



## The Hammersmith Society

### Newsletter – September 2009

#### Dates for your diary

**London Open House Weekend** 19/20 September. Details can be found at [www.openhouse.org.uk](http://www.openhouse.org.uk) and booklets picked up at most local libraries.

**Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group Annual Meeting** is on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October at Latymer Upper School. King Street. 7.00pm for light refreshments and tour of the buildings, meeting starts at 8.00pm. This year's theme: The Borough's Schools, Old and New.

### THANK YOU TO ANGELA CLARKE

**W**armest thanks to Angela Clarke, whose three-year term as Chairman came to an end in May. Prior to that she was Secretary of the Society for three years, and her wide knowledge of the planning system and calm and capable leadership was of enormous value to the Society over that time. We are delighted she will still continue on the Committee. We welcome Annabelle May who takes on the role of Secretary.

This is my first Newsletter since becoming Chairman in May. I am already discovering how much Angela had to do! My previous term as Chairman ended in 1989, at a time when the Society was engaged in the debate over the future of Hammersmith Broadway, then still a circle of red brick Victorian and Edwardian shops and offices. It is a source of satisfaction to everyone involved at that time that Bradmore House was saved from demolition and remains an elegant and distinctive landmark on the Broadway and, with St Paul's Church, makes the focal centre of Hammersmith – a reminder that we should *always* seek to improve on developers' first proposals. Since that time an extraordinary number of local residents' groups have emerged which simply did not exist twenty years ago, reflecting people's increased concern for their locality and willingness to lobby, object, write letters, and work together for their local patch, for example by planting trees. It is good that the Hammersmith Society – as the umbrella amenity group – and local groups work together in a mutually beneficial relationship to share local and strategic knowledge to improve the quality of our surroundings in Hammersmith.

Melanie Whitlock

[www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk)

## THE HAMMERSMITH SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT AWARDS 2009

**A**t our AGM in May, held in the beautiful surroundings of Maggie's Centre, we celebrated 20 years of Hammersmith Society Environment Awards. There were fewer new buildings to choose from this year, perhaps a sign that the downturn in construction had been making itself felt for some time before the rest of us began to notice it.

One of the biggest projects in Hammersmith was the renovation of St John's Church in Glenthorne Road, and the elegant new music block linked to it. However, disappointing and incomplete landscaping (including a prominent generator in full view in front of the listed church), poor attention to detail and evergreen planting which will soon obscure much of the site from the public - including sadly the war memorial - meant that it did not win an award.

Another significant new presence - apart from the Westfield Shopping Centre which no-one proposed for an Award (except Wooden Spoons) - is the Shepherds Bush Central Line Station, with its fresh and clean lines. However a total absence of green landscaping counted against it, as its surroundings are bleak and windswept .

No building or project met the standard for the main Environment Award, but the **Nancye Goulden award for a smaller scheme went to 180-184 Westville Road W12**, next to the listed Greenside Primary School, for the white modernist building designed by Ben Elsdon of Paper Project for Octavia Housing Association. The committee praised its understated elegance and calm modern design.

**The Society's Conservation Award went to Island Studios, 22 St Peter's Square W6 9NW.** The building (formerly Island Records, where many famous names recorded) has become the headquarters of architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, the practice that designed the Hungerford Footbridge. The Committee were enthusiastic about the elegant restoration of the front of the building, based on detailed research, and praised the careful preservation of the Royal Chiswick Laundry buildings at the back in British Grove: a good example of both accurate restoration of a listed building and preservation of reminders of an old urban trade.

The other contender for this award was the former Dimco building behind Westfield, which has been preserved and converted into a bus depot. It has been well done, and Westfield is the better for its retention.

The society also awards its famous Wooden Spoons to those responsible for eyesores in the Borough. This year they went to:

- **LBHF Council for both giving planning permission for, and erecting their own large advertising displays across the Borough, including on their own sites. These include the advertising tower on the Guinness Trust's land blocking the view of the Ark, a Tower approved for St Paul's Green which will damage the view of the listed St Paul's Church, advertising on the Church itself, one approved next to the doctor's surgery by Hammersmith Bridge, and proposals on the A4 at Latymer School.**
- **LBHF Council again for failure to ensure implementation of landscaping agreements around Westfield and at the Hammersmith Broadway temporary bus station.**
- **Westfield Shopping Centre** for its ugly green cladding.
- **Broadway Chambers on Hammersmith Broadway** where the red brickwork of this Victorian building has been painted in three shades of blue. (This contrasted with the earlier restoration of the ground floor front of the same building, a former Lloyds Bank, by Ladbrokes which had won a previous Hammersmith Society Environment Award in 2004.)
- **Thames Water** for its continued failure to replace and maintain the landscaping of Holland Park roundabout. (The latest hoardings are apparently to ensure motorists are not distracted by the works being carried out on the island site!)

## AGM: HOW BEST TO “DO” PLANNING?

The AGM was also the occasion for two presentations of the theme of improving the planning process: by Jon Whitwell, Deputy Director of Development Planning at Hammersmith & Fulham Council, and Jon Allen, an architect closely involved in the process known as “Inquiry By Design”. Jon Whitwell explained how essential the London Plan and Local Development Framework processes were in trying to balance public interests. The council were in favour of wider consultation and involvement of the public by developers, and planning forums fitted in with this approach.

Jon Allen, on the other hand, said that consultation was often “too little too late”, and the Inquiry by Design process proposed as much as a year of preliminary consultation and workshops culminating in a 5-day intensive design workshop involving all the stakeholders in a given scheme. An example was the redevelopment of Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool.

The Hammersmith Society would like to see a more collaborative approach to planning involving greater consultation by developers from the earliest stages, encouragement of the drawing up of community wish lists, and planning forums for difficult or contentious schemes. Good design pays dividends to developers, and it is often the case that the more time is spent on design and consultation, the quicker the building stages.

## LATEST NEWS

### London Plan “A New Plan for London” and Hammersmith & Fulham Local Development Framework “Core Strategy Options”

In recent months the Committee has spent many hours preparing responses to these two lengthy and formidable documents. What are they and why do they matter?

Briefly, they contain the framework which controls development across London, and in our Borough. “Development” means land use, infrastructure planning and transport. As Jon Whitwell, Deputy Director of Development Planning for LBHF, said in an illuminating talk at our AGM in May, the planning system in the 1960s basically assumed development should go ahead. This was replaced by a plan-led system which tries to balance the public interests of many different publics. Legislation requires the Mayor of London to produce a London Plan, and local London Councils must draw up their own, more detailed plan which must be in conformity with the London Plan. These Plans will be the statutory framework for the next 20 years when they are adopted.

We are in a state of transition because the Mayor of London is revising the London Plan, and Government has required local councils to replace their established Unitary Development Framework format with a new Local Development Framework, on which our Council has been consulting since 2005. The hope is that the new London Plan will be in place by winter 2011/2012 and our own LDF will be finalised by means of an examination in public in 2010 and in place by 2011.

If anyone would like to receive copies of the Hammersmith Society submissions, (preferably by email) please get in touch. Here are a selection of issues on which we commented:

**London Plan:** the importance of social infrastructure considerations; new requirements for minimum space standards in housing; housing density levels; the proposed 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at Heathrow (which the Mayor of London opposes, as does our Council); tall buildings (which the Plan suggests should be restricted outside designated areas; a welcome change from previous policy, but we feel the restrictions should be more closely drawn).

**LDF:** Planning for the impact of Westfield; the need for additional open space, and new parks when development takes place in the White City Opportunity Area and Earls Court/West Kensington; the need for existing housing density standards and external amenity space standards to be implemented; a

robust attitude to developers who claim that more intensive residential use is required to finance their purchase; strict limits on tall buildings; a long-term goal to sink and cover over the A4.

On tall buildings, our comments included the following:

*The Preferred Option specifically addresses the question of tall buildings. We wish to see strict limits on tall buildings in Hammersmith and throughout the borough.*

*Tall buildings have an impact on London residents as great as or greater than almost any other aspect of the built environment. They have a profound effect on the familiar and cherished local scene and on wider views and prospects. In our submission to the latest London Plan document we pointed out that very tall buildings are inappropriate in London apart from a very few strictly limited areas such as the City and Canary Wharf. There should be a presumption against tall buildings along the riverside upstream of the central commercial areas, or where they intrude on smaller-scale riverscapes. Tall buildings affect areas a long way from their immediate footprint, and affect riverside views from a long distance. (...)*

*The borough as yet has no ultra-tall buildings and it should not do so. Existing heights should be used as a limit. The question should be asked, why tall buildings are necessary or desirable. Richard Rogers in his Urban Renaissance report showed that high densities can be achieved without tall buildings.*

### **Shepherd's Bush Common**

Works are planned to overhaul and refresh Shepherd's Bush Common, the result of a planning agreement with the developers of Westfield Shopping Centre who have committed funds to improve the Common. We consider that the Common looks tired and shabby and bears the imprint of various, often contradictory initiatives and makeovers over the last 20 years. The present scheme proposes opening up enclosed space (including the War Memorial and present dog area), placing cycle paths round the outside edge of the Common, redesigning the path layout and using a better-quality, bonded resin gravel surface for the paths, creating a new children's play area and a café with toilets nearby, planting new Plane Trees to make a double avenue along the North side of the Common (but removing some trees for the new path layout), and introducing grassy mounds into central areas. Unfortunately the area over the Ginglyk Club cannot be included in the works, and will remain in its present shabby state, because of a dispute over responsibility for that particular area.

New revisions have just been announced by the Council and landscape consultants, in the light of conflicting views on some of the works – the presence of and the design of the Café, the desirability of mounded grass areas, and the removal of the tennis courts and incorporation of a teenagers' activity area. The number of trees to be felled has been reduced from 20 to 12; the stone benches have been removed from the mounds and the mounds have been repositioned; the multiuse games area has been removed; and the amount of grassed area on the Common has been increased from the existing. A new design for the café will be submitted.

In the Society's view it is a major error to remove the games area, as it offered a place for teenagers to play football or basketball. All too often outdoor provision for the young stops at age 8 or 12, and marginalises teenagers. Another instance of this attitude is the removal of the skateboard ramp in Ravenscourt Park, with no plans to replace it. It is surely more desirable to give young people a place to engage in exercise and activity rather than have them hanging around with nothing to do. We will be pressing for reinstatement of the games area.

The new plans can be found on the LBHF website under planning applications search with the following reference: 2009/00758/FR3.

### **White City Health Centre**

Work is due to start at the end of the year on the long-delayed new White City Health Centre on Bloemfontein Road. The development is designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour Associates and will include state-of-the-art health facilities and 179 housing units, of which 70 will be affordable housing. The developers are due to contribute £1m to improvements to Wormholt Park and to "transport improvements". The Hammersmith Society has been involved at length and in detail in

improving aspects of the housing layout and - critically - ensuring there is no net loss of green space in building the scheme. The original plans would have appropriated space from Wormholt Park, and it needs to be clear from the outset in any development near the Borough's Parks that any net loss of green space is unacceptable. It remains to ensure the monies promised to improve Wormholt Park do materialise.

### **Lyric Plans**

The Lyric Theatre has launched a proposal for a £13.5m capital development to extend its current building, with new teaching facilities for its performing arts programme for young people. The architects are Rick Mather Associates (who are responsible for the expansion and renovation of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the new Lyric entrance). We await detailed proposals with interest.

### **Student Accommodation & Hammersmith Palais Site**

There are increasing numbers of applications from developers for purpose-built student accommodation –developments of small, ensuite self-contained flatlets enabling large numbers of people to be accommodated relative to the size of the plot available. There is a 80% shortfall in student accommodation in London as a whole, and west London is an area of particularly high demand as Imperial College (which includes not only its S Kensington campus but also Charing Cross Medical School) seeks to satisfy demand for accommodation. The concept is likely to appeal to developers at present as the market for residential and office development has plummeted.

Large-scale student accommodation is not a suitable use for a site in an area of predominantly family housing, and the Council has recognised this by turning down proposals for student accommodation in Sinclair Road and Fulham Palace Road.

An application has been made for student accommodation on the site of the late lamented Hammersmith Palais. This is a site with no immediate residential neighbours, so the potential nuisance of having 450 student occupants would not be keenly felt. The size of the proposed scheme, however – 5 storeys on Shepherd's Bush Road facing Hammersmith Library, increasing to part 8, part 9 storeys behind - is too high for its location, and would excessively dominate its surroundings, which include the various nearby Listed buildings: the former Fire Station, the Police Station, and the Hammersmith Library opposite, as well as the Laurie Arms Public House.

There is existing consent which includes 4221sq m leisure use (including 225msq café space), achieved only with considerable effort from local groups, in order to compensate for the loss of the Palais dance hall. We consider leisure use, available to the public, of that size should continue to be a precondition of development. The one positive aspect of the scheme is that the developers seem keen to include proper illustrative reference to the history of the site as a major entertainment venue.

### **Heathrow Airport**

The fight against the third runway, the potential effects of which on Hammersmith we described in our February newsletter, continues. The High Court has recently ruled that objectors (including west London Councils) can present their case against the third runway in a three-day public hearing in the autumn. The case will be made on the basis that the details of the then transport secretary's statement to Parliament which approved the third runway were fundamentally different from the proposals on which the Government consulted, and that the decision is incompatible with the government's climate change policy.

### **Goldhawk Industrial Estate**

Following the Council's planning forum in March, at which the developer announced proposed token changes to their scheme, the application was submitted in June. It looks as if it will now go before the planners towards the end of September having been postponed once because the Environment Agency wanted further consultation on flood risk

The Brackenburg Residents' Association has asked the planning department to investigate more fully several matters on the application including what appear to be material inaccuracies, including incorrect information on existing floor space, omission of loss of employment on the site, density and impact on local parking. Local residents are concerned that it is the Council's policy to make a presumption in favour of development and it would prefer to grant a consent rather than risk losing at appeal and face attendant costs. The BRA is continuing to oppose what is seen as gross overdevelopment of the site and loss of employment to the borough. Residents and The Soundhouse are employing a leading planning counsel, Patrick Clarkson QC, to advise grounds for refusal if (as expected) the Council recommends approval. This is a QC who previously acted for the Council over the Allied Carpets block.

The Society supports the local residents in their action against overdevelopment and the loss of an area offering employment.

### **New City Academy, Cathnor Road**

Demolition is well advanced on the site on Cathnor Road. The Academy (sponsored by the Mercers' and Information Technologists' Companies) is expected to open to its first intake in 2011 and will ultimately cater for 700 11-18 year olds from local primary schools.

### **New Shepherd's Bush Library**

The new Shepherd's Bush Library, which is part of the Westfield Development in Wood Lane, has just opened. The formal opening by the Mayor is on 14<sup>th</sup> September. It replaces the library on Uxbridge Road close to Shepherds Bush Green, which was opened in 1896. The old library was one of several around the country erected by Victorian philanthropist John Passmore Edwards, and is a fine part of the local townscape. It is on the Local Register of Buildings of Merit. The Council have not yet said what their intentions are for the former library. In the view of the Hammersmith Society it has served the community well, and we very much hope it can stay in community use.

### **BBC Centre Listed**

The BBC Television Centre on Wood Lane has been given statutory listed Grade II status because of the quality of the Central Ring and Studio One. Built between 1955 and 1960 they were designed by Graham Dawbarn of Norman and Dawbarn. The listing letter notes the entrance hall with its John Piper mosaic; the central drum with its mosaic tiles; the Huxley-Jones gilded sculpture of Helios; the full-height glazing of the stair and original clock, together with the well-known atomic dots of Studio One, and the name of the building, as well as a cantilevered porch on its exterior.

The BBC hopes to sell the site as most television production is moving to Manchester. We welcome the listing, which will provide protection for the most significant building on the site, although it may make sale and re-use more problematic.

### **282-288 Goldhawk Road**

Formerly an old people's home and a small block of Council-owned bedsits, this one-acre site on the corner of Ashchurch Grove and with its entrance in Ashchurch Park Villas was earmarked for disposal to developers in 2007. The Council's development brief indicated that nine mature

trees on the site should be preserved, but failed to mention that the site was in a conservation area: Ravenscourt and Starch Green. In 2008 the Hammersmith Society expressed reservations about the five shortlisted proposals as none of them was entirely satisfactory, but we were dismayed when the Council chose a Places for People scheme that was a high-density housing scheme designed for an inner-city regeneration area in the East End and imported to Goldhawk Road with few modifications.

This proposal for 67 units of affordable and market housing, including a block of supported housing, is unacceptable: it does not conform to conservation area guidelines, and does not fulfil the December 2007 development brief's specification to deliver an architectural design "sympathetic to the surrounding built form". Moreover, it does not comply with the new London Development Agency's London Housing Design guidelines, published by the Mayor this July, as these very small units are far from 'lifetime homes'.

Contrary to Council assurances that where possible existing trees and shrubbery would be retained, local residents are angry that the incongruous design not only includes a great deal of hard landscaping but also demands removal of the mature beech hedge that surrounds the site and all but three of the mature trees. The scheme rises to 4 ½ stories (higher than most neighbouring buildings); roof terraces are the only private amenity space; and it has a sprawling footprint that intrudes into the streetscape of the Goldhawk Road. We support the Ashchurch Residents' Association in their campaign against this proposal, and join them in urging the Council to rethink these plans. The Hammersmith Society has been championing the idea of a proper integrated landscape proposal for Starch Green, which under the present plans will be extended.

### **Olympia 'Aparthotel'**

A Public Enquiry was held at short notice in July against the planning permission granted for a large glazed cube on Hammersmith Road next to Olympia Exhibition Centre, as a result of the scheme being "Called In" by the Secretary of State. The planned building is 7, 9, and 10 stories and would be an overwhelming neighbour to the art deco building Olympia 2 as well as cutting out light and views for many local residents. It offers no positive design contribution to the local streetscape. The case against the Aparthotel in its present form was presented by David Morton of the Avonmore Residents' Association. The Hammersmith Society restated in writing its view that the planned scheme is too high and bulky for the site and has a poor elevational treatment. The outcome of the appeal should be known soon.

### **Green Spaces**

Hammersmith has a delightful new green space on the balcony of the **Lyric Theatre**, which was transformed from a bleak concrete platform into a garden at first floor level and opened in June. Passers-by on King Street can now see a leafy arbour and tree tops moving in the breeze above the parapet overhead. The roof garden is a joint project by environmental charity Groundwork and local businesses led by Marks and Spencer, and is designed by landscape architects Adam White and Andree Davies. Go up and see it, and have a cup of coffee from the Lyric Café...

For another unexpected green space it is worth taking a detour to see the **Phoenix School Farm** – visible from the front of Janet Adegoke Leisure Centre on Bloemfontein Road. It is a well-tended and productive vegetable growing area which is also extremely attractive. It is the result of work by school pupils and community volunteers; rabbits and chickens are kept there, and there are plans for beehives. A food co-op selling fresh produce at cost price is also part of this excellent enterprise.

### **The Friends of Ravenscourt Park**

Last year the Hammersmith Society welcomed the idea of establishing a Friends group for Ravenscourt Park, and this voluntary independent local user group is now up and running. As the principal liaison point for communication with the Borough on issues involving the Park, it represents the interests of Park users in consultation with the Borough and other bodies. The Friends intend to encourage access to the Park's amenities, facilities and environment by all members of the local community, and recently assisted in the Borough's successful application for Green Flag status: a

national award designed for parks that are welcoming and well-maintained, with sustainable systems, conservation and heritage, and an associated management and delivery plan. The Friends' committee members and constitution were agreed at their first AGM, held in the Town Hall, King Street, on July 1st. Anyone interested in joining the Friends should contact the Secretary, John Bellringer, via email at [info@friendsofravenscourtspark.org](mailto:info@friendsofravenscourtspark.org) or visit [www.friendsofravenscourtspark.org](http://www.friendsofravenscourtspark.org). Alternatively the Council's liaison officer for the Friends, Paul Bassi, can be contacted on 8753 2599.

### **Tree Planting**

The Mayor of London's Street Tree programme includes Hammersmith as one of its priority areas for funding. Funding operates only within designated areas, and in our borough the area is central Hammersmith and west Kensington, with a narrow section extending north towards Goldhawk Road. At least one local group, the Brackenbury Residents' Association is applying for funding from the Mayor's programme. The scheme is continuing and residents' groups can find details on [www.london.gov.uk/streettrees](http://www.london.gov.uk/streettrees) and [www.ltwgs.org](http://www.ltwgs.org).

Regrettably we understand from the Council's tree officer that there is no Council funding for new tree planting across the borough, only for replacing vandalised and dead trees. It is good that replacement goes on, but there are still areas outside the Mayor's priority area which are in acute need of trees – for example Askew Road, sections of Goldhawk and Uxbridge Roads, and north of Uxbridge Road. It is a highly effective way of improving and humanising a neighbourhood. Local groups can, however, seek to fund local tree planting through the Grassroots grant scheme from the Thames Community Foundation which has an environment and community section which can be found at <http://www.thamescommunityfoundation.org.uk/funds.htm>.

### **Paving Over Front Gardens**

It is now no longer permitted development to dig up and pave over a front garden unless the resulting scheme is in accordance with the principles of SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System). This is particularly good for our borough where there have been many incidents of front gardens being destroyed and increasing problems of basement flooding caused by inability of the sewer system to cope with the additional loads resulting from heavy rainfall. *(Item reprinted by kind permission of H & F Historic Buildings Group).*

### **Subscriptions**

Subscription rates are: £15 for organizations, £6 for families/ couples, £5 for individuals, £3 concessions. Make cheques payable to The Hammersmith Society and send to Julian Hillman, 19 Flanchford Road, London, W12 9ND. **Thank you to those who pay by standing order as this makes our Hon Treasurer's job so much easier. A standing order form can be found on our website, [www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk).**

### **Contact the Hammersmith Society**

Email or write to the Chairman, Melanie Whitlock, 38 Ashchurch Grove, London W12 9BU, [whitlockmelanie@hotmail.com](mailto:whitlockmelanie@hotmail.com), or the Secretary, Annabelle May, 35 Ashchurch Grove, London W12 9BU, [annabelleamay@lineone.net](mailto:annabelleamay@lineone.net).

In order to receive email updates from us about local planning issues and public meetings, send your email address to the Secretary at [annabelleamay@lineone.net](mailto:annabelleamay@lineone.net).