

# newsforum



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

**The London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies**  
 Founded 1988  
[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

## In this issue

Spotlight on Belgravia Residents Association, Page 8

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 CivicVoice Launches Manifesto 2020-2023       | 5 London Forum News; PE&T report                         | 10 A View from the Suburbs: the New London Plan |
| 2 Small Sites Policy the NLP Inspectors' report | 6 London Forum Open Meeting - Improving the Public Realm | 13 News briefs                                  |
| 3 The London Forum AGM                          | 7 Wimbledon to Hainault                                  | 14 Round the Societies                          |
| 4 New threat to London's Green Belt             | 8 Spotlight on Belgravia Residents Association           | 16 Events and meetings                          |

## CivicVoice Manifesto 2020-2023

# CivicVoice Launches Manifesto 2020-2023

As campaigning for the coming General Election gets under way, London Forum's vice chair, **Paul Thornton** welcomes the CivicVoice Manifesto launch.

With the election season in full swing, amenity and civic societies are anxious to know whether Brexit and the NHS will continue to crowd out all other issues, or whether the parties' manifestos will make clear their intentions about the planning system. A year ago, Labour launched its Planning Commission, promising a "root and branch rethink". The final report was due to have been published in October, but where is it? Meanwhile the Conservatives have reinforced their commitment to the "permission in principle" regime, heedless of the problems this causes for local communities and their elected representatives.

Against this background, CivicVoice, the national organisation for the civic movement has launched its Manifesto 2020-2023. Addressing the widespread distrust of a system largely played out between developers and local authorities, the manifesto calls for a profound change in the timing, intensity and style of community engagement. Its three main goals are to:

- Create a more 'accessible, balanced and collaborative' (ABC) planning system with communities at the heart
- Move towards a citizen-led, participative model of governance for our towns, cities and villages
- Ensure local authorities have the appropriate resources and proper powers to enhance the historic environment and to make better places

Specifically, Civic Voice is calling on the next Government to:

- Introduce a 'pre-application community consultation stage' and a 'limited community right of appeal' into the planning system.

*Let's hope that we can unite ... to create a tide of opinion in favour of a dramatically enhanced role for communities in the planning system*

- Strengthen Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs) so that the statements set out, in accessible Plain English, how the local authority and developers will be expected to engage meaningfully with local communities on planning.
- Introduce an 'Office for Public Participation' to oversee standards and consistency in public consultations. For major developments it would be an independent honest broker to carry out the pre-application consultation with the local community, removing any perceived conflict of interest for the developer.

• Utilise planning technology in decision making so that we go from talking to the 'already engaged' to having 'everyone engaged' in shaping our towns, cities and villages

London Forum strongly supports this initiative by Civic Voice which follows hard on the heels of a number of similarly-intentioned moves including the Centre for London's symposium on Strengthening Public Participation in London's Planning System, and TCPA's Planning for a Just City. Let's hope that we can unite these straws in the wind to create a tide of public and expert opinion in favour of a dramatically enhanced role for communities in the planning system – a tide that will cause the next Government to sit up and take notice, despite the immediate pressures of Brexit and the NHS. ■

Full details can be found at

[http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto\\_FINAL\\_Screen\\_version.pdf](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/uploads/files/Manifesto_FINAL_Screen_version.pdf) ■

# Will Small Sites Policy H2A survive?

London Forum Chairman, **Peter Eversden** comments on the report of the NLP Inspectors

Sadiq Khan's New London Plan (NLP) was published in draft in December 2017, consulted upon in 2018 and examined by three Inspectors in 2019 at hearings on over ninety subjects, with London Forum invited to participate in most of them. With the publication of the Inspectors' report at the end of October, another milestone towards the adoption of the New London Plan has been passed.

The Mayor has six weeks to consider their recommendations and tell the Secretary of State the final plan version he intends to publish. The Mayor is not bound to follow the Inspectors' recommendations, but he has to say which he proposes to reject and why, and the Secretary of State has the power to overrule him. The final NLP could be effective from March 2020.

The Inspectors addressed only those NLP policies which could affect its soundness. That is, they expressed no views on the many improvements which the Forum and others had sought. Fortunately, the Mayor incorporated many of those in a new draft version of the NLP in July 2019. The Inspectors have approved all of these.

Those recommendations of the Inspectors that are most significant for London Forum member societies are summarised below:

## Housing targets

The overall housing targets for boroughs over the next ten years should be reduced by 20% from 649,350 to 522,850. This is wholly a consequence of the recommended deletion of the Mayor's policy H2A on a presumption in favour of development for small sites. The Inspectors consider that H2A is problematical in principle and unlikely to achieve the desired outcome. The general policy for use of small sites Policy H2 remains.

## Deletion of policy H12

Deletion of Policy H12 Part C is recommended. This would have prevented boroughs from setting prescriptive area-wide dwelling size mix requirements for market and intermediate housing.

## Modification of viability assessments

The requirements relating to site-specific viability assessments should be modified to make it clear that they apply only if relevant policies in the local plan are up to date,

## Modification of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land Policies

Policies G2 and G3 (Green Belt land in London and Metropolitan

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*Despite the probable relaxation in housing targets the NLP is still predominantly a charter for intensification of land use ... for some boroughs there will be little protection against unacceptable development.*

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Open Land) should be modified to bring them into line with national policy. The Mayor's proposed blanket ban on development on such land would be replaced by an "only in very special circumstances" condition. This is particularly serious for Metropolitan Open Land, where there is no prospect of trading MOL lost to development for land newly designated as MOL.

## Policy opposing Heathrow third runway recommended for deletion

Mayoral policy T8 which opposes the Heathrow third runway delivery unless certain demanding criteria are met is considered to be contrary to national policy and is recommended to be deleted.

The default assumption should be that Heathrow development will go ahead.

## Additional land for industrial uses

The draft London Plan may need to allocate "many hundreds of hectares" of additional land for industrial, storage and distribution uses, including, potentially, green belt land. The report concludes that storage and distribution uses (B8) "are expected to require more land amounting to between 280 and 400 hectares".

## Compatibility with 2019 NPPF

In a letter to the Mayor, the Secretary of State had set an expectation that the Plan should be reviewed immediately after publication, so that it can have regard to new national policies in the 2019 NPPF. However, the NLP Inspectors agree that this cannot be completed before 2023. They are concerned that any earlier, partial review would deter boroughs from taking action to implement the NLP and would divert GLA staff away from their primary task.

## Intensification of land use

Despite the probable (and especially for the outer boroughs, welcome) relaxation in housing targets (see article by Gordon Massey elsewhere in this edition of Newsforum), the NLP is still predominantly a charter for intensification of land use across the Capital. NLP policies on 'Good Growth', design and densification will require up-to-date Local Plans. London Forum urges its members to press their borough councils to get ahead of the game with site allocations, context and character analyses and design codes; otherwise there will be little protection against unacceptable development. ■

More detailed information, including a non-technical summary can be seen at: <http://tinyurl.com/rjblv54>

# The London Forum Annual General Meeting

Summary of the Minutes of the 2019 AGM of the London Forum Of Amenity And Civic Societies held 6.30pm, 3rd October 2019, at 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1

**John Myers** reports

The full minutes can be found on the Forum website: [www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

## Present

Peter Eversden (Chairman) and representatives of 27 Societies. Apologies for absence were received from 5 societies.

## Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman recorded the Forum's appreciation of Alan Baxter and his staff in the provision of office and meeting space, facilities and valuable networking opportunities with so many other organisations in their building. Alan Baxter had asked the Chairman to pass on how much he and many others appreciate the work that London Forum members do: "London would be seriously damaged without you all, so keep it up!" Minutes of the AGM 31st October 2018 were agreed unanimously.

## Chairman's report

The Chairman described the lengthy process which should eventually lead to an approved New London Plan, and London Forum's critical part in that process. Publication of the Inspectors' report following the Examination in Public was imminent (Editor's note – this is covered elsewhere in this issue of Newsforum). London Forum had recently written to the Mayor about the Small Sites policy, and had advised members to contact their borough councils.

London Forum had been involved in a number of transport matters, including aviation and Heathrow expansion. London Forum objected to shortening of bus routes and reduced frequency of buses but TfL implemented most of those proposals.

London Forum had contributed to many consultations, as reported in the Annual Report and in 'What We've Said' pages of our web site, but the GLA and the Assembly had been occupied with the New London Plan and the Government had made little progress on legislation as it grappled with one major issue.

London Forum had supported an Assembly scrutiny on the Mayor's call-in of planning applications, giving evidence about recent cases. The outcome of the Mayor's interventions was rarely satisfactory and London Forum was seeking stronger GLA support for decisions of the boroughs.

The Chairman hoped members had someone keeping an eye on the web site for new items and following Twitter postings from @London\_Forum, which were also reproduced on each page of the London Forum website. Updates could be every few days and our e-bulletins could not be that frequent.

London Forum had held an open meeting on broadening societies' membership and would be holding another event to pursue that subject further.

Other open meetings had covered Town Centres, Better Urban Design, Development Viability and Improving the Public

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*The Chair expressed his hope that members shared his sense of pride in what the London Forum has achieved*

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Realm. London Forum had been fortunate to have had some very experienced speakers including the immediate past President of the RIBA.

The Chair expressed his hope that members shared his sense of pride in what the London Forum has achieved and he extended his thanks and, he hoped, members' appreciation to the members of the Executive and the Planning, Environment & Transport committees for their hard work.

## Approval of Annual Report and Accounts for 2018/19

The Treasurer noted that the London Forum had adopted Financial Reporting Standard FRS 102, a requirement of the Charities Commission. The relevant Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and FRS 102 required that, where practical, charities record the benefit of donations received in kind, such as the value of the office accommodation kindly provided by Alan Baxter Ltd. This increased both the income and the expense columns with offsetting amounts, but the restatement did not change the overall surplus previously reported for the prior year.

The annual surplus of £2,275 had been added to the Forum's general reserve. The Trustees had a plan to commission a new website and new databases, which was expected to consume a proportion of the reserves.

A motion to approve the Annual Report and Accounts was approved nem con.

## Appointment of Honorary Independent Examiner

Mr Egan was willing to continue and a motion to reappoint him was agreed nem con.

## Election of Trustees

The Officers were willing to continue. Messrs Hammerson, Bach, Eversden and Pickering were retiring by rotation and were also willing to continue. A motion to re-elect Officers and Trustees en bloc was carried nem con.

The Chairman noted that the number of trustees was at the minimum permitted by the Constitution. He appealed to representatives either to put themselves forward or to consider nominating one of their Society's officers to the London Forum's Executive Committee, or to its committee dealing with planning, housing, environment and transport.

Helen Marcus and Diane Burrigge explained how interesting and rewarding they had found their role as London Forum trustees.

As noted elsewhere, five participants subsequently offered themselves for consideration as trustees.

*continued on next page*

# The London Forum AGM (continued)

## Other Business

In response to a question about how many underlying members the member societies had in total, Mr Thornton responded that the best estimate was of the order of 100,000 individuals. The Chairman noted that many member societies also had affiliated residents' associations and their total membership would be considerable.

Following the AGM, the Deputy Mayor for Housing, James Murray, was to have addressed the meeting but he was unfortunately indisposed. His office had sent through some speaker's notes, and the Chairman, Peter Eversden used these as a basis for a talk about Housing. A lively discussion ensued.

## London Forum new trustees 2019-20

Following the Chairman's impassioned plea at the 2019 AGM, London Forum is delighted to welcome the following new trustees, each of whom was co-opted to the London Forum Executive Committee at its meeting on 29th October

### Clare Birks

Chair, Bermondsey Street.London  
Committee member of SPAB London  
Vice Chair, Trustees, Making Music  
Speaker at November Open Meeting, Broadening the Membership Base

### Mary Hogben

Finchley Society Planning Committee  
Architect; member Urban Design Group  
Green Register of Construction Professionals;  
Association for Project Management  
Interested in community engagement

### Darian Mitchell

Past Chair, Amwell Society  
Participated in October PE&T meeting  
Interested in community engagement In planning

### John Rushton

Friends of Jubilee Gardens and Trustee of the Trust  
Co-founded 'Small Back Room' in 1977  
Former Chair of the Waterloo Business Improvement District Trust  
Director of Build Studios co-working space

### Helen Warner

Westcombe Society  
Background in policy and practice, strategic and business planning, performance management, social media, web design and marketing  
Opposes Silvertown Tunnel; concerned re air pollution; seeks more diversity in societies ■

# A major new threat to London's Green Belt

Helen Marcus comments

The Campaign to Protect Rural England is advising all its members to write to the London Mayor Sadiq Khan to ask him to stand firm on protecting Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) following the Inspectors' proposed modification of Green Belt and MOL Policies in the report on the Mayor's draft London Plan. (see page 2). There is widespread dismay that the report proposes a watering down of the Plan's strict policies to protect the Metropolitan Green Belt and London's unique Metropolitan Open Land, despite growing awareness of the value of green spaces in the face of public health, climate and nature emergencies.

This comes just as recent research at Newcastle and Warwick Universities provides evidence confirming that the proximity of greenspace to an individual's home has a significant association with improved mental wellbeing. The study, one of the largest ever conducted on this subject, surveyed more than 25,000 people.

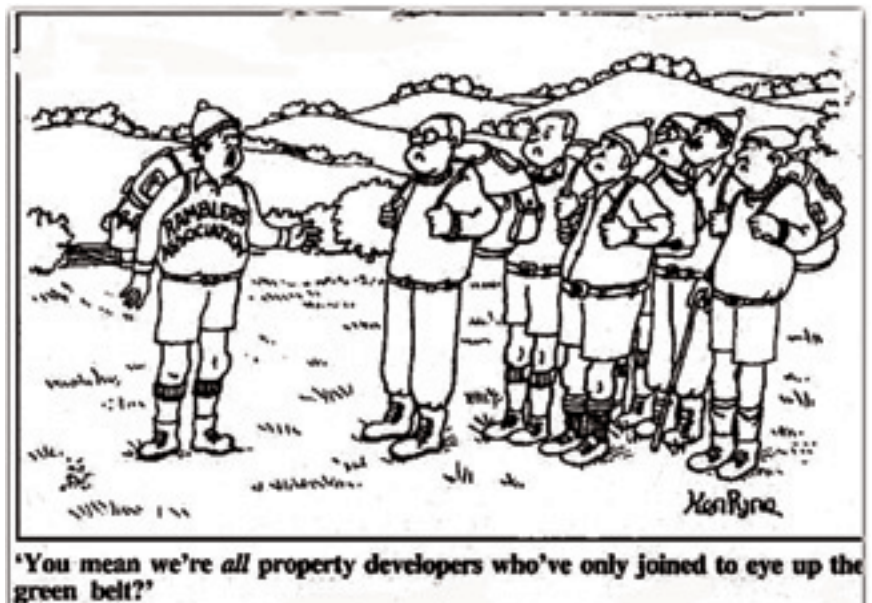
One is moved to ask whether government ever looks beyond narrow ideology when policy is formulated. Is any proper, wide ranging audit conducted of what unintended consequences and costs of these policies might be? Or is it all intentional? - Policy dictated, as we have reported here on several occasions, behind the scenes to satisfy commercial interests, without any concern for wider public well-being? ■

## More information can be found by googling

*A spatial analysis of proximate greenspace and mental wellbeing in London.*  
Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies,  
Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear.  
Centre for Doctoral Training in Urban Science, hosted at the University of Warwick. ■

## Plus ça change

By kind permission of Ken Pyne; originally published in the RICS Journal c. 1970.



# Planning, Environment & Transport Committee Matters

Peter Pickering reports

## Consultations

The Committee goes regularly and carefully through the lists of consultations issued by the Government, the Mayor and Transport for London, giving one of its members a remit to study carefully all that seem to be within the Forum's remit, and draft a response. The Government's almost exclusive concentration on Brexit may have reduced the number of consultations since the last News Forum.

A consultation by TfL on 20mph speed limits in central London closed on 10th July, only five weeks after opening. Some of the committee were concerned that it would make for worse driving.

The Committee responded to consultations on the bus route changes necessitated by the closure of Hammersmith Bridge for repairs. The diversions of all motorised traffic are causing serious pollution and congestion. The Committee has therefore pressed for very early action to commence repairs, giving them priority for funding over any new river crossing (for instance the Silvertown tunnel).

The Committee responded to the Green Paper 'The future of UK aviation - Aviation 2050' and to further consultations about Heathrow, rather unsatisfactory since they were conducted by Heathrow (and therefore, for instance, had very little information about flight paths) rather than the Government.

## Monitoring

Committee members shadow the various scrutiny committees of the Greater London Assembly and keep abreast of the work of Select Committees of Parliament. There are many inquiries by Select Committees of significance for the Forum (delivery of social and affordable rented housing; implications of the Waste Strategy; review of the building regulations; the funding and governance of local roads; road safety and mobile phones) but none where a Forum input was required, and of course all Select Committees will fall with any election. The committees of the Greater London Assembly have great potential for scrutinising what the Mayor is doing, but do not seem to be as effective as they could be. Among the most significant are those into the delivery and progress of the GLA Housing Zones Programme, the growth in the number of planned tall buildings and the effects of Crossrail delay on small businesses.

## London Plan and the Mayor's actions

The Committee has been waiting for the publication of the Inspectors' Report of the Examination-in-Public of the draft new London Plan, and will now be assessing its implications and deciding whether to make representations to the Mayor and/or to the Secretary of State. The Small Sites Policy in the

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*The Committee's lead role in overseeing the Forum's programme of Open Meetings, making them as topical and interesting as possible has proved successful*

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Plan as originally drafted caused much concern, because it could give rise to large numbers of planning applications for which there has been little or no community engagement, which if turned down by boroughs, could be allowed on appeal despite fierce opposition within the affected communities.

The Committee has on several occasions discussed with some exasperation planning applications allowed by the Mayor despite having been refused on valid grounds by borough councils.

## Actions by Boroughs

There are great variations amongst boroughs in the way in which they encourage or allow public participation in planning committee deliberations. The Committee has discussed this, and the related question of the publication of notes of pre-application discussions, and is considering the possibility a survey, asking member societies to report on boroughs' practices.

Local authorities allowing parts of public parks to be closed off for private events has caused concern. This has been a particular worry to members around Finsbury Park.

## Other organisations

The Committee attempts to keep abreast of the work of the many organisations whose field of responsibilities is similar to, or overlaps with, that of the Forum. Important among these are Just Space, Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Campaign for Better Transport, Civic Voice, the Heritage Alliance, Centre for London, Urban Design London, and London First.

Committee members, where possible, attend events arranged by these organisations.

Members of the Committee have been associated with work by the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, and have also sought to make the Labour Party's review of planning policy aware of the importance of community bodies.

## Housekeeping

The Committee had a full and constructive discussion of a paper by Paul Thornton about Associate membership of the Forum. Its implementation is ongoing, but it bodes fair to produce a more coherent and structured arrangement for the relationship between the Forum and its disparate partners (for some of which see 'Other Organisations' above).

The Committee has taken the lead role in overseeing the Forum's programme of Open Meetings, making them as topical and interesting as possible, and publicising them widely - the use of Eventbrite for some of these has proved a successful innovation. ■

# Improving the Public Realm

Open Meeting 19th June 2019: improving the environment for pedestrians

Peter Pickering reports

The Guest speakers were Adam Harrison (Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment at Camden Council), David Harrison, (Islington, and London Living Streets) and Maria Curro, (Project Manager at the Department of the Built Environment, City of London Corporation), and there was a lively discussion.

## Transforming Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street

Adam described the West End Project, making Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street two-way and transforming the area, refurbishing Whitfield Gardens, making Princes Circus a unified space, and the War Memorial accessible.

David said that motorised traffic had waged a hundred-years war against pedestrians and residents. The public realm should be where people could enjoy, linger and walk. All councils said that pedestrians should have priority; only Camden and the City put that into practice. Electric vehicles, helpful for air pollution, might increase traffic. Street trees were wonderful, but could obstruct the view of fine buildings.

## Improvements in the City

Maria said that 90% of the trips in the City started or finished with walking. The coach park in St Paul's Churchyard would become a park for people; excluding all traffic but buses and pedal cycles from Bank Junction during weekdays had greatly improved air quality, as had removing the 1960s Aldgate gyratory and the uninviting subways and introducing two new public open spaces. The City were looking ahead to a 15 mph speed limit, and specific road user charging; this would be additional to the congestion charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).



## Concerns at pavement clutter

Adam described the problem of negotiating with BT and private owners about telephone boxes (and InLink). David was

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concerned at the clutter caused by the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points which could be outdated by technological advance. Maria said that the City was working on a better system of way-marking signs.

Most street lighting was ugly; cities where lighting was fixed to buildings were nicer; Maria said that fixing street lighting to buildings was widespread in the City. Wheelie bins were ugly; Adam said that as residents' experience of wheelie bins grew they discovered ways of mitigating their ugliness.

## Overcrowding

Overcrowding on public transport and two-way working on streets were serious for safety. David said that if walking were more pleasant people would prefer it to short bus trips, thus easing overcrowding. Adam said that the buses section was the hardest part of TfL to deal with. Maria said that the changes in the City speeded up buses.

## Cycle lanes

Dangerous congestion was caused in Islington when a narrow cycle lane pushed cyclists close to the white line. David agreed that there were problems; perhaps some provision for on-street car-parking could be reduced. Maria would encourage Quiet Ways; there was a difficulty with shared space - the City were looking at the structure of junctions. Cycle-lane standards had changed recently.

Adam admitted that the beautiful resurfacing of Tottenham Court Road could be undone by multiple digging up by utilities - it was hard to get competing cable providers etc to work together.

7% of travel was by cycle, but cycle superhighways made things difficult for pedestrians. 80% of travel was by bus, but buses were third in Greenwich transport planners' hierarchy. Bidirectional cycleways on one-way streets or in the middle of pavements were dangerous. Some cycleways slowed traffic to 6 mph, increasing pollution.

## Vision, strategy and long-term planning

To achieve change authorities needed vision, to be consistent and not waver. Camden had a 20-year strategy and the City a long-term programme. Since all schemes required finance only those, relatively few, councils with a large car parking reserve account could be ambitious. How could retail and commercial businesses, with premises that needed servicing with deliveries, cope? Timing deliveries was the key; experience was that businesses liked what was happening, with its improved environment for pedestrians. ■

# Wimbledon to Hainault

Following Tony Michael's feature article on Wimbledon town centre in the last issue of Newsforum, **Andrew Bosi** discusses the rail options

In the early 1990s there were three schemes for enhancing rail services across London. The Jubilee line extension was very much a late-comer to this list and secured the go ahead only because it was claimed that Olympia & York would contribute to the cost.

Crossrail was promoted by the government although it fell foul of internal Tory Party politics. The Major government decided to punish the recalcitrant members by putting them on the Crossrail committee and they retaliated by blocking its progress.

By far the best value for money was offered by the Chelsea-Hackney line. Unlike Crossrail, it had the "Heineken factor" – it reached the parts other lines did not reach. It was only the likelihood that Crossrail's costs would rise more rapidly on account of the terrain through which it passed that gave it priority. One wonders if anyone then realised just how rapidly.

## Historical background

Most of the deep tubes in central London were built between 1890 and World War I. There was some extension into the suburbs before the next war, but by the time the Victoria line came to be built there had been a long period of urban sprawl for which long distance buses were increasingly considered with disdain, and there was consequently growth in private motoring. Once the population of London began to rise again, the inadequacy of the rail infrastructure was impossible to ignore. Existing lines were grossly overcrowded.

The Chelsea-Hackney line, later extended to become the Wimbledon-Hainault line, was designed to address overcrowding on existing lines as well as the need for new ones. Stations like Leytonstone, Essex Road and those of the Gospel Oak-Barking line see few passengers alight on the morning journey into London (or Barking) and consequently there is no room for their passengers to board. So many people fill the trains at Hainault and Wimbledon that there is insufficient capacity at intermediate stations.

The overcrowding on the Gospel Oak-Barking line in part results from the fact that it crosses eight other lines without any decent interchange. The Wimbledon-Hainault line recognised the importance of interchange.

Unfortunately, as time passed and with the government committed to Crossrail ahead of the north-east to south-west line, construction costs rose outstripping general inflation. The collective memory of Olympia & York was allowed to fade and the ideology of private good public bad took hold. The idea that developers would pay for the line if it served potential development sites held sway, even though those sites are further from the employment centre of London. This has resulted in a project that no longer serves the areas that were

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developed in the period when rail infrastructure was being neglected or ignored. It also increases costs, both of construction and ultimately to the environment as commuters are encouraged to travel ever greater distances to achieve the same end.

Prior to the major consultation on Crossrail2, which aroused widespread objections to some of the details, there was a low key consultation on whether to pursue a Metro option or a Regional option.

## The wrong question and the wrong issues

Like the tram versus trolleybus consultation over the West London scheme, it asked the wrong question and posed the wrong issues. (In West London, it was the articulated nature of the tram or trolleybus that provoked opposition, a double-decker tram or trolleybus would not have been as hostile to pedestrians and cyclists). The consultation highlighted the perceived benefits of a Regional option – more people benefitting – and ignored the loss of interchange stations while playing down the additional cost. There was no mention of the additional impact above ground. It was only when the major consultation was opened that the altered impact on the Angel area, the area between King's Cross and Euston and Wimbledon came to light.

The original concept involved providing new direct links between existing stations, reducing the distance travelled to make the same journey. The change to include Euston, made in the belief that the construction of HS2 would compel a future government to provide Crossrail2 as a means of dispersing its passengers, undermined that concept. Shifting the station west had the effect of duplicating some existing links, albeit with a rather circuitous walk underground, and resulted in the switch from Essex Road to Angel. Sir Peter Hendy, the then Transport Commissioner for London, believed the case for extra capacity at Euston would be unanswerable. In fact, it is being seriously challenged by the Taxpayers Alliance because firstly the number of trains using HS2 seems likely to be reduced (or eliminated if HS2 stops at Old Oak Common) and secondly the majority of its passengers are not arriving in the peak periods, they will be more evenly spread.

Continuing beyond Wimbledon using existing lines requires considerably more land take at Wimbledon. The alternative of changing trains, though less attractive for passengers would still represent an improvement in public transport provision and would significantly reduce the cost.

The Government is asking for a review of the route of Crossrail2, but is still attracted to the idea of sending it to places which yield the greatest private sector contribution rather than driving down the cost of the scheme. A return to the Metro option would be a far better way forward. ■

# Spotlight on the Belgravia Residents Association

Chair **James Wright** and committee member **Mike Parts** on the changing face of Belgravia Residents Association

The Belgravia Residents Association, or the BRA as it is commonly known, was formed in 1972 after a group of local residents had joined together to campaign for changes to the Leasehold Reform Act. After a successful campaign, the residents decided that rather than disband, the experience should be put to good use for the benefit of local residents and the area. The Belgravia Residents Association was born.

The founder of the BRA and the first Chairman was Lord Ezra, a former chairman of the then National Coal Board. There have been only three Chairmen - Lord Ezra, Arthur Shannon, an architect, and the current Chairman, hotelier James Wright. The BRA represents a small central London area with transient population and residents with second homes across the country and overseas. This poses significant challenges for the Association. We have been incredibly lucky to have had a wide variety of members in the BRA and on the Committee, from members of the House of Lords to retired professionals. Their experience, devotion to local matters and energy has been instrumental in the success of our organisation and has made us what we are today.

## Difficulties in recruiting members

However, in common with most local amenity societies in the country, we have been facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining members. This is partly a consequence of our transient population. To engage with all residents and businesses in the area, we conduct surveys, organise events and assist residents and businesses on a one to one basis. This hard, unpaid work has borne fruit, and we have been rewarded with a recent surge in the membership. Our membership and committee reflect the composition of the area today. Furthermore, each committee member either has a business to run or is in employment. While this is encouraging, it also puts a constraint on the ability to devote time and energy to matters "local".

As an example, one of the most laborious tasks is vetting every planning application that is made and on which we are asked to comment. Most of Belgravia is a conservation area and the number of listed buildings is high. Therefore, we have no choice but to devote less time to smaller, less contentious items such as change of windows or air conditioning plant requests, unless of course they were to cause detrimental visual impact, or residents highlight potential issues with the plans. We dedicate more time and energy to review and comment on larger scale developments and, of course, the dreaded basement issue. We work in close contact with Grosvenor, the local land owner, and in the case of basements we have a common approach.

That said, we do cross swords with Grosvenor from time to time where they are pursuing a more aggressive development to maximise profit, sometimes forgetting that buildings are developed in an existing community. Our residents and most of the businesses in Belgravia want to keep the "village" feel of Belgravia at the forefront, with a retail mix to suit locals and Londoners rather than international needs.

## Mediating planning disputes

We work very closely with Westminster Council, but like most councils in the country, their coffers seem to be under great strain. This affects the area and our work directly. We have seen a surge in planning disputes where the BRA has had to step in and mediate, sometimes pointing the parties to an appropriate route to resolve issues. We are always happy to help our members, but as a voluntary organisation, we don't always have the resources to do so. Normally, this would be a matter for Council's planning and building control. This reinforces the need for more resources for local government.

So why are we doing all this? To give you an example: Cundy Street flats - private and social housing. The plan was to demolish and build new flats. As a result of discussions with developers we have been instrumental in winning the right to return for all residents, and changes in the design including a space for the community open for all, which we desperately need in our area. Consultations are ongoing; we are hoping for more positive changes to come.

Often threats that arise from time to time are not merely local issues but have an impact on the wider built environment. In these cases, we can be more effective by liaising with other bodies (and ensure we are not seen as merely a bunch of NIMBY's). Examples are:

- We lobbied to keep the red route out of Belgravia to ensure sensible traffic arrangements for local residents and businesses
- We worked with other local amenity societies to stop Kensington & Chelsea changing Sloane Square from its current roundabout to a crossroads, threatening to destroy the Square and create traffic chaos and increased pollution.
- Working with the Qatari royal family on the Chelsea Barracks development resulted in changes to the Lord Rogers' and Candy brothers' plans, making it a more inclusive scheme. In this case it is not strictly Belgravia, but local residents in surrounding streets called on our help.
- We were instrumental in bringing in traffic calming schemes to Belgravia in parallel with the congestion charge. This involved closing a rat run through Ebury St from the Embankment, and changing Buckingham Palace Road from one-way flow to two-way.

All of the above take an inordinate amount of time and effort for BRA committee members, and we do not always win. We failed in our attempt to stop Grosvenor closing down the historic Newsyon's timber yard in Pimlico Road. This was a purpose built timber yard still operating as one 150 years on, and well used locally. This is where Travis Perkins company started off.

## The value of membership

To meet the cost of running the association our membership fee is £30 a year. We get involved and support all members who ask for advice - whether it be on planning or local traffic issues, or for a way through the morass of dealing with the council or





## The Belgravia Residents Association

**Contact:** James Wright Chair  
**email:** info@belgraviareidents.org.uk  
**website:** www.belgraviareidents.org.uk

Chair James Wright

other services. Our membership also gains access to our Partnership scheme which was started a few years ago. We feel very strongly that bringing local residents and businesses together will help to build a strong community. Our scheme offers exclusive discounts in local businesses, and provides them with a free promotion channel.

In our area with its transient population, it is hard to build a community. Many people don't want to get engaged until some adverse change is affecting them directly. Like most civic and amenity societies, we receive no funding from either local or central government so we need to be creative with our limited funds and resources in order to reach out to our residents, many of whom have no internet access.

We are constantly seeking innovative ideas for community engagement. ■



Right: Example of recently restored sign.

Below: Eaton Square



Cundy Street flats

**Age:** almost 50

**Circumstances of Birth:** Campaign group for reform of Leasehold tenure.

**Biggest Successes:** Changes to the Chelsea Barracks development, stopping the Sloane Square traffic changes.

**Biggest Disappointments/Frustrations:** Attracting and retaining members.

**Present Preoccupations:** Belgravia is a small, mostly residential, area in central London. As well as 4,500 residents, it is also a home to a number of Embassies and multinational companies. We work tirelessly with local residents, businesses, developers, local council and landowners to ensure all developments are sympathetic to the area and acceptable to the local community.

**Working Details:** The BRA Committee of 11 members meets monthly. We receive an average of 55 planning applications for comment every month.

**Special Characteristics:** Belgravia was developed in the early 19th century by Richard Grosvenor, 2nd Marquess of Westminster under the direction of Thomas Cubitt. It has a number of terraces centred on Belgrave Square and Eaton Square. Much of Belgravia is still owned by the Grosvenor family property company. Owing to the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, the estate has been forced to sell many freeholds to its former tenants.

Belgravia takes its name from one of the Duke of Westminster's titles - Viscount Belgrave, derived from Belgrave, Cheshire, a village on land belonging to the Duke of Westminster.

Most of Belgravia is a conservation area, with many Grade I and II listed buildings which helps to preserve the historic feel of the area. A location to many a film and TV series and an inspiration to several books, Julian Fellowes' "Belgravia" among them.

**Last Word:** Working for a better Belgravia for all. ■

# A View from the Suburbs: the New London Plan

By **Gordon Massey**, Chairman, Federation of Residents Associations in Barnet;  
Planning Officer, Barnet Residents Association

High Barnet has undergone a long transition from a self-contained Hertfordshire town with its own local industry to a predominantly dormitory suburb of London. By the beginning of this century the transition was largely complete, with little industry left and far fewer residents engaged in the local economy. Most remaining local employment is now in the service sector. Despite these significant changes the area has continued to maintain its appeal as a place to live, especially for families. But the social structure of the area has been underpinned by the archetypal suburban home – the modest terrace or semi-detached house, and it is this that may now be under threat.

## The changing demographic

In recent years many relatively higher-income families and even single people with jobs in central London, who in the past would have found a home in more fashionable inner boroughs, have been forced by higher house prices to look much further afield. In High Barnet this trend is best illustrated by the growth in passenger numbers at the tube station which have increased by over 50% since 2011. Whilst the population has continued to grow the extra homes that are needed now rarely include houses. In addition to limited new build, we have had offices, floors above shops and industrial buildings converted to flats in substantial numbers. Thus we have an ever increasing supply of small flats but more intense competition for the largely static house market. These problems are now likely to be exacerbated by the expectations in the New London Plan which will increase the drive to yet more small flats and may even diminish the supply of houses.

## Failure to deliver homes for families

Barnet's current Local Plan envisaged some 2,200 new homes a year over a ten-year period, which in itself was a step change that just about doubled previous levels of provision. It has been no surprise, in common with many other Boroughs, that delivering such numbers has proved to be way too difficult, and indeed last year was the first time that the Borough delivered more than 2,000 homes. And yet, the draft New London Plan was seeking another step-change by asking the Borough to deliver over 3,100 new homes a year over the next ten years.

Apart from doubts whether such a target would be anywhere near achievable, the Council's own future Housing Strategy reveals the fatal flaw in the whole enterprise. The assessment of need has identified a requirement for 62% of properties to be three-bedroom or more, with a requirement for just 38% to be one or two-bedroom homes. But over 90% of new homes created in the Borough in recent years have been flats. Developers are shy of building three-bedroom flats for the simple reason that families do not want them, so they find them hard to sell. Thus the majority of those built have been studios, one or two bedroom properties.

This current pattern of new construction may well fulfil the needs of the expanding population of singles and couples, but does not meet the long-term aspirations of families where, perhaps other than those on low incomes who may have little choice, the expectation for a long-term home remains a strong desire for a house. With few houses being built, and little indication that older people are willing to leave their family homes after the children have moved on, no wonder that 300,000 people a year are leaving London to settle elsewhere. Certainly anecdotal evidence suggests that even at the extreme edge of the outer suburbs where we are, large numbers of children of local families are obliged to move out to Hertfordshire or beyond to be able to achieve their aspiration to live in a house. And the many incoming singles and couples moving into the flats here will similarly look elsewhere when they want a house, creating a large transient population with no incentive to put roots down here.



Green and pleasant land.

### **Perverse policies**

So what we have been seeing is an emerging strain on the previous demographic pattern where the housing and social fabric of the area has been geared to settled families. And what can we expect next? Fortunately the recent report of the Planning Inspectorate following the Examination In Public (EIP) of the draft New London Plan has advised substantially reduced housing targets across London, with Barnet now expecting a figure of 23,640 over the next ten years, some 8,000 fewer than anticipated and now little more than the target for earlier years. How will this pan out? What we do know is that the all the large brownfield sites have gone or have schemes in the pipeline, so the low hanging fruit has all been plucked. Nor indeed are there many small brownfield sites remaining as developers have trawled and trawled again for every tiny plot of land where a couple of houses or a small block of flats might be squeezed in. Many of these developments, large and small, have been controversial with strong opposition from residents. And it does seem somewhat perverse that the system allows the conversion of houses to flats in areas where there is a shortage of family homes.

### **A gamble in social engineering**

The revision of Barnet's Local Plan has yet to appear for consultation, so I can only make an informed guess as to what we might expect. I do anticipate that, though substantial, the target of some 19,000 homes on large sites could well be met. There are eight large sites in the Borough with planning approval or with schemes in the pipeline that could deliver up to 15,000 homes, provided the enormous redevelopment at Cricklewood is delivered. But these numbers will come at a price. A predominance of small flats in high rise blocks will be the order of the day at several locations where transport and other facilities are minimal. Diane Burridge wrote very graphically in the February Newsforum about the negative impact of living in high rise flats on the well-being of individuals and the conflict with the expectations of families, so I need not dwell on this. If these flats are primarily going to be homes for singles and couples only, they will engender an enormous change in the social fabric of the suburbs as the needs of the young and childless are very different from those of families. But there has to be an assumption that these flats will indeed be occupied by substantial numbers of families. Past experience of families in high rise blocks does not engender confidence that this gamble in social engineering will be successful, and the unwillingness of middle and upper income families to live in flats is unlikely to change.

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*It does seem somewhat perverse that the system allows the conversion of houses to flats in areas where there is a shortage of family homes.*

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A further expectation in the draft Plan was that in the suburbs over 40% of the new homes would come from small sites - defined as those that are less than 0.25 hectares. In Barnet this would have equated to some 12,000 homes over the next ten years. But we know the expectation that many of these homes should come from brownfield sites is an illusion, so the search would have to turn to the other measures identified in the now somewhat notorious Policy H2A, which was demanding 'intensification' in areas close to town centres and

transport hubs. Measures proposed included conversion of houses to flats, additional floors to houses, back land development, and demolition of larger houses to be replaced with blocks of flats. We recognised the potentially catastrophic consequences when the draft New London Plan first went out to consultation, and our comments back in February 2018 were largely focused on this one policy.

This policy would embody our worst fears of a major restructuring of suburban housing, with the outcome that many suburban streets of family houses could be changed out of all recognition. And we had no doubt that it would happen. Whenever relaxations to planning controls are introduced there can be a deluge of developers who are more than ready to take advantage. The most recent experience is the Permitted Development Order 2015 allowing the conversion of offices and small industrial buildings to residential. The Government expected a handful of redundant offices to be converted, but a veritable stampede has resulted in some new 200,000 homes so far, with many providing sub-standard accommodation, some of which have attracted notoriety. It is also the case now that we get numbers of planning applications for the kinds of developments envisaged in Policy H2A, but Barnet's current Local Plan includes policies that have a presumption against many such developments. But in conforming to the demands of policy H2A these defences could be substantially weakened.

There has always been a paradox to the 'intensification' policy, which envisages this will occur around transport hubs and within 800 metres of town centres. But it is precisely these areas that are already most intensely developed. It is further out where we have large swathes of detached houses and houses with generous gardens, which offer the greatest opportunities for additional floors, infill or demolition and replacement with blocks of flats. But then, if they generate more car traffic, as inevitably they would, that would clash with the major objective in the New London Plan to reduce car journeys.

*continued on next page*

# A View from the Suburbs (continued)

## A reversal of policy

Our comments back in February 2018 were ignored. And when we learned of a Greater London Authority official saying at the EiP that 'one house plot could support over twenty flats on it' we concluded the political momentum behind policy H2A was unstoppable. But we have been amazed by Inspectors' recommendation following the EiP that this policy be deleted in its entirety. Moreover, the whole of the reduction in the housing target for Barnet should be applied to the small sites ten-year target, bringing the number down to 4340, which might even be manageable. The implications of a withdrawal or major changes to H2A are explored in the article by Peter Eversden elsewhere in this Newsforum. We have not yet popped the champagne corks as some of the threatening measures in H2A could well remain or reappear in another form, but we are keeping our fingers crossed that good sense might prevail.

## Apprehension about the future

Though the immediate threat to the suburbs would be diminished with the reduction in target numbers for small sites, our sense of unease with enormous developments of small flats remains. And we may find in ten years there is a renewal of the demand for yet more intensification. And a further major concern is the growing awareness locally of the pressures from more development on transport and infrastructure such as schools and especially healthcare. A

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*Wholesale social re-engineering would be needed to transform the character of the suburbs from 'suburban' to 'urban'... Such a transformation needs to have the will of the people on its side.*

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step-change in population can only exacerbate this, with no major transport expansion envisaged for Barnet and the near impossibility of funding or locating expanded acute care facilities. So we still have good reason to be apprehensive.

And finally, I still find it difficult to believe that the wholesale social re-engineering that would be needed to transform the character of the suburbs from 'suburban' to 'urban' will actually happen. Such a transformation needs to have the will of the people on its side, and I am quite certain that will not be the case. Families will protest, but if they find their environment becoming less and less congenial they will just leave. Our outer suburbs would then lose the benefit of a stable multi-generational, socially and economically mixed population that in the past has been their very essence. ■

Do we really want more of this?



# newsbriefs

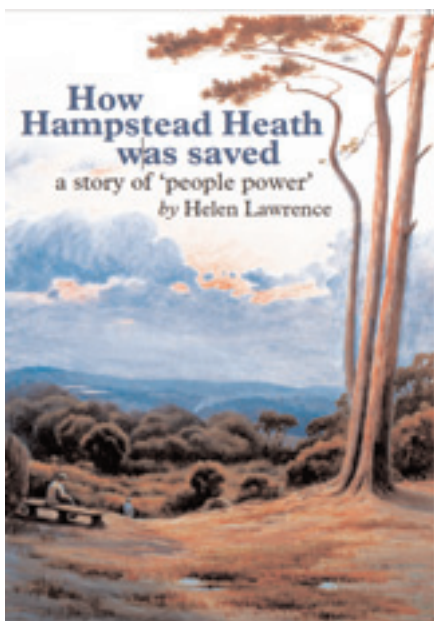
News and issues of interest and concern to note.

## Secretary of State allows Harrow School to build on MOL

The complexity and thoroughness of the planning system has been illustrated by the recent decision on Harrow School's proposal for a new sports building on land which was designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). The original application was made in April 2016. In November 2016 Harrow Council decided to defer a decision for more consideration and information. In June 2017 they decided, on the Chairman's casting vote, to approve the proposal. This decision had to be referred to the Mayor of London because it was of potential strategic importance in that it involved the development of a large building on MOL. The Mayor decided in January 2018 to direct Harrow Council to refuse the application because it was inappropriate development on MOL. Harrow School appealed to the Secretary of State against this refusal. There was a Public Inquiry in May 2019. Unusually, the decision was not delegated to the Inspector, but recovered (the technical term) for the Secretary of State's decision. The Inspector's recommendation in July was that the appeal should be allowed because though the proposed development would result in harm to MOL there were very special circumstances (including educational need, community need, heritage, landscaping and biodiversity benefits, etc.) which would clearly outweigh this harm. On 31st October the Secretary of State accepted these recommendations. Costs were awarded against the Mayor. There is a period of six weeks for the decision to be challenged in court.

## A new book of interest How Hampstead Heath was saved

Helen Lawrence's new book has been published to coincide with the latest twist in the history of the Heath – the return of



sheep grazing. She charts in great detail the long struggle over ownership of the heath and the rights and easements granted or withheld. There is a critique of earlier publications and this book brings together the full story to date, acknowledging that it will continue to evolve and urging vigilance on readers who might be faced

with challenges in the future.

Hampstead has always been inhabited by more than its share of the great and the good and it is interesting to speculate, as you read the book, how Epping Forest might have fared if it had fallen into the same ownership. The book is sub-titled a Story of People Power and although legislation has changed out of all recognition there are echoes of the petitioning of Parliament over the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in the account of how successive Bills in Parliament designed to permit unwanted development were rebuffed.

Surprisingly, the coming of the Railways did not pose a threat to the heath and the Hampstead Junction railway skirting the southern edge of the heath strengthened the argument that this is a London wide resource. None of the radial routes to the north come anywhere near.

Changes to local government on the other hand posed more difficulties. Within the living memory of most readers, the abolition of the Greater London Council and the long drawn out debate about how its functions were to be administered involved twists and turns that are faithfully recorded here.

In places the left justification of the text results in some confusing spacing: one or two errors have escaped the proof readers. The book is copiously illustrated and very reasonably priced. A rather limited print run may mean first editions become a much sought after investment in years to come. Anyone with an interest in the history of the Heath, or needing to fight for open space elsewhere, will want to make that investment now.

*Andrew Bosi*

*How Hampstead Heath was Saved, published by the Camden History Society at £14.95, ISBN Number 978-1-913213-00-8. Can be ordered online through the Camden History Society website.*

## The retimed 2020 to Paddington is delayed. Please listen for further announcements.

Less than six months after announcing an opening date for Crossrail of between September 2020 and March 2021, the chief executive of Crossrail has acknowledged that this deadline will not be met. The announcement of the range of dates previously given had itself been delayed to ensure a realistic target. No new date has been given, but "sometime in 2021" would seem to be in the last nine months of that year, and quite probably three years after the original date of 9th December 2018.

The cause of the delay is the difficulty of linking a new signalling system over the central section with those of the Heathrow spur, the Great Western lines and the Great Eastern. It would not have been practical to convert the whole line to the new system, but Heathrow has been a particularly tough nut to crack and with hindsight it might have been cheaper and quicker to convert its signalling. This would however have disrupted the Heathrow Express service during installation. ■

# Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Michael Hammerson**

*Please ensure that we receive your newsletters - digitally to our new RTS editor at Michael@hammerson.me.uk, or hard copy to 70 Cowcross Street.*

*With many newsletters, full of important items to review and limited space, we try to select items which we think will be of interest and relevance to the wider membership. However, please let us know directly if you would like us to highlight anything which you consider of particular importance.*

## **The Finchley Society**

The Society reveal that Joseph Dunham's Statue of Peace in Friary Park is of Queen Victoria. Approved by Prince Albert to be erected behind the Royal Albert Hall, it was replaced with a statue of Albert after his death in 1861, the original finding its way to Friary Park in 1911. The Society reports Barnet's new draft Domestic Crossover Policy, replacing non-compulsory Guidance Notes under which crossovers proliferated, covering front gardens with hard standing and vehicles projecting over the pavement. The new policy relaxes space requirements, but obliges residents to observe better design and ecological standards, and the Society adds that it will still be down to the public to report contraventions. They also comment on a recent complaint: almost unbearable noise on the Northern Line between Kentish Town and Euston. The cause is unclear; TfL say that they will be taking alternative measures in late 2019.

## **The Putney Society**

The Society announce the start of works to enhance Putney High Street. They are concerned that the rebuilding of the centre of the Alton Estate at Roehampton by Redrow and Wandsworth Council may not provide value for money, since the Council are contributing £108 million plus land to get 30 extra council homes and 160 replacements. They learn that the closure of Hammersmith Bridge has led to an additional 4,000 vehicles a day crossing Putney Bridge. Of the 25,000 that used to cross Hammersmith Bridge daily, 6,500 use Chiswick, 2,000 Kew, 2,000 Wandsworth and 1,000 Battersea Bridges. 9,000 seem to have disappeared.

## **The Highgate Society**

The Society express concern over poor planning decisions by Haringey which are accelerating the deterioration of the Conservation Area. More developers are trying to regularise breaches of Planning Control by applying for Certificates of Lawfulness, although National Guidance makes clear that "Lawful development certificates are not relevant to situations where breaches of listed building or conservation area controls may be alleged" and "the grant of a certificate applies only to the lawfulness of development... It does not remove the need to comply with other legal requirements such as... the 1990 Planning Act". In addition, major alterations to permissions are being submitted as non-material amendments, with no public consultation.

## **The Peckham Society**

The Society report the sensitive restoration of the 1935 Art Deco Holdrons' department store, by the freeholders, the Wilson Family, and the tenants, Khan's Bargains, who received a Historic England Angels Award.

## **The Isleworth Society**

The Society are concerned at Council proposals to develop the Syon Lane Tesco site with 1,600 units in blocks from 3 to 16 stories high, with another 450 units on the new Tesco site on the Great West Road. However, the Council have made significant additions to the Local List.

## **Ealing Civic Society**

The Society consider two development proposals for the West Ealing station area are a threat to their environment. Despite public exhibitions within days of each other, the developers had no knowledge of each other's applications, though both had discussions with Ealing Council. They involve two 25/26 storey residential towers, completely out of keeping with the local Victorian and Edwardian architecture, and a local action group has been set up. There has been a proliferation of applications for tower blocks across Ealing, and the Society has reviewed 14. Local heritage assets are also threatened by the new developments, including an Art Deco former 'Woolworths' building. Six have already been granted and, so far, none refused, while two further proposed blocks would overwhelm the setting of the art deco Hoover building.

## **The Knightsbridge Association**

The Society note with dismay that the Native Land development proposals at South Kensington Station bear no relation to the brief produced by TfL in 2016 after two years' local consultation. The conservation-led approach they advocated has been ignored: "it is not surprising that local groups feel betrayed and now regard TfL's consultation exercise as a sham... Since Native Land became involved consultation has been minimal and the good relationship which had been established by TfL with local groups has evaporated."

## **The Clapham Society**

The Society are assured that council proposals for rejuvenating the grassed events site on the Common are not aimed at reintroducing a heavy programme of events, but remain alert as the council has a sizeable revenue target from commercial events there; the Society's legal advice, which Lambeth seem to have accepted, argues that such events are illegal without ministerial consent. They are working with Lambeth to introduce winter litter picking across the Common; there was none at weekends last winter. They are pleased that proposals for the Vauxhall island site, including the redevelopment of Vauxhall Bus Station and two tall towers, have been called in by the Secretary of State.

### The St. Marylebone Society

The Society consider that the Baker Street Two-Way project by Westminster and TfL is improving a vital neighbourhood with more welcoming and safer streets, new road crossings and cycle lanes, reduced street clutter, new trees, a simpler bus network and shorter, more direct car journeys. It included the restoration of the 1903 Allsop Place Water Fountain.

### The Streatham Society

The Society report the official reopening of the restored 1933 Woodfield Pavilion as a community hub and conservation centre, and the restoration of its grounds through grants from National Heritage Funding, Veolia Environmental Trust, Western Riverside Environmental Fund and Wandsworth Council.

### The Sydenham Society

The Society major on the consultation for the Bell Green Urban Renewal masterplan. Short-term aims include streetscape and pedestrian improvements, and historic building enhancements; medium-term include improved bus interchange, a linear park, trees and greening; and longer-term include relocating Lower Sydenham Station, replacing surface car-parks with multistoreys which can eventually be converted to housing; and a new primary school. They report on how the local authority are addressing fly-tipping, a problem locally, and new trial measures to reduce air pollution from rat-running traffic.

### The Enfield Society

The Society highlights the dilemma of protecting Green Belt while creating sites for new homes, and notes a number of new high-rise office and residential developments proposed for Enfield and Southgate, all near transport hubs. The Society will however press for new developments to be appropriate to the area, provide good quality homes with access to open space, and accord with the local plan. They have considerable concerns about a 17-storey block proposed on a hill near the Grade II\* Southgate tube station.

### The Greenwich Society

The Society consider new "Mini-Manhattan" proposals for the Peninsula will be extremely dense, with social housing between the motorway slip roads and no additional green space. The developers, Knight Dragon, would not reveal how much of the next phase would be marketed only outside the UK.

### The Blackheath Society

The Society report that Greenwich now require a Basement Impact Assessment for any residential development involving a new or enlarged basement or converted cellar. It must state how problems will be overcome and show that the structural stability of the building or neighbours will not be affected.

### The Heath And Hampstead Society

report success in persuading an Inspector to dismiss an appeal against Camden's order to demolish a new house built illegally on the South Fairground site overlooking Hampstead Heath, and awarding partial costs against the developer for unreasonable behaviour at the appeal. They also report that, following strong objections, the site for a proposed memorial to Humanitarian Aid Workers at Kenwood, which would have been visible across Hampstead Heath, has been dropped.

### The Barnet Society

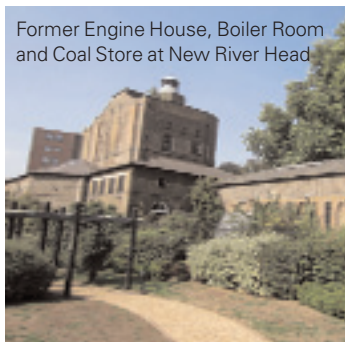
are battling the scale of proposals for 700 homes on Barnet Tube Station car park as significant overdevelopment which would be visible from Green Belt, result in substantial tree loss, and lack of infrastructure. They are also involved in promoting a new Act of Parliament to improve the protection of Hadley Common by creating a new charity to run it; this was due to be deposited in Parliament on November 27, but will presumably fall victim to the sudden election call. Like many other Societies, including Finchley and Highgate, they are working closely with the local authority on a badly-needed update of the Local List.

### House of Illustration acquires New River Head

The Islington Society and Amwell Society report the purchase of a long lease on the heritage assets at the New River Head site in Islington by the House of Illustration, Europe's leading gallery and resource centre for Illustrators. This closes a chapter on a 30-year campaign to secure an appropriate use for this important site where just over 400 years ago, a 44-mile aqueduct (the New River) was completed to bring fresh water into London from Hertfordshire. New River Head served as the headquarters of the Metropolitan Water Board, and subsequently Thames Water until a decision was made in 1989 to relocate the offices to Reading and most operational activities to other sites. Much of the site was converted to apartments in the 1990s. The 1999 Planning Brief called for the complex of 18th century buildings on the site to be preserved for heritage and education purposes. Despite this, the site was sold to a property developer who submitted several applications to convert the buildings for residential use. These were rejected by Islington Council, and refused again on appeal on each occasion.

The local civic associations were instrumental in bringing the developer, Thames Water and the House of Illustration together at a time when the latter, currently based at Kings Cross, was looking for a new home for their expanding activities. We are all looking forward to the presence of a major new cultural institution in the heart of the former borough of Finsbury. ■

Former Engine House, Boiler Room and Coal Store at New River Head



# Dates for your diary

## London Forum events

### Membership renewal

Please keep London Forum's membership system up to date for your society by using the new membership renewal facility on the web site:

[http://www.londonforum.org.uk/member\\_login.php](http://www.londonforum.org.uk/member_login.php)

Do make sure to amend your data so that the right people are receiving post and email bulletins, otherwise societies might not be kept informed. The way in which members can amend their details is secure, as is the information we hold. Queries can be sent to [admin@londonforum.org.uk](mailto:admin@londonforum.org.uk) ■

### The Newsforum team would be delighted to hear from members

Please send us your newsletters so that any items of interest can be featured in

#### Round the Societies:

[Michael@hammerson.me.uk](mailto:Michael@hammerson.me.uk) ■

### Delivering Newsforum by email

The Newsforum in PDF form sent by email can be widely distributed at no cost. If you do not keep your hard copy and feel you could do without it, 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. ■

### For information about the London Forum contact:



**Peter Eversden** Chairman  
London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street,  
London EC1M 6EJ  
Telephone: 020 7993 5754  
email [chairman@londonforum.org.uk](mailto:chairman@londonforum.org.uk)

Registered Charity Number 1093134

## London Forum Open Meetings 2019

### Save the Dates

#### 2019

#### Wednesday 4th December

Be ready for the new London Plan

#### 2020

#### Tuesday 14th January

#### Wednesday 25th March

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

#### Meetings are held at The Gallery,

75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ, (Farringdon station)

**All meetings begin with refreshments at 6pm for a 6:30pm start, unless stated otherwise, and finish at 8:45 p.m.** ■

## 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](http://twitter.com/London_Forum)

NB - note the underscore: \_ in the name ■

## newsforum

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

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