunteers."

There is no indication as to who these volunteers are who are making these important decisions, or how they have been recruited.

Some of the proposals are as follows:

A federal structure where civic societies remain independently run (at what stage was it ever suggested that civic societies might not remain independent?) and join the new national body as members.

The new national body will look to involve up to ten partner organisations in its governance within the first year of its operation, and likely partners will be invited to the first meeting. Any partner organisation involved in the national body will be from the not-for-profit sector. There will be an option for the partner bodies to appoint a director/trustee who must be approved by the governing body.

Membership will be open to civic societies, and non-voting membership to individual "supporters" and associate members from corporate, local authority, parish council, professional and other partner bodies, residents associations, amenity groups, environmental groups and also to groupings of civic societies and civic societies elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

There will be an annual Convention: the AGM will require 5% of voting members to be present to constitute a quorum; voting will be by postal ballot based on 'one society - one vote' and not be weighted by membership.

The directors/trustees of the new national body will be elected following open recruitment against a set of desired skills and experience. There will be no electoral colleges based on regions or other geographical areas.

A nominations committee will be established. A majority of directors/trustees will be members of civic societies.

For information about the London Forum contact:

www.londonforum.org.uk

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

Haydn Mylchreest Membership Secretary
Telephone: 020 7720 2429
email membership@londonforum.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 1093134

Civic societies will join the new body at a per capita fee determined by the trustees on the basis of an "agreement".

At the meeting held in London none of these issues were discussed. We understand the same agenda was imposed at all the meetings, which leaves one wondering where these proposals have emanated from and when they were discussed.

Your views sought

The CSI would like your feedback and ideas no later than 5pm, Friday 15 January, 2010. A discussion paper will be put forward in February 2010.

They expect to make an announcement in February on the name, structure and governance arrangements for the new body, and to call for people to put themselves forward as national trustees/ directors.

The aim is to ratify and launch the new body at a special meeting of civic societies and others on a Saturday in April 2010.

Time to decide

A new leaflet - *Time to decide* - summarising the main issues and responding to some of the questions being asked about the funding and costs of the new national body, is being circulated by post shortly. If you want to receive copies please email admin@civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk

It will be available to download from the website shortly. ■

London Forum survey

London Forum's Planning & Transport committee members want to know how community groups are dealing with the recent introduction of on-line planning applications. With the introduction of the central Planning Portal and increasing use of the electronic system of consultation via the internet, it was decided to survey members societies online, to get a better understanding.

The results of the survey will be presented to the Association of Borough Planning Officers. ■

newsforum

Editor Helen Marcus

Editorial team Peter Eversden, Michael Hammerson, Tony Aldous, Haydn Mylchreest

Original 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.