

newsforum



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

The London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies
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The new Mayor of London

A new era for London

The new Mayor of London, **Sadiq Khan**, has made his key appointments and some early policy indications

The new Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has pledged to make the capital “a safer city, with a world-class transport network and affordable housing leading to shared prosperity for all Londoners”. Housing will be “a top priority so that all Londoners will be able to buy or rent a decent, affordable home.”

Key appointments

Key senior appointments were announced at the end of May:

Jules Pipe is Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills. He will lead on the revision of the London Plan and work closely with James Murray, deputy mayor for housing and residential development, to tackle the city’s housing crisis. He will step down from his roles as the first directly elected mayor of Hackney in 2002, (re-elected for a fourth term in May 2014), and as Chair of London Councils (since June 2010)

James Murray is Deputy Mayor for Housing. He is currently the Executive Member for Housing and Development at Islington Council

Val Shawcross AM, CBE, is Deputy Mayor for Transport and Deputy Chair of Transport for London. She is a former leader of Croydon Council and served as Lambeth and Southwark’s representative on the London Assembly from 2000 – 2016. She has chaired the London Fire and Emergency

Planning Authority has been Labour’s transport spokesperson on the Assembly for the last eight years, alternating between being Chair and Deputy Chair of the Assembly Transport Committee.

Rajesh Agrawal is Deputy Mayor for Business, tasked with championing London’s interests following the EU referendum, and protecting jobs and growth while the negotiation process takes place. Rajesh Agrawal, is a fintech entrepreneur and innovator.

Justine Simons, Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries, will oversee City Hall’s work across music, theatre, international cultural exchange, visual arts and arts in the public realm, film, fashion and design. She worked in contemporary dance for ten years and founded the World Cities Culture Forum. She played a lead role in the cultural programme for the London 2012 Olympic Games for the previous Mayor of London. She serves on the boards of the British Fashion Council, British Film Commission, London Design Festival and the Artichoke Trust.

Sophie Linden will be Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. A former government special adviser to David Blunkett at the Home Office, she is currently Deputy Mayor of Hackney Council with lead responsibility for crime and community safety, neighbourhood and civic engagement.

Fiona Twycross AM will Chair the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. An Assembly Member since 2012, she has served as Vice Chair of LFEPA since July 2013. She has also sat on the Assembly’s Economy Committee, Housing Committee, Audit Panel, Health Committee and the Police and Crime Committee.

Lord Andrew Adonis is Chair of the Crossrail 2 Board and will also continue his role as chair of the National Infrastructure Commission of which he was recently appointed as founding chair. Lord Adonis served in government as Minister for Schools from May 2005 until October 2008, and as Minister and Secretary of State for Transport between 2008 and 2010.

Lord Toby Harris of Haringey has been appointed to undertake a full and independent review to ensure London is as prepared as possible to respond to a major terrorist incident. He will investigate the capability, capacity and collaboration arrangements of every London agency with a part to play in protecting Londoners.

Early Mayoral Initiatives

A One hour 'Hopper' fare giving unlimited bus transfers within one hour - to launch in September.

Affordable homes Officials have been asked to produce an urgent audit of City

New Mayor's appointments and policies

Heathrow; High Speed 2; Measures to protect office space; Review of Old Oak OPDC; Action to deal with London's pollution

Hall's preparedness to tackle the housing crisis. It showed that affordable home delivery at near-standstill. The Mayor has pledged to build new homes on land owned by City Hall, including Transport for London land, and intends to fast-track scores of sites, like Landmark Court, that are suitable for development, but not utilised by the previous Mayor.

Efficiency savings programme The Mayor and London's Transport Commissioner, Mike Brown, have announced a major efficiency savings programme to enable fares on Transport for London services to be frozen until 2020 without impacting vital investment on the transport network.

Night Tube services will launch on 19 August. Central and Victoria lines to go live first, with Piccadilly, Jubilee and Northern to follow in the autumn

The Garden Bridge At his first Mayor's Question Time Mr Kahn said it would cost taxpayers twice as much to cancel the Garden Bridge as to complete it and £37.7 million of taxpayers money already spent would be lost. However on July 12 it was reported that he had ordered "enabling works" - strengthening Temple Station - to be suspended over fears that additional public spending would be required. Mr Khan has made it clear that no new public funds should be committed to the project.

Protection of Green Belt The Mayor has pledged to oppose building on London's green belt and instructed his planning officers to ensure his view is reflected in all planning decisions made by the Greater London Authority.

Bromley decision overturned One of the new Mayor's first acts has been to overturn Bromley Council's decision to grant planning permission in April for Cray Wanderers football club to build a new stadium at Flamingo Park. It would replace an existing sports ground said to be underused and poor quality, including a pavilion building on the site currently used as a night club, with a modern, state of the art three-storey football stadium, and two four-storey

blocks of 28 flats. The Mayor believes the plans would cause significant harm to an area of much needed open green space. He was also concerned the application included no affordable housing.

Demolition of old Foyles bookshop. The Mayor has refused to intervene to halt the demolition of the original Foyles bookshop; he said he was happy with Westminster council's decision to approve the new nine-storey development. The Victorian Society, Save and Historic England have all objected to the proposals.

High Speed 2 Call for High Speed 2 redevelopment of Euston station to be put on hold until a less disruptive plan is found. The Mayor said the works would cause "huge inconvenience" to thousands of residents, with hundreds of homes and businesses destroyed.

Measures to protect office space New measures will be put in place to help protect and expand office space for small businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs in London.

Third runway cost to London health A new report 'Landing the right airport' published by the Mayor has estimated the cost to the health of Londoners of a third runway at Heathrow. Speaking of Heathrow's noise nightmare the Mayor said the only credible solution to Britain's aviation dilemma was to pursue plans for a new hub airport to the east of the capital, away from populated areas.

The report sets out a strong case against the expansion of Heathrow - and the logic behind building a four-runway hub to the east of London. ■

Heathrow decision put off

Former Prime Minister David Cameron announced on June 30 that the decision on airport capacity will be left to his successor following his resignation after the EU referendum. The Times report suggested that this "effectively spells the end of plans to build a third runway at Heathrow."

The new Prime Minister, Theresa May, is said to have opposed Heathrow's expansion. ■

Review of Old Oak OPDC

The new Mayor has ordered a review into the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) which is overseeing the regeneration of the Old Oak area of west London a little more than a year after it was set up. The OPDC's role includes building 24,000 new homes and creating 55,000 jobs in the Old Oak Common and Park Royal areas. It has full planning powers within its 650ha boundary that includes land in the boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Ealing and Brent.

City Hall said the Mayor has concerns about viability and its impact on the amount of genuinely affordable homes; and also about due diligence checks carried out by former Mayor Boris Johnson particularly regarding existing land ownerships and other technical planning requirements.

The review which is expected to take two months will take a detailed look at past decisions made by the former Mayor focusing on the amount of affordable housing being proposed, the future direction of the development corporation and the terms of a memorandum of understanding agreed in March which paved the way for OPDC to take ownership from government of public land surrounding the proposed new High Speed 2 and Crossrail station.

It will also look at the funding required for infrastructure at Old Oak Common and check that "development there is properly integrated with surrounding communities and that residential development delivers a mix of genuinely affordable housing types"

Action to deal with London's pollution

One of the Mayor's first announcements was that he wants to take urgent action to deal with London's air pollution. It is thought that about 9,500 Londoners die from long-term exposure to air pollution every year and research shows over 443 schools in the capital are in areas exceeding safe legal pollution levels.

On July 5, the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act, the Mayor launched a major public consultation on a new Clean Air Action plan which includes a £10 Emissions Surcharge for the most polluting vehicles from 2017; introducing the central London Ultra-Low Emission Zone a year earlier than previously planned, in 2019, and extending it beyond central London from 2020 including a requirement for all double-deck buses to be compliant; and measures for a national diesel scrappage scheme and clean bus corridors.

The first round of the consultation ends on Friday 29th July 2016. Further more detailed consultation will take place later this year. More details on the GLA website:

<http://bit.ly/29PBy3c> ■

Local History and Archives

Bill Linskey discusses cuts to library services which are putting borough archives under pressure or actual threat

In parts of London the local amenity or civic society effectively doubles-up as the local history society. This makes a lot of sense. Firstly, there is the wider issue of civic pride, which we all wish to engender, and a broad remit to inform and educate. Then, at the more detailed level, there are questions such as, what is the history of this proposed conservation area or what is it about this building which makes it worth preserving? These are historical as well as architectural questions. We need to know where we have come from to plot a course into the future.

Archives are a vital resource

Archives are a vital resource for local history. As in some other spheres, London is different from other parts of the country in having three tiers of operation. There is the National Archives (TNA) which happens to be located in London at Kew. Then there is the London-wide, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) in Clerkenwell, under the care of the City of London. Finally, we have local, borough archives.

In many places, cuts to library services have put borough archives under pressure or actual threat. An on-line trawl has shown some interesting results. The TNA website lists only 24 borough (plus the City of London at the LMA) archives. The GENUKI (UK & Ireland Genealogy) website additionally lists some physical resource for 7 out of the other 8, leaving Havering as, apparently, having only on-line resources.

Borough archives are not just the collective memory of the modern boroughs: many hold extensive records of their predecessor bodies going back well before the boroughs as such were created. They hold many records deposited or donated by, for example, local companies, civic bodies and individuals. They are important resources for amateur, professional and academic genealogists and historians (and not just local historians – they often hold exemplars for much wider stories). The fact that their resources are also often used by people such as town planners and architects working on current and future projects is often overlooked. This isn't just about history – it's also today and tomorrow.

Minet Library threatened

One borough archive being caught up in the issues around library cuts is that of the



Minet Library

Borough of Lambeth. It is housed in the Minet Library building and was alongside the local lending library, but that was closed at the end of March. As a result of extensive protests around the borough, not least the occupation of the threatened Carnegie Library, the archives were closed for some time without notice, while the lending library was sealed off and security staff installed. The irony seems lost on the council that it is now costing it more to keep it closed with security staff than it would to keep it open with librarians! Although the archive has re-opened, the future of the building seems in doubt. A consultancy has been engaged to look into the whole future of the archives. This is being supported by the Lambeth Local History Forum (LLHF) which brings together many civic societies and other bodies from across the borough which have an interest in local history. As part of the work, the consultancy has created an on-line survey.

As the archive is used by people from outside the borough as well as local people – not least because in the past it has collected, and still holds, records for a number of other South London boroughs – this is an open invitation to anyone with any interest in the future of this important archive to contribute to the survey which will remain open until 31st August.

It is at:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YSGWVDR ■

Briefing paper on libraries

A Commons Library briefing paper published in April gives a brief overview of the statutory duties of library authorities in England and Wales, the role of the Secretary of State, the work of the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce, and concerns about the impact of funding cuts on library services and closures. In a February 2016 parliamentary response, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) estimated that 110 public libraries closed in England between 2010 and 2016, but at least 77 new libraries opened.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has challenged these figures pointing to figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) of a net reduction of 178 libraries in England between 2009-10 and 2014-15. It has launched a "My Library By Right" campaign calling for the public's "rights to libraries to be recognised and respected" and for the DCMS to carry out its duties under the 1964 Act.

The Commons briefing paper can be found at:

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05875>

London Forum Hustings Meeting

London Forum joined forces with CPRE London and Planning Aid on March 22 to hold a hustings meeting at the Gallery in the run up to the Mayoral election.

The meeting was chaired by **Tony Juniper**, Environmental Campaigner

Michael Hammerson reports

Pre-submitted questions

Q (CPRE): There are 50 Green Belt and MOL sites in London currently under threat, and the Mayor is disregarding his own policies by not protecting them. How will you do so if you are elected?

A: All the party representatives appeared to rule out development on Green Belt and agreed that development should be on Brownfield land,

Q: (London Forum): How will London be able to provide affordable housing if the Housing and Planning Bill* is passed? How can we get the housing which is needed?

A: Lib Dems are fighting the Bill in the Lords, with 87 current amendments. UKIP was against reducing the amount of social and council housing; The Conservatives: The Housing Bill blames Councils (LPAs) for missing targets. We must make developers build the million homes with unimplemented permission, and a further million landbanked. The market is not working. Zac Goldsmith concedes that the Bill should be a lot better than it is, and thinks it will get a lot of changes. But the developers, who own the sites must be made to build.

The Green Party and Labour were in agreement: the London Forum is right to raise this. The Bill is a misconceived piece of legislation. The sale of council housing over the years has only produced expensive private housing. The mayor cannot block the legislation but we will work with the LPAs to frustrate it. We will try to implement Community Land Trusts to produce more social housing and with organisations which own surplus land, such as TfL.

Q: (Planning Aid): How will the candidates help organisations like Planning Aid in helping communities to get better planning?

A: (Conservatives): Nimbyism is actually an excellent thing. LPAs are not democratic and work with developers, not communities. Some local communities are articulate and can fight, but many aren't and their fine buildings are demolished. Local groups are far more passionate about their environment and we will support them.

The Panel of speakers

David Dean, Conservative Assembly Candidate for Merton & Wandsworth

Valerie Shawcross, Labour Assembly Member, Lambeth & Southwark

Caroline Russell, Green Party Assembly candidate for Islington

Annabel Mullin, Lib Dem Assembly candidate for West Central

Peter Harris, UKIP Assembly candidate for City & East

(LD and UKIP) both agreed that community involvement is very important and that planning decisions should be brought to local communities

(Lab) We will do everything in our power to give London communities as much power as possible. Nicky Gavron thinks the GLA should give communities and Planning Aid funding to achieve this; at present, all the power is on the developers' side. Local democracy is being disempowered. Permitted Development changes are disastrous for businesses, especially small ones, and for communities. There is enough land for the housing needed. There are a million permissions, and enough brownfield land for 1,400,000 more. Intensifying densities round town centres will produce another million. The Mayor must use the London Plan to enforce good urban design that is public-interest led. We need a policy for play spaces in developments, and promoting biodiversity, and effective use of brownfield land: e.g. supermarket car parks should be built on. (Green) Sian will support involving communities in planning. They are committed to introducing an organisation within the GLA to help communities, who must be involved at an early stage, especially when building on existing council estates. The built environment is also important; Sian wants more people-friendly streets.

Open Question session

Mayer Hillman warned that climate change was the most important issue facing the planet,

(Green) climate change is a huge crisis, but we also need to deal with inequality, and cannot just stop everything. Transport must be made more efficient and improvements prioritised but Sian is against any airport expansion. City Airport should become a business and housing district. All new road building and tunnel projects should be cancelled.

(Con) There are 3 priorities: decarbonising transport, sustainable energy and zero waste. Waste is run by a London Boroughs "Mafia" who are building huge new incinerators. We must make more use of cycles, buses and trains.

Unlawful development of open space by Local Authorities

(Con) "Developers can appeal; residents can't." That should change.

(Lab) When Boroughs make decisions against their plans, the Mayor can intervene and should call them in. We will do so where green space is under threat.

Fares on public transport

(Con) There are free fares for the young and old; Fares should not be free for everyone.

(Green) Would make London a one fare zone. People are forced to the outer areas because they can't afford the house prices, so should not be penalised by having to pay higher fares to get into town.

(Lab) We will freeze fares.

Michael Bach asked the candidates What will you do different in the next four years?

(Con) Would plant more trees – one for every person in London; taxis need to be zero-emission by 2018; unequivocally protect every green space and spend more on public transport. There will be 1 million more people by 2050.

(Lab) London needs strategic projects and especially a strategic transport policy to open up land for housing and deal with overcrowding on the Underground.

(Green) New homes, cleaner air, better streets, better childcare to enable more women to go out to work, more night-time police. ■

**The Housing and Planning Bill was still before Parliament at the time of the Open Meeting*

Open Meeting 12th May Parks and Open Spaces

Peter Pickering reports

Peter Eversden, Chair of the London Forum, set the scene. There were then five presentations.

Alice Roberts, (CPRE London) explained what they were doing to protect green spaces in London. Their recent publication 'The Strongest Protection' highlighted the threats to London's Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land, and how to counteract them. Another publication, 'Done Deal', highlighted cases where schools were being built or planned on such land. They had produced an interactive map of open spaces. They had had some success in drumming up support and drawing all this to public attention during the election. They were pressing for a Mayoral 'PFL - Parks for London' like 'Transport for London'; they had revitalised the London Green Belt Council, and were concerned also about the London Green Belt outside the Greater London area. In reply to a question about the suggested 'National Park' for London Alice Roberts said that the campaign was an important one - national park status might secure funding.

John Lavery, Open Spaces Society was concerned that many local authorities in London were allowing things to happen in parks and open spaces that were not legal under the Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Order 1967. He explained the provisions of that order. The proposal to allow motor racing in Battersea Park was in his view a clear contravention of that order. Sections 38-41 of the Commons Act 2006 could also be relevant. The Open Spaces Society was producing a flow chart explaining how to make challenges. Mr Lavery was questioned about amplification of music in parks (it is not explicitly permitted, but not explicitly prohibited either); about children's playgrounds in parks (which might need a public inquiry if permanent, though temporary ones would be easier); about Oktoberfest (which Ealing Council wanted to permit on Acton Green Common, though it had previously been refused a licence on Haven Green); and about Gillespie Park, where Islington were permitting barbecues despite the nature reserve, though they were not allowed in neighbouring Hackney.

Tony Leach, London Parks and Green Spaces Forum explained how the Forum

The Panel of speakers

Alice Roberts, Green Spaces Officer (CPRE London)

John Lavery Trustee of the Open Spaces Society

Tony Leach Chief Executive London Parks and Green Spaces Forum

Dave Morris Chair London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network

William Fraser Chairman Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA)

worked across 33 boroughs, with elected members; with borough officers with practical responsibilities; with private contractors; and with the some 600 Friends Groups. They provided tool kits to help involvement and advice on how to mobilise. A worry was that many boroughs were cutting skilled and knowledgeable staff and using consultants, though they did not have the competence necessary to assess the advice they were receiving. Mr Leach understood why open spaces were being used to satisfy the huge demand for houses and schools - in some outer boroughs the supply of open space might be sufficient to justify some encroachment. He said that there would have to be a new London Plan; that could provide an opportunity to get green infrastructure into the London Infrastructure Plan, which would be a key document; he drew attention to the publication 'Natural Capital: Investing in a Green Infrastructure for a Future City'. In reply to a question Mr Eversden said that the map of publicly owned sites produced by the London Land Commission was to be revised to highlight only brownfield land.

Dave Morris, London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network described the growth of the inspirational Friends movement since 2000, and the great improvement in parks since 1987. The current challenges were formidable, and it was essential for friends groups, especially those in each borough, to work together; they could and did force local authorities to think again. His network held meetings in City Hall - the next on 26th June.

William Fraser, MPGA described the activities of his organisation, which was founded in 1882 by Lord Brabazon, and had inspired legislation in the 1930s to protect public gardens. It provides grants for the preservation and improvement of public gardens and neglected areas across London. A current scheme was 'Bulbs for London'.

General discussion

There was a general discussion about legal challenges. Paul Ekins of the Battersea Park Action Group described the costly legal case it was taking against the obdurate Wandsworth Council to prevent it from allowing motor racing in Battersea Park; already £20,000, the cost would be much greater if the Group won and the Council appealed. Dave Morris said that the public had to be desperate, and then money would be raised. Alice Roberts said that press publicity was necessary, but not too hard to obtain. John Lavery said that in taking legally dubious actions authorities relied on not being taken to court; one tactic was to disguise the date on which they reached a particular decision, since observance of time limits were crucial for judicial review. It was important to get younger people involved, since they are more adept with social media. Mr Eversden said that the Bedford Park Society had shown that it was possible to engage younger people with work on subjects they felt were important, provided they did not have to attend boring committee meetings. ■

CPRE London's report

CPRE London's report *The Strongest Protection* identified over 50 protected green spaces in Greater London - including parks, recreation grounds and sports fields - which are under threat from development. The London Plan Annual Monitoring Report 12 for 2014/15 says a total of 26 protected sites in Green Belt, and Metropolitan Open Land were given planning permission to be built on in 2014/15.

Planned Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework would see more Green Belt land earmarked for development while brownfield sites lie idle and untouched.

The report can be downloaded from <http://www.cprelondon.org.uk/> ■

Open Meeting 28th June

Meet Historic England

Nigel Barker, Historic England's Planning Director, London, and **Sarah Gibson**, from the listing team, discussed what they do
Peter Pickering reports

Dick Allard was in the chair and introduced the two speakers.

Sarah Gibson set out the various categories of designated heritage assets (important in the National Planning Policy Framework) - Scheduled Ancient Monuments; Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Designated Wrecks, and Designated Battlefields. There was a searchable database of all designated heritage assets on the Historic England website.

Ms Gibson explained the principles by which buildings were selected for listing - architectural interest or historic interest (with some element of architectural interest); it had recently become possible to list only parts of a building. There was a strategic programme of listing (e.g. post-war schools; post-war monuments), but they also added buildings to the list when there was a tangible threat to them. She showed some examples of recent listings in London - including a skateboard park in Romford, and the Royal Vauxhall Tavern.

Enriching the List

Historic England had only this month launched an initiative called "Enriching the List" whereby everybody will be able to share their knowledge and photographs of listed buildings on the Historic England website.

It was necessary to distinguish national from local interest. Local Listing was for local planning authorities; Historic England provided some guidance to local authorities on this. (Ealing Civic Society was unhappy at the lack of attention Ealing Council paid to the local list.)

Recent scheduling in London

Recent scheduling in London included some sections of the Roman London Wall, and a remarkable ice-well.

Nigel Barker explained the recent split between English Heritage, (responsible for the large number of properties open to the public, and due to become a self-financing membership charity), and Historic England. Historic England was responsible for advising Government ministers on listing; holding the archive; looking after heritage-

at-risk; in Greater London except for Southwark and the City, providing archaeological advice to local planning authorities; and giving planning advice. In giving planning advice, Historic England worked according to conservation principles - 'evidential value', 'historical value', 'aesthetic value' and 'communal value'; - the last covering the meaning of an asset to people.

Heritage at risk

On 'heritage at risk' Mr Barker spoke about the challenge posed by the number of cases where the use of buildings was changing as prisons, courts, etc were being replaced by entirely new structures. Finding alternative viable uses could be possible, but might entail changes in structures that would not formerly have been deemed acceptable - for instance the conversion of Oxford Prison into an hotel. The revamping of the King's Cross area was proving successful. Mr Barker illustrated his argument with examples like Dean Street Soho, the Harmondsworth barn, Gunnersbury (where the local authority was sympathetic) and Broomfield House (where it was not). Historic England worked closely with the Heritage Lottery Fund as the prime source of money, though occasionally providing money itself when a recipient had unshakeable objections to benefiting from gambling.

Questions from the floor

Tom Ball (Thorney Island Society) asked whether the Churchill Gardens estate could be listed as a whole - despite its pioneering importance it was under threat from Westminster Council and the Government. Mr Barker and Ms Gibson were doubtful - there was a problem with listing recent buildings (listing could be seen as an imposition on private property rights, and might not be accepted by Ministers, with whom the decision rested - Historic England provided advice), and with listing anything other than individual buildings. Registration of the estate as a park/garden might be possible.

Del Brenner (Regents Network) asked how best to engage with Ministers. Mr Barker said that Historic England dealt with two Government departments -

Communities and Local Government and Culture Media and Sport - and had a team engaging with them. His advice to societies was to make their own contacts, especially by being assiduous in participating in consultations.

Bill Linskey (Brixton Society) was concerned at the way in which the government was pressing for housing estates to be redeveloped, irrespective of their merit and the wishes of those who lived there. He cited Cressingham Gardens, listing of which had been refused. Mr Barker agreed that this was frustrating, but there was little Historic England could do.

The Soho Society raised the conflict between conservation and sustainability (energy efficiency etc); was it possible to adapt rather than redevelop? Mr Barker understood the problem - besides energy issues there was the increasing need to make dwellings easier for elderly people. Historic England had a research team working on modern standards in old buildings; there was a relevant section on their website. It was essential to look at all costs over the life of a building; that could make redevelopment, upvc, etc, seem less attractive.

Michael Bach asked what parts of the London Plan Historic England would be concentrating on in its revision. Mr Barker said that they had commissioned research on the effectiveness of the heritage portions of the Plan. ■

Threat to Archaeology?

Concern was expressed that changes to pre-commencement planning conditions in the new Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill, announced this year, might curtail the ability to conduct archaeological examinations of development sites. It was feared that developers might be allowed in future to proceed without archaeological surveys before starting housing projects; it led to a petition being started. The Government acknowledged the petition and said that the interpretation of the effects of this clause did not accurately reflect its intention. It will be important to scrutinise the Bill carefully to see what it says when it is finalised. ■

An exciting Roman find in London

Museum of London publishes finds from 3 Queen Victoria Street excavation

In June archaeologists from the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) published their research into one of the most exciting finds in the history of archaeology in London: the largest collection of small objects including the earliest and most significant Roman waxed wooden writing tablets ever recovered on a single site in London. Covering a period from the AD 40s to the early 5th Century, about 10,000 items have been discovered.

The finds were made during excavations at the 3.2 acres site at 3 Queen Victoria Street being built for Bloomberg's new European headquarters.

They include the first hand-written document known from Britain; the earliest reference to London dated to AD 65-80; a tablet dating from AD 43-53, the first decade of Roman rule in Britain; a financial document of 8 January AD 57; new evidence for Julius Classicus, a figure later known to history as a leader of the Batavian revolt, revealed to be the prefect of the Sixth Cohort of Nervians in the first decades of Roman London; a contract from 21 October AD 62 to bring 'twenty loads of provisions' from Verulamium to London by 13 November, a year after the Boudican Revolt. The tablet reveals precious details of the rapid recovery of Roman London. The names of nearly 100 people, from a cooper, brewer and judge, to soldiers, slaves and freedmen reveal early London was inhabited by businessmen and soldiers, most likely from Gaul and the Rhineland.

The preservation of the wood tablets is in itself remarkable, as wood rarely survives when buried in the ground. The waterlogged conditions of the site on the bed of the Walbrook - one of the "lost" rivers of London that dominated the area in the Roman period - created an anaerobic environment that stopped oxygen from decaying the wood and leather artefacts, preserving them in excellent condition. A wooden door is another prize find. Tree ring samples can be taken which will provide dendrochronological dating for Roman London, expected to be earlier than the current dating of AD 47. Experts believe it "will transform our understanding" of Roman London.

The fragile tablets were kept in water before MOLA conservators carefully

The site contains layer upon layer of Roman timber buildings, fences and yards, all beautifully preserved

Sophie Jackson MOLA

cleaned them and, using a waxy substance, PEG, which replaced some of the water content, treated them before they were freeze-dried. Recesses in the rectangular tablets were originally filled with blackened beeswax, with text inscribed into the wax with styluses. Although the wax hasn't survived, the writing occasionally went through the wax to mark the wood. As tablets were reused, in some cases several layers of text built up on the tablets, making them particularly challenging to decode. Some are thought to contain affectionate letters.

They have been deciphered and interpreted by classicist and cursive Latin expert, Dr Roger Tomlin, using photography with raking light and microscopic analysis.

Built-up earth waterfronts and timber structures, including a complex Roman drainage system used to discharge waste from industrial buildings have also been found. At 40ft it was also one of the deepest archaeological digs in London.

MOLA's Sophie Jackson said the site contains "layer upon layer of Roman timber buildings, fences and yards, all beautifully preserved and containing amazing personal items, clothes and even documents."

The site also includes a previously unexcavated section of the Temple of Mithras which was first unearthed in 1954. The site will eventually become the entrance to the Waterloo and City line at Bank station, and the temple and finds from the excavation will become part of a public exhibition at Bloomberg's headquarters, once it is completed.

The full research is published in *Roman London's first voices: writing tablets from the Bloomberg excavations, 2010-14*, £32 Available at www.mola.org.uk/publications ■

Cressingham Gardens Estate legal challenge

The 1960s Cressingham Gardens Estate is a low rise, small scale estate made up of 306 homes, 213 of which are council homes. It contains plenty of green space, and was described by Lord Esher, when president of RIBA in 1966, as 'one of the nicest small schemes in England'. Since 2012 residents of the estate have campaigned for repairs to be made to the estate; six flats have stood empty for over 16 years.

In February 2014 Lambeth Council set up the Cressingham Gardens Project Team to consider the future of the estate, and put forward options for discussion. These included:

- Refurbishing the estate;
- Refurbishing plus infilling to create new homes;
- Partial demolition of the estate, with extra new build homes sold at top market price;
- Full demolition and rebuilding of the estate

Following a three month consultation at the end of 2014 when the vast majority of the residents made it clear that they favoured refurbishment over demolition, Lambeth Council suddenly announced that all options to refurbish the estate were off the table. This decision was then rubber stamped by the council's cabinet members.

Lambeth claimed that following financial analysis on the refurbishment options they would not be consulted on further. Only the options to demolish would now be considered.

Successful judicial review

A tenant of Lambeth Council applied for the council's decision to be judicially reviewed at the High Court. This was granted and took place on 11 June 2015. The High Court found that the council acted unlawfully when it removed options from a public consultation over plans to redevelop the south London estate.

Lambeth Council will now have to re-consult in relation to the refurbishment options and the redevelopment options. ■

The Evolution of BIDs in London

John Griffiths surveys the progress of London's Business Improvement Districts

*John Griffiths is a Director of Rocket Science (www.rocketsciencelab.co.uk) and one of the authors of *The Evolution of London's Business Improvement Districts*, a report based on research commissioned by the GLA and the London Enterprise Panel from *Future of London and Rocket Science**

One of Boris Johnson's final acts as Mayor of London was to announce he had achieved his second-term manifesto target of seeing 50 Business Improvement Districts set up in the capital. London's reaching 50 BIDs (almost a quarter of the total in the UK) does not mean we are at saturation point. Several of the 14 boroughs which have not embraced BIDs are considering their feasibility, including Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and Haringey. However, the 50 BID milestone is an opportune moment to reflect on what BIDs have achieved, their strengths and weaknesses and how the new Mayor of London may decide to enable them to work more collaboratively with other partners who are interested in the place-shaping of London's many different communities.

The first BID in London

The first BID in London, Kingston First, was set up in 2005 and in 2015 entered its third 5-year term. Term renewal is regarded as one of the most telling indicators of a BID's success. All eight that have had renewal ballots since 2012 have seen an increase in turnout and approval rates. And yet, whilst London's BIDs seem here to stay, they still face considerable challenges:

- Cuts in local government funding mean that BIDs have an opportunity to expand their responsibilities and importance, but this also threatens their *raison d'être* as business-led membership organisations which, first and foremost, exist to add value to statutory provision not to substitute for it;
- Opportunities presented by the government's commitment to devolution and localism also bring risks and uncertainties for BIDs in terms of their financial sustainability, given changes to local government finance, rate revaluation and new taxation mechanisms;
- Expectations of BIDs to play a role as convenors and enablers of local/neighbourhood plans bring added responsibility and requirements in terms of professional skills, and expectations of greater accountability and transparency to stakeholders other than just BID levy payers.

The appeal of BIDS

BIDs appeal to the majority of London's councils for different reasons. Inevitably, as town halls face further funding cuts, BIDs appear attractive as a money-saving device. Within that framework, some London boroughs adopt a hands-off approach, reaching a baseline-agreement for local services, but largely recognising BIDs' autonomy as private-sector organisations. In contrast to this *laissez-faire* approach, others have sought collaboration in the form of public-private partnerships. Councils that have redefined themselves as enablers, see BIDs as integral to establishing new forms of service delivery and stimulating economic growth. Boroughs which have taken this approach include the City of Westminster, home to eight BIDs; Lambeth (6); Southwark and Camden (4 each).

Westminster, for example, recently instigated regular meetings between the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Business and Economic Development and the borough's BID chief executives. This is a clear signal to the BIDs that they are regarded as key to the economic development of the borough. The meetings enable the BIDs to report back on council services in their areas, but also to identify opportunities for contracting out services, including to local BID partnerships. The council has also encouraged BIDs (eg Victoria and the New West End Company) to support the work of local Neighbourhood Forums; as business led forums they can then access Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Lambeth's transformation into a 'Cooperative Council' includes identifying opportunities to break up bigger contracts as they come up for renewal; smaller contracts, delivered more locally, have provided opportunities for BIDs (eg Vauxhall BID taking over management of Vauxhall Park under a council contract). The Council's bi-monthly BID forum also lets BIDs propose and test new ideas, including South Bank BID's proposal for a shared apprenticeship scheme.

Systems for engagement need to be robust. There will be occasions when the

BID's and the local authority's interests conflict. Angel BID, for example, which has a close working relationship with LB Islington, found itself leading a vociferous and ultimately successful community campaign against the council's proposed parking policy. In Croydon, relations with the BID became temporarily strained last year when the Council's Labour administration took umbrage at the blue uniforms, along with bowler hats, of the BID's new Street Ambassadors. They now wear an eye-catching pink.

The Evolution of BIDS report, March 2016

One of the report's main recommendations to the new London Mayor is to focus less on the setting up of yet more BIDs, but rather to find ways to support existing BIDs as agents of local partnership. The growth in number and diversity of BIDs in the capital calls for a greater awareness of the sector's segmentation, enabling groups of BIDs to collaborate on different issues, and with the voluntary sub-regional arrangements of boroughs which are linked to London's devolution proposals. In the meantime, this is happening as much by chance as by design, with an ad hoc mix of BID-financed infrastructure and area-based partnerships in place (eg the Cross River Partnership), providing support for both inter-BID collaboration, as well as cross-borough public-private initiatives.

As, in the words of one BID Chief Executive, the "new kids on the municipal block" BIDs are quickly having to find their feet in a fast-changing environment for both local government and wider governance arrangements in London. It will be those BIDs with an enterprising mind set, political nous, an open and supportive relationship with their local community and a propensity to collaborate which succeed. As new BIDs continue to emerge whilst others grow in maturity, the London BID community will become increasingly diverse. This will require a variety of different support arrangements and partnerships – both area and issue based – in order to harness BID energies and resources, enabling BIDs to maximise their contribution to tackling London's policy priorities which is in the interests of both their members and the wider community. ■

Is the Planning System working?

Civic Voice APPG

Michael Hammerson reports on the All Party Parliamentary Group Meeting for Civic Societies held by Civic Voice on 7th June, 2016

The APPG For Civic Societies held at the Houses of Parliament in June was chaired by Craig Mackinlay MP and was attended by an influential group of MPs and Lords: Scott Mann MP, Vice-Chair of the APPG on Local Democracy, Lord Porter, Chair of the Local Government Association, Clive Betts, MP Chair of CLG Select Committee and Baroness Parminter.

There were over 100 representatives from a wide range of amenity and civic groups from as far as Ilkeley and Winchester. There were also professional planning and heritage-related organisations, including the Heritage of London Trust; Local Authority Councillors, a Planning consultant, and a corner shopkeeper badly affected by the new permitted development rules.

Mr. Mackinlay said that all MPs were bombarded by their local societies about the Housing and Planning Bill, and especially the 3rd Party Right of Appeal. The Minister is aware that communities need to be heard if Localism is to be effective.

Mr. Mann said that Planning concerns come up more at his surgeries (in Cornwall) than anything else. He expressed concern that developers are exploiting out of date local plans, and that Neighbourhood Plans are not being given enough weight.

Baroness Parminter reported on efforts to oppose the Housing & Planning Bill. There was cross-party support in the Lords to get 3rd Party Right of Appeal into it but a majority vote of 32 was ignored by the Government. Ministers regarded it as "complicated and unpredictable" but it has been shown to work abroad (e.g. New Zealand) and they will continue to press for it.

Lord Porter of Spalding had worked on the NPPF with Greg Clark. He was critical of the Treasury's continued view that it is "all the fault of the planning system"; when it is really a failure of fiscal policy. He was pro-growth, considered the NPPF perfectly adequate and held the view that mass building would cause a house price crash. There are 470,000 unimplemented planning permissions but it is not in the interests of developers to build them all at once; their aim is to maintain their land bank value which means they build only about 120-140,000 a year. There should be more smaller developers in whose interests it is to build. More permissions are actually being granted, but the rate of building is not increasing.

Clive Betts, MP also flagged up his concern at the number of unimplemented Planning

Permissions while local authorities are still blamed for not meeting their targets. He criticised the Government's housing policies, and the Treasury's view, still prevalent in Government, that the Planning System was an obstacle to growth. He disagreed with Lord Porter that mass building would drive down house prices. Local Plans needed to be simplified - some are far too large and complex - but it should be a statutory responsibility, and not taken over by Government if not in place. The process has been made more and more confusing by constantly changing permitted development.

Points and questions from the floor

Too few Planning Officers: We cannot have effective planning if there are not enough Planning Officers; they do not have time to visit sites and it is impossible to speak to them.

Pre-application discussions: The issue of pre-application discussions was flagged up. Lord Porter suggested that developers should go straight to the people likely to object and find out what the issues are.

Neighbourhood Plans ignored: Buckingham Society and the Crawley Parish Councillor said their Councils have no Local Plan and are ignoring the Neighbourhood Plan,

Historic buildings in danger: Diana Beattie, Heritage of London Trust, said that a huge number of historic buildings in London are being allowed to fall into decay by developers who own them; Councils must threaten to use Compulsory Purchase Orders if they are not brought into use.

Viability assessments: Battersea raised the issue that developers in London use confidential viability assessments to get away with less affordable housing; and the Planning Authorities accept these at the pre-application stage, leaving local people stitched up.

Commercial space to residential: A shopkeeper from Barnes gave his personal experience of a developer wanting to convert his restaurant to residential under permitted development. Despite 430 objections and rejection by the Planning Committee it was allowed on appeal. He will lose his business. Is the intention of permitted development to make people homeless and close businesses? Others told of similar problems and a threat to their local shops.

The East Kent representative said we don't need more housing; we need economic boosting. ■

Street Design for All

An update of national advice and good practice

Written & produced by: Colin J Davis

Civic Voice, with the Department for Transport and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, commissioned Colin Davis of the Public Realm Information and Advice Network to produce a new manual, Street Design for All. It brings together current thought and practice of several official, professional and special interest organisations in the art of Street Design.

It is part of Civic Voice's campaign to support local communities working for better place making. Some long established practices are challenged and new ideas put forward.

It is endorsed by the Minister for Transport, Robert Goodwill, Griff Rhys Jones, President, Civic Voice, and Peter Dickinson, Chair of the Urban Design Panel of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.

It is designed to be used by professionals and also to help local community groups understand how they can take part in the development and adaptation of their own streets.

Those who are acquainted with Colin Davis's previous work will know that this is a highly readable and well illustrated manual which will be a very useful tool for amenity and civic groups.

W It can be downloaded as a pdf directly from the internet by typing

Street Design for All ■

Inspector approves controversial new Brentford Football Stadium

Brentford Football Club's proposals for a new 20,000-seater stadium have caused massive controversy. The site, on Lionel Road between Kew Bridge railway station and the M4, is in a heavily congested area. The plans rely on profits from "enabling developments" around the stadium in order to pay for it. These involve 910 flats and a hotel in tall blocks at almost three times the density in the London Plan on three additional plots of land which in turn require Compulsory Purchase Orders. These would be sold to developers with outline planning permission, full permission being applied for later. No affordable housing is offered. It is the enabling element of the scheme that has caused widespread objections. Kew Society said "We are not opposed to the new stadium but the enabling developments would have a long-term impact on vistas from several heritage sites in the area and on traffic and air pollution, already a significant problem in this part of London.

Hounslow planning committee approved the scheme despite "concerns about impacts on the townscape including views from the World Heritage-listed Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, the living conditions of neighbours, noise and disruption, pressure on local infrastructure and parking, as well as traffic and public transport congestion."

English Heritage, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Transport for London all objected. The North and South Circular

Roads would be gridlocked on match days and the two nearby stations, Kew Bridge and Gunnersbury, would be overwhelmed by the number of spectators because neither could be expanded in capacity. In addition to Kew Society, other local amenity groups such as West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society, and Strand on the Green Residents' Association have all objected, and at two well-attended public meetings most residents were against the plans as was the owner of one of the plots of land subject to the Compulsory Purchase Order.

Local requests for sight of the financial viability assessment in full, so that the community could assess whether all alternative routes to funding really have been exhausted, was withheld as commercially sensitive.

Despite all this in April this year the plans were given the go-ahead following a Planning Inquiry. The Inspector confirmed the Compulsory Purchase Order to acquire the remaining land needed for the scheme, and his decision was approved by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Kew Society is maintaining its objections to the detailed planning application (ref 00703/A/P11) More information can be found at: <http://kewsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Kew-Society-objections-to-Brentford-enabling-developments-reserved-matters.pdf> ■

Community Infrastructure Levy CIL to be revised

The Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL") was introduced in April 2010 to provide a faster, fairer, more certain and transparent means of collecting developer contributions to infrastructure than Section 106 planning obligations. However six years on the Department for Communities and Local Government felt these aims are not being achieved and set up a review panel to examine the workings of the Levy.

Chaired by former British Property Federation chief executive Liz Peace, the review panel has recommended a radical overhaul of the Levy, a major policy U-turn. Ms Peace said that the levy is 'not providing a huge amount of funding for infrastructure'

and has failed to provide a 'faster, simpler, more transparent system' than section 106. It is thought that CIL will be stripped back to its original purpose of funding local infrastructure with a simple, national base tax on all new developments.

Section 106 charges would return for infrastructure requirements on large developments.

The changes are expected to be considered after parliament's summer recess.

Changes are likely to need primary legislation and could be inserted into the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill. *Peter Eversden* ■

Carlton Tavern to be rebuilt

Victory for campaigners at public inquiry

The council has required them to reconstruct the pub brick by brick.

Just as the 1920s Carlton Tavern in Kilburn was being considered for listed status by Historic England in April 2015, it was demolished by owners CLTX. A Westminster council representative described it as a flagrant breach of planning control and building regulations with the sole aim of frustrating the designation of the pub as a Grade II listed building. CLTX's application to redevelop the site had been refused by Westminster City Council.

Following the demolition, CLTX appealed the refusal of their planning application, which included a new pub and 10 flats above over four floors. They demanded the appeal be heard in private, by written representation. In response, the Council listed the building as an asset of community value and issued CLTX with an enforcement order, requiring them to reconstruct the pub brick by brick. CLTX appealed this and a public inquiry was held in May. The Inspector has upheld Westminster's decision and given CLTX two years to rebuild the pub. ■

Launderettes win reprieve

Launderettes have won a reprieve from residential development

The Government has strengthened the prior approval terms required relating to the need for the facility in a local area before launderettes can be converted to residential use. Local authorities will be allowed to retain launderettes where they believe such services are still required. ■

The National Infrastructure Commission

David Lewis reports on three initial studies

The National Infrastructure Commission, which is already at work on a shadow basis, is seeking views on the proposed governance, structure and operation of the Commission. It has called for evidence as part of a consultation on its three initial studies.

Purpose of the Commission

The purpose of the National Infrastructure Commission, an independent Non-Departmental Public Body, is to identify the UK's strategic infrastructure needs over the next 10 to 30 years and examine the most pressing infrastructure issues.

It will produce an Assessment in each Parliament and examine (under terms of reference set by the Government) proposed solutions to the most significant challenges. If these recommendations are accepted by the Government ('Endorsed Recommendations') they will become Government policy, subject to review where necessary by the relevant Secretary of State. It will need to consider the environmental, social and economic costs of a policy or study alongside the anticipated benefits, and will need to look at alternatives.

Promoting cross-party consensus

The Commission will engage with private sector infrastructure owners and operators, economic regulators and relevant public bodies, and other relevant stakeholders, such as environmental and community groups, and will aim to promote cross-party consensus on its recommendations.

Impact on housing supply

The Commission will consider the potential impact of infrastructure decisions on housing supply where it can affect the viability of both large and small housing projects. Information about the location of strategically important housing allocations, such as new settlements and urban extensions and when they will come forward, will be an important component of the evidence base collected by the Commission. ■

Old Foyles bookshop facing demolition

The demolition would strike at the heart of why Soho is so special.

Yet another piece of London's heritage - the original Foyles bookshop in Charing Cross Road - seems set for demolition following the new Mayor Sadiq Khan's refusal to intervene.

The nine-storey mixed-use development for Soho club owner Paul Raymond's Soho Estates, will contain office space, retail and restaurants and a new facade for a Grade II-listed building on Greek Street. The entire south side of Manette Street and a terrace of buildings on Charing Cross Road which date from the 17th to the 20th century and include three "unlisted buildings of merit" would be demolished.

The Victorian Society, Save and Historic England all wrote to the Mayor saying that it would "strike at the heart of why Soho is so special". Historic England chief executive Duncan Wilson said: "The height, bulk and corporate character of the design for this building to replace the much-loved original Foyles store on Charing Cross Road is completely out of keeping with the historic grain of Soho.

The GLA also objected, stating: "The loss of the original Foyles building causes significant harm to the conservation area and consideration should be given to façade retention."

Foyles' new store, designed by Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, opened a few doors down in 2014. The practice was named London Architect of the Year by the RIBA on the strength of it.

SAVE has appealed to Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to call in the proposals for a public inquiry. They also launched a petition to Greg Clark, the previous Secretary of State to demonstrate the public support for retaining and reusing these buildings. Find it at:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-demolition-of-soho-save-a-key-west-end-landmark> ■

Norton Folgate: the Fight is on - again!

Following Tower Hamlets Council's rejection of the application to redevelop Norton Folgate, creating 340,000 sq ft of office space, 40 homes, shops and restaurants; (see newsforum no. 71) the plans were called in by Mayor Boris Johnson. In January he overturned the Tower Hamlets decision and gave approval for the contentious plans. The Spitalfields Trust immediately applied for and was granted a judicial review on four grounds which they believe made Mayor Johnson's calling in of the decision unlawful. The Trust obtained evidence through Freedom of Information of "procedural irregularities in the Greater London Authority's (GLA) handling of the case".

Disappointment for the Spitalfields Trust

The Review was heard in the High Court in May and the verdict was a bitter disappointment for the Spitalfields Trust: Justice Gilbert gave his verdict in favour of the Mayor of London and against the Trust.

While he confirmed the Trust's contention of the mishandling of the Mayor's call-in he nevertheless concluded that these errors would not have made a difference to the Mayor's decision to approve, therefore the decision is legitimate.

Challenge in the Court of Appeal.

Spitalfields Trust disagrees with this finding and have decided to challenge it in the Court of Appeal. They consider that their position has been advanced by the judgment which establishes that a series of errors were indeed made, with wider implications for the Mayor's handling of planning applications.

They have widened their challenge by questioning the fact that the GLA planning officers wrote their recommendations to suit the predetermined decision, emphasising the supposed benefits of the development and neglecting other factors; they apparently told the developer what the recommendation would be before reading statutorily relevant material. ■

Spotlight on the Putney Society

The amenity society for Putney and Roehampton

By **Judith Chegwidan**

It all started with a tree, specifically an elm tree which screened the view of a hospital chimney from residential neighbours but which was about to be felled. Richard Newton, one of our founding members living in the affected road, objected and contacted fellow residents, and wrote to the local newspaper and the Civic Trust. This was a catalyst for a group of concerned residents to get together to form an amenity society. By early 1960 a constitution had been drawn up and 34 members enrolled. At its inception the Putney Society was fortunate in its friends and members. It received advice from the Chairman of the Chelsea Society and from a local councillor and member of the LCC. Amongst its active members were two young architects, one of whom organised a survey of the district, which formed the basis of the Society's policies on planning. Regular scrutiny of local planning applications started almost as soon as the Society was set up, as were regular meetings on transport and traffic issues.

Today the structure of the Society is surprisingly much the same; from the beginning it has had Buildings, Transport and Open Spaces panels (albeit with rather longer and more portentous names). In 1970 the Community Panel was set up and all four panels continue to flourish with regular monthly panel meetings attracting at least 5-10 members. Household membership now totals around 900, which probably represents about 1,400 residents in Putney and Roehampton.

Our Bulletin has been a key method of keeping in touch with members since the inception of the Society – initially typed and cyclostyled in the home of one of the founding members. We are one of the few societies to issue 11 newsletters a year and, in the last twelve months, we have moved to colour printing; there is so much panel activity and local issues to report that the Bulletin often runs to 6 pages. We are working towards making our website more interactive and using Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness of our campaigns and meetings.

Key issues over the years:

The built environment From the outset the Society has been proactive in protecting the quality of the built environment in

We aim to identify ways in which we can increase our visibility, attract new members and improve our campaigning strength.

Putney and Roehampton; in the late 1960s we produced a detailed report recommending seven local conservation areas, several of which were subsequently designated by Wandsworth Council. Although the Society is not opposed to construction in the area as long as it is in keeping with the surrounding architecture, it has objected to overdevelopment of some sites in Putney particularly where height has been an issue. It is clear that the pressure for higher buildings is not abating, despite the impact the “canyon effect” along main roads can have on air quality.

In common with many other amenity societies across London we are concerned about the amount of commercial space (mainly but not exclusively office space) that is being replaced by residential apartments under the permitted development regulations. The resulting loss of local employment has knock-on effects for local shops and restaurants which lose important daytime trade. We believe that a thriving community is one which offers a balance between residential and commercial interests.

Traffic and transport

The problems of the traffic flow from one of London's major river crossings being forced into the Victorian Putney High Street have, unsurprisingly, dominated our discussions over the last 50 years. In the 1970s the Society campaigned against the threat of the Motorway Box. Today we still struggle with the impact of heavy traffic in the town centre, with the knowledge that this traffic results in one of the highest levels of air pollution in London. Recent studies have shown that poor air quality is the third major cause of death in Wandsworth. The Society has been campaigning vigorously to reduce pollutants for the past five years, carrying

out its own Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) pollution monitoring in 2011 and again this year and lobbying Wandsworth Council and TfL to introduce effective measures to cut pollution. Many bus routes use the High Street (according to measurements made by Kings College buses account for around 67% of the pollutants) and TfL have now introduced hybrid buses or have retrofitted catalysis to other buses in an attempt to cut NO₂ and particulate emissions. Going forward we are working with the Council to ensure that the effectiveness of these measures is checked and to seek other ways of improving air quality such as limiting lorry/van deliveries at busy times (restrictions recently introduced) and looking at the effectiveness of differential parking charges for older diesel vehicles (as happens in Kensington and Chelsea).

The condition of the overground and underground stations continues to be an issue – one of our long serving vice presidents joined in 1974 because of the run down nature of Putney Station. Today we are concerned about the snail-like progress on “Access for All” improvements at the same station – one of the busiest in London.

We have successfully campaigned for the extension of 20mph zones in large parts of Putney and continue to press for improved cycling routes.

Aircraft noise From the outset the Society has been a vocal supporter of HACAN in their attempts to reduce the impact of aircraft noise over southwest London. We have backed our MP, Justine Greening, and our local council in their opposition to the construction of a third runway at Heathrow. We submitted our own response to the Airport Commission and were distressed to find that its recommendations were for an increase in runway capacity at Heathrow. We will continue to challenge its findings on noise, affordability and ability to meet EU air quality standards.

Heritage

The Society has produced eight blue plaques since 2007 to commemorate the lives of those that have made a significant contribution to the area. Plaques have been erected for Captain Lawrence Oates, the Antarctic explorer; Gavin Ewart FRSL,



The Putney Society

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Judith Chegwidan

the poet; Lord Hugh Jenkins, Labour politician; Norman Parkinson CBE, the photographer; Sir William Lancaster, philanthropist; J R Ackerley, writer; Edward Gibbon, historian and Thomas Cromwell, Tudor statesman. The last plaque was unveiled by Hilary Mantel in 2013.

Riverside and open spaces

Members of the Society worked with other local groups in a successful campaign to prevent the main drive site for excavating the Thames Tunnel (or super sewer) being built at Barn Elms (close to Putney Embankment). We feel for our neighbours in Fulham, where the access site will now be located. Many of our members consider that this expensive infrastructure development may not be the best way to deal with the additional burden of sewage and surface water disposal in London.

A major concern throughout our history has been the protection of trees and open spaces. Over the years we have worked with Wandsworth Council and the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators to plant trees wherever appropriate. In recent months we have also become involved with volunteering on Wimbledon and Putney Commons and Putney Heath to work with the Conservators to protect the heathland from scrub invasion. As funding for municipal parks is cut the need to create support groups for local parks is becoming clear. Recently the Society acted as a facilitator in the creation of the Friends of Wandsworth Park.

Community

The Community Panel has a wide remit – issues range from health to policing by way of education and affordable housing. It has recently run a successful first aid course which led to the discovery that there are few defibrillators in the area and to start to campaign to increase both the number of defibrillators and to improve knowledge about their whereabouts. It is surprising that the emergency services have very partial information and we hope to remedy this over the next few months. The provision of mental health services remains a concern and the Society has organised meetings on local primary mental health services such as mindfulness and sleep clinics as well as responding in detail to consultation of the future of secondary and tertiary mental health services in south west London.

But we should remember that we are not always right - In the 1970s members of the Executive opposed the sale of Church land to fund the rebuilding of the historic St Mary's Church after a destructive fire. Today the rebuilt St Mary's is a thriving community hub where we hold many of our meetings.

Future - Promoting the Society

We are very aware that many people in Putney and Roehampton are unaware of the Society and we aim to identify ways in which we can increase our visibility, attract new members and thus improve our campaigning strength. We have just set up a discount scheme for our members encouraging them to shop at local small independent traders. ■



St Mary's Church

Age: Founded in 1959.

Circumstances of Birth: Concerns about a tree felling was the catalyst for concerned residents to form an amenity society.

Biggest Successes: (1) A monthly bulletin (paper and emailed) and a lively website; (2) Working with local residents in achieving a satisfactory planning permission for Putney Wharf, behind our parish church, after years of meetings, appeals, and a Public Inquiry. The result: an award-winning riverside redevelopment that has transformed this part of Putney town centre; (3) Strong opposition to very tall (26 and 21 storeys) landmark buildings opposite East Putney station resulted in refusal of planning permission; (4) Citizen science NO2 pollution measuring exercise highlighting heavy pollution in our town centre and subsequent work with Wandsworth Council and TfL to introduce less polluting buses; (5) Blue plaque scheme to commemorate eminent local people.

Biggest Disappointments/Frustrations: (1) Strong opposition to massive development on Putney High Street/ Lacy Road led to recent refusal of planning permission, which was then overturned by the Mayor of London; (2) Failure to encourage younger people to join the Society.

Present Preoccupations: Air pollution levels in Putney, reducing traffic levels and speeds, enhancing the pedestrian environment on Putney High Street; trying to retain trees or ensure replanting of trees at major development sites along Upper Richmond Road; keeping watch on the plans for regeneration of the Alton Estate in Roehampton; loss of office space to residential development.

Working Details: Registered charity; Executive Committee currently 13 strong; four panels (Buildings, Community, Open Spaces, Transport); membership: 900 households and businesses; annual subscription shortly to be raised to £18. Eight members'/ public meetings p.a. on topics of local and national interest; programme of social events and visits to places of interest; community activities e.g. litter-picking, first aid course.

Special Characteristics: Victorian/ Edwardian suburb divided by major arterial roads; Roehampton estates; iconic Putney Embankment with boathouses - start of annual University Boat Race.

Last Word: We shall continue to fight for our charity's objects: to promote, for the public benefit, the improvement, development and preservation of the character and amenities of the Putney and Roehampton area of historic, ecological or other public interest. ■



Putney Bridge



News from the Friends of Capital Transport Campaign

Andrew Bosi discusses the results of the consultation on Crossrail; the Gospel Oak line to Barking; the latest on HS2; and police response to sex crime on the underground

Crossrail 2 publishes consultation results

The results of the consultation which closed on January 8th were published on the day of the Budget. The 357 page report details the arguments put forward by over 20,000 respondents.

The largest response was in opposition to the station at King's Road, Chelsea, but there was an equally well argued case made for it by a significant minority. There was overwhelming opposition to Balham displacing Tooting Broadway, for which a wide range of supportive arguments was put forward. There was considerable opposition to the plans for Wimbledon, and a preference for Turnpike Lane/Alexandra Palace over Wood Green. More respondents were opposed to the impact on Wandsworth Common, Shoreditch Park and Bradbury Street in Dalston.

The stated purpose of the consultation was to minimise petitions against the Bill once it enters Parliament. It would therefore be surprising if they continued to advance Balham over Tooting. On the other hand, there is pressure to reduce the cost and speculation that the New Southgate branch will fall as a result of this economy drive, or be relegated to a later phase.

As we go to press, Crossrail2 has published a first response to the concerns raised in the consultation. It includes a vigorous defence of New Southgate. There is hope offered to some local concerns, including Bradbury Street, but elsewhere they remain wedded to their original ideas. They say they are anxious to minimise loss of residential properties and are looking at ways to achieve this.

Transport & Works Act Order published for Barking Riverside

The Order to be made under the Transport & Works Act for an extension of the Gospel Oak line to Barking Riverside has been published. Disappointingly, there is not even passive provision for the intermediate station which so many respondents to earlier consultation have called for.

HS2 enters the Lords

There was considerable disquiet at the performance of the House of Commons select committee looking at the hybrid bill for HS2. Members were often absent from sessions, seemed to want the thing

There was some indication that the government feels it has lost control of the HS2 scheme, with HS2 Limited taking decisions without reference to them.

to be over as quickly as possible and were increasingly unwilling to consider the petitions before them. As the last part of the route to be considered, it was felt that London and Camden lost out.

It is likely therefore that Camden will go first in the Lords. Co-ordinated by the Camden Society, there is now an impressive array of alternative schemes, all of which seem better to meet the stated objectives of HS2 while causing less disruption to Euston station and the approaches to it. Since HS2 have themselves failed to resolve the question of a connection to HS1, and have no clear plan for Euston, the Committee would do well to take these alternatives seriously. The Transport Infrastructure Commission needs to take a grip before any long lasting decisions are made. The concept of the Commission, even if it is perceived to be headed by someone gung-ho for any railway development, would be sound if they were allowed to appraise the alternatives before Governments became committed to one idea or another. We already have a Crossrail Act that puts support services in the way of HS2 at Old Oak, simply because HS2 had not been thought of when the Bill was drawn up and enacted.

The list of alternatives is impressive. High Speed Rail relies on the use of existing lines out of Euston, but has the advantage of reducing journey times to many more major population centres than HS2. By serving New Street rather than Curzon Street, it retains interchange with Cross Country and other services. It relies on Crossrail absorbing the semi-fast services to Tring, currently operated by London Midland. It preserves housing in West Euston but does not address the threat to social housing between Euston and King's Cross posed by the plans for

Crossrail2, which would not be necessary if Euston were avoided altogether. It also does not involve Old Oak Common.

Euston Express and Double Deck Down provide High Speed track all the way from Old Oak Common. Double Deck Down accommodates all the existing services on top of HS2, with minimal impact on housing, although again the problem of Crossrail2 would remain. Both require a temporary terminus at Old Oak Common, which would give more time for sensible thought about the link to HS1. The temporary terminus is on the government's radar as they struggle to balance the needs of thousands of passengers using Euston Mainline station every day with the need to redevelop it, which would arise even without HS2.

There was some indication at the CBT RAIL CHAT meeting in April that the government feels it has lost control of the scheme, with HS2 Limited taking decisions without reference to them. While they may not empathise with local people over the twenty year disruption at Euston, they probably do not like the idea of a new railway arriving at a building site.

HS2 - another critical report

In the meantime a further National Audit Commission report has questioned whether HS2 can keep within its spiralling budget if the present timetable is maintained, suggesting that a later start date might significantly cut costs.

Reprieve for BTP sex crime unit

British Transport Police seems to have thought better of their plan to disband their unit of specialist officers dealing with sex crime on the underground. With the impending introduction of Night Tube there are concerns that crimes against the person, particularly against women, will see an increase as a result of providing a service in the hours when drink fuelled crime is more likely to occur.

Southern Railway - the Mayor responds

In response to the chaos on Southern Railway, the Mayor of London has called on government to withdraw the franchise. There are precedents for this: South-eastern in 2003 and ECML in 2007. ■

City North at Finsbury Park - yet more buy to leave?

by Diane Burridge

Two 23 storey towers alongside a 12 storey building are planned next to Finsbury Park station, very near Finsbury Park. Described in publicity as a 'flagship, mixed-use development... creating a new destination for shopping and dining', it seemed to me like yet another soulless overdevelopment in London.

At a public display in May 2016 organised by the developers Telford Homes, in partnership with the Business Design Centre Group, it was difficult, for example, to see any play areas for children. Upon request, I was shown two small areas: one on a roof and a small gated one tucked away in the shadows of the towers.

Perhaps families are not expected to live in this development. The hosts of this exhibition did not know what sizes the units would be when asked. And of 355 residential apartments planned 47 will be for 'affordable' rent (12%), managed by Newlon Housing Association. And I dread to think what the 'affordable' rent will be.

Of the 308 private apartments remaining, 161 have already been sold off-plan overseas. A tour of the East is now in the pipeline for the remaining 147 homes left to sell. But there will also be a launch in London, I was reassuringly told, as I looked downcast upon hearing this information.

The development will be completed by 2020, and will include a supermarket, a new western entrance into Finsbury Park station, a cinema and gym, as well as 17 commercial units.

It is unbelievable that Islington Council approved this development – going against their own planning policies: tiny private play areas, obstructive views of the towers when looking from Finsbury Park, so little social housing, and many units sold to overseas investors, probably as 'buy to leave'.

What sort of 'communities' are we developing? How could Islington Council have allowed such 'regeneration'? The Council's own planning policy states that no more than 10 storeys are allowed

outside the central zone. Section 4.3.2 of the Finsbury Park Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (March 2016) states that tall buildings in this area are no longer supported under current policy. One has to ask: then why was this development supported in the first place, changing the whole area in one planning approval?

No wonder people renting and wanting to buy a home (the majority) feel alienated if this is the housing that is being built, even by 'caring' councils. What are we doing to London, as similar-type developments crop up all around the city? People one day will look back in dismay at how the city was changed detrimentally so quickly.

To see the agreed Plan:

[http://www.islington.gov.uk/public-records/library/Planning-and-building-control/Publicity/Public-notice/2014-2015/\(2015-03-16\)-Finsbury-Park](http://www.islington.gov.uk/public-records/library/Planning-and-building-control/Publicity/Public-notice/2014-2015/(2015-03-16)-Finsbury-Park) ■

Towers of London - more buy-to-leave concerns - Helen Marcus reports

The drive for more tower blocks in London continues. The number of proposals submitted has almost doubled in the past year from 263 to 436 structures of 20 storeys or higher.

Work has already begun on 89 of these, with planning permission granted on 233 more. A further 114 proposals are awaiting approval from city planners. Some 73 per cent of the schemes are residential; only three such schemes were refused last year.

More sky-scrapers are planned for sites in the City, at 1 and 40 Leadenhall (dubbed Gotham City) and 22 and 150 Bishopsgate, although it is now being said that their completion may have been thrown into doubt after the EU referendum.

Residential towers

The Estates Gazette London Residential Research has found that 90% of all tower applications have been in Opportunity Areas, with nearly half of them in just 4: Greenwich Peninsula (54), Isle of Dogs (50), Lower Lea Valley & Stratford (46) and Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea (42). Tower Hamlets has 93 new high rises.

The Vauxhall Tower 1 St George Wharf is a depressing symbol of much that is wrong with the housing market at present. Nearly 600ft high with 50 storeys, it dominates the London skyline, looming over the Houses of Parliament and damaging the integrity of its world heritage status.

Of the tower's 214 apartments, almost two-thirds are owned by foreign buyers who do not live in them; a quarter of the apartments have been bought by companies registered in offshore tax havens. No one is registered to vote in the UK in 184 of them. They are not homes but investment opportunities.

The scheme was granted planning permission in 2005 by John Prescott, while Deputy Prime Minister in the last Labour Government, overruling not only the local authority, Lambeth Council, which had refused permission, but also the planning inspector.

Many fear that not only the historic character of London is being put at risk, but its social fabric. Planning permission for residential towers is supposedly contingent on the provision of affordable housing, but

developers are increasingly using "viability" assessments to get round this obligation.

Westminster revisiting its policy

Robert Davis, deputy leader and cabinet member for the built environment at Westminster City Council, told the London Real Estate Forum in June that "the City Council is now revisiting its building height policy, which now stands out-of-date. We are in the process of drawing up a set of principles to frame the debate, which will explain the issues and set out the challenges. "And whilst the West End will therefore be protected from a rash of skyscrapers, its future remains of paramount importance to Westminster."

"Only through a full debate can we promote the right kind of growth that supports the City Council's economic goals, but also protects the exceptional heritage that Westminster has to offer." It is not clear whether he means more towers or more control of them!

It has just been reported that the City are also to consult on sites for more towers. ■

A novel plan for affordable homes

According to a report in *The Times* in March, three footballers have set up a charity called the Legacy Foundation that aims to deliver thousands of affordable homes to communities across Britain. Rio Ferdinand has teamed up with Mark Noble, the captain of West Ham, and Bobby Zamora, the ex-England striker, to develop the homes that will include a mix of social housing and affordable homes for key workers such as nurses and teachers. Each housing development will have a sports academy at its centre, using coaches from the area's local football team to train children. Mr Ferdinand, who grew up in a council estate in Peckham, said he wanted to bring a sense of community to some of the poorest areas of the country and has promised to coach at some of the centres.

The charity has struck a deal with authorities for 1,800 homes in Newham, east London, and 1,100 homes in Bedford and is approaching other councils, offering to build on brownfield land or regenerate run down council estates. McLaren Property will help build the homes, funded by private investors. Councils will then be offered leases. ■

Housing associations merger

In April it was announced that three housing associations in the south of England, London & Quadrant, The Hyde Group and East Thames, are to merge, creating one of the biggest housebuilders in the country with the aim of delivering 100,000 affordable homes over the next decade across London and the southeast.

The merger is part of a wave of consolidation among private but non-profit, state-regulated housing associations. But will they still provide homes at "social" rent that are genuinely affordable against incomes? There is no mention of these in the plans.

Government has imposed cuts to social housing rents and decreased grants to the sector. Now the government is conducting a review into the role of housing associations, asking what the sector can do to encourage building. ■

London Housing Commission final report

The London Housing Commission chaired by Lord Kerslake issued its report on March 7. It acknowledged that "In the long-run, an economic policy that encourages a more even distribution of business activity across the country - thus making London a relatively less attractive place to live" - might help to alleviate London's housing crisis but "Measures to reduce demand, such as by achieving more balanced economic growth across the UK, can form only part of the solution".

It acknowledges that "large-scale conversion of office or retail space to new homes on the scale required would risk creating a new problem, by significantly reducing London's space for work and employment".

The report does not appear to acknowledge the role of speculation in making homes unaffordable, or make any recommendations as to how to tackle the problem. While recommending that more land be found to build houses, a review of greenbelt land near public transport sites, and "improving planning", it fails to mention that developers already hold 270,000 unimplemented planning permissions, or their land-banking practices.

Building a new deal for London:

Published 7 Mar 2016

The report and its recommendations can be found on the IPPR website:

www.ippr.org/publications/building-a-new-deal-for-london ■

Supermarket sites for residential development

In *Newsforum* no 71 last year we reported that Tesco and Sainsbury were selling off sites they no longer wanted to develop. Now it appears from a report in the *Estates Gazette* in May that more than a dozen large London supermarket sites are being brought forward for residential-led redevelopment. The supermarkets, trying to drive efficiencies in their portfolios, are keen to cash in on London's increasing land values as they continue to battle against each other to remain price-competitive.

Large, multiple-acre sites in central London with car parks can accommodate hundreds of homes and are worth tens of millions of pounds, which supermarket operators want to realise. *Estates Gazette* identified 15 sites either being sold, coming to market, or with planning permission.

They are using partnership models that allow them to keep their retail footprint with its high day-to-day turnover, while realising the residential value of sites.

Four Tesco stores, including sites in Brixton and Hackney, have been offered to housebuilders and it is thought that Barratt may be working up plans for a residential-led scheme for Morrisons 4.9-acre site, in Camden. Others include Sainsbury's sites in Ladbrooke Grove, Ilford: and Whitechapel; Tesco stores at the Oval, Brixton, Hackney and Bow; and Asda's 8.8-acre site Canary Wharf site with planning permission for 850 homes. ■

£1bn of European money to fund new social housing in UK

It has been confirmed that the European Investment Bank (EIB) agreement to provide £1bn for new social housing investment across the UK, in partnership with the Housing Finance Corporation (HFC) will go ahead despite the recent referendum vote. The money which will fund delivery of 20,000 homes is said to be the bank's largest ever support for social housing anywhere in Europe.

The 30-year long-term EIB loan will be matched by HFC, and benefit from a government guarantee, and is expected to support £2bn of overall investment in new social housing and urban regeneration

schemes by housing association across the country.

The EIB previously invested in low-cost housing in Britain in 2013, when it made a £500 million loan under the Affordable Housing Finance (AHF) initiative to registered providers of social housing in the UK.

See more at:

<https://www.http://bit.ly/29Wvjtc> ■

Provision of affordable housing

In November 2014 a written Ministerial statement introduced a new policy concerning affordable housing, amending the National Planning Practice Guidance. Its effect was to reduce requirements on small sites of fewer than 10 units, and the vacant building credit*. As we reported last year, West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council challenged this and Mr Justice Holgate found in favour of the councils in a Judicial Review last July.

However that ruling was overturned in the Court of Appeal in May when Lord Dyson, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Laws and Lord Justice Treacy upheld the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government appeal.

They have now ruled that the Government's policy on the provision of affordable housing set out in a Written Ministerial Statement was not inconsistent with the statutory planning scheme and was lawful.

**'credit' to be applied which is the equivalent of the gross floorspace of any relevant vacant buildings being brought back into use or demolished as part of the scheme and deducted from the overall affordable housing contribution calculation.*

Important analysis of government role in promulgation of policy

The Court's judgment is an important analysis of the role of central government in promulgating policy, the nature of such policy, and its interaction with the underlying statutory scheme in the planning field. It also contains an important analysis of the scope of the obligations on decision-makers to carry out a lawful consultation, as well as the scope and application of the public sector equality duty. ■

Regina (West Berkshire District Council and Another) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government May 11, 2016 ■

Brixton Nightclub Saved – for now

Planning permission was controversially granted by Lambeth Council planning officers under delegated powers to redevelop Brixton's legendary Club 414 for retail and flats, despite huge public interest and hundreds of objections.

Social and community significance

The Club had important social and community significance. Opened shortly after the Brixton riots of 1985 it has played host to many famous Jamaican performers.

The objectors were given permission by Mr Justice Collins to challenge the decision at a Judicial Review which was heard in May at the Royal Courts of Justice.

At first the Council refused even to agree to a statement of reasons that included unlawful delegation as a reason for quashing the planning permission, and did not accept that the Court could make an order requiring the planning application to be re-determined by its planning committee. However after much negotiation in the corridors of the Court, the Council and the developer accepted Mr Justice Gilbert's direction that the planning permission be quashed as having been taken ultra vires, and be re-determined.

The Council did accept that it had failed to consider the (then emerging) Lambeth Local Plan, which was adopted just one week after the grant of permission. Crucially, the Lambeth Local Plan recognises the importance of protecting the night time economy in Brixton and supports leisure uses where they contribute to the vitality and viability of Brixton town centre.

Planning and licensing interest

This important case will be of interest to both planning and licensing practitioners. At the heart of it was the Council's refusal to consider the role played by nightclubs in contributing to the culture and economy of Brixton town centre.

Bill Linskey, Chair of Brixton Society, comments: The council's guidance on what goes before the planning committee gives too much discretion. Not even a councillor has the right to call-in such an application to the committee - they can ask, but the ultimate decision lies with the chair. Unfortunately, the court decision seems based on an alleged breach of the "statement of community involvement" rather than the planning procedures although, of course, the latter should be tightened in the light of this case.. ■

The London Land Commission

A flawed process

In the last newsforum we asked 'What is the London Land Commission up to?' and raised concerns over the map it published of publicly owned land. Its prime aim having been stated to be finding brownfield land for housing, it listed parks and MOL in a quite random and inexplicable way, including golf courses and allotments, and appeared to contain errors.

The new Mayor has now described this initiative as "A flawed process of identifying public land for homes." It has been revealed that it not only included green spaces but scores of sites that will never be built on, including 10 Downing Street, City Hall, and the British Museum.

The website says the information is currently being analysed by City Hall "to further unlock and speed up the redevelopment of this land" A nice "buy to leave" tower block to replace No. 10 perhaps? ■

Right to light judgement

A couple in the Hertsmere area north of London who had planning permission for an extension at their home believed they could go ahead with the building work.

Their neighbour, a building surveyor, had not formally objected when planning permission was first sought, because he wanted to avoid offending his neighbours and being labelled "awkward".

He did write to Hertsmere Council pointing out the light problems but unfortunately stopped short of a formal objection hoping the plans would be rejected. However, they were approved.

The surveyor asked the couple to change the design of their extension which blocked out light to his bathroom, and a garage which was used as a workshop and office, but they refused.

The building surveyor sued, arguing that the extension broke the right-to-light rule by putting his home in the shade. The judge agreed and awarded damages. An Appeal Court hearing confirmed the judgement, underpinning the importance of right-to-light. ■

Concerns about the quality of Legislation

Report warns about the alarming state of our legislative processes

In his paper *Dangerous Trends in Modern Legislation and how to reverse them*, published by the Centre for Policy Studies in April, Daniel Greenberg, a leading parliamentary draughtsman, warns that the length of new Bills and the number of clauses they include is becoming so great that Parliament is unable to scrutinise them properly. These trends "threaten the effective protection of the rule of law".

The vastly increased number of clauses in new Acts reduces the effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny and allows the Executive to wield ever greater power over Parliament.

The "line-by-line" scrutiny process has become diluted to such a degree that it can no longer be described as taking place. There are often lengthy and significant parts of a Bill that receive no detailed scrutiny at

all at any point in its Parliamentary passage. The paper proposes the introduction of two new elements to the legislative process:

- The Explanatory Notes for each Bill and Act should record the scrutiny given to the legislation in each House; they should also record incidents of certain powers for subordinate and quasi-legislation that undermine Parliamentary control;
- This information should be consolidated into a yearly review, which would be debated in both Houses of Parliament.

These concerns were echoed in letters to *The Times* in May. Lord Lisvane, Clerk of the House of Commons 2011-14, wrote: "The threshold between bills and secondary legislation has risen in recent years, with significant matters of policy and principle frequently being left to regulations made by ministers, often with insufficient

parliamentary scrutiny and control. In some cases, consultation that should have finished well before a bill is introduced is left until after enactment. And there is far too much use of "Henry VIII clauses" which allow the executive to amend, by mere statutory instrument, existing or future acts of parliament."

Lord Judge, Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales 2008-13, agreed saying "Lord Lisvane does not exaggerate the alarming state of our legislative processes. Law-making by secondary legislation has become habitual. Every year statutory instruments covering something like 12,000 printed pages come into force. The real problem is and remains law-making on a vast scale without adequate - indeed with virtually no effective - parliamentary scrutiny." ■

Laundered money and London Homes

The revelations about the Panama papers earlier this year brought into prominence once again the way in which the use of secret offshore structures linked to corruption, criminality and money laundering is distorting the London property market and helping to push up prices.

But what is most shocking is that it has all been known for some time and that nothing has been done. In March 2015 Transparency International UK, published research entitled *Corruption on your Doorstep: How corrupt capital is used to buy property in the UK*. It found "growing evidence that the luxury property market in the UK is a safe haven for laundered wealth, facilitated by the laws that allow UK property to be owned by secret companies registered in offshore havens such as the British overseas territories". Billions of pounds-worth of properties are owned by secretive offshore companies covering up corruption. It is now being openly said that London has become a global magnet for corrupt funds making the city arguably the world capital of money laundering, and that the flow of corrupt cash has driven up average house prices. Transparency International described it as an "abuse of the global financial system." *The Times* reported that the National Crime Agency was alarmed by the number of homes registered to complex offshore corporations. They too said that these

transactions were pushing up house prices

The Law Gazette said in October 2015 that the cumbersome regime imposed on solicitors to tackle money laundering is not working. The evidence is in sky-high house prices.

Commons motion

There was even a motion in the House of Parliament last July, which had cross party support including from Jeremy Corbyn and Peter Bottomley, "That this House notes the recent screening of *From Russia with Cash* on Channel 4; expresses its concern that the proceeds of corruption are being laundered through the London property market via the use of anonymous offshore companies"

The government has responded by planning to create a central register that will reveal the beneficial owners of offshore companies. UK companies will have to reveal their "significant" owners for the first time from 30 June 2016.

But at the same time they are planning to privatise the Land registry, which, as the MPs pointed out should be part of any action to remedy the situation. They recommended that corporate transparency becomes a Land Registry requirement so that any foreign company intending to hold a property title in the UK is held to the same standards of transparency required of UK registered companies. ■

Right to Buy fraud

BBC Radio 4's *File on 4* ran a programme at the end of June on an unintended consequence of the Government's Right to Buy scheme: fraudulent applications being used for money-laundering.

The Audit Commission estimate that cases of fraud have increased nearly five fold since 2009/10 and now cost the public purse £12.3m a year. Since the government greatly increased right to buy discounts there has also been a further increase in fraud and it has also emerged that Right to Buy property deals may be being used to launder dirty money. What has alerted council officials to the problem is the number of people applying under the Right to Buy scheme who are also claiming housing benefit.

Companies can make big profits by offering tenants help to buy their home in order to get their hands on valuable properties. It is said that local authorities are struggling to cope with the increased number of applications, and they are simply not able to carry out sufficiently thorough checks to prevent fraudulent applications from being successful.

Many housing associations also do not have the resources and skills to prevent fraud which could potentially result in the loss of millions of pounds worth of much needed homes. ■

Changes to recent legislation

Government concessions on The Housing and Planning Act; Briefing Paper on the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill; grave concern about the Land Registry

The Housing and Planning Act

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) helped to secure an amendment to the permission in principle provision of the Housing and Planning Act. It was agreed it should be changed to make it clearer what was meant by the 'qualifying documents' that would be used to grant permission in principle. The RTPI argued for more clarity in order to prevent an Act of Parliament permitting any document created by the Secretary of State to grant a blanket permission across England.

Baroness Williams, the communities minister, laid a government amendment which set out the qualifying documents that can grant permission in principle to local plans, registers and neighbourhood plans.

The policy proposal to sell off high-value council houses, will now be subject to all homes sold being replaced one-for-one and like-for-like, and national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty have been granted an exemption

Baroness Williams indicated she was willing to meet peers' "powerful" arguments with changes to the legislation at third reading.

Private renters

The government resisted calls to strengthen protections against eviction and rent rises, and to require landlords to make homes fit for habitation.

Generation Rent has campaigned for important changes including:

- a right to claim back rent from a landlord who has neglected disrepair in the home
- Local councils to be able to keep fines giving greater incentives to go after slum landlords
- Councils to be able to ban landlords and seize their properties

Private peer's bill

Generation Rent will continue to lobby MPs and the new Mayor of London on these fronts. In June a Renters' Rights Bill, that could ban letting fees reached its second reading in the House of Lords and now awaits a date for committee stage. However it is unusual for such bills to succeed.

Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The government has published a Briefing Paper summarizing the planning reform proposals currently being made in the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The main provisions are:

- privatisation of the Land Registry.
- the National Infrastructure Commission to be made statutory.
- measures to speed-up and simplify the neighbourhood planning system; for reviewing and updating plans; to provide a duty for the Government to support groups wanting to do neighbourhood planning.
- pre-commencement planning conditions to be imposed only when they are absolutely necessary.
- compulsory purchase: process to be made clearer, fairer and faster, including a new statutory framework for agreeing compensation.

The paper can be downloaded by typing Briefing Paper Number 06418, 18 May 2016

Opposition to sale of the Land Registry

The proposed sale of the Land Registry in particular has caused enormous concern. A number of high profile organisations have spoken out against it including the Conveyancing Association and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The Land Registry has recorded the ownership of all land and property in England and Wales since the 1860s. An attempt to sell it by the last government was halted by Vince Cable and the Liberal Democrats.

The CMA warns that, by the introduction of a profit motive, access to its data would in fact be degraded in order to weaken competition to its own commercial products. It would harm consumers and restrict innovation and choice.

An online petition against the privatisation received over 256,000 signatures and was delivered to the then Business Secretary Sajid Javid.

The results of a government consultation on the sale, criticised for being launched just before the Easter Bank Holiday weekend, is now awaited. ■

Inquiry on Local Plans

Peter Eversden and Michael Bach report London Forum's response

The Local Plans Expert Group

The Local Plans Expert Group (LPEG) was set up by Government in September last year to help streamline the local plan-making process. It produced a report in March with 47 recommendations.

The LPEG report highlighted difficulties assessing and meeting housing needs through local plans as a central issue, the dominance of which was sometimes to the detriment of other local plan elements. The report also raised insufficient engagement with local communities as an issue.

London Forum Response

Michael Bach for the London Forum, welcomed the report and agreed with the majority of its recommendations. It is, perhaps, unsurprisingly, heavily focused on housing delivery to the exclusion of other types of objectively-assessed need.

However, the Forum is disappointed that, with the exception of the duty to cooperate, little of it relates to London and does not acknowledge the special status of the London Plan.

Confusion between the role of local plans and neighbourhood plans.

One of the major weaknesses of the report is the lack of understanding that all key policies including spatial ones need to be in plans and be readily identifiable. There appears to be confusion in the LPEG between the role of local plans and neighbourhood plans. The latter are unlikely to cover the total area of a local authority. Local plans cannot be restricted to "strategic policies". Other types of Borough-wide policies need to be in the Local Plan, not relegated to neighbourhood plans which are not the place for Borough-wide policies nor will neighbourhood plan coverage be anywhere near comprehensive even in 10 years time.

London Forum is concerned that the LPEG's recommendations could result in weaker Local Plans in future.

At the end of May the Communities and Local Government Committee launched an inquiry into the LPEG recommendations. The LPEG report can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/29ToJIY> ■

Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Diane Burridge**

50 years of the Highgate Society

Set up in 1966, as a campaigning organisation, to oppose (successfully) plans to build a main artery for north bound traffic along Highgate High Street, the Society has since spawned various groups. These include: Friends of Highgate Cemetery (1975); Jackson's Lane Community Centre (1975); The Harington Scheme (1980); North London Hospice Group (1982- with fundraising support); Highgate Climate Action Network (2007), and most recently the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum.

That these groups continue today is a great credit to the Society. The book: *Life in a London 'Village': The Story of The Highgate Society 1966-2016*, written by Peter Woodford and edited by Richard Webber, gives the history of these developments.

Consultation challenges using new technology?

The **St Marylebone Society**, having responded in detail to many planning applications since 1948, is having to adapt to Westminster Council's paperless planning consultation process. The Society has been given lap tops to enable members to look at drawings on-line, but naturally members are finding it difficult to read large documents on a small screen, particularly detailed drawings.

Is such a process discouraging feedback due to these difficulties? Are other Societies facing similar problems? Feedback would be welcome as a key role for many Societies is responding comprehensively to planning applications.

2016 anniversaries in Brixton

The Friends of Windrush Square and the Friends of Tate Library Brixton, both sub-committees of **The Brixton Society**, organised the Windrush Square Community Day in April, in the 200th year of the windmill being built. The annual Windmill Parade and Festival followed in June 2016.

April was also the 35th anniversary of the Brixton Uprisings: The Brixton Society's newsletter (April 2016 edition) included an article by Devon Thomas who described how community actions arising from the riots propelled many black people in the area into electoral politics. See www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Success in controlling events on Blackheath

The **Blackheath, Greenwich and Westcombe Societies**, working with local residents and Councillors, have been successful in getting Greenwich Council to withdraw its own application for a permanent licence to vastly extend the commercial use of Circus Field on the Heath. This would have replaced the need to submit a separate application for each event.

Greenwich Council had sought a licence that would allow Circus Field to be used for up to 70 days a year. The three societies are represented on the Blackheath Joint Working Party, and Greenwich and Lewisham Councils have now agreed on the need to develop a joint policy for events on the Heath in order to regulate the number and type of these in future years.

Influencing Greenwich Planning Documents

The **Blackheath Society**, in June 2015, made comprehensive responses to Greenwich Council's Local Information Requirements List: Supplementary Planning Document. A good proportion of this feedback has been taken on board. In particular, applicants planning basement excavations will now need to include detailed information in their submissions. And Financial Viability Assessments submitted in support of larger developments will be publicly available without redactions.

Finchley Society programme of plaques

A plaque was recently unveiled by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor David Longstaff, in front of the Peace Statue in Friary Park. The plaque gives details of the history of the Park, and is one of a series throughout the area funded by The Finchley Society aiming to bring places of architectural or historical interest to the attention of people passing by.

New plan for the Ealing town centre

In 2014, Central Ealing Neighbourhood Forum asked for views on how the area should be planned for the future. A draft Neighbourhood Plan was produced which is to be checked by an independent Examiner before going to a referendum of local residents and businesses. If proposals are approved, this Plan will become part of the official Borough Plan. The **Ealing Civic Society** has been involved in this process throughout. For details: www.centralealingforum.com

Future of Chelsea

Taking the initiative, the **Chelsea Society** has adopted Policy Guidelines for the Future of Chelsea after much debate and consultation. This is now on the Society's website at: <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/>

80 years of The Enfield Society

Set up in 1936 to save Chase Green, the **Enfield Society** is celebrating its past and present in an exhibition at the Enfield Museum in the Dugdale Centre, three minutes walk from Enfield Town Station. The exhibition runs from May through to 8 January 2017.

www.enfield.gov.uk/museum and www.enfieldsociety.org.uk

Commemorating loss of lives in Camberwell during the Second World War

The **Peckham Society** has been awarded a grant from Southwark's Cleaner, Greener, Safer fund to erect an information board commemorating the loss of life of 23 young women when a V1 rocket (Doodlebug) exploded on a corset factory in June 1944, near Peckham Rye Common. This was the greatest loss of life within the former Borough of Camberwell during the Second World War.

Full Judicial Review of Enderby Wharf (North)

Led by **East Greenwich Residents Association** and joined by many other civic societies, including the **Greenwich Society**, a full judicial review was granted for the planned development of Enderby Wharf (North), which includes a cruise liner terminal.

The grounds for the review include the nature of the air quality assessments presented to the Planning Board of Greenwich Council. According to the Mayor of London's own consultants, as one example, the diesel pollution from one docked hotel cruise ship would be similar to that from 688 idling lorries. The complainants are arguing for on-shore power supplies to be used instead. Ironically, the Royal Borough of Greenwich was designated an Air Quality Management Area, over 15 years ago.

A full hearing will be held at the High Court shortly. To support the case, a crowdfunding website was opened at CrowdJustice, and this very quickly reached its target of £16,000 with contributions from 226 backers.

Park Road Allotment Garden site as an Asset of Community Value?

An interesting dispute has been brewing for some time over the Duke of Northumberland's plans to build on The Park Road allotments bordering his Syon Park estate in west London, opposite Kew Gardens. The Northumberland Estate made the land available for allotments 100 years ago around 1914 during the First World War. Now they plan to build about 120 mostly two-bedroom low-rise houses for private rent which will help contribute towards £10m needed to pay for repairs to Syon House.

The Northumberland Estate wants to re-locate the allotments to within Syon Park but allotment holders say the alternative site offered in the Park is unacceptable.

The **Isleworth Society** submitted a petition containing 400 signatures asking that the Allotment Garden site be listed as an Asset of Community Value, which was approved by Hounslow Council.

The site is the last remaining part of Old Isleworth that is undeveloped offering the local community a much needed tranquil location in an otherwise urban setting, and is part of the historic setting for the 600 year old All Saints' Church.

Such a listing only becomes effective when the land is sold, and so the Society was surprised when the Northumberland Estate appealed against this decision. The Estate has not indicated that it was planning to sell the land.

The Estate requested the General Regulatory Chamber to hold a First Tier Tribunal to examine their appeal. The Isleworth Society (whose president is Caroline de Cabarrus, the sister of the duke, and lives in a property overlooking the disputed site), is putting together evidence for this Tribunal. Over 1,200 signatures supporting the campaign to save the site had been collected, by June 2016, through 38 Degrees. The campaign, led by Sharon Proberts, is calling upon the Northumberland Estate to desist from all plans and activities to develop the site or relocate the allotments, now or at any time in the future.

For more information see

<http://www.parkroadallotments.com/>

Legal action against Wireless Concert in Finsbury Park

The **Highbury Community Association** supported legal action in June 2016 by the Friends of Finsbury Park against Haringey Council - in response to the impact of large-scale concerts. A request for a judicial review was made against the planned Wireless Festival which would use 37% of the Park area. This Festival in July is positioned conveniently near the Islington and Hackney boundaries - not the Haringey boundary. The cost of legal fees was raised by crowd funding:

www.crowdjustice.co.uk/case/save-finsbury-park/

The Friends of Finsbury Park sent Haringey Council a letter from solicitor Susan Ring, a specialist in environmental and public law, to inform them that they are acting unlawfully, as the size of the concerts contravenes an Act of Parliament set up to protect London parks.

The whole application and approval process was very secretive. The Friends were told in January 2016 that the Council was working with Wireless Festival organisers on an event application. Then Wireless started to promote the summer dates a week before The Friends of Finsbury Park had even received the application.

Ten days were given to respond to the application, and feedback was only asked from named Stakeholders, including the Highbury Community Association. There was no Risk Assessment, Noise Management Plan, Green and Sustainable Policy, Event Management Plan or Area Map. When the Friends of Finsbury Park contacted the Council they were advised that this information was 'commercially sensitive', and that a Freedom of Information Request needed to be submitted.

At the Court hearing, Mr Justice Supperstone granted permission for a judicial review on all grounds and then dismissed the claim for reasons that are still to be provided in his judgement. The Friends of Finsbury Park believe that the judge was wrong to dismiss the claim. As they note, this judgement gives Haringey Council the power to exclude the public from more than 10% of the Park, and for more than 12 days in a year or six consecutive days in a year. The Council submitted to the Court that it can do essentially what it wants with the Park.

This decision sets a terrible precedent for the nation's parks, and the case has generated national interest from other Friends of Parks groups.

Haringey Council is now attempting to secure yet more major events in Finsbury Park - for example, a rave and then drum and bass festivals in late September with Park closures for up to two weeks. The organisers, Radioactive Clothing Ltd, are also applying for a ten year licence to run four of these events per year with over 15,000 people at each event. These four events would likely close large areas of the Park for up to six weeks or more.

The Friends of Finsbury Park have stated that: 'This is only the beginning and, going forward, our fight will be joined by many more. We will continue to fight for what we believe is right and are now considering an appeal'. ■

newsbriefs

News and issues of interest and concern to note.

Motor-racing in Battersea Park - compromise

After a strong and well-publicised campaign the Battersea Park Action Group have reached a compromise over the plans to run a motor-race championship in Battersea Park. The Formula E motor-race championship, which was approved by Wandsworth Council and set to continue every year, will now take place only this year with full reinstatement afterwards.

The Open Spaces Society, Save Battersea Park, the London Wildlife Trust, London CPRE, the Friends of Battersea Park and the Wandsworth and Battersea Societies were among the organisations and individuals who had submitted 577 detailed letters of objection to the Formula E event.

A Judicial Review of Wandsworth's decision challenging the hosting of the Formula E Championship in Battersea Park was due to be heard in May in the High Court. However it was announced that a satisfactory agreement had been reached over the future use of Battersea Park and the objectors withdrew the Judicial Review action with costs to date being met.

Kate Ashbrook, the Open Spaces Society's general secretary commented that while the result will ensure that the park is protected in future, she was sorry that the legal challenges were not tested in court. The issue at stake is the proportion of space that would have been taken up. "The Greater London Parks and Open Spaces Order 1967 outlaws such events where they occupy more than one-tenth of the open space. There are other events occurring in London which we also believe to be contrary to this legislation, and we are ready to issue a legal challenge if we consider a common, park or open space to be at risk."

For the statement on the legal settlement, and more information see; <http://savebatterseapark.com/news/>

New CEO at the Heritage Alliance

Kate Pugh OBE will be stepping down from her role as Chief Executive of the Heritage Alliance later this year after 13 very successful years at the helm. Kate has built the Heritage Alliance into an effective voice with more than 100 members, and thousands of regular readers of its Heritage Update newsletter,

Lizzie Glithero-West is to be its new Chief Executive. Her career has been mainly in the civil service, initially with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister but since 2004 with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport where she is currently adviser to Baroness Neville-Rolfe. She has a degree in Archaeology and Anthropology from Oxford, and an MA in History of Art from Birkbeck. In 2014 she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Her main task when she takes over in September will be implementing the Alliance's new strategy for the next four years, *Realising the Power of Heritage*.

Sir Edward Lister moves to the HCA

London's former deputy mayor for policy and planning, Sir Edward Lister, has been named as the new chairman of the Homes and Communities Agency. He is currently the chairman of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

Book: The Lost Rivers of London

The underground rivers of London, north and south of the Thames are of perennial interest. The first edition of this book, by Nicholas Barton, the most detailed description of the rivers and their effects on London, was published in 1962 and has remained in print ever since. For years it was the only book on its subject and the recognised authority.

Then in 2011 three new books on the subject came out at the same time; one was by Stephen Myers, water engineer and author of *Walking on Water — London's Hidden Rivers Revealed*. This new interest prompted Historical Publications to bring in Myers to add new research and detail to Barton's classic. Myers's engineering expertise has led to new information on everything from hydrology and water tables to siphons and Bagshot sand.

Of particular interest is Stephen Myers's intriguing new theory on the source of the Walbrook. He traces the river, previously thought to rise in Shoreditch, all the way north to Clouesley Square in Islington. This lengthy section of river never appeared on any map because, according to Myers, it was "stolen" by monks. The brothers of Charterhouse built their own pipeline, diverting the upper Walbrook to build their own long-distance water supply, which is still working today.

This new third edition, substantially revised and extended with new information, features 45 maps (29 in colour) which show in detail the courses the rivers take, nowadays mostly incorporated into the drainage system. It deals extensively with their history, the industries they aided, such as milling and brewing, and also how they were degraded and eventually buried.

The routes of the rivers are superimposed on Geographers' A-Z maps – all in colour - tracing the likely courses of rivers through the modern streetscape.

The Lost Rivers of London by Nicholas Barton with Stephen Myers
Historical Publications ISBN: 9781905286515, hardback
224 pages; 44 maps and 109 illustrations (many in colour).

Available from

<http://www.countrysidebooks.co.uk/> Online price £18.00

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill inquiry

The Communities and Local Government Committee is conducting hearings into the Government's Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill which says "Whitehall and local areas must go further with their devolution deals"

The Communities and Local Government Committee report 'Devolution: the next five years and beyond', welcomes the Government's commitment to devolution but urges Government and local leaders to do more to engage the public in devolution proposals, negotiations and outcomes"

More information can be found on the Parliament website by typing:

Inquiry into The Government's Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill

newsbriefs

The Editor's round-up

GLA A-Z of Planning and Culture

Speaking at the press launch for the new Tate Modern, the new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, announced a cultural infrastructure plan saying that Culture will be as central to his administration as housing, transport and the environment; it would be embedded in London's planning system, making it an affordable city for artists to live and work. These commitments actually come from an *An A-Z of Planning and Culture* which was published by the GLA in October 2015 under the previous Mayor. It attempts to formalise the role of the planning system in providing cultural venues and facilities.

This curious document raises some questions, in particular, what is meant by "culture"? It mixes up museums, artists and arts venues with general leisure activities and commercial entertainment, such as skate parks, restaurants, pubs, pop-up shops and night clubs. There is no mention of opera, ballet, orchestras or concerts. How can a document purporting to discuss culture omit any mention of these; are they not to be planned for any more? It is in sharp contrast to a Government *Culture White Paper* published in March which harks back to Jennie Lee's 1965 White Paper, and makes quite clear that "Knowledge of great works of art, great music, great literature and great plays, and of their creators," is what is needed.

Night clubs are highly problematic. They are commercial ventures, all too often associated with noise, drug-taking and rowdy behaviour. Is it the role of the GLA to plan for more of them?

Skateboarding is a leisure/sport activity, and open-air markets and short-term pop-up shops are commercial. Libraries are mentioned only in passing amongst 13 case studies offered, which are examples of the usual battles that local people have to fight to preserve their amenities. Parks, which are often the venues for large pop concerts, are also not fully considered. Yet as we heard at the recent London Forum Open meeting, they are increasingly under threat from lack of funding and inappropriate money-making ventures by councils, frequently to the dismay of local residents, as Diane Burridge describes on page 21.

How are boroughs to subsidise artists' studios when even their powers to provide much needed subsidised housing are being removed, and they risk being sued by developers if they do not give permission to re-develop what might be a much loved local building?

The document raises expectations with its enthusiastic style of presentation but seems to be a lost opportunity. However it does give an interesting list for further reading and can be downloaded by googling *An A-Z of Planning and Culture* (October 2015)

Thames Water finances

With Thames now co-investing £1 billion in London's £4.2 billion sewerage, the annual dividend paid to the Australian finance house Macquarie has dwindled to £82 million compared with £170 million in the previous year. Macquarie's stake in Thames is down to about 25 per cent and it intends to quit the company altogether. Other big investors in the company are the BT pension fund with 13 per cent, the Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund with nearly 10 per cent and a Chinese sovereign wealth fund with nearly 9 per cent. Martin Baggs, Thames' outgoing chief executive, conceded the company still had much to do to improve its poor customer service for which it has been penalised by the regulator in the past.

"House price rise to create fall in house prices"

A few years ago Private Eye ran this headline over one of its satirical articles; recent reports about the housing market with their "Alice in Wonderland" quality, evoke a similar reaction.

Theories on the housing market and its unaffordable prices become ever more contradictory. The Bank of England's financial policy committee and the Financial Times have talked of a buy-to-let boom leading to a property bubble that 'new rules will do little to quell.' Yet now talk is of a 'loss of momentum' in residential building and housebuilders offering discounts on London's most expensive homes and since the EU referendum the big property funds have suffered huge losses. The latest housing surveys released on July 14 delivered more mixed messages saying that there is a decline in buyers' inquiries but that lending figures show a rise in purchases.

We are constantly told there are not enough houses and that only building more of them could bring down the prices. Now it seems there are not enough buyers; have they suddenly all vanished? Or is there another explanation which has little to do with any shortage of bricks and mortar and everything to do with housing having become a commodity out of which to make profits.

It is now admitted that overseas speculators are driving up house prices. They buy off-plan with the sole intention of selling on to take advantage of rising property prices, pricing local buyers out of the market. At the same time investment in commercial property in the UK has slumped, and, according to the FT, "Wealthy investors in search of income-generating investments are looking to move from residential to commercial property."

Where the people who simply wish to buy a home come into all this is anyone's guess.

With people having to rent because they can no longer afford to buy, there are increasing reports of large companies stepping in with "build-to-rent" schemes across London. Some see this as a partial solution to the problems as these are professionally run ventures, sometimes providing a better deal for renters than the traditional landlords.

Wandsworth Council has taken advantage of the oversupply of new properties at the Battersea Power Station Development and has signed an agreement which will see 374 homes including 69 three-beds and 35 4-beds offered to local residents to rent or buy at well below market prices.

For more information:

http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/news/article/13175/up_to_70_per_cent_rent_discounts_for_new_battersea_homes

Vantage Point at the Archway gyratory

One example of the new trend is a 17-storey block of flats with 118 units on the Archway gyratory roundabout near Highgate, although this is not a new building. Formerly a tax collection department for the Inland Revenue, clad in black glass, it has lain empty for seven years. It has now been gutted and completely refurbished by *Essential Living*, and given a new exterior with brighter, perforated steel cladding.

City Hall is remodelling the Archway gyratory, to calm traffic and provide a better environment for pedestrians. Directly beneath the tower is Archway Underground station, giving direct access to the City. ■

Dates for your diary

London Forum events

Membership renewal

Last year we changed our membership renewal process so that it can all be done through the London Forum website. Subscription renewals reminders were sent in February by email giving details of how to renew, including on-line.

We have introduced also a secure way in which members can amend the details we hold of their officers and their organisation. Unfortunately some members are still not using this facility so that some of you will not be receiving our communications.

Do please update your information on the Forum's website. Information on how to do this is included in the email reminder.

As you all know, London Forum relies totally on Members' subscriptions for its budget. However, after the first six months of this year there are several societies which have not yet renewed their subscription. Please check if your payment has been made and if not contact membership@londonforum.org.uk ■

Delivering Newsforum by email

We currently send you Newsforum by email in the form of a PDF as well as posting you a hard copy.

For most of you the PDF is the most useful form as it can be widely distributed at no cost. It also has the advantage that web links can be accessed directly.

We have reduced our costs by sending the summer edition in PDF form only. It is environmentally more friendly, saving paper, and it also saves London Forum a great deal of expense. With the enormous increase in the price of postage this is now becoming a major consideration.

If you do not keep your hard copy and feel you could do without it, relying on the PDF, please let us know via one of the email addresses below, giving your Society name as well as email address, so that we could reduce our postal mailing list and save printing and postage costs. ■

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London Forum Open Meetings 2016 at The Gallery - save the Dates

Monday 19 September

Provisional subject: the changes made in planning policies by the Housing and Planning Act and the implications for London.

Tuesday 25th October London Forum AGM

followed by some talks and discussion on how civic societies can develop their work, reputation, and the engagement of younger people.

Wednesday 30th November

Provisional subject: town centres.

Watch out for emails and consult the website nearer the time for more information

The Gallery 75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ, (Farringdon station)
All meetings begin with refreshments at 6pm
for a 6:30pm start ■

If you have any items of interest for the Newsforum the Editor will be pleased to hear from you at:

admin@londondorum.org.uk

London Forum on Twitter

Don't forget the London Forum Twitter site.

Stories; updates on the latest news as it comes in; useful web addresses.

Do pass on the address to all your amenity society contacts.

Twitter can reach far beyond London Forum's e-bulletin list of contacts.

http://twitter.com/London_Forum

NB - note the underscore: _ in the name ■

newsforum

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