

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

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The Grenfell Tower fire

The Grenfell Tower fire - a tragedy of national significance.

London Forum Chairman **Peter Eversden** reflects on recent events

The Grenfell Tower fire was one of the most dreadful disasters in London of recent times and a tragedy of national significance. It exposes the terrible dangers inherent in too many Government policies.

The public inquiry to be conducted by Sir Martin Moore-Bick is vital to ascertain what went wrong and how warnings and proposals after earlier incidents as far back as 2009 were handled. There will also be inquiries by the Emergency Services and others.

It is to be hoped Sir Martin's report together with any other inquiries, may help to inform a wider consideration of how policies and actions that can have such a disastrous effect on so many lives are arrived at.

The scramble by local authorities to ascertain the safety of such towers up and down the country, when some were declared unsafe but then their condition later thought not to be serious, starkly reveals the chaotic approach that now prevails over too many areas of the planning system and also in disaster planning at Government, GLA and local authority level. It has been revealed that the fire brigade did not have the sort of equipment required to reach the upper floors. There should now be a moratorium on the approval of new tall buildings and renewal of extant permissions for them until safety requirements have been examined in all cases.

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Warnings ignored

This shocking episode also reveals just how damaging has been the relentless onslaught by governments of all parties on the planning system in the name of removing red tape said to be standing in the way of development. In particular the privatisation of building control that has taken it out of the oversight of local authorities whose concern must be for the whole community, not commercial profits. Warnings about the fire risk of flammable materials being fitted to the outside of buildings have, apparently, been repeatedly ignored.

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London Forum Awards

Only 6 weeks left to submit an entry for this year's awards!

- Is your society trying out new initiatives to increase its effectiveness?
- Are they succeeding?
- Should other societies have the chance to know about them?
- Would your society benefit from the experiences of other societies, and from the advice of London Forum's judges of this year's achievements of societies?

If so, the London Forum Awards event on October 12 is your chance to be recognised and to hear from others what they have been doing, and to discuss new ideas.

Entries for this year's London Forum Awards have to be in by **Thursday 31 August.**

The Awards will be presented by **Professor Tony Travers of LSE** at London Forum's AGM on October 12.

see more details page 2

The Grenfell Tower fire (continued)

The General Election

Regulatory framework weakened

Professor Christopher Hall in a letter to the Financial Times firmly placed responsibility "with the governments that over many years have weakened the industry's regulatory framework, and have eviscerated the public-service research base on which it depends." He continued: "It is particularly damning that this regulatory failure occurred in public housing, where government must be the guarantor of safety for tenants who may have little choice in where they live." (*Financial Times*, June 17)

Dr. David Strong, former managing director of the Building Research Establishment, which itself was privatised in 1997, wrote to the Times saying it was not austerity that caused the fire but a "fundamental market failure resulting from building control bodies competing with each other to deliver enforcement with the lightest possible touch" "Competition and market forces had driven a deadly drop in standards," *The Times*, June 29.

Outsourcing has also contributed to undermining Local authority oversight and competence. On July 11 The Times named seven leading companies whose outsourcing contracts had been a failure.

The London Forum while always endeavouring to offer constructive responses has watched this process with ever deepening dismay and has consistently opposed the attacks on the planning system. As far back as 2005 I wrote in relation to the Barker review, that

some of the proposed changes "would be a direct attack on the principles underpinning the planning system. It would establish the principal role of planning as being simply to meet market demand, without regard to any other considerations, including democratic accountability." (*Newsforum Spring 2005*)

In these pages last year Newsforum editor Helen Marcus pointed out "The planning system is there to preserve standards protect our environment and ensure safety; it is not merely a conveyor belt for developers' building permissions and profits." *Newsforum No 72 (Spring 2016)*

It is essential to understand how these deep underlying failings of governance and oversight at every level, that have been developing over too many years, have led to a situation where such a thing could happen.

Residents concerns ignored

Another disturbing element has been the residents' complaint that they were simply not listened to. All too often when civic and amenity groups or individual local people try to make constructive and valid criticism, we are disparaged as "Nimbies" or "usual suspects". Yes of course there are always going to be people who object to anything and everything for various motives. But sometimes politicians' motives seem equally suspect. The residents at Grenfell Tower had been trying to get their concerns listened to for years without success and it later emerged that residents' concerns in the Camden tower blocks at Swiss Cottage

also went unheeded. The phrase most widely repeated was that their concerns were "treated with contempt".

A key message

Things have to change. If there is a key message it is that business as usual is not an option. Politicians have to learn to engage directly with the public, listen to what they say and respond. It is time to call a halt to ill-thought-out deregulation and outsourcing, and reinstate public sector accountable control. We are at a turning point and the politicians need to recognise this and change their relationship with the electorate.

The General Election

This disaster coincided with the outcome of one of the most extraordinary General Elections for decades. Particular concerns in London among many others are about the way Brexit will be conducted; the implications for jobs; the level of business rates that boroughs will retain. Mayor Sadiq Khan has made clear that businesses and financial institutions in London must be supported.

Many parts of the Conservative manifesto did not make their way into the Queen's Speech which leaves doubt over policies that London Forum was expecting to scrutinise and comment on such as housing, infrastructure development, and devolution.

We wait to discover what will happen to these and to the Housing White Paper. ■

Only 6 weeks left to submit an entry for this year's London Forum Awards!

Download an entry form from the website - click on 'news' and then on 'awards 2017'

The Awards ceremony on October 12th will be your chance to be recognised, and to hear from others what they have been doing, and discuss new ideas.

The guidance notes about the kinds of things the judges will be looking for are on **the London Forum website** - here are some pointers:

- **Obtaining the views of young people**, perhaps through social media

- **Making people aware** of how plans and planning documents will affect their lives

- **Publicising your Society's position** for example through tweets and blogs

- **Contributing to place-making** for example by obtaining improvements to the public realm; new signage; arranging walks or talks

- **Arranging a celebration** of local Conservation Areas

- **Encouraging people** to set up task groups to focus on a particular project

- **Involving and making contact** with newer residents

- **Activities for parents and children** - nature trails, or competitions

- **Award schemes street festivals** or community arts projects

http://www.londonforum.org.uk/awards2017_notes.php

We look forward to hearing from you

The erosion of sound government

In the wake of the terrible events at Grenfell Tower a light has been temporarily shone on several aspects of policies that have been driving governments for over two decades, and failures of governance that are undermining trust and the ethos of public service.

Helen Marcus reports

The revolving door is spinning faster. The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA), originally established in 1975, by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, monitors ministers and top civil servants leaving government service, to ensure they do not “improperly exploit privileged access to contacts in Government or sensitive information”; or “that an individual might be influenced in carrying out his or her official duties by the hope or expectation of future employment with a particular firm”; or “a particular firm or organisation might gain an improper advantage by employing someone who, in the course of their official duties, has had access to information relating to ...Government policy”.

Over the past decade there has been increasing concern about its effectiveness. ACoBA's 2015-16 report more or less admits that the trend is increasing and it is failing to control it.

So unsuccessful has it been that the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee made its own investigation into what is going wrong. Their report, published in April, is damning: “ACoBA, in its current form, is a toothless regulator which has failed to change the environment around business appointments.” “...the present system is completely failing to address public concern” “The Government must take steps to ensure that the ACoBA system is improved swiftly. In the long term, failure do so will lead to an even greater decline in public trust in our democracy and our Government.”

Former ministers and civil servants who have moved into posts in the private sector with companies with whom they had dealings as government officials include three former health secretaries; armed forces personnel and MOD officials who now have posts in the arms industry; at least ten Financial Conduct Authority staff, including its recent acting chief executive, who joined the firms they had been regulating; and a Minister of State for Housing who launched the Build to Rent policy in 2012 and left government not long after to join the company Essential Living.

Captains of industry and consultants

Then there is the whole area of “captains of industry” and consultants brought in to run

sectors of government and the number of lobbyists and top business people seeking to influence policy making in their favour. The ‘Leaders’ Group’ allows them to attend private dinners with ministers, including the Prime Minister. Events like Bilderburg and Davos are now public knowledge. Another, more secretive gathering is the Franco British Colloque set up by a former BP oil executive who then worked as Senior Policy Adviser at 10 Downing Street from 2009 to 2010. Attendees have included Sadiq Khan when he was still a Labour MP in 2009, Yvette Cooper, Chuka Umunna and Dominic Grieve.

Often untested ideas are introduced in the name of efficiency savings with little evidence that the intended efficiencies ever arrive. The reforms to the planning system since 2004 have been driven by the interests of the building lobby, and developers had a large role in writing the NPPF. (see page 4).

Sound government and trust eroded

A cornerstone of sound government and the ethos of public service are being eroded to the extent that we can no longer trust that advice to government on important areas of policy such as housing, planning and the environment is truly independent and is based on what might be best for the country rather than possible job expectations of the advisers.

In London several controversial infrastructure plans such as HS2, Heathrow third runway, and the Garden Bridge, have been heavily criticised on all sides, from Parliamentary committees, to civic groups and members of the public generally. How can we be sure that the decision-making on these projects was not unduly influenced by interested parties who stand to benefit, especially where large sums of government funds may be involved?

The Constitutional Affairs Committee found that “the problem has escalated, with increased numbers of public servants moving between the public and private sectors...resulting in declining public confidence in a system that was set up to command trust by mitigating any breaches of the Rules.”

Local Authority accountability

However there is not even an ACoBA to scrutinise the activities of Local Authority councillors and officers.

In 2011 Sir Stuart Lipton's City Finance Commission called for a new relationship between businesses and local government with “real influence for business over local priority-setting.” (see *Newsforum Issue 59 Autumn 2011 PDF supplement*). Although little publicised, the “influence” of this report appears to have permeated local authority conduct. London Boroughs have taken to attending the lavish MIPIM (Marché International des Professionnels d'Immobilier) property fair held in Cannes every year. In the absence of ‘sponsorship’ by developers, tax-payers’ money pays for their trips. Inside Croydon local newspaper discovered that 16 London boroughs attended this year.

According to their website MIPIM brings together “the most influential players from all international property sectors offering unrivalled access to the greatest number of development projects and sources of capital worldwide”. It has been so successful that there is now a MIPIM UK which boasts “the participation ... of numerous local authorities and housing associations”.

Haringey Council attended in 2015: “Securing investment for Haringey to achieve its potential ...to promote the borough to prospective investors.” Lendlease, a partner in the controversial Haringey Development Vehicle also attends MIPIM.

Brent Council “regularly attends the annual MIPIM property conference” and “is committed to developing open and transparent relationships with the private sector and developers.” (*Brent Draft Borough Investment Plan 2010*)

Sutton officers attendance this year was sponsored by house-builders and developers Barratt and Mizen both of whom have been granted planning permission for projects in the borough.

How many such deals have been made for publicly owned land behind the backs of the electorate, ignoring their protests? As more and more borough services are being outsourced and sham “consultations” are staged on what are apparently done deals, democratic accountability is being eroded and the concept of public service lost.

WThe ACoBA 2015-16 Report and the Constitutional Affairs Committee report can be downloaded from the internet as PDFs ■

Housing in London – whose interests?

The housing crisis is yet another example of how government policy has been manipulated by vested interests to the detriment of Londoners. It is becoming increasingly clear that the government and their chosen advisors have little idea of what the problem really is or how to deal with it

By **Helen Marcus**

The Government, influenced by their chosen advisors, the development lobby, is fixated on the idea that the problem of affordability will be solved by allowing developers to build what and where they like and that only the planning system stands in their way.

A growing number of academics, economists and others are pointing out the defects of these policies (as reported in Newsforum) but they are ignored.

Even as Government is being told on all sides that what is required is social housing at low rents it has switched all public investment from social rent (below market levels) to "affordable" rents which for most people are not affordable at all. It is not solving the problem for those who cannot afford what is on offer, and it is degrading London's environment. Moreover dangerous levels of corruption have been introduced into the UK economy by the house market, that exacerbate the problem.

Laundered money and London Homes

Several recent reports, especially since the revelations of the Panama Papers, have highlighted the role of overseas investors, and their links to money laundering. Foreign buyers now own close to 10 per cent of the UK's housing, inflating prices across the entire market. There are warnings that there is effectively an infinite supply of international money that can pour into the country and "the inevitable result of this free market was excellent housing for the wealthy and slum housing for the majority." *The Bow Group Report - The UK Housing Crisis (2015)*

Transparency International's report this year: "*Faulty Towers: Understanding the impact of overseas corruption on the London property market*" also details how the "vast sums laundered through UK property are contributing to a housing crisis, particularly in London - leading to the underuse of stock and over-heating of prices" and helping to price Londoners out of the capital.

Building more housing won't solve the problem of affordability

The whole notion that under-supply of new housing is the problem is now widely dismissed. David Smith, (Economics

"New housing makes a marginal difference to the supply-demand situation. It would be foolish to expect new housing to solve the problem of affordability."

David Smith, *The Times*, April 11 2017

Editor of *The Sunday Times*) poured scorn on the government's Housing White Paper assertion that the cause of the broken market and high prices was "simple" and reflected "the laws of supply and demand". He described this statement as "not so much simple as simplistic". "New housing makes a marginal difference to the supply-demand situation. It would be foolish to expect new housing to solve the problem of affordability." (*The Times (April 11 2017)*)

Geoffrey Meen, Alexander Mihailov and Yehui Wang of the University of Reading, in a research paper presented at the Royal Economic Society's conference in Bristol, *Understanding the Next Housing Crisis*, agree "that to expect an increase in building to improve affordability significantly would require a step change in supply of the kind that has never been achieved on a permanent basis in this country."

Paul Finch, chairman of CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in 2011 posed the crucial question: "whether the housing shortage has anything at all to do with the planning system, or whether a bipartisan policy not to build social housing since 1982 has played its part" (*see newsforum 59 Autumn 2011*)

A pernicious housing delivery test

Alex Morton, a former Number 10 special advisor on housing and planning said: the "battle" for the Housing White Paper "was won by people who are quite market-orientated" (*Planning Resource 31 March 2017*). He cites particularly the new housing delivery test which is geared to

forcing local authorities to accept specific targets in local plans. Significantly it was this element of the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 14 and 49, that was recently subject to a series of court rulings and appeals, the outcome of which has confirmed that it is designed to boost housing supply whether local people want it or not.

This should not come as a surprise. When the NPPF was launched in 2011 there were many accusations that it was a developers' charter, written by developers, for developers. The Government strongly rebutted these claims but it did not take much effort to discover that two of the four people who drew up the draft NPPF were advisors to the development and housebuilding industry. (*Newsforum 59 Autumn 2011*)

Over-supply and falling prices

Now developers appear to be hoist by their own petard. Having been allowed to provide ever increasing amounts of "luxury" apartments in London it is being said that they have created an over-supply: prices and rents are falling. A headline in the *Times* in June signalled a housing slump and property recession, and a report in the *FT* concluded that demand is unlikely to pick up "to absorb all of the high levels of stock". The paper followed up with a full page analysis (Friday June 9) showing that this is a worldwide problem: "The five-year global construction boom in luxury housing has left many cities with a surplus of high-end flats."

The article also made the crucial point that linking provision of affordable homes in London to these commercial developments makes it dependent on the vagaries of the commercial market. Nine Elms is a case in point. Battersea Power Station Development Corporation has applied to delay the construction of 103 affordable homes and review other affordable housing commitments while their other properties are not selling.

That is no way to solve the problems. Discrediting and dismantling the planning system, and forcing local authorities to sell off the urgently needed low rent homes that they do provide, is making matters worse. Policies must change. ■

What is happening to London's water?

Further serious concerns about Thames Water's finances **Helen Marcus** reports

Thames Water was floated on the stock exchange in 1989 and was acquired by the German utility group RWE in 2001. They sold it to the Kemble Water Holdings consortium led by the Australian bank Macquarie in 2006, (nicknamed the Vampire Kangaroo for its ruthless focus on profits), who used about £3bn of third-party debt and removed the company from the stock market.

Between Thames Water and Kemble, there are up to 10 intermediary companies "whose rationale and roles are hard to determine," according to Martin Blaiklock, a former director of power and energy utilities at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, another persistent critic of Thames Water.

Kemble has another subsidiary, Thames Water Utilities Cayman Finance, registered in the Cayman Islands, which was set up in 2000, and was used to issue new Thames Water bonds to repay the third-party debt used to buy Thames. Blaiklock said this was an "unsuitable structure" for a UK utility delivering a monopoly service to customers.

Government committee concerns

There are serious concerns even at government level about Thames Water's finances and its ability to see through the super-sewer project. A 2015 National Audit Office report attacked several water companies for retaining profits rather than passing savings to customers.

In January 2016 Parliament's Public Accounts Committee heavily criticised the regulator Ofwat for failing to protect consumer interests and for allowing companies to make excess profits. Ofwat Chairman, Jonson Cox, protested in a letter to the FT claiming that following their intervention, "the company will inject up to a further £100m to improve its water mains in London".

Financial manipulations

Thames Water's longterm borrowings - some of which have been used to repay shareholders who underwrote the original acquisition debt in 2006/07 - have more than doubled from £3.6bn in 2007 to over £10bn in 2016. Investors, who now include pension and sovereign wealth funds such as the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, the

China Investment Corporation, the Canadian pension fund Omers and the Kuwait Investment Authority, have taken at least £1.16bn in dividends. Macquarie sold its final stake in Thames Water for £1.35bn this year.

Thames Water says it has invested about £1bn a year in the past decade, fixing leaks and repairing tunnels. But this has also generated tax breaks, reducing its corporation tax bill. The company often paid no corporation tax and doubled its debt. It also paid executives massive remuneration packages while at the same time its pensions liabilities went from a £26.1m surplus in 2008 to a deficit of £260m in 2016, potentially leaving employees exposed in the event of a crisis.

"When the company was pressed in 2012 by the EU and the government to build the sewer under the Thames, it said it had too much debt and was forced to turn to the government for help." (23 Mar 2017 FT)

Construction risks will be borne by taxpayers because the government is acting as a guarantor of the scheme. (see Newsforums 73 and 74, 2016)

Sir Ian Byatt, another consistent critic, who was head of the UK water regulator Ofwat after the industry was privatised in 1989, said "The boards are largely composed of investors, so the prime issue is how much money are we getting, not how can we best provide a service for the customer ...one cannot resist the idea that they are more concerned with money than with serving the public." He has described it as "an unholy alliance between politicians and capital markets."

Pollution

In March Thames Water was fined over £20m - around two weeks of operating profits - for allowing 1.4bn litres of raw sewage to flow into the River Thames. The incident was far from an isolated case. Despite money gushing out to pay investors and executives Thames Water seemed unable to maintain and manage key equipment and fulfil its statutory duty. Judge Francis Sheridan, who presided over the pollution case at Aylesbury Crown Court earlier this year, described this failure as "borderline deliberate".

Matt Prescott, from the Environmental Rating Agency consultancy, said:

"Investors, regulators and customers should be extremely concerned that despite receiving such a predictable income from bill payers, Thames Water has caused such serious pollution to our rivers." (*Financial Times, FT Big Read. UK Utilities May 05, 2017*)

Now the company is again under investigation by Ofwat for its "unacceptable failure" to control water leakages, with 180 litres a day leaking from every property the company supplies. Ofwat said "The failure by Thames Water to meet the leakage commitments it has made to its customers is unacceptable."

Worldwide failure of water privatisation

A 2014 report by the Public Services International Research Unit at the University of Greenwich, *Water remunicipalisation as a global trend*, also publicised by the Financial Times in June this year, found that cities worldwide are experiencing the failures of water privatisation. Unequal access, broken promises, environmental hazards and scandalous profit margins are prompting municipalities to take back control of this essential service. This report is the first extensive global mapping of water remunicipalisation cases over the last 15 years. 180 remunicipalisations took place between 2000 and 2014, 136 of them in high income countries: Paris, Grenoble, Bordeaux, Nice, Montpellier, Berlin, Stuttgart, Budapest, and major US cities such as Atlanta and Indianapolis (which was forced to pay a \$29-million fee to French multinational Veolia to terminate the 20-year contract over a decade early).

The failures that have led to remunicipalisation include: under-investment, disputes over operational costs and price increases, soaring water bills, difficulties in monitoring private operators, lack of financial transparency and poor service quality.

France, the country with the longest history of water privatisation and the home to the leading water multinationals, presents the most cases of remunicipalisation.

For more information see:

<http://www.psir.org/>

Towards the Mayor's Transport Strategy

London Forum held two Open Meetings to discuss this important strategy. On 29 March **Lucinda Turner** of Transport for London outlined the key aims and principles, and **Jeremy Leach** of Living Streets set out what they would like to see in the strategy. **Peter Pickering** reports

Jeremy Leach noted that the Mayor's Transport Strategy will be only the third such strategy since the Greater London Authority was created. Living Streets' manifesto for walking in London, concerned with both the mode of travel and also with the quality of places, had been accepted by the Mayoral candidates of all the main parties. He expected Healthy Streets to be a central concept in the Mayor's Strategy: this concept includes places to shelter from the weather, shade, seats, control of noise levels, a zero target for deaths and serious injuries, and interesting things to see and do. Although Mini-Hollands had brought benefits to whole areas, and in Walthamstow overall traffic had been reduced by 16%, the wider objective ought to be creating Liveable Neighbourhoods. In 1971 many children under 10 were allowed to go on their own to any place within walking distance, but now almost none can. Although walking and cycling are crucial it is also vital to integrate them with public transport; improving public transport may need to be a first step.

Living Streets would like to see road pricing and the Ultra Low Emission Zone extend to the whole of London. New York, Paris and Madrid seem to be ahead of London in dealing with diesel emissions and traffic more generally. A consultation is expected soon on what is now being described as the 'transformation' rather than the 'pedestrianisation' of Oxford Street. But there are also many other opportunities, such as the Strand, Soho, Parliament Square and the Mayfair squares. Action on these would be important to encouraging walking in the 21st Century Global City.

Key principles of Transport Strategy

Lucinda Turner apologised for not being able to provide a preview of the Mayor's Transport Strategy; some aspects were still under discussion. She would outline the key principles and the direction of travel. TfL's Business Plan is for a 5-year period and covers only TfL's responsibilities, and all its content has to be fully funded. The Mayor's Transport Strategy has a longer timescale and a wider perspective, including the policies and proposals of bodies other than TfL; policy on fares is dealt with separately.

The first Strategy was quite specific, but inevitably in some respects overtaken by events. The second Strategy was more flexible but at the cost of being vaguer. Including specific projects in the Strategy provides a firmer legal basis for further work on them, even if their funding is not yet in place. Account should also be taken of the possibility that central government may devolve further functions to the Mayor.

The three broad aims of the Strategy will be to create Healthy Streets, improve public transport and provide for the projected increases in population and employment. There will be greater emphasis on integrating transport provision and land use. The planning rules on the amount of car parking and cycle storage will be reviewed. PTAL will be retained as a well understood tool even if it is not perfect.

Healthy Streets

Healthy Streets must be embedded in the planning system. Some improvements, for example landscaping, can be made at low cost. The appointment of the Walking and Cycling Commissioner has given walking a higher profile. With the increase in home deliveries sustainable freight systems will be important, but have not proved easy to establish. Air quality will be improved: NOx levels will be reduced by 40% in the Ultra Low Emission Zone proposed by the Mayor. The Mayor is lobbying central government to introduce a diesel scrappage scheme, and is of course committed to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050.

Improving public transport

The great challenges in improving public transport include maintaining the reliability of bus services. We are approaching Peak Tube: passenger movements into, out of and between trains will become the constraint, rather than the capacity of trains. The first stage in extending the Bakerloo Line will be identified as a priority and the Mayor still wants to reorganise the South London suburban lines into a Metro system. Bus transit schemes may be proposed in some areas.

Population and employment

There has been an 11% shift away from car

use since 2000: that trend is expected to continue and the aim will be to achieve an even larger shift. But the projected increases in London's population and employment are estimated to result in an extra 6 million trips a day. Greater density of development should help in achieving sustainable transport. Potential growth areas often do not have good transport connections at present. DfT's assessment methodology gives emphasis to the benefits of time savings on existing transport corridors and does not give equal weight to meeting latent demand. The Strategy will have to establish a framework for use of new technology. Electric vehicles do not produce emissions on the road but still take up road space. With the aid of the internet car sharing and demand-responsive systems could be a major factor in Outer London. However, it is difficult to persuade car clubs to devote effort to Outer London because they foresee larger profits in Central London; and borough councils may raise objections to allocating road space for private profit.

Borough Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) have led to big achievements and £1 billion will be allocated to them over the next five years. There will be firmer guidance about how the money should be used, with the emphasis on traffic reduction strategies. Publication of the draft of the Mayor's Strategy may be accompanied by the draft guidance to boroughs on LIPs. The consultation period will be 12 weeks.

Discussion from the floor

Following the presentations there was a lively discussion with the two speakers. Peter Eversden asked how much influence Living Streets has. Jeremy Leach said there have been some achievements but the position varies between boroughs and is affected by the resources a borough has available. Living Streets is not anti-car, and accepts that some people need to use a car but it is against disproportionate emphasis on it (Dick Allard emphasised the importance of cars to people of limited mobility). A representative of the Sydenham Society doubted the wisdom of promoting walking in Outer London given the bad state of footways and reduction in

Mayor's draft Transport Strategy

Open Meeting June 26

Note by **Peter Pickering**

street lighting.

Chris Barker (Campaign for Better Transport) said the gaping hole in integration is mainline rail.

Representatives of the Highgate Society complained that schemes for major intersections tend to give creation of town centres priority over integrating transport modes; bus stops had been scattered at Archway, with not enough attention paid to the needs of disabled people. Jeremy Leach said things had been managed more successfully on the Walworth Road. John Cox (Campaign for Better Transport) said too little attention has been paid to place-making in proposals for the Bakerloo Line at Lewisham, although the consultation on it is still in progress. He said that the new Brent Cross scheme would generate increased car traffic.

Attention was drawn to the potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists; other speakers emphasised the need for a co-operative approach by the two groups in order to maximise the number of people campaigning for change. A speaker from the Chiswick Society drew attention to the convenience of combining cycling and walking.

Representatives of the Marylebone Association highlighted the need to calculate displacement effects when traffic schemes are being planned. All the Central London amenity societies think there is no way of pedestrianising Oxford Street which will not damage air quality in nearby streets.

Healthy Streets Board

TfL has set up a Healthy Streets Board with the aim of balancing all the various factors involved. It may sometimes be possible to take mitigating measures outside the area covered by a scheme. Some people criticised excessive reliance on traffic modelling. Andrew Bosi

said predictions of increased congestion or pollution are not always borne out in the event. Some complained about the impact of satnavs, which depending on the traffic conditions may well direct vehicles down streets which planners had assumed would be lightly used but did not want to close off.

Michael Bach said developments at high densities must be accompanied by provision of social infrastructure and sites should be planned for that. Where developers provide contributions through section 106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy the need for transport improvements has to be weighed against other needs.

Closing remarks

Lucinda Turner said reducing the volume of traffic must be part of a solution. There are significant numbers of car journeys in Outer London which could be switched to other modes. Differences in trends in car use in different parts of London are explicable in terms of drivers' motivations. Don't underestimate the political opposition to proposals to limit vehicle use or increase its cost. The high-level commitments made by other world cities can be misleading because they tend to be subject to lots of exceptions.

Making tube stations collection points for goods ordered on the internet will contribute to a sustainable freight system. TfL is requiring contractors to agree logistics plan at major sites. But the market is not bringing about consolidation of loads. Peter Eversden pointed to the advantages of transporting freight by water, including canals. ■

The Mayor's draft Transport Strategy was published on June 21 and was presented at London Forum's Open Meeting by **Lucy Saunders**, Consultant in Public Health - Specialist in Transport & Urban Realm, and **Mike Keegan**, Policy Manager, Transport for London.

Michael Bach introduced the speakers with some historical background. He explained that following the abolition of the Greater London Council (noteworthy for the 'Fares fair' policy) the central Government's Department of Transport, as responsible for transport in London, had sought to build more roads but Ministers had eventually realised that such a policy was unacceptable to the people of London. The first Mayor after the formation of the Greater London Authority, Ken Livingstone, had introduced the Congestion Charge and increased bus usage. His successor, Boris Johnson, had retained the congestion charge (though removing the extension of its area) and had strongly encouraged cycling. TfL had taken over some of the heavy rail routes in London (the 'Overground' etc) and much increased their usage. Sadiq Khan was now consulting on a new transport strategy, emphasising air quality and health, not just traffic.

Healthy Streets - the overarching framework

Ms Saunders said that in Sadiq Khan's new draft transport strategy air quality and health, not just traffic, were emphasised: 'Healthy Streets' was its overarching framework

Londoners' health was strongly influenced by transport. Car ownership was the biggest cause of inactivity. Changing the look and feel of streets would encourage healthy activity, and reduce air pollution. London must be made walkable.

Mr Keegan said that the draft Transport Strategy was putting people at its heart. The aim should be twenty minutes of active travel a day. The forecast of population growth, and road building not being an option, meant that there would have to be much greater use of public transport, cycling and walking. In central London there would have to be pressure on the most inefficient uses of space: demand management was the key - since the congestion charge was introduced travel on Saturdays and Sundays had greatly increased, as had the number of taxis and private hire vehicles (exempt from the congestion charge); policy on taxis and private hire vehicles would be kept under review, with some numerical limit on the latter not being ruled out. In inner London the increase by five times in the use of the Overground since TfL became responsible showed what could be achieved; buses could be redeployed, and bus speeds could be increased. In outer London car dependency would have to be reduced, cycling made safer, and air quality and the environment generally improved; it was important that an attack on diesel cars did not lead to a switch back to petrol; there should be low

continued on page 8

Mayor's draft Transport Strategy (continued)

and zero emission zones. Individual boroughs should have local traffic reduction strategies. The draft Strategy strongly favoured devolving more of the rail services in London to the Mayor. That would support new homes and new jobs in London. As autonomous and connected road vehicles made their appearance in London they would have to be consistent with the strategy.

Question and answer session.

There followed a lively question and answer session.

Richard Bourn (Campaign for Better Transport) was surprised that the draft strategy still favoured the Silvertown Tunnel, which seemed entirely contrary to its philosophy. Mr Keegan said that the present nineteenth-century Blackwall Tunnel did not meet modern safety standards. It had to be replaced; charging for use of the replacement and for the Silvertown Tunnel would keep travel down consistently with the strategy.

Ruth Mayorcas queried whether anything in the strategy would succeed in deterring car use; improvement in cycleways and strengthening of the congestion charge was required. Mr Keegan pointed out that the draft strategy was out for consultation; points like these should be made in response to that consultation.

Charles King (East Surrey Transport Committee) said that the strategy, though right in principle, was not practical in areas like his, with hills that were difficult for pedestrians and cyclists; car use there was increasing.

Wandsworth Living Streets thought target dates in the draft strategy were too distant, and should be brought forward; and wondered if it would be possible to get boroughs to act. Mr Keegan replied that there were interim target dates, and pointed out that local implementation plans had to be approved by the Mayor.

Tom Ball sought more emphasis on, and action to curb, the common bad behaviour by cyclists. Mr Keegan said that improving the design of facilities for cyclists would have a good impact on their behaviour.

Peter Pickering claimed that the draft strategy failed to mention the economic and financial impacts of its proposals. Mr

Keegan drew attention to the discussion beginning on page 265 of the funding of the capital proposals (some £3.3bn a year); other funding mechanisms were being examined including the devolution of Vehicle Excise Duty to the GLA. Current costs (like that for freezing fares) were the subject of the separate TfL business plan, and were being met by efficiency savings in TfL, including the profitable use of transport land.

Steve Christof of Warren Street said that densification of his estate meant the loss of gardens where children played. Ms Saunders agreed that the healthy strategy should cover everything and take account of matters like that (which were outside her personal responsibility)

Dick Allard said that any road user charge should be distance-based. Mr Keegan said that page 82 recognised this.

Chris Barker (CBT London) advocated trams rather than buses on suitable routes - they were more successful in attracting people from cars.

Alex Jenkins (Tower Hamlets branch of the London Cycling Campaign) asked about discussions with cyclists. Mr Bach said that demographic change was resulting in more cycling. Ms Saunders emphasised the inclusivity of the whole strategy.

Diane Burridge sought better enforcement of the rule requiring cars to remain stationary until the lights changed. She also asked for public toilets to be more available; they were necessary for truly healthy streets.

Gail Waldman (Highgate Society) emphasised the importance of Crossrail2 if the necessary housing was to be built in London. Mr Keegan said that the Mayor was giving 100% backing to having Crossrail2 by 2033.

Roger Blake (Railfuture) said that TfL must keep on with its policies, knowing that even if borough councils supported things like parking restraint local residents might not; charging for parking on red routes was a possibility. Mr Keegan drew attention to the Implementation Plan at the end of the document. The GLA/TfL had to concentrate on its own road network, but must work with the boroughs.

Bill Linskey suggested a single

highways authority for London, but Mr Keegan had his doubts.

Mr Egan (Highbury Community Association) said that requiring children to go to the nearest school would greatly reduce car use.

Other questions raised concerned Heathrow and whether there was a healthy airports strategy; Mr Keegan drew attention to pages 248-9 of the draft strategy. The Mayor was opposed to Heathrow expansion unless very stringent conditions could be met; there would in any case have to be better public transport links.

Other points made: buying up and removing parking spaces throughout London to deter car use; there were now specially adapted cycles which could be used by people with serious walking disabilities; more people in central London no longer had cars and if they moved outwards they might be less likely to acquire one. Mr Keegan observed that fewer people were taking driving tests. The NHS should be championing healthy streets; what mechanisms were there for improving the quality of road schemes; Ms Saunders said that, ironically, some schemes to encourage cycling were opposed by NHS London. ■

Problems at HS2

There has been controversy surrounding the role of US engineering consultant, CH2M, the preferred project manager for phase 2, which has withdrawn amid a row over conflicts of interest. It had emerged that Chris Reynolds, a former HS2 Ltd executive who is now working for CH2M, led the phase 2 bid team.

Mace, the British company that came third in the tendering process, commented: "In our 26-year history, working on some of the UK's most iconic projects, we have never seen a procurement process run like this."

There have been two important changes of personnel in charge of High Speed Two at the Department for Transport. The director-general of High Speed rail and the DfT's long-serving permanent secretary have left. Could this have implications for direction of future policy? ■

Mayor, GLA and other London news

London Plan; New Chair of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation; Tri-borough arrangements to end; Heathrow and Crossrail in legal dispute; 'Space to Build' - a new CPRE report

The London Plan

Peter Eversden reports

The draft Replacement London Plan is due in November with an Examination-in-Public in Summer 2018.

Owing to the election, publication of the Mayor's strategies was delayed but the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) assessment has been proceeding and the findings should be available in November. 11,600 large sites are being assessed. There will be viability testing and scenario testing during the summer. Numbers will be for 2017 to 2019 and then for five year periods to 2041. Crossrail 2 is a vital factor. Brexit and net migration will be examined.

Housing

The London Plan housing team have given a presentation on the approach to be taken to the new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for identifying housing need.

Changes since 2013 that will be taken into account include a 14% increase in jobs, a 6% increase in population and a falling affordable housing provision.

At least five boroughs are conducting their own SHMAs and some calculations are being done on a sub-regional basis.

Population projections

Population was 8.7M in 2015 and projections are that it will be over 10M in 2031 with a possible extra 45,000 households annually according to the Government's 2014 figures.

Assembly committees 2017-18

New chart of Assembly committee members 2017-18 has been published.

Key appointments include:

- Housing committee: Sian Berry Chair, Caroline Russell Deputy Chair;
- Planning Committee: Nicky Gavron Chair, Andrew Boff Deputy Chair;
- Transport: Keith Prince Chair, Caroline Pidgeon Deputy Chair

The whole list can be downloaded as a pdf from the GLA website:

[w https://www.london.gov.uk/](https://www.london.gov.uk/)

More publications by the London Assembly covering a wide range of subjects are at:

[w http://bit.ly/2vm8jKL](http://bit.ly/2vm8jKL) ■

Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation

The Mayor of London has appointed Liz Peace CBE as the new Chair of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, tasking her with spearheading the delivery of 24,000 homes and 55,000 jobs in a largely industrial area of London. It is set to become a transport hub with the arrival of Crossrail and the High Speed Two rail projects.

With more than 35 years' experience in government and the property sector, Ms Peace was Chief Executive of the lobbying organisation the British Property Federation and has also been Honorary President of the Property Litigation Association, Chair of the Centre for London think tank and Chair of the Shadow Government Property Agency. Her appointment was approved by the London Assembly on April 10. ■

Heathrow and Crossrail

Heathrow and Crossrail legal dispute

Proposals to run Crossrail through Heathrow Airport have been jeopardised by a legal dispute.

Heathrow Express trains run partly on a five-mile stretch of track built by the airport for more than £1 billion 20 years ago. The Crossrail link into Heathrow would run on this section of track.

The airport's owners - a consortium of mostly foreign investment funds - want to recoup their past spending on this private train line with an "investment recovery charge" of £570 for every train that uses the track, plus extra fees of about £107 per train.

They are now in dispute with the Office of Rail and Road, which sets track access charges, over the amount that TfL, which runs the Crossrail Elizabeth Line, will need to pay to use the track.

The hearings were held at the High Court earlier this year and a judgment is expected within weeks.

Crossrail trains may have to terminate a few miles short of the airport, with passengers forced to transfer onto other trains at a suburban station. ■

Tri-borough arrangements to end

It was announced in April that the Tri-borough arrangements between Westminster City Council, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham Council, in place since 2011, are to end.

Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea say they have "reluctantly" decided to serve the notice "in the face of uncertainty caused by ... Hammersmith & Fulham, appearing to make alternative in-house plans without any formal engagement with the other two local authority partners about key services".

Hammersmith & Fulham Council Leader Stephen Cowan responded by saying: "We've had concerns for some time about the value of the 'tri-borough', its lack of transparency and its built-in conflicts of interest. In our last two budgets, Hammersmith & Fulham Council found £31 million in savings but the 'tri-borough' contributed no more than £200,000 of that, less than one per cent."

Westminster Council said that the arrangement which was set up to drive savings and public service reform for the three London boroughs had generated service improvements and a saving of £43m.

New industrial strategy

This month Mr Cowan wrote to the Times to say Hammersmith & Fulham is launching an industrial strategy working in partnership with the private sector and local residents, investing in skills and infrastructure to "drive innovation and ensure that growth benefits everyone." "We are already home to major international businesses, a burgeoning biotech, creative and digital sector, and a thriving start-up community." ■

CPRE report Space to Build

CPRE London's latest report *Space to Build* released in the context of increasing threats to London's green spaces shows that there is enough space in London for well over a million new homes without building on Green Belt and other green spaces.

The report calls for more realistic housing targets; the enforcement of a 'brownfield first' approach; and more affordable homes to solve the housing crisis

[w http://www.cprelondon.org.uk/](http://www.cprelondon.org.uk/) ■

Spotlight on the York House Society

One of London's oldest Societies - over ninety years of caring for Twickenham

Michael Lee relates some of the fascinating history of the House and the Society

The York House Society emerged from the committee which had persuaded Twickenham Urban District Council to purchase the York House building as a town hall for a borough, a status the town hoped to acquire.

Initially seen as the elite of Twickenham it was limited originally to fifty members. It is the oldest amenity society in Middlesex. Organising a ball to be held in January on the Twelfth Night of Christmas, it recruited the first members from those coming to this dance. The last ball took place in 1999. Since then the Society has had a Twelfth Night Dinner. There were frequent discussions about increasing the size of the membership. Nowadays the society is egalitarian and open to all who might wish to join.

Historic royal connections

The Society was proud of its royal connections and made great play of the period when Lord Clarendon (1609-1674) had been the owner of York House from 1661 to 1674. It was believed that Queen Mary II, Queen Anne, and the children of King James II, had regularly visited him there. Lord Clarendon was the father-in-law of King James. The name of York House in fact comes not from royalty but from the Yorke family which held this area of land from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

The White Lodge in Richmond Park had become the home of the Duke and Duchess of York who became King George VI and Queen Elizabeth after the abdication of Edward VIII in 1938. They were shown around York House in 1923, and agreed to attend the ceremony which on 22 November 1926 marked the delivery of the charter granting Twickenham its borough status. The arrival of the document itself attracted a great deal of popular attention although at the time the renovation of York House had not been completed for its conversion into a town hall. The ceremony inaugurated the use of York House in a dramatic way.

The Society's remit

The agenda of the Society has always been the stewardship of all proposals for the design and layout of central Twickenham.

The agenda of the Society has always been the stewardship of all proposals for the design and layout of central Twickenham

This includes the care of the grounds of York House and of the statues acquired by its previous owners. The most elaborate of these acquisitions are the collection known locally as 'the Naked Ladies' bought by Sir Ratan Tata (1871-1918), the financier and philanthropist, in 1909 and erected with a large pond in what had been a former water meadow beside the River Thames.

Orleans House

The other area that needs constant supervision is the site of the former Orleans House built around 1710 for James Johnston (1655-1737) who was the Secretary of State for Scotland from 1692 to 1696. This lies to the east of York House and is a property of the borough. Mrs Nellie Ionides (1883-1962) of Riverside House next door to the site of Orleans House who became the Society's first patron was able to preserve the Octagon Room, an addition designed by James Gibb around 1720, by bidding to purchase a separate plot of land in 1926 after the main house had been demolished. She bequeathed her property and her collection of 450 portraits and prints of local topographical views to the borough. The collection is now often on display in the Orleans Art Gallery opened in 1972.

Helping new societies to form

During the Second World War the Society did not meet. Post-war it helped in the formation of The Twickenham Society which was founded in 1962. Christopher Callaghan, a member of the York House Society, was the first secretary of the Twickenham Society and then later the secretary of the York House Society itself. The Borough of Twickenham Local History

Society was also founded in 1962 with strong support from the librarian who arranged a special exhibition. Similarly there was Society support for the committee which began the campaign to establish a Twickenham Museum. There had been a small museum in York House from 1929 to 1939. A museum project committee was formed in 1983 and proposals made to use Orleans House stables for museum purposes in 1986. The gift of another building led to a museum opening in 2001. Members of the York House Society were influential in the conversion of the former mission hall on the embankment into the Mary Wallace Theatre for Richmond Shakespeare Society.

Redevelopment averted

Sir John Betjeman (1906-84), the poet and enthusiast for preserving Victorian architecture, succeeded Mrs Ionides as the Society's patron in 1962 when the Society had just commissioned a scheme for the redevelopment of Church Street.

During the period covering the late 1960s and early 1970s the Society was principally occupied with the consideration of alternative schemes for the redevelopment of central Twickenham. The old village site was seen as an action area in the Greater London Development Plan. There were a number of different schemes to consider in 1972, including one from the Society. Most of the proposals were for bypassing King Street which was to be made into a shopping centre. But being tied to Greater London meant that priorities were given to other places. Nothing emerged from all these efforts.

Networking with other societies

Once a year in the summer the Society acts as the host for a drinks party that gathers together representatives of voluntary societies of Twickenham for networking and an opportunity for some to advertise special events.

A team of Society members inspect the grounds of York House four times a year and make recommendations to the local authority on the choice of plants and on the routines of maintenance. It managed, for instance, to prevent the area of the present



The York House Society

Contact: Geoffrey Melling Hon Sec,
Yvonne Hewitt, Chair,

website: www.yorkhousesociety.org.uk

Yvonne Hewitt



The Naked Ladies statues

Age: 93 years

Circumstances of Birth: formed by a group of urban district councillors, the York House Committee, who wished York House to become the town hall of Twickenham which had applied to be given the status of a borough. Their main argument was that such a building which had originally been erected in 1630s and then extended by the Duke of Orleans in the 1890s was more dignified than the alternatives proposed by 'the economy party' which held the largest number of council seats. This minority persuaded those five or six councillors who were independents to 'change sides'.

Biggest Successes: creating a majority on the council which would vote for the purchase of York House as the future borough town hall. The York House Committee converted itself into the York House Society after the council had agreed in 1924 to purchase this building. It remained the headquarters of the new London Borough of Richmond upon Thames created in 1965 by amalgamating Barnes, Richmond and Twickenham. At that date the majority of councillors came from Twickenham.

Biggest Disappointments/Frustrations: failing to prevent the destruction of Orleans House built originally in 1710 for the politician, James Johnston (1655-1737) who had been Secretary of State for Scotland 1692-6. It was purchased by William Cory & Son and in March 1926 was pulled down so that the gravel underneath it could be excavated. Mrs Nellie Ionides, the first patron of the Society, was able to preserve the Octagon Room which had been designed as an annexe for the entertainment of special guests and linked to the main house, because she could bid for a different section of the land which had been divided into lots. The loss of Orleans House strengthened the determination of the Society to protect local amenities.

Present Preoccupations: making sure that all planning applications for development in central Twickenham are examined in detail by the Society's chairman and committee. Any legitimate objections are then submitted to the council chief executive for consideration by the planning committee and the main council.

Working Details: the Society is not a registered charity but an organisation that meets once month when any problems can be raised for discussion among its members after a presentation given by a guest speaker. Founder member of London Forum. Membership: approximately 120. Patron, Lady Camilla Panufik, the granddaughter of the first patron, Mrs Ionides.. Annual subscription, £12 per member. ■

tennis courts that are open for public from being used as a car park.

Another regular duty of Society members is to be room stewards when York House is open in September for London visitors.

From the mid-1980s onwards the main issue in local planning was the future of the site which had been an open air swimming pool from 1935 to 1981. Various proposals were made for the construction of blocks of flats and for public meeting places. These included one by Marks & Spencer and one by Dawney Day, the owners of the south side of King Street. The swimming pool buildings were demolished in 2004, but no alternatives were deemed satisfactory until 2012 when the Conservative administration created the Jubilee Gardens to be managed by the Twickenham Riverside Trust with a 120 year remit.

Another important issue

is the future of the site on the corner of King Street and Water Lane which had been King's Arms public house and which the Conservative administration had purchased because the area seemed ideal for the creation of a central town square. Plans for this were revised in 2016 and submitted for a public consultation which continues. All proposals, particularly from the council itself, require constant vigilance.

A detailed history of the society can be found on its website ■

Another view of the Naked Ladies statues



York House



Victoria Tower Gardens

A worthy memorial in the wrong place?

There is concern about proposals to build a new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens next to the Houses of Parliament.

Conservative MP Edward Leigh spoke in the House of Commons in February saying '...the Victoria Tower Gardens site ... is completely unsuited to the role'; the Gardens were 'too small for what is needed'. The government's ambition for the memorial had already been scaled down from "an entire learning campus to a few underground rooms" due to the site's constraints. He also pointed out that the area is prone to flooding. Mr. Leigh added that building the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens would 'set a dangerous precedent for green spaces in the care of the Royal Parks Agency'.

A million visitors a year

Although the Centre will be located underground, it will require a long ramp to reach a subterranean entrance, which will split the park. It is expected to attract one million visitors a year, an influx which will radically alter the character and tranquillity of the park, transforming it into a 'civic space' with all the attributes needed to manage large groups of people, and associated servicing: lift pods, escape stairs, service ducts, vents and grilles. These will necessarily protrude above ground into the park, while extended paving areas will be necessary to accommodate the visitors, thus replacing large areas of grass.

Parks and green spaces should not be seen as available areas to build upon, or privatise, as with so many other recent examples we have seen. They should remain to be enjoyed as open spaces by the thousands of people who work or live nearby, or who come to the capital as visitors.

The brief for the project advises that 'Victoria Tower Gardens has an existing memorial-narrative with a series of monuments associated with democracy: the abolition of slavery, the fight for universal suffrage and civic sacrifice. These are: The Buxton Memorial (Grade II*, 1865), the Statue of Emmeline Pankhurst (Grade II, 1930), and the

Parks and green spaces should not be seen as available areas to build upon, or privatise

Burghers of Calais (Grade I, 1915).'

But this proposal is on an altogether different scale and the brief fails to mention that the site has also been designated as a 'Monument Saturation Zone' by Westminster Council.

Government backing

The government has pledged £50 million as its contribution to the total project costs. Ten shortlisted final entries will be exhibited to the public. Some of architecture's biggest names are bidding, including Adjaye Associates (UK) with Ron Arad, Caruso St John (UK) with Rachel Whiteread, Foster + Partners (UK), John McAslan + Partners (UK) Studio Libeskind (US) and Zaha Hadid Architects (UK) with Anish Kapoor.

The Jury includes Peter Bazalgette (chair) the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Sajid Javid MP Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sadiq Khan Mayor of London, and Loyd Grossman Chair of Royal Parks.

Campaign and petition launched

The 'Save Victoria Tower Gardens Campaign' has launched a petition urging the government to choose another site such as the nearby College Green or the Imperial War Museum, where there is a permanent Holocaust exhibition.

Joseph Rykwert, distinguished architecture critic who was born in Warsaw and escaped Nazi persecution in 1939, has also said the site is unsuitable for the Holocaust memorial.

To submit feedback on the designs, email ukhmf@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. See more about the campaign at: <http://www.londongardenstrust.org/features/VictoriaTower.htm> ■

Air quality Emissions – a mixed picture

Following the Court ruling that the last Government should publish an air quality strategy, one was published on 4th May with response required by 15th June.

The Government's new nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) plan reveals bigger problems and less action than expected and no commitment to diesel scrappage. London is still expected to breach the World Health Organisation guideline and legal limit for NO₂ in 2030 with no help offered by the Government to Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Diesel vehicles are responsible for 90-95% of NO₂ exhaust emissions from road transport in London.

On May 6 Mayor Khan expressed his disappointment forcefully in The Times: "The clean air proposals finally put forward by the government yesterday are woefully inadequate. They would still leave Britain with illegally polluted and unsafe air for at least another decade. I welcome that the government has agreed to consult on introducing a targeted diesel scrappage fund, as I have modelled, to help drivers who bought diesel vehicles in good faith. However, the government has failed to give a firm commitment and, even if it goes ahead, this alone would go nowhere near fixing the problem."

He called for "The governmentto commit to a 21st-century clean air act to provide a framework for action. We need a legally enforceable right to clean air for everybody and new powers to regulate all emissions sources, including construction and river vessels."

The wider picture

However the wider picture may give cause for some optimism as Carbon Brief analysis shows that UK emissions fell by 5.8%. This is a relatively significant cut for a single year, though down on cuts of 8.9% in 2014 and 8.7% in 2011. All told, CO₂ emissions in 2016 were around 36% below 1990 levels.

London Forum's input to the Government's Air Quality Strategy and other consultation submissions can be seen at

<http://www.londonforum.org.uk/responses.php> ■

Housing news briefs

Hopeful signs of boroughs stepping up to the mark with innovative ideas on affordable housing provision; continuing concerns about permitted development rights and buy-to-leave; a new threat of leasehold manipulation

New forms of affordable housing

In the absence of any meaningful moves by government to provide affordable dwellings so desperately needed, some local authorities are devising ways to do so themselves in partnership with the private sector. Discounted market rent (DMR) refers to housing for rental at below market rates provided by a commercial developer rather than a housing association.

The London Borough of Ealing has granted planning permission to US rental giant Greystar's 1,965-home scheme, with more than 400 discounted market rent homes.

Croydon's council has set up its own development company, Brick by Brick, which aims to provide affordable housing, while keeping the full value of development growth in the borough – whether in the form of additional affordable housing, physical improvements in the local centres or dividend return to the council to fund council services. It operates as a private, independent company, but with the council as sole shareholder. More information can be found on the Brick by Brick website.

Barnet Council aims to build more than 27,000 new homes over the next decade, with a range of social rent, affordable and market rate homes, as part of its Housing Strategy to 2025. It plans to deliver an initial 320 homes for affordable rent on various infill sites that have been identified across the borough. These will be owned and managed by Opendoor Homes, a subsidiary of the Barnet Group, which in turn is wholly owned by Barnet Council. Opendoor is a Registered Provider with the HCA and is funded with a loan of up to £65m from Barnet Council,

Greenwich Council has given Essential Living permission for a 249-home development including 25% DMR, at Creekside Wharf. All residents will have access to the same amenities and apartments of the same specification, regardless of income. DMR levels will be set from 55% of full market rate, and Greenwich council will be able to choose the DMR tenants. The scheme includes a dedicated family block with buggy storage, extra acoustic insulation and on-site crèche. It will use the modular building technique.

New Draft SPG

The Mayor recently published a new Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) which will permit planned private rented sector (PRS) schemes to provide their whole affordable housing contribution at discounted market rent, provided that the scheme meets certain conditions. Once in force, the SPG would also introduce a 35% flat rate for affordable housing provision on schemes built for sale.

Rent levels are set either by reference to local wages or at a discount to market rents. Renters are able to sign up for two or three year tenancies, longer than usual for private rent. Crucially all the units will remain under single ownership and management, meaning no divisive 'poor doors'.

Extortionate ground rent trap

Developers selling new-build homes as leasehold properties are selling the freeholds on to other companies, trapping the homeowners in unaffordable but virtually unsaleable properties. Investors are snapping up ground rent contracts that provide a lucrative income. In some cases homeowners, having been told that they could buy their lease, are discovering that the freehold has been sold to a third party which is then charging exorbitant prices for the freehold.

The matter has become so serious that the communities secretary Sajid Javid said that he was planning to tackle the "unjustifiable and unfair" practice.

Call for support for small builders

The Communities and Local Government Committee has called for government support for small and medium-sized builders to ensure a competitive market. The Committee criticised the way in which the sector is over-reliant on an alarmingly small number of high-volume developers, driven by commercial self-interest, who control the market, building more than half of all new homes and with little incentive to build any quicker.

LGA concern for slums of the future

Are the new permitted development rights creating the slums of the future? The Local Government Association (LGA) has identified a serious problem with the new permitted development rights and multiple

occupation: landlords are converting properties into tiny units marketed as self-contained flats and therefore qualifying for the maximum level of housing benefit, which is paid directly to the landlords. The LGA report suggest that billions of pounds in housing benefit in 2015 is being paid out to landlords whose properties are squalid and sometimes dangerous.

A spokesman for the Department of Communities and Local Government said that new measures have been put in place giving councils extra powers to tackle the worst offenders and poor-quality rental homes in their areas. They claimed that "more than 5,000 landlords are now facing enforcement action or prosecution."

In Barnet a developer is planning to transform an 11-storey block of former council offices into 254 tiny studio flats, despite opposition from campaigners and local residents. 96 per cent of them would fall below the national minimum space standard of 37 sq m for a single person and some measure only 16 sq m,

Although Barnet council says that it cannot prevent the scheme going ahead because of the "permitted development" legislation brought in in 2015, it attached conditions relating to traffic and parking.

Empty homes

The scandal of houses and new blocks of flats standing empty - "buy-to-leave" - while would-be buyers are priced out of the market is now spreading to other parts of the country with reports about Number One Cambridge Street in central Manchester. The 282 flats in this 29-storey development have been sold to people from all over the world with 18 nationalities represented. Only two of the homes are lived in by British owners and a significant proportion of the properties appear to be empty.

Recent reports have found that there are more than 20,000 homes sitting empty in London. However, it is not made clear whether this is in addition to the 57,000 empty homes reported by the charity Empty Homes in Apr 2016. One suspects it may be because the report focussed on homes in Kensington and other wealthy boroughs. ■

Tall Buildings in London – the relentless push continues

Protest at Westminster City Council push for high rise buildings, but retreat at Whitechapel; NLA London Tall Buildings Survey 2017

Westminster City Council published a consultation in May, *Building height: Getting the right kind of growth for Westminster*, which seeks opinions on revisions to the council's City Plan planning policy document, and ways to "find space for more jobs and homes to meet the needs of a growing population and economy".

But proposals that suggest one way to achieve growth is to build higher have met with hostility. The document says 'there is potential to get more out of sites by having more intense development,' either by adding storeys to existing properties or by 'building significantly taller buildings'.

Protest from community groups

London Forum had circulated members with a list of objections to the proposals. An open letter of protest to Westminster City Council by an alliance of community groups was published in the local paper West End Extra. Over 50 signatories included: the Thorney Island Society, Westminster Cathedral Area Residents Group, the Belgravia Society, Soho Society, Seven Dials Trust and Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum, several of whom are London Forum Members. They wrote: "High-rise at the centre of our historic capital city threatens to destroy the iconic beauty of central London not just for Westminster but also for neighbouring boroughs, and would be at the expense of our international reputation as a world class city."

Westminster claims that, by 2036 its population is 'projected' to grow from 226,000 to 262,000; it needs to find extra business floorspace to accommodate 77,000 jobs. But the protesters say "There

is limited evidence to back up the claim that economic growth goes hand in hand with increased density and/or height; 85 per cent of businesses in Westminster employ less than 10 people"

They also pointed out that high-rise buildings bring environmental problems. "Our quality of life should not be made worse by bulky overshadowing buildings, stealing light, creating canyon effects. Westminster should have its own height cap on buildings as do most historic cities; we do not want London to become Bangkok or Dubai. London is not merely a city of commerce but a city of history, culture and beauty which could easily be degraded"

Skyline Campaign petition

The Skyline Campaign, which was one of the signatories, has launched a petition against Westminster City Council's policy proposals. They called the questionnaire 'devious and dishonest': "The questions are not posed neutrally but framed to elicit a response in line with the council's objectives"

The Skyline petition says: 'Westminster Council already has at its disposal very well-considered and carefully drafted policies that regulate tall buildings. There is no need to rewrite them. This is the latest attempt to undermine such policies to achieve a laissez-faire regime that will not be able to stop any degree of inappropriate development. This would be the kiss of death to conservation in Westminster.'

The new London Mayor had already signalled a shift in policy away from encouragement for tall buildings. This may be reinforced by what happened at Grenfell Tower. ■

New London Architecture (NLA) and consultancy GL Hearn's annual London Tall Buildings Survey includes a comprehensive review of all towers of over 20 storeys proposed, in planning or under construction across the capital.

The report's findings include:

- 83 new tall buildings were submitted for planning in 2016 – down 30 per cent on the "exceptional" year before at 119.
- 48 tall buildings started construction in 2016 and 26 were completed.
- 40 tall buildings were submitted as a single application at the Greenwich Peninsula scheme.
- The number of tall buildings in London which are proposed, approved and under construction has increased marginally to 455 in 2016, up from 436 in 2015.
- There has been a small shift towards London's outer zones from last year's data.
- An estimated 30 per cent of homes currently under construction in London are in tall buildings.

According to a statement from New London Architecture issued alongside the report, the Greater London Authority will create a "London-wide interactive digital model" of the capital to help communities, the Mayor and planners "envisage the full impact of tall buildings on London's skyline and at ground level". This will support the process of redrafting the new London Plan and help to "identify areas of growth potential and how more housing can be delivered".

The report sets out recommendations for the next London Plan.

Of course since the terrible events at Grenfell Tower attitudes to the desirability of tall towers may undergo some change. ■

28-storey tower dropped from Whitechapel plans

Unit Architects' plans for a retail and residential scheme backed by Sainsbury, at One Cambridge Heath Road in Whitechapel, were part of the area's ongoing regeneration and linked to Whitechapel's new Crossrail station. They included 559 flats in eight buildings, one of which was a 28-storey tower.

The scheme was opposed by Historic England and criticised by historian, TV

presenter and local resident Dan Cruickshank. They warned that it would cause substantial harm to the Grade I-listed Trinity Green Almshouses, and impact on 'the character and appearance of Stepney Green Conservation Area ...the Whitechapel Market Conservation Area [and] the Grade II-listed Albion Yard building'. Planning permission was refused.

Sainsbury's "have reflected on the views

and feedback from the community and council" and Unit Architects has revised the plans, reducing the height of the tower to just eight storeys thereby removing the visual impact on the Trinity Green Almshouses and the surrounding area.

Historic England are currently involved in discussions with Sainsbury's and Tower Hamlets Council." ■

Responses to recent legislation

Neighbourhood Planning Act protection for pubs; more councils using Article 4 directions – protection for historic pubs in Southwark, and launderettes in Camden and Hackney; Bromley town centre

More London boroughs have put in place Article 4 Directions to protect valued local facilities from demolition or redevelopment under permitted development rights that do not require a planning application. These will mean any change of use must get planning permission and will be assessed against Council planning policies.

The 2011 Localism Act gave Councils power to designate pubs as “assets of community value” (ACV) which requires any landlord wanting to sell an ACV-listed pub to give the community six months to buy it. But in reality it can be difficult for local communities to raise funds to rival bids from developers and the ACV listing has to be renewed every few years.

Neighbourhood Planning Act amended

Now the Neighbourhood Planning Act has been amended to remove permitted development rights from pubs altogether making them *sui generis*, effectively meaning that any change of use to or from a ‘drinking establishment’ would require specific planning consent. It further proposes that permitted development rights to demolish pubs would be removed.

In the meantime **Southwark Council** has given all 188 pubs across the borough formal protection from conversion to mini-supermarkets, estate agents, homes or shops. Southwark historic pubs include the

George, the Market Porter, the Ivy House and the Globe

Camden Council has made three Article 4 Directions:

- Shops to financial and professional services (A1 to A2);
- Light industrial use to dwellinghouses (B1c to C3);
- Launderettes to dwellinghouses (*Sui Generis* to C3)

This last direction applies to 7 properties with launderettes in the borough. The directions are currently in a notification period; if confirmed they will come into force on 1 June 2018.

The London Borough of Hackney is also using Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights on launderettes, light industrial premises and storage, and conversion of distribution floorspace into residential use. The launderette Article 4 Direction would cover 14 properties across the borough. The three directions which cover the entire borough will now be consulted on and could come into effect next April.

Meanwhile it is probably too late for the **Prince Regent pub, Sutton**. Mizen, who sponsored Sutton Council’s visit to MIPIM (see page 3) has applied to build a nine-storey block of flats on the site of the pub, which was a protected Grade II-listed building. It had become run down, and closed in 2015. It was “de-listed”; at the end of last year, opening the way for its demolition ■

Revision of London daylight guidance?

A report by business group London First with surveyors GIA, has called for revision of London daylight guidance to boost development densities. *Guiding Light: Unlocking London’s residential density*, is pushing the notion that daylight/sunlight targets need revision.

It claims that, the ‘one size fits all’ approach on daylight/sunlight targets “impedes London’s ability to make the most efficient use of its land resulting in low site coverage and greater separation distances between buildings. Most importantly,” it continues “it hinders London’s ability to deliver the volume of homes that its population needs”. Perhaps they haven’t read the latest report in the Financial Times: “London rents hit by over-supply of flats” (*FTMoney Saturday June 5*)

It goes on: “London must [sic] develop at higher densities, making better use of its existing land in order to provide the number of homes the city needs.”

The report says that the layout and placement of new buildings is “habitually dictated by the need to maintain separation between building faces to maintain BRE’s daylight and sunlight levels as well as privacy”. (Does it not occur to them that perhaps that is what people like and need?)

It adds, “the suggested distances ... when strictly adhered to, are uncharacteristic of city centre living and of London’s denser and distinctive urban grain. More importantly, they pose a design threat to the delivery of a varied and rich urban streetscape”.

This raises so many questions that it is beyond the scope of this newsletter to address them. ■

Mayoral decision for Bromley town centre housing zone struck down in High Court

High Court judge Mr Justice Collins has struck down a Mayoral decision to designate Bromley town centre as a housing zone, ruling that it did not meet the criteria for designation.

The creation of 31 housing zones across the capital by the previous mayor Boris Johnson was intended to accelerate housing delivery in the capital and to provide more affordable homes.

The London Borough of Bromley was promised over £27 million of funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) by Mayor Sadiq Khan after it was designated a

town centre in March last year.

The case was brought by property company, Relta Limited, which is involved in the promotion of land in Bromley, and whose own schemes might have been prejudiced had the area been designated as a Housing Zone. Relta claimed that the Mayor misinterpreted his own criteria against which Housing Zone bids were assessed. In particular, the criterion that the designation would deliver a minimum of 1000 new homes.

In upholding the company’s complaint, the judge found that Bromley’s bid did not

comply with the requirement that at least 1,000 new homes would result from the designation. A number of housing developments that were already underway or in the pipeline had been included in the figure of 1,150 put forward by the council. Those projects did not require GLA intervention and were unconnected to the housing zone designation and should not have been included in the delivery figure. Following their deduction, that figure fell below 1,000. ■

Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Diane Burridge**

Alternative designs for tower blocks

The **Kingston Society** has been involved with the drawing up of an alternative design for a 16-storey tower block on the corner of Wheatfield Way and Brook Street, the site of the Old Post Office. The Chairman of Berkeley Homes agreed to pay architects for this work after fierce local criticism of the original design approved in 2016. Berkeley Homes are now costing this alternative design for another round of public consultation organised by the Royal Borough of Kingston, before being submitted to the Council for approval.

Anti-litter work in Enfield

The **Enfield Society** has resurrected its anti-litter group with support from Cleanup UK, after many Society members were involved with the Clean for the Queen weekend in March, and the New River Path Clean-up late 2016. These events were supported by CleanupUK www.cleanupuk.org.uk and Thames 21

www.thames21.org.uk for Societies interested in doing similar work.

Saving Fulham Gasworks

The **Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group** and the **Fulham Society** have been involved with saving parts of the No 7 Gasholder at Fulham Gasworks, where the third and final phase of redevelopment is underway in a joint venture between National Grid the site owner, and Berkeley Homes.

There are four Grade II listed structures within the Gasworks Area including Gasholder No. 2 which dates from 1830 and is the oldest surviving gasholder in the world. But No. 7 was given a Certificate of Immunity from Listing as being of no interest. But it has an elegant 1880 cast and wrought iron guide frame and both Societies asked for that be retained. It will now be incorporated in the site, either part-retained as an arc displaying its construction or incorporated in one or more building facades. Hammersmith and Fulham Council are now considering proposals.

Brockwell Lido: 80 years young

Proposals by Lambeth Council to demolish Brockwell Lido in the 1990s, due to costs, led to **Friends of Brockwell Park** committee stalwart, Michael Boyle, organising a petition to save it. Signed by over 4,000 people, this petition was the largest the Council had received to date. Now managed by Fusion Leisure, the gym and pool have proved a great success, and a year-long programme of events is planned by the Friends to celebrate the Lido's 80th birthday. Thanks must go to the Friends for their efforts here, giving Londoners a wonderful open air pool which could have so easily been lost for ever.

Increasing interest in the Highgate Society

The Society's website had 19,049 visits in the last year, up nearly 50% from the previous year, with 47.3% of traffic returning, indicating that the site is in regular use by Highgate people. A new press clippings archive going right back to the foundation of the Society in 1966 has also been produced.

Blackheath Preservation Trust Legacy

The Blackheath Preservation Trust (BPT) set up in 1938 was wound up at the end of 2016, mainly because improved planning and conservation-area legislation had reduced its role. The **Blackheath Society** bought the entire BPT shareholding in 2010 and recently sold its remaining buildings as part of winding up the Trust. The Trust had bought historic buildings under threat of demolition over a period of 80 years, in order to preserve and enhance them, with most being sold on to new owners.

In recognition of the Trust's work, the Blackheath Society is publishing two new books: a companion volume to *Walking the Heath*, and *Walking the Village: An Introduction to the History of Blackheath Village* which explains the origins of all the key institutions.

Harry Beck Plaque at Finchley Central Station

The **Finchley Society**, supporting the Railway Heritage Trust, recently invited Mark Wild, the Managing Director of London Underground, to unveil a new enamelled plaque showing the classic 1931 London Transport Map as designed by Harry Beck. Finchley Central was Beck's local station.

He created the first full system map in colour of London's tube stations, all with the same distance apart from each other. Considered too radical at the time, the map was initially rejected by London Transport. Finally 700,000 copies were printed in 1933, proving very popular, and Beck's map has been copied in many metro and suburban systems around the world.

Successful fundraising initiatives

The Finchey Society's 100 Club was set up in 2009 to sell 100 shares in order to raise £600 - money needed to cover the doubling of the rent from £600 to £1,200 for the Society's archive room in Avenue House. The rent has recently been put up again and so regulars are being asked to reinvest: for £12, they have 10 chances to win a prize during the year.

The Highgate Society's 50:50 Club Lottery is a fundraising draw whose proceeds are divided 50:50 between the Society and cash prizes for the winners. The entry requirement is a contribution of £10 which entitles the donor to enter two draws per year. Each additional £10 entitles the donor to a further entry in each draw. Five prizes are given each draw. The Society also raised funds for their recent publication: 'Life in a London Village - The Story of the Highgate Society'. This 175 page, colour-illustrated book cost £7,000 which was paid for by 120 private 'subscribers', and 15 organisational sponsors. The publication can be purchased for £19.50 from Highgate Bookshop and is a very interesting read.

The Streatham Society has published a new set of note cards depicting colour prints of five views painted in watercolours in the mid-1800s. Printed on good quality paper, a description of the views is given on the reverse. The packs include envelopes, and cost £3.50 (£4.30 p&p) from the Society's book stall at meetings and events, including the Kite Day and Henry Tate Gardens Tours.

The Clapham Society's Tenth Green Plaque

In 2011, the Clapham Society started a scheme to mark with a Green Plaque important local buildings which had changed use since they were built. Three plaques are planned for 2017, including the tenth one in July, on the former Coroner's Court and London County Council Weights and Measures Office at 43 Netherford Road, SW4 6AF. The ceremony will be performed by the owners of the property, Axel Maier and Allison Clark.

It can take time to obtain permission from the owner, particularly when it is sometimes difficult to identify who they are, and in the case of a Listed Building, approval from the Council which can also take time. But as the scheme has spread, it has gained in popularity and the Society is now approached by owners with requests to mark their building in this way.

Each plaque gives the date of the building and its former and present uses and a brief illustrated history of each building can be found on the Society's website at

www.claphamsociety.com/articles/greenplaques.html

Flintheads at the Chelsea Barracks

The **Knightsbridge Association** has been meeting regularly with the builders for the Chelsea Barracks, to oversee this development. Recently the archaeologists working on site have have reported some fascinating finds describing changes in the landscape which took place between 20,000 to 30,000 years ago.

Changes have also been discovered dating from 10,000 to 15,000 years ago, which had affected the Westbourne River, once a feature of the site but eventually covered in a culvert and now lost altogether. Flint heads have been found, evidence that there may have been people living on the site in the early Bronze Age or even earlier in neolithic times. A great deal of analysis is still to be done on the finds. A great incentive to attend future meetings!

Enderby Wharf port – the fight continues

East Greenwich Residents Association (EGRA) has filed a petition with the European Parliament submitting that the planning permission for London's First Cruise Port at Enderby Wharf breaches two European Directives on air pollution. The legal battle was recently lost after EGRA was refused permission to appeal against a High Court judgement in February 2017, which had agreed that the Royal Borough of Greenwich had not made errors in its planning decision approving the cruise port. The Association has met with Councillors to urge for a clean and green port, and Councillors are now in discussions with developers and operators to try to find a solution to meet these requests.

Overall, Morgan Stanley Real Estate Investing is working with West Properties to deliver a cruise terminal and a 250 room hotel on the riverside at Enderby Wharf. The development includes commercial space and the restoration of Enderby House, a grade II listed building built in the 1930s. The rest of the site is allocated to residential development. Barratt London, in a 50/50 joint venture with Morgan Stanley, will provide 770 homes of which 154 are Social Housing (20%).

CPRE Annual General Meeting,

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) London Branch held a well attended Annual General Meeting on 25 May with an interesting panel of speakers. The Panel Discussion, *Here today, gone tomorrow? The future for green spaces in London*, featured London Assembly Members Nicky Gavron (Labour) and Sian Berry (Green); Mathew Frith (London Wildlife Trust), Alice Roberts of CPRE's London Branch office and Michael Smythe of Phytology, Bethnal Green Nature Reserve, (located in the grounds of what was originally St. Jude's Church, where Samuel and Henrietta Barnett were based in the 1860s and which was destroyed in WWII).

In particular the meeting re-affirmed CPRE's commitment to protecting London's parks and green spaces – Alice's research has discovered that over 70 parks and green spaces in London are threatened with development. The problem is compounded by the decline of funding, now at one third of what is needed to avoid dereliction, leaving many parks extremely vulnerable. For example at Shoreditch Park in central London the council has proposed building over the semi-derelict ball courts. We have carried several reports about Finsbury Park and threats at Battersea in Newsforum.

CPRE continues to campaign hard to raise awareness of the issue, helping local campaigners win their battles.

In July CPRE published an analysis of local authority plans to build thousands more houses in the Green Belt. Almost 425,000 are planned, up by 54 per cent since March last year, Although the Conservative manifesto pledged to "maintain the existing strong protections on designated land like the Green Belt" Councils are finding themselves under mounting pressure to allocate more land for housing or face being stripped of their ability to determine which areas should be developed. Moreover the type of housing being proposed on this land will do very little to address the affordable housing crisis.

For more information see www.cprelondon.org.uk

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London Forum Awards 2017

Download an entry form from the website now

www.londonforum.org.uk

click on 'news' and then on 'awards 2017'

The entry form and guidance notes are also attached to the email which delivered this Newsforum

You can print the entry form and submit in paper form by post to:

Awards,

London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies,

70 Cowcross Street,

London EC1M 6EJ

newsbriefs

News and issues of interest and concern to note.

More reforms of the planning system?

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) has launched a review to identify "how the government can reform the planning system to make it fairer, better resourced and capable of tackling the major challenges which confront the nation and to provide a positive set of recommendations to completely reshape planning, restoring its democratic and creative purposes.

It has set up a task force chaired by former housing and planning minister and TCPA president Nick Raynsford, which will have politicians, public and private sector planning practitioners, housing providers, developers, consultants and academics. What is of concern is that, despite the description of the task force as "including the public", there is no representation from the civic movement nor community experts in the development of planning in the UK like London Forum's Michael Bach. Nor is there anyone covering heritage.

London Forum was not invited to the event launching the Review of Planning, only to a meeting meant to be for community group representatives which seemed to focus on local/ neighbourhood planning. Peter Eversden attended this meeting chaired by Nick Raynsford but was disappointed that owing to the way it was structured there was no opportunity for debate or to respond to any comments made.

London Forum has requested a meeting with the TCPA to discuss how the Forum can make a meaningful contribution to the review, and will be responding to the call for evidence, and will seek its members' views.

The Panel includes among others representatives from the Living Space Project, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Bartlett School of Planning and a former chief planning inspector for England and Wales

For more information see

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/raynsford-review>

Historic England names new planning director

Government heritage adviser, Historic England (HE), has appointed Ian Morrison as its new planning director. Morrison, who has been chief executive of the charity the Architectural Heritage Fund, will replace outgoing HE planning director Chris Smith in July.

Morrison worked at HE's predecessor body English Heritage for 15 years until 2008. He was a heritage adviser in London before specialising in the regeneration of former industrial sites in the south-west. In his new role, Morrison will lead HE's planning staff across nine regional offices.

Greater London Archaeology Service Charter

Historic England have issued their new Charter explaining the service which will be offered by their Greater London Archaeology Service (GLAAS). It will explain exactly what help may be expected from Historic England if its help is sought in regard to archaeological issues in their areas. It can be downloaded from the Historic England website:

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/>

Churches to lose dedicated lottery funding

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is to discontinue its dedicated £25m Grants for Places of Worship for England's listed churches from 2018. Money for the maintenance of church buildings will instead come out of its overall heritage programme, which supports everything from industrial buildings to neolithic standing stones. The HLF said church organisations would still be able to apply for funding for repairs and it would "target" a similar amount of spending for churches and other religious buildings.

Since 2010, when Historic England had its budget slashed as part of the coalition government's spending cuts, churches have come to rely heavily on lottery money to finance vital capital works. When he was Chancellor, George Osborne put in place a roof repair fund of £55m over two years and a cathedral repair fund, to commemorate the first world war, adding another £40m. Both those programmes have now run out.

The Church of England has approximately 1m churchgoers who are responsible for looking after 13,000 churches. These represent 45 per cent of the entire stock of architecturally important Grade 1 listed buildings in England. Since 1977 English churches have had a dedicated supply of funds from various organisations.

In continental Europe the state plays a big role in the upkeep of churches. In Germany and parts of Scandinavia there is a church tax. In England, however, church taxes or tithes were abolished in the 1830s,

A poll by ComRes, commissioned by the National Churches Trust, suggests that even in an increasingly secular age, about half of British adults believe it is the government's responsibility to help to fund repairs.

Scrap wasteful Garden Bridge, Mayor is urged

Dame Margaret Hodge's report on the Garden Bridge, commissioned last year by Mayor Sadiq Khan, was published in April. It says "Value for money has not been secured" and that it should be cancelled now to avoid costing the taxpayer any more money. It has already used £37.4 million of the £60 million in public money pledged to it; there is a funding gap of at least £70 million and the project is struggling to attract donors. Meanwhile the projected cost has ballooned from £60 million to more than £185 million.

Dame Margaret was unequivocal in her verdict that the Mayor should refuse to provide any more funds. "I did not seek to ask whether the concept of a Garden Bridge was a good idea but my review has found that too many things went wrong in the development and implementation of the project."

Ann Treneman of The Times noticed signs that had been attached to a small grove of large trees between Blackfriars and Waterloo bridges saying: "This tree is one of 38 scheduled to be cut down to make way for the £185 million vanity project, the Garden Bridge." She pointed out that there are already two footbridges nearby – "Surely this bit of London has already reached "peak bridge." Why not put it somewhere else, as in another city entirely?" "Save the trees" she said, "and forget the bridge." *The Times March 21 2017*

newsbriefs

National Institute for Medical Research

The Medical Research Council was established on the Ridgeway at Mill Hill in the 1920s, before the designation of London's Green Belt. It now falls within both the Green Belt and the Mill Hill Conservation Area. There are no statutorily or locally listed buildings on site.

The nine-story building constructed on a 15 hectare hill-top site, in the shape of a cruciform, was designed by Maxwell Ayrton, and completed in 1949. It is an iconic landmark, its massive green pitched roof being visible for miles around. But the National Institute for Medical Research has moved to the new Francis Crick Institute behind the British Library at St Pancras, and the Mill Hill premises were sold to Barratt. They propose to demolish all the buildings including the Ayrton building but will retain the cruciform layout of the Ayrton design in the new buildings but making better use of the floor space. Around this would be 19 new apartment blocks, 12 detached houses, and green spaces. 20% would be affordable housing with a minimum of 92 shared ownership units and a £4.56 million contribution for affordable housing to be provided elsewhere. This was considered by Barnet officers, and by the GLA to be acceptable.

There would be also 21,000 sqft of commercial space for use as a business hub and a café with views over the valley that would be open to the public.

Barnet Society and Mill Hill Preservation Society both felt the scheme was acceptable although Mill Hill expressed concern that the 'brownfield' designation applies to the whole site which includes green fields behind it (to be set aside for sports use) and that this might set a precedent to allow further development on them. There should be a condition in the Planning Consent.

However the Barnet Conservation Department felt the proposed scheme failed to comply with some of the key objectives and guidance set out in the planning brief. It would cause harm to the character and appearance of the Mill Hill conservation area, failing to make appropriate reference to its identity. It is contrary to London Plan policies.

Barnet councillors took note of their Conservation officer and refused permission against their planning officers' recommendation for approval.

The Mayor of London has called in the scheme accusing the council of "significantly under-delivering" against its housing completion and affordable housing targets. He said the development could make a contribution to the affordable housing supply across the capital and would therefore subject it to further scrutiny to determine if it is possible to increase the level of affordable housing.

One wonders whether the Mayor knows the site with its access along a narrow country lane and the nearest tube station, Mill Hill East a good distance away. Anyone who does know it will wonder how this will work. The line to Mill Hill East is a single-track branch of the Northern line from Finchley Central station with a very limited service. The buses serve only the local area; none go into London.

The Chairman of Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum, although supporting "the principle" of 460 new homes on the site, said: "The Mayor's Office are generally wholly unrealistic about car parking requirements for properties in the suburbs with a low PTAL rating".

Wood Street police station

Planning approval is being sought to erect a nine-storey tower, infill an existing courtyard, convert basements and carry out internal refurbishment work at the City of London Police's Grade II*-listed station in Wood Street. The only listed post-war police station, it was built in 1966 to the designs of Donald McMorran of McMorran and Whitby. Described as 'progressive Classicists' they worked in a classical idiom, which was for a long time considered unfashionable. The quality and invention of their buildings has however been recently reassessed.

The Twentieth Century Society is objecting to the scheme arguing that the proposals would 'harm the outstanding significance of the building'.

Historic England has also objected to the proposals, although they do not consider the harm to be 'substantial' because the tower extension has been reduced in height. This means that the application will be referred to the Secretary of State. The Twentieth Century Society will be supporting this referral and requesting the application is taken to a public inquiry should the planning committee be minded to grant permission. It appears to be one of those cases where the local authority - the City of London - is both owner and planning authority.

[w](https://c20society.org.uk/news/c20-society-objects-to-damaging-proposals-for-wood-street-police-station/) <https://c20society.org.uk/news/c20-society-objects-to-damaging-proposals-for-wood-street-police-station/>

Extension for British Library

The British Library is planning a £500m extension that will provide 100,000 sq ft extra for education, exhibitions and research next to its headquarters at St Pancras, London.

The £500m project on a 2.8-acre site north of the library, will be designed by Richard Rogers' practice, and built by Stanhope, which will obtain 600,000 sq ft of commercial space. It will also house the Alan Turing Institute, the national data science centre.

Heritage Alliance Brexit and Heritage Briefing

The Heritage Alliance has not taken a formal position on the EU Referendum but has produced various papers studying the impact on heritage, of the Leave vote.

To download documents and for more information:

[w](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/) <http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/>

[w](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tha-website/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Heritage-the-EU-May-2016.pdf) <http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tha-website/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Heritage-the-EU-May-2016.pdf>

Developer's profits from Help to Buy

The house builder Persimmon revealed that Help to Buy had proved particularly "beneficial for the company". About half its sales were bought using the scheme, an increase of 8 per cent on last year. But evidently that is not enough. Persimmon wants the green belt reviewed and is still critical of the planning system, complaining that it "still takes too long and some local authorities can, and do, vote down planning applications against their own officers' recommendations". (Isn't that what's called democratic accountability?). In those circumstances, Jeff Fairburn, the chief executive said, the industry has to appeal and in the majority of cases wins. Just so. ■

Membership renewal

As you all know, London Forum relies totally on Members' subscriptions for its budget. Please do use the new membership renewal facility on the web site:

http://www.londonforum.org.uk/member_login.php

and 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.

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Or contact Bill Linskey, (see details below) ■

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Dates for your diary

London Forum events

London Forum Open Meetings 2017

Save the Dates

Monday 11 September

Thursday 12 October AGM with Tony Travers Awards to societies for achievements

Tuesday 28 November

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

Meetings are held at The Gallery,

75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EL, (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@londonforum.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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