



The Hammersmith Society

Newsletter March 2012

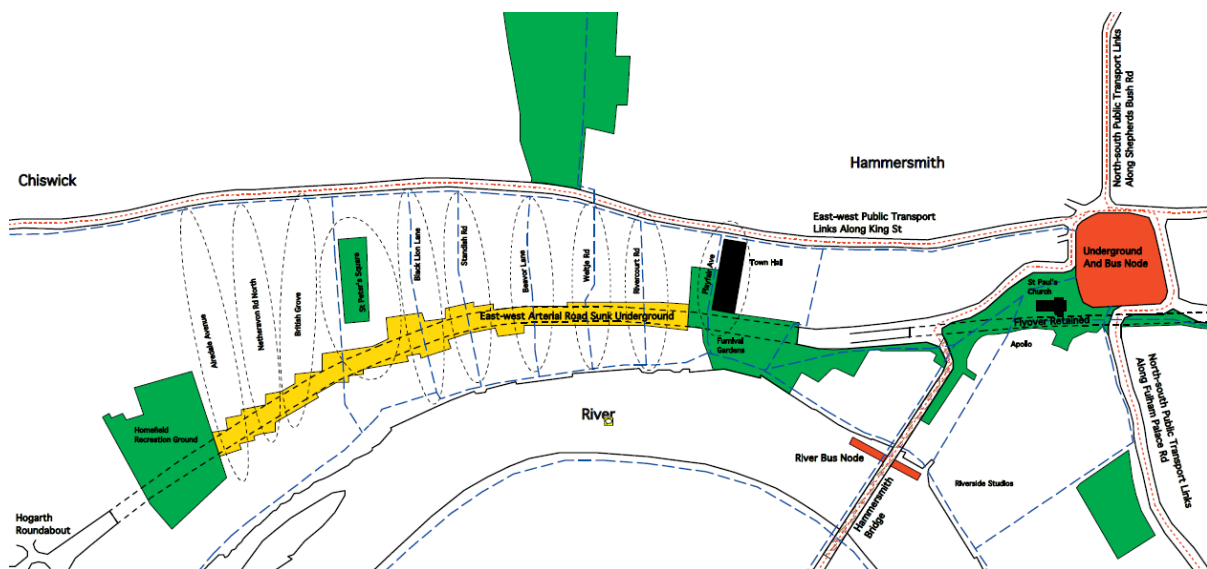


Image from London Festival of Architecture 2008/West London Open Studio

A TUNNEL INSTEAD OF THE FLYOVER

The closure of the Flyover in December, and current repairs because of structural weaknesses have revived an idea put forward by West London Architects and the Hammersmith Society during the London Festival of Architecture in 2008, of sinking the A4 in a tunnel and reuniting Hammersmith with its riverside. When first suggested there was no indication as to the potential problems with the Flyover so it was not included in the 2008 study, but the same project today would certainly be looking to include the Flyover route in the tunnel. The project illustration above shows how the existing, severed streets and green spaces would reconnect. A plan for today would undoubtedly seek to tunnel the A4 from Hogarth roundabout to Talgarth road at Earl's Court. The existing path of the A4 would remain in a reduced form as a local access road. This type of

tunnel project is quite common in parts of Europe and America (notably Paris, Barcelona and Chicago) but something which here in the UK we have to date been timid about.

The project for tunnelising the Flyover and A4 is one whose time has come and should be fully assessed now that the future of the Flyover is so clearly in question. The cost would be met in part at least by appropriate development over the site. This would be a high cost capital project (though insignificant in relation to the Olympics), but a financial appraisal in 2008 showed that a substantial part of the cost could be offset by the potential real estate re-instatement of the various roads which were originally severed. It meets the needs of Hammersmith (joining up its severed halves) and of course resolves one of the key flaws of the Town Hall development, i.e. the bridge over the A4 and its impact on Furnivall Gardens.

There would be enormous quality of life and business advantages to Hammersmith in terms of improved air quality, connectivity to its most attractive areas on the riverside, and better access for local businesses and residents who currently have to deal with the sclerotic traffic round Hammersmith Broadway.

The present repairs to the Flyover will last only 10 years, according to TfL, and a decision about a long-term solution must be made in the next 2-3 years. What a legacy it would be for Hammersmith if a really bold and far-reaching environmental improvement scheme like this could be achieved! Early indications are that the Council are also exploring this idea and have had initial discussions with the Mayor.

TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT: WATCH THIS SPACE

The Council approved the redevelopment application at a Planning Application Committee packed with some 400 people, overwhelmingly objectors, at the end of November. To be valid, it then needed approval by the Mayor of London as part of the GLA's Stage 2 process. In an unexpected move, the Council temporarily withdrew its Stage 2 application, and the Mayor commended the Council's action, saying "we must protect historic buildings, green space, and the views of our great city".

However, the Council has emphasised the application is still live and it is working on further viability studies with the GLA. This is widely thought to mean consideration of whether some pruning of the height could be carried out, and maybe a little affordable housing included. It is likely to come back into play after the mayoral elections.

Meanwhile the Hammersmith Society has urged the Council to use this opportunity to meet with local groups and rethink the scheme in ways which local residents could widely support. The Council has declined to meet us until the Stage 2 referral has been considered by the Mayor of London, and said that "it is contractually bound by the development agreement ... to realise the project".

But meanwhile the future of Hammersmith Flyover is in question, and the possibility of tunnelling the Flyover and part of the A4 has entered the discussion. If that happened, the land values of sites presently bordering the former through-route A4 would rise dramatically and the costings for a redevelopment of the Town Hall would change considerably. Surely the Council has a duty to include this possibility in the redevelopment equation?

**The Society's 50th AGM: Weds 23rd May at the London Corinthian Sailing Club,
7.00pm**

Please put the date in your diary for this very special anniversary event. After the AGM there will be a light buffet supper (please book using the enclosed ticket booking form or contact Angela Clarke at aficlarke@gmail.com or telephone 020 8748 0284) and there will be an exhibition of memorabilia and photographs commemorating changes over the last 50 years in Hammersmith.

50 YEARS ON: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD.

We are proud to mark our 50th Anniversary this year. It makes us the borough's oldest conservation and amenity society. The links between past and present are nicely illustrated by the fact that the Society was started by concerned residents who saw the damaging effects of the widening of the great west road in the 1950s and how Hammersmith was cut off from its riverside – and 50 years later there is now serious discussion about how the A4 might tunnel under Hammersmith rather than cut through and over it with the present hideous road which slices Hammersmith in two.

We believe Hammersmith is a vibrant, interesting and attractive place to live. We want to promote and protect those qualities. Development and redevelopment is inevitable, especially in a place which developers see as one of the most desirable areas in West London, whether for office or residential development. Our task is to point out that development and change should be the best possible for our community: in design, architecture, in preserving the historic fabric and much loved views and open space, in offering generous new open space to go with new development, and in ensuring local people are not priced out of Hammersmith.

The next 50 years – even the next 20 – will see extraordinary changes in our area, which the Society's founders could never have foreseen. A whole new chapter in Hammersmith's townscape is opening up with the development of the White City Opportunity Area and Earl's Court /West Kensington, which will bring 12,000 new homes to the area. Major development at Old Oak in tandem with the High Speed 2 interchange will change the face of the north of the borough with some 10,000 new homes. The feel of Hammersmith - already one of London's most densely populated boroughs - in 20 years time will be very different. It will be essential for our political decision makers – who are after all, temporary custodians of our municipal commonwealth - to ensure development does not happen at the expense of quality of life and environment for all.

And as for just some of our past achievements?

Saving the Victorian interior of the Lyric.....Preserving tiling from the exterior of the original Hammersmith Station.....Hammersmith Society Environment Award....Saving Bridge Avenue and Angel Walk....Saving Bradmore House....Putting forward alternative town centre scheme....Putting a brake on the King St “walkways in the sky”...St Paul's Green....Surface Pedestrian Crossings on Broadway....First organisation to give awards to The Ark, Maggie's Centre, Hammersmith Surgery...Joint founder of West London River Group...

HAMMERSMITH LIBRARY

After the redevelopment of Askew Library and Shepherds Bush Library at Westfield on the “More than a Library” model, next in line for redevelopment is the main Hammersmith Library in Shepherd’s Bush Road, located in the fine listed Carnegie building. Money for the project comes from the development on the NCP car park site north of Lyric Square on Beadon Road.

Local groups have, not surprisingly, been extremely concerned to ensure that as Hammersmith’s central Library it remains a serious book-based resource. The library itself is looking shabby and down at heel, and the entire upstairs reference section has been moved to Fulham Library.

In response to representations from the Hammersmith Society, the Council has said that refurbishment to the listed Grade II building will be carried out in consultation with English Heritage, historically appropriate colours will be used, and there will still be a reference section, while the former reference library upstairs will be used to provide improved study facilities. However, books will be disposed of and the stock renewed: this inevitably creates anxieties that visually appealing new material will be preferred over irreplaceably informative books. It would be hoped that qualified librarians will be making those decisions and that users will be consulted. There is a clear divide between the provision of mass appeal books, resources, and ice-cream vending machines, in the “More than a Library” model, and a library where reading, and study are undertaken in tranquillity and users can expect to find a wider selection of books including those which are less commonplace, to use both as a traditional reference resource and to ignite the imagination.

Under the new tri-borough working arrangements, our Head of Libraries is now the Head of Libraries at Westminster Council, which, despite fiscal efficiencies, does mean decisions are ultimately made by someone who will not be familiar with local issues and (for example) the practical difficulties of north-south public transport in the borough to access the “main” library, now in Fulham.

HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM ARCHIVES

Last year we warned that the Archives and Local History Collection were in danger of being dispersed and culled, as the reading room was due to be closed to local residents and visitors. After months of work by a team of representatives from local amenity groups across the borough, with valuable input from the London Metropolitan Archives, advice on statutory responsibilities from the National Archives, and indispensable help from volunteers, there is access to the Lilla Huset now for two days a month: 12 hours. Importantly, the issue of retaining the borough archives, which had disappeared from the agenda of the tri-borough plans for libraries, is now back on the agenda. With the belated realisation that the archives are not only a heritage asset but an essential tourist and business resource, the Council Cabinet will decide their future on April 16. Meanwhile, members might wish to lobby their local councillors on this issue.

LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE 2012

The Society is glad to be associated with the West London hub of the biennial London Festival of Architecture, from 23 June-8 July. Look out for details of events (www.lfa2012.org). This year’s theme, in response to the London Olympics, is *The Playful City*.

PETER SMITH (1938 - 2012)

It is with great sadness that we record the sudden and unexpected death of Peter Smith RIBA, founder and senior partner of Warren Smith Architects, who was Chairman of the Hammersmith Society 1975-1984.

He was an inspirational Chairman during that time, and will be particularly remembered for starting the process of rethinking the layout of central Hammersmith, as the Broadway redevelopment began to be discussed. He successfully persuaded the Council to give a grant to research alternative road patterns and managed to see off the proposals for the “city in the sky” first floor walkways along King Street and over to the Broadway, while managing to spearhead the saving of Bradmore House. After supporting and engaging with various exciting alternative schemes for the redevelopment of Hammersmith Broadway, including plans by Norman Foster and Terry Farrell, he worked hard and successfully to achieve the best possible outcome from the less inspiring proposals favoured in the end by London Transport, who were owners of the Broadway site.

In particular, he developed a gyratory highway proposal which would have taken two-way traffic on three sides of the Broadway, to the north and east, and running under the flyover and to the south of St Paul’s Church, and thus, by removing the traffic from the west side of the Broadway, would have allowed the re-connection of the island site, the church and the churchyard with the rest of Hammersmith. He believed strongly that pedestrians should be treated more equitably in the equation between cars and people, and should not be expected to cross roads by means of contorted and superfluous bridges and subways. He suggested the idea of surface pedestrian crossings at the Broadway to replace the unpopular subways – an idea taken up and realised up the Council, for which it received the Hammersmith Society Environment Award in 1994.

Peter conceived the idea of completing St Peter’s Square, which had an unsightly gap in its southwest corner, where the original ‘triple villa’ (Nos 19, 20 and 21) had been part demolished and truncated in order to drive through a new development in the late 1890s/early 1900s, to Berestede Road. Peter lived at the remaining house, No 19, with his offices at the rear. His re-creation of the two lost houses, now 20 St Peter’s Square, is a lasting legacy. The present Committee was unanimous in deciding it should be given the Society’s 2011 Conservation Award. It was a happy occasion when Peter and members of his practice were able to turn out in force at the last AGM to receive the award.

Peter was still working as an architect when he died, and his death is a huge loss to his family and colleagues.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND LOCALISM ACT

Affiliated groups were invited to an invaluable seminar on the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act (which has now come into force) in November, organised by the Society as part of our “Working Together” programme. Peter Eversden, Chair of the London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies, updated us on these highly significant changes to the planning system. The changes are predicated on the claim that the current planning system holds up development, economic growth and the supply of homes: this despite the fact that over 80% of all planning applications are decided in the expected timescale and over 80% of planning appeals are granted. In London, planning approval has been granted for over 170,000 homes – over 6 years’ supply, but they have not been built.

The NPPF replaces numerous carefully formulated pieces of planning policy guidance – including the invaluable PPS5 : Planning and the Historic Environment. It is intended primarily for rural and suburban communities, to *enable* development, and does not address the situation of London boroughs where the real challenge is to restrict development to what is appropriate. The third-party (community) right of appeal, to balance the right which applicants have, offered in the Government’s earlier Open Source Planning document, has been dropped. The NPPF contains the notorious instruction that “the default answer to development is yes except where this could compromise sustainable development principles” (which are not defined). However, this clause is under review after criticism from the Parliamentary committee considering the framework, which also called for a clearer definition of sustainable development.

The Localism Act, coming into effect in stages, includes the right for communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans, and several London Forum societies, including our neighbouring Bedford Park Society, will be doing so. However, bolting on a third level of planning (to an area’s own Core strategy and the London Plan) ought surely to be unnecessary and could take any group up to 2 years and £20,000.

SECURING THE FUTURE OF RAVENSCOURT PARK

Of the Borough’s 54 parks, open spaces and squares, the 13 hectares of Ravenscourt Park are among the most highly-used and best-valued green space in Hammersmith. Although we live in the fourth smallest borough in London Hammersmith & Fulham is now the third most densely populated local authority in England and Wales. The borough will move rapidly to the top of that scale as the current plans for White City, Earls Court, the riverfront and elsewhere materialise. With over 10,000 vehicles already passing daily in King Street and Goldhawk Road, it is more important than ever to ensure that Ravenscourt Park remains a tranquil green oasis for residents and visitors, with open access to all. Air pollution is a growing health issue, and the air quality mapping conducted by the Environmental Research Group at King’s College London has already recorded two pollution episodes, each lasting several days, in mid-January and early February this year across the borough (www.londonair.org.uk).

Ravenscourt Park is a historic site with two archaeological priority areas, as well as a nature conservation area. The conservation area profile praises its informal landscaping and important views of mature trees. The Council has a duty to ‘preserve and enhance’ such features, so it is regrettable to see the Grade II listed lodge in Paddenswick Road on the council’s sell-off list for 2013.

The Council is now consulting on the Park’s future, but the Friends of Ravenscourt Park were disappointed to find some of the inaccuracies and inappropriate questions in the document. Some of these relate to planning issues, and should be part of due process, not a tick-box exercise. And the Goldhawk Road entrance, where planning procedures previously broke down and improvements are badly needed, is not mentioned at all.

This valuable Park is not a recreation ground, and the Friends are dismayed to see the Council caving in to the increasing pressure from nearby secondary schools to use it as playing fields. The Friends still hope to see the Council taking a more robust approach, and engaging in some strategic thinking on this subject. Future generations will thank them. *If you are interested in joining the Friends of Ravenscourt Park or would like to find out more, please contact the Chair Annabelle May annabellemay@lineone.net or the Secretary Janis Cammell OBE janiscammell@btinternet.com*

WHITE CITY: LONDON'S NEW HIGH-RISE GATEWAY?

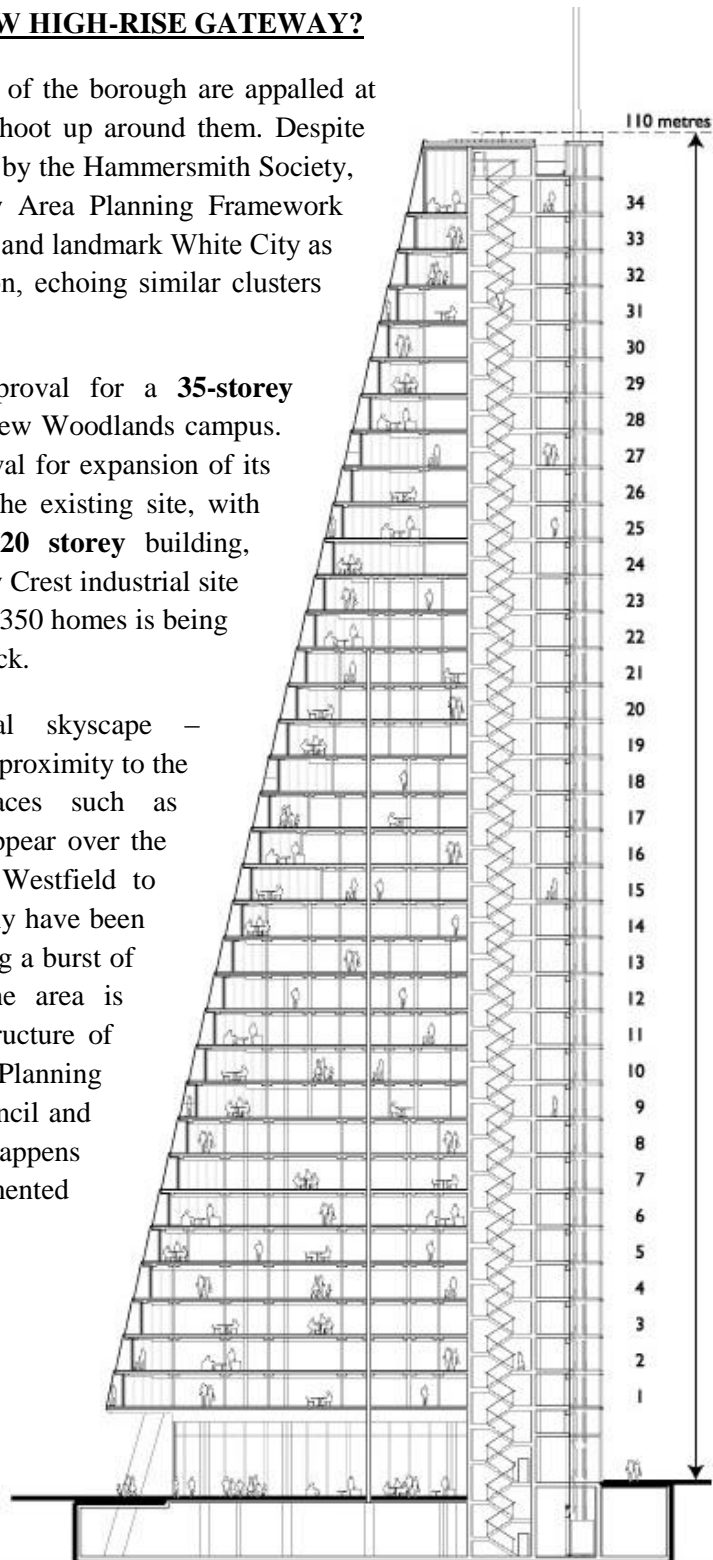
Local residents in the north of the borough are appalled at the tall buildings due to shoot up around them. Despite their objections, supported by the Hammersmith Society, the draft White City Opportunity Area Planning Framework says the skyscrapers will “Identify and landmark White City as the ‘gateway’ into central London, echoing similar clusters along the rest of the route”.

Imperial College is seeking approval for a **35-storey** building next to Westway on its new Woodlands campus. Westfield has just received approval for expansion of its shopping centre to the north of the existing site, with 1,522 new homes including a **20 storey** building. Closer to Westway is the old Dairy Crest industrial site for which outline permission for 1,350 homes is being sought – including a **32-storey** block.

Drastic changes to our local skyline – predominantly low-rise due to our proximity to the river and to large open spaces such as Wormwood Scrubs - are set to appear over the next few years. The area from Westfield to north of A40 Westway which many have been oblivious to for years is undergoing a burst of construction. Development in the area is supposedly operated under the structure of the White City Opportunity Area Planning Framework, drawn up by the Council and the GLA to ensure development happens in a coherent rather than fragmented manner.



Local houses to the same scale



Imperial College Building F ©Aukett Fitzroy Robinson Ltd PLP/Architecture Ltd

The framework envisages, for example, a fair-sized park for the area (“White City Green”) which, though not as large as the Hammersmith Society could have wished, nonetheless would give the residents open space for relaxation and informal ball games. In practice, the Green is pencilled in over a plot held by Marks and Spencer which has no immediate plan to redevelop, and it depends on all the landowners contributing to its costs. Will it happen? There is the very real prospect of an area of

some 5000 new homes where the one leisure facility for young and old alike is a giant shopping centre. And developers are not embracing the London Plan guidance that 40% of all new homes should be “affordable” – the typical percentage is a fraction of that, not always provided on site, and “affordable” can mean 80% of market cost: not a threshold which widens the accessibility greatly.

The notion of a new gateway to London *does* come from the draft Planning Framework, and it is something that local residents are challenging: in an area which at present is characterised by open skies and low buildings, the motivation seems to be to bring the height and development density of Paddington Basin, 2 miles further into London, out to Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush regardless of the



overshadowing of local streets, impact on the already desperate traffic in the area, and the density of future living conditions. More info at info@woodlandsarearesidents.org and www.imperialfolly.org.uk. Image on previous page from Woodlands Area Residents information leaflet, both images@Aukett Fitzroy Robinson Ltd PLP/Architecture Ltd.

SHEPHERDS BUSH MARKET

The Council has approved plans for redevelopment of Shepherds Bush Market which will see 212 new homes built on top of a remodelled market. The parade of shops on Goldhawk Road including the Cooke’s Pie Mash Liquor and Eels shop will be demolished, and new buildings will rise to 8 storeys. Market traders have severe concerns about impact on trading during construction works and increased rents and service charges. The Society and other local groups have said that while sensitive renovation of the market would be welcome, the scheme is inappropriate to the area, damaging to the market, does not respect the local streetscape and is excessively dense and tall, and offers no affordable housing, contrary to the London Plan and the Council’s Core Strategy.

Updates by Email. If you do not already receive occasional updates by email from the Society, it means we have an out-of-date email address, or no email address at all. We plan to inform members more regularly by email on developments in Hammersmith, so do please let us have your current email address. Send it to secretary@hammersmithsociety.org.uk. We will not pass on email addresses.

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Contact the Hammersmith Society by emailing or writing to the Secretary, 35 Ashchurch Grove W12 9BU, secretary@hammersmithsociety.org.uk