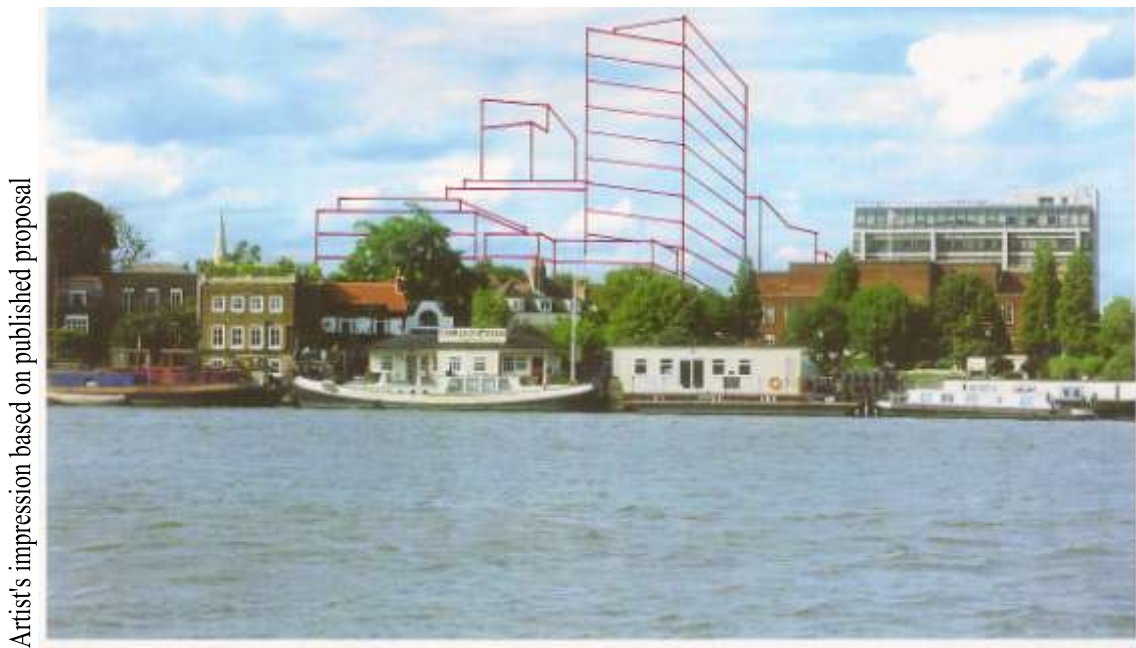




The Hammersmith Society

Newsletter September 2010



Artist's impression based on published proposal

TOWN HALL & FURNIVAL GARDENS REDEVELOPMENT

The image above is a “red line” impression of the prospective development around Hammersmith Town Hall. The red-brick 1930s Listed Grade II Town Hall is on the right, with the existing Town Hall Extension behind it. It shows the drastic impact of the proposed scheme on the surrounding areas, and its effect on views from the river and further afield.

Most members will by now be aware of the proposals for the redevelopment of King Street around the Town Hall. You may have attended the drop-in exhibitions in July in Lyric Square or the Town Hall. The scheme proposes demolition of the 1970s Town Hall Extension, a town square in its place, new council offices on the site of the carpark behind the cinema, and offices and flats on the surrounding plots. The developers are expected to submit a planning application in the near future.

The height of the proposed office and residential development around the Town Hall, shown in the image above, is unacceptable. It includes two blocks of 14 plus storeys (in addition to blocks of 7, 8

and 9 storeys), which will damage views from Hammersmith Bridge and the river and further afield, and create a precedent which will make it impossible to prevent a rash of very tall buildings further along King Street. The public exhibition of plans did not show the impact of the height of the new development from the river and from the middle distance along King Street. It will dominate and overpower the surrounding low-rise streets.



The developer's "site in context" image, showing the massing relative to the neighbouring area

The Hammersmith Society is certainly not against a suitable redevelopment in line with the original brief drawn up by the Council in 2007. We would like the Town Hall to be seen as originally intended, standing alone, but not at the cost of surrounding it by buildings of a height which damages valuable views, and the setting of the listed Town Hall and surrounding conservation areas. We are very concerned that the scheme seems to be moving further and further away from the original brief which specifically linked the new scheme to the height of the Town hall extension (7 storeys) and contained no reference to a footbridge. There will be a full-size supermarket on King Street on the site of the cinema, with all the associated traffic problems and the impact on small local shops.

The planned footbridge over the A4 might seem appealing, but it has to be balanced against the large area it will take away from Furnival Gardens for its huge descent ramps. What is now ball-playing space, picnic space and formal flowerbeds will be earthworks rising to 5.7 metres. It will dramatically alter this lovely and historic riverside open space and reduce the area available for public enjoyment.

And the raising of Nigel Playfair Avenue to first floor level at the Town Hall would have a disastrous impact on the setting of the listed Town Hall. This fine building was designed to be seen standing alone, and to build up a roadway next to it will damage its impact and setting. Indeed the whole scheme ignores statutory obligations and planning guidance in regard to listed buildings, conservation areas and public open space. The footbridge would also have a drastic impact on the cluster of very old and listed buildings around the Doves Passage at the west end of Furnival Gardens, including

Grade II* Sussex House. The bridge is likely to end up being fully enclosed for safety reasons, to protect the traffic below, even if that is not the designers' present intention.

It is disappointing that the Council has turned its back on reconnecting Hammersmith to the river by surface-level crossings, as was advocated by the Council itself and Transport for London in the 2004 A4 Green Corridor study. Surface-level crossings at, for example, 3 points along the A4 between the Flyover and Hogarth roundabout as part of a carefully planned traffic management scheme with lower speed limits would transform Hammersmith's connections with the river and give full and safe access to Hammersmith for riverside residents.

We feel the Council in its anxiety to achieve a new Town Hall extension is being insufficiently focussed in its approach to reconnecting Hammersmith to its riverside, and insufficiently rigorous with the developers on the height and density of the surrounding development, and should rethink its commitment to this particular scheme..

A coalition of local residents and groups has set up a website to highlight what is wrong with the proposed scheme: see www.saveourskyline.co.uk . We urge anyone who shares the Society's concerns about the redevelopment to email or write to the Council's Director of Environment: nigel.pallace@lbhf.gov.uk or Nigel Pallace, Director of Environment, Town Hall, King Street, London W6 9JU.

Dates for your Diary

London Open House Weekend: 18/19 September

**Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group
AGM:**

Wednesday 3 November, Holy Trinity Church, Brook Green, 7.15pm for tour of church, meeting at 8.00pm

HAMMERSMITH PALAIS INQUIRY

This was held in June and the Hammersmith Society, the Historic Buildings Group and the Brook Green Association gave evidence in support of the Council's refusal of planning permission for a 437 bed student hostel rising to 10 storeys on the site, arguing the design was highly inappropriate for this prominent town centre site. It was satisfying that the Inspector rejected the developers' appeal and agreed that Shepherd's Bush Road had, in the Inspector's view, a coherent, historic civic character which would be damaged by the design of the proposed building. The main case was very effectively put by the Conservation team in the Council Planning Department.

GOLDHAWK INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Meanwhile, at the time of going to press the Inspector's decision is still awaited on the appeal against planning permission given to the redevelopment of Goldhawk Industrial estate. The inquiry was held over 8 days in June and the case against was excellently organised and executed by local residents.

HAMMERSMITH LIBRARY

The Council is proposing to sell a number of buildings “that are either underused or provide poor value for money”, including Fulham Town Hall, Palingswick House, and Hammersmith Library, if a buyer can be found and “if a suitable site in the centre of Hammersmith is secured”.

The Library is a magnificent building which has served the community well and still continues to do so. It is a Carnegie Library, donated by the Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1905, one of a string of Carnegie libraries across the country whose building was motivated by great idealism and a determination to place the means of learning within the grasp of working people. The library building is Listed Grade II and is particularly attractive combination of red brick and Portland stone, and makes an important contribution to Hammersmith's city centre townscape. It has a plaque over the entrance saying "This Building was the gift of Andrew Carnegie". The interior is a fine and dignified public space, especially the wide staircase and the reference library, which has been enjoyed and used by generations of Hammersmith residents.

It is valid to ask the question as to whether the building is really the Council's to sell. If it has to be sold, it should conditional upon remaining in a use which serves the community, otherwise the Council will be selling a building given to the people of Hammersmith, for a short term profit. Once gone from public use, it can never be recovered.

Palingswick House, at the corner of King Street and Weltje Road, is an impressive late Victorian building which is now almost the only survivor of the large detached houses which once lined King Street. It was built as a Poor Law children's home (see our February newsletter) and it has since been a special school and a remand home, and is now a centre for voluntary organisations. It has substantial space behind it for redevelopment and we feel it is imperative the original building is preserved, and some community use should continue on the site, perhaps in part of any redevelopment at the rear.

The Council's website is running a consultation on building disposal until 30 September. Providing one uses the space provided for comment rather than simply the yes/no answer boxes, it is a useful questionnaire: www.citizenspace.com/local/lbhf/Buildings_Consultation/registration.

COUNCIL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Following on from suggestions from the Hammersmith Society and the Brackenbury Residents' Association, as part of its proposals for improving public involvement in the planning process, the Council is introducing a Design Review Panel (made up of architects and possibly other design professionals) to “review key planning proposals and offer support and advice to the Council's officers and planning applicants, to deliver high quality architecture within Hammersmith and Fulham. The intention is to raise the design quality of schemes being submitted to and approved by the Borough, with particularly reference to contemporary architectural styles. “

The panel's role will be purely advisory and the panel meetings will not be open to the public but their findings will be published on the Council website and will be passed on to the Planning Applications Committee. We give a cautious welcome to these proposals and wait to see how they work in practice.

Meanwhile, also in response to suggestions from local groups, the Council has introduced more widespread use of **planning forums** for bigger schemes, which are an opportunity for local residents

to express views on development of a site before a planning application is submitted. Ideally this would ensure that residents' concerns would be heard early in the planning stage, avoiding conflict later. But its success is dependent on developers' willingness to respond to those concerns.

We are pleased to see that the Council website's Planning page now has a link to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' *Objecting to or Supporting a Planning Application* which contains very helpful guidance on how to comment on a local planning application.

NCP CAR PARK

After a planning forum held in March, a planning application has now been put in for the site at the north end of Lyric Square, at the foot of Hammersmith Grove, currently occupied by an NCP car park.

The scheme proposes two closely adjoining blocks, predominantly 11 and 9 storeys but with lower sections adjoining the Hammersmith & City Line station. The plans seen by the Society show a development which can at best be described as in generic glass office style. No cinema is included this time but there is a community meeting space envisaged. Although the buildings are high, there are tall neighbours – the Wimpey building just north of the site, on Hammersmith Grove, is 9 and 10 storeys, and 1 Lyric Square is 14 storeys. Images can be seen on the developer's website, www.hammersmithgrovenpc.co.uk. The development highlights a common problem: developers suggest something innovative but completely inappropriate for location (the controversial 2007 "armadillo" scheme) and when that is greeted by a chorus of catcalls, go to the other extreme of generic blandness. It is surely possible to have office buildings of significant size which nevertheless sit well among their surroundings and offer visual interest?

IMPERIAL COLLEGE WOODLANDS SITE.

As reported at the AGM, the BBC World Service Woodlands site immediately to the north of Westway on Wood Lane has been bought by Imperial College for a campus involving postgraduate accommodation, teaching and administration buildings. That provision would be financed by office and private residential blocks, which include a proposal for a 24 storey tower block. There is much to be welcomed about the proposed scheme, including an open space at its centre (which, however, we consider is likely to become de facto the preserve of students and residents rather than the wider community), and a community hall for local residents, but the prospect of a 24 storey block is extremely worrying. It would inevitably create a precedent for others of similar height. A spread of extremely tall buildings in the north of the borough would damage the view from a wide distance, including from the river and open spaces such as Wormwood Scrubs. It would diminish the quality of the lived environment for local people, creating canyon environments. This is not characteristic of our borough, and should not become so.

LONDON PLAN

The revision of the London Plan, which dictates the framework for planning and development in London for the next 20 years, continues and the Examination in Public of the comments and evidence submitted in response to the draft plan is continuing until the beginning of October. All sessions are open to the public to observe (details on www.london.gov.uk/london-plan

[eip](#)) . Angela Dixon, Chairman of the Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group will be participating in the discussions on Heritage Issues, Local Distinctiveness and High Buildings and London Views. The West London River Group will be participating in the discussion on Waterways.

LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE – AN INVITATION

Some 400 people looked in on the highly successful “Love Your Street” event on Starch Green on 26 June, held in the context of the London Festival of Architecture. West London architects and local residents workshopped ideas on improving the streetscape and connecting with Ravenscourt Park. **The ideas will be presented by the architects at a reception at the Town Hall Mayor’s Foyer on Tuesday 21 September at 6 – 8pm. Society members are warmly invited to attend.** Please let the Secretary know if you plan to attend, annabelleamay@lineone.net.

EMERY WALKER HOUSE

If you have not yet visited 7 Hammersmith Terrace, then you are strongly advised to do so before the end of September this year.

The decoration and furnishings are preserved as they were in the lifetime of the printer Emery Walker (1851-1933), a great friend and mentor to William Morris. It is the last authentic Arts and Crafts interior in Britain and the only house which has original William Morris wallpaper in every room.

The trustees of the Emery Walker Trust have reluctantly decided that it will not be possible to open 7 Hammersmith Terrace in 2011 on the same scale as they have for the past five years. They intend to open next year but on a very limited basis. An announcement of the 2011 opening dates/times will be made early next year. During the next six months the trustees will be urgently exploring a range of options to secure the future of the house and its unique collection.

To book a time to visit telephone 020 8741 4104 or book on line at www.emerywalker.org.uk.

ST PETER’S CHURCH WINDOWS

The ten enormous arched windows of St Peter’s Church in Black Lion Lane with their hundreds of panes are suffering from rust, corrosion, cracks and gaps causing draughts. They are the original ironwork frames from 1825, cunningly set into oak timber surrounds which were almost certainly the work of local shipbuilders. Most of the panes are misted because the windows were blown out four times during the Blitz and the parishioners replaced them with coarser utility glass. The circular windows on the sides of the tower, inside and out, are now in a very poor state indeed.

The windows are of an unusual construction in that the iron glazing bars are set directly into the oak without a surrounding iron frame. Experts did not think it possible to remove each window, so all the windows will be repaired in position. Each individual pane will be removed, the timber stripped and repaired, and the surrounding stonework made good. The metal frames and glazing bars will have their many layers of old crusted paint stripped off and all the rust removed. Specialist paint analysis revealed that the original Georgian paintwork was off white. Four coats of industrial paint (as used on

oil rigs) of precisely matched colour will be applied. The replacement panes will be of sparkling clear horticultural glass and each pane will be individually cut to fit the refurbished glazing bars. The total cost of the project is estimated at £120,000+VAT and a major fundraising project is under way.

282 GOLDHAWK ROAD

The Ashchurch Residents' Association (ARA) report some unexpected good news: the original scheme proposed for this site has been discarded. Residents heard recently that councillors agree with them that the previous high-density hard-landscaped design (described in the February Newsletter) would be inappropriate for the conservation area location.

Since the outset of this long-drawn-out planning process, however, the ARA has made clear to the Council that residents do not want to see pastiche architecture or a gated community at 282. Residents also stated at the outset that they were not opposing social housing -- in fact, it eventually emerged that none had been included. The ARA wants any new proposals to incorporate the mature trees and beech hedge, as both are of considerable amenity value to their neighbourhood. ARA can be contacted via ashchurchresidents@hotmail.com.

FRIENDS OF RAVENSCOURT PARK

The Friends have had a busy year, consulting local amenity groups and local residents' associations about the Council's -- sometimes controversial -- plans for the Park and putting forward ideas and views of their own. Being a Friend offers the opportunity for regular 'walkabouts' with Council officers, and a chance to raise issues of concern as they occur: some visible improvements have been achieved. Expect lively debate at the Friends' second AGM, which will be held on Wednesday 6 October at 7pm in committee room 3 in the Town Hall. If you would like to join the Friends of Ravenscourt Park -- the annual subscription is £5 -- contact the Meetings Secretary Janis Cammell O.B.E. at janis.cammell@btinternet.com.

ARCHIVE REQUEST

If there are any inveterate hoarders amongst our members who may have AGM papers or Newsletters dating from 2003 and earlier, do please get in touch (see contact details below). We would like to fill in gaps in our archive.

CONTACT THE HAMMERSMITH SOCIETY

Email or write to the Chairman, Melanie Whitlock, 38 Ashchurch Grove, London W2 9BU, whitlockmelanie@hotmail.com or the Secretary, Annabelle May, 35 Ashchurch Grove, London W12 9BU, annabellemay@lineone.net. In order to receive email updates from the Society send your email address to the Secretary at annabellemay@lineone.net. Space restrictions mean that this Newsletter reports on only part of what the Society does.. If there is a planning matter that concerns you and is not mentioned here, please get in touch to alert us or to get an update on action taken by the Society.

AGM AND HAMMERSMITH SOCIETY AWARDS 2010

The Society's AGM was held on Thursday 27 May, with a record attendance, at the offices of architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands at 22 St Peter's Square, winners of the previous year's Conservation Award.

The Society's Environment Award went to new buildings at Burlington Danes School, Wood

Lane, W12 designed by Barnsley Hewett and Mallinson (pictured on left).



The Society's committee were highly impressed by the quality of the design of the two new buildings, and the attention to detail, which means they fit very well with the original 1930s buildings (designed by Sir John Burnet, architect of the Royal Masonic Hospital).

The Society's Conservation Award went to St Paul's Church, Hammersmith, overseen by Richard Griffiths Architects,

pictured below.



The quality of the restoration work is exceptional, and after years of concealment it is like having an old friend returned to the community – although the Committee regretted that there is still an extremely ugly and intrusive advertising hoarding facing the Broadway. Ahead of further building works, there is presently excavation of an early 19th century section of the graveyard. Some 500 graves are being excavated, and the remains will be preserved in an ossuary in the church's bell tower.

In addition to the positive awards, there are also the Wooden Spoon Awards, for the ones that got it all wrong. The first Wooden Spoon went to the Council for its policy on Advertising Hoardings, highlighted by the two Towers beside the Flyover. These towers are not only enormous, but their digital images are so bright as to be not only offensive to passersby and a possible distraction to motorists, but the light pollution also causes

distress to nearby local residents. The Committee asked whether this is really the way we want to introduce people to the Borough of Hammersmith? A second Wooden Spoon also went to the Council for permitting a large area on Shepherd's Bush Green to be used as a compound in connection with the renewal of gas pipes in the adjoining streets, which is ugly and unsightly and ignores the fact that Shepherd's Bush is 'Common Land'.