



## The Hammersmith Society Newsletter Autumn 2018



*An unflattering computer-generated view of the proposed Olympia Redevelopment (see page 2)*

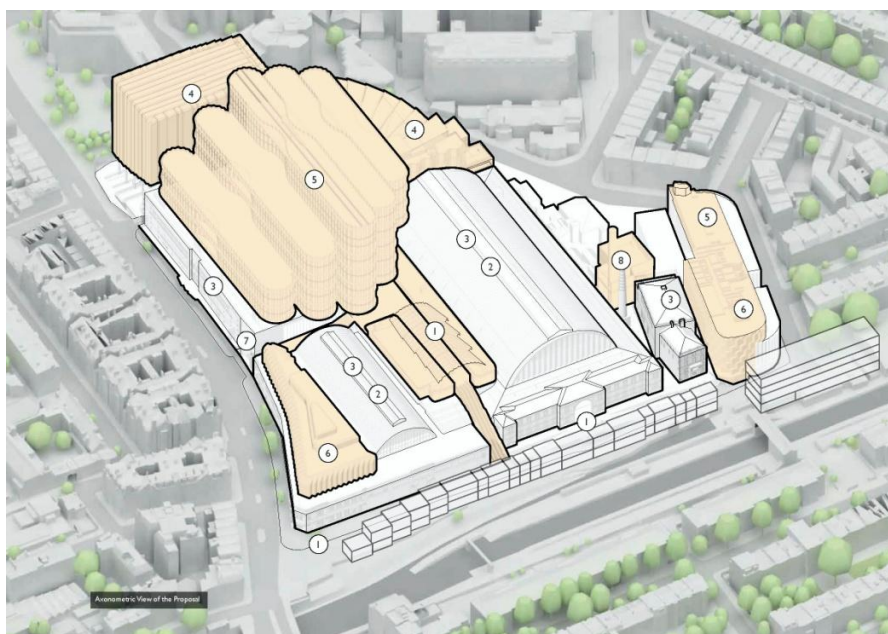
The Hammersmith Society may find itself redundant in the wake of the new commission announced by the Communities' Secretary. The *'Building Better, Building Beautiful'* commission is due to *'...start a debate about the importance of design and style'*, and to *'...find new ways of ensuring new developments reflect what communities want'*. Community involvement is of course already provided for in current planning policy, and communities want to be involved because they have lost confidence in a system which allows the sort of developments we see around us. They might campaign against bad developments, and support positive development, but good developments come from good planning, enlightened developers & creative designers.

Planning legislation champions good design, but the good intentions are undermined by a presumption that development should be allowed to proceed. As a result, planning control tends to be sidelined by development potential, sites become over-valued by development bravado, and high values lead to viability arguments, then used to justify overdevelopment. *Building better and building beautiful* is left far behind!

### Contents

Olympia Redevelopment ..... 2 Town Hall ..... 3 West London College on Gliddon Road ..... 3 West 12 Shopping Centre ..... 4 Kings Mall Shopping Centre ..... 5 Riverside Studios..... 5 Cycle Superhighway CS9 ..... 5	Heathrow Third Runway ..... 5 Brook House, Shepherds Bush Road ..... 6 Hammersmith Bridge ..... 7 On-Street cycle storage ..... 8 Phone boxes, old and new ..... 9 Linford Christie stadium ..... 10 OPDC – Old Oak..... 11
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## OLYMPIA REDEVELOPMENT



1 Olympia Way vehicle-free, low level buildings beside the railway provide enclosure and separation. Escalator up to roof-level mall with restaurants, garden spaces etc.

2/3 Grand Hall: refurbished with additional mezzanine decks inside

4 1500 seat theatre with restaurants, and 3000 capacity music venue

5 Office use

6 Hotel and cinema uses

7 Logistics centre managing below ground parking and exhibition servicing access

8 Energy centre

Last year the Olympia Exhibition Hall site was bought by Yoo Capital, and their project company Olympia London declared their worthy intention to *'re-utilize underperforming areas of the estate, and transform Olympia into London's new creative arts, entertainment and exhibition district...'* Since then the Hammersmith Society has attended a number of public exhibitions of the redevelopment proposals, and we are currently assessing the planning application which was submitted on 11 October (ref 2018/03100/FUL) – for which the public consultation period has been extended until 3 December.

In the development proposals the principal elements of the existing architecture are preserved, but within a programme of very significant and radical changes to the overall site. A summary of the scope of the proposals is indicated on the illustration above, which is taken from the planning application.

The development will breathe new life into a very special piece of Hammersmith, introducing a rich spectrum of activities bringing a mix of arts, recreation,

entrepreneurial support and architectural recovery to accompany and enrich the core exhibition activity. However these bold development ideas should take appropriate account of the significant heritage assets in the site architecture. The existing buildings of Olympia offer a quiet presence on Hammersmith Road which is punctuated by the wonderfully distinctive, heroic style of Olympia Central (listed Grade II) fronting the main road, and the familiar soaring glazed vault of the Grand Hall (Grade II\*), entered through the neo-classical façade on Olympia Way. These dominant external features are joined by a host of rich supporting elements including the north-eastern car park (Grade II), the elevations to Olympia Way – and the potential offered by the building site on the Hammersmith corner.

The proposed development would bring a theatre, a music venue, a roof-level arcade of restaurants and display spaces, a cinema – and, rising from the roof of the Hammersmith Road elevations, a multi-storey office building and a hotel. Olympia Way is tidied up and freed of vehicles, with a terrace of buildings bringing separation

from the railway line. A high windowless block houses the stage and flytower of a new theatre on the Hammersmith corner site, offering a gloomy introduction to the site as you approach from the west.

This is a cacophony of architectural creativity, and we are concerned that the Grand Hall and Olympia Central will be submerged amongst the jostling mixture of new architectural elements, each bringing its own distinctive style, together jeopardising the cohesive wrap of the existing block.

The Hammersmith Society is preparing a letter of comment on the planning application, which will be posted on the Society website.

## TOWN HALL

Over 450 documents described the planning application for the Hammersmith Town Hall development proposals which was submitted to LBHF earlier this year, together with an application for listed building consent for the interior and exterior alterations proposed to the Grade II listed Town Hall. The application designs generally reflected the scheme displayed at the April public exhibition.

Since the applications were lodged, we understand that discussions between Historic England (formerly English Heritage) and the project team have required some amendments to the application design, and these will be incorporated in revised applications due to be submitted shortly. The updated scheme will be published on the LBHF website, and will also be shown at a public exhibition. We are advised that despite the planning delays, there is prospect of work starting on site in early summer 2019.

The current planning application can be viewed on the LBHF planning website, reference 2018/01500/FUL

## WEST LONDON COLLEGE ON GLIDDON ROAD



*photo: RIBA image library*

West London College Hammersmith campus is on the corner of Talgarth Road and Gliddon Road, close to Barons Court tube station, on a substantial site of over 2.3 hectares. The predominantly brick, brutalist style buildings were designed in the 1980's by Bob Giles at the GLC architects department, and are set in a generous landscaped site, fitting well in the neighbourhood environment. An application for the listing of the buildings is being considered by some amenity groups.

The College considers the existing buildings are no longer suitable for their educational needs, and earlier this year presented their redevelopment proposals for public consultation: in place of the existing buildings, the site would be divided between residential on the west side, sold to a developer to raise funds for new college facilities on the east side. A substantial new college block is proposed, entered on the Gliddon / Talgarth Road corner, and rising some 20 metres high, with frontages of 50 metres to the A4 and 70 metres to Gliddon Road. A new town square would separate



the campus from the 6 to 12 storey high blocks planned for the residential area. Approval in principle would be sought for the residential element, anticipating further – and possibly quite different – proposals from the selected residential developer.



*West London College, as proposed mid 2018*

In terms of development concept, it is unfortunate that economic constraints have stifled the creative opportunities of this substantial site, creating a use-boundary between residential and educational: integration of these different uses could have brought the benefits of diversity of mixed use, life and activity to otherwise isolated spaces, and a richer mixture of urban fabric. Consideration might be given to identifying developers who have the insight and creative capacity to undertake both the residential and educational works.

In terms of outline design, the scale of the college building is alien to its urban context, and is incompatible with its proximity to Gliddon Road. This is part of an unusual neighbourhood of notable buildings which together create a high quality streetscape. Redevelopment should respect and enhance the existing qualities of the urban environment, including acknowledgement of the richness and creativity of the architectural context: the Grade 2\* listed artists' studios - with Barons Court station nearby, the 1930's Barons Keep apartment block opposite on Gliddon Road, even the well preserved if less distinguished substantial Edwardian apartment block on the south east corner of the junction. The importance of this urban design priority is well described in the LBHF Local Plan (Policy DC2).

For the residential buildings, the layout would benefit from spatial or visual relief

from the relentless brick blocks and projecting balconies; at this stage further design information is needed to assess the proposals.

The development team have held discussions with LBHF planning, and we understand the scheme currently awaits review by the new CEO of the College.

## **WEST 12 SHOPPING CENTRE**



The West 12 Shopping Centre, located on the south east corner of Shepherd's Bush Green, is owned by Land Securities (in their £14bn property portfolio), while the two residential blocks which rise above the shopping centre are owned by LBHF.

LandSec intend to optimise the value of the site by refurbishing the shopping centre and adding residential development above.

Initial discussions have been held with community groups, including a July meeting between the Hammersmith Society, LandSec and the project architect Allies and Morrison. At the meeting LandSec discussed the project approach, development strategy and some initial hazy design concepts emphasising their priority of community opinion. The ideas included the redesign of the Shepherd's Bush Green frontage, the opening up of the over-enclosure of the interior, and introducing throughways from the front, spilling out at the rear on Charecroft Way. It appears that Lidl are likely to return to the refurbished building, but the future of the cinema facility is uncertain. At least one residential tower is proposed at roof level.

Following the meeting we confirmed our response to the concept discussions to LandSec: we welcomed the links proposed into Charecroft Way, which would bring life and interest to the frontage. We are concerned at the proposals for high residential blocks above the podium, whilst there is at least an element of consistency in the existing residential towers, the introduction of a further, different and higher tower may appear as a random and opportunist intrusion, which would upset the dynamic of the streetscape views from the Green.

We understand from informal discussion with LBHF planners that design discussions have been taking place over the summer, and we await the next public consultation.

### KINGS MALL SHOPPING CENTRE

Schroders became the new owners of Kings Mall shopping centre in 2015 (purchased for £150M), and announced their intention to refurbish and upgrade the buildings. A number of changes have already taken place, including the welcome removal of the concrete stair alongside the entrance to the mall. Construction work currently in progress is part of a re-styling and refurbishment of the overall King Street frontage, including new shopfront canopies, lighting, signage, and the installation of a digital screen above the side of the Patisserie Valerie unit.

The current planning application can be viewed on the LBHF planning website, reference 2018/01206/FUL.

### RIVERSIDE STUDIOS

We understand that the building and fitting-out work has been delayed by funding and procurement problems, together with a late requirement for a sprinkler fire protection system. The opening is now scheduled for September 2019, with Sam's Riverside restaurant opening a month earlier.

### CYCLE SUPERHIGHWAY CS9



*Problematic junction at British Grove*

The spring newsletter reported on the Society's concerns at the TfL CS9 cycle superhighway proposals, and in our public consultation response we have raised issues of safety, congestion, practicality, and our support for the alternative route beside the A4. TfL are currently preparing their '*Response to Issues Raised*', which we are advised will include a breakdown of consultation respondents by postcode. LBHF have declared their initial comments on CS9, which they are due to have reported to TfL, including concerns at the impact on air pollution, pedestrians, journey times, emergency vehicles, access to schools and bus stops, and the need for a reappraisal of the feasibility of a route alongside the A4.

We are hopeful that TfL's significantly modified proposals will be issued shortly, and will include an opportunity for further public consultation.

### HEATHROW THIRD RUNWAY

In the wake of the Parliamentary vote in June to back the Third Runway, H&F Council joined with a number of other London councils, NGO *Friends of the Earth*, and campaign group *Plan B* in a legal challenge to the project. The challenge was given approval last month in the High Court to go ahead to full trial next year. The challenge claims that the Government's National Policy Statement setting out its support of the Third Runway fails properly

to deal with the impact on air quality, climate change, noise and congestion.

At the same time, new noise guidelines from the World Health Organisation indicated that aircraft noise can affect the health of people living well over 20 miles from Heathrow. Campaign group HACAN chair John Stewart said, "The clear message to Heathrow is that it needs to look after its distant neighbours as well as its near neighbours when planning its new flight paths. The most effective way to do that is to ensure that residents living 20 miles and more from the airport are guaranteed predictable breaks from the noise each day." The Hammersmith Society would add – "and do not build a third runway creating new flight paths over West London".

And a recent Defra report on Ultrafine Particles (UFP) in the UK states that a

location such as Heathrow Airport, where aircraft tend to approach the airport from the east (flying over the London conurbation) has potential for considerable exposure to UFP from aircraft.

Meanwhile *HandNothirdrunway* continues to campaign against a Third Runway, with a wider mission to campaign against plans to allow Heathrow to increase noise, pollution and traffic congestion in Hammersmith & Fulham. The group is also watching out for signs that Heathrow might use its existing two runways more intensively or dilute alternation patterns designed to provide respite from noise.

The programme currently outlined for the Third Runway project states that construction could begin in 2021, with the third runway operational by 2026.

## BROOK HOUSE, SHEPHERDS BUSH ROAD

Since the fourth meeting with officers the scheme has evolved further, including taking on board comments made by the Hammersmith Society. These include:

- High quality brick
- Further articulation to the window bays
- The use of zinc or lead roll on the roof
- A new green wall to the circulation core as specifically requested by the Society and as a contributor towards the public realm



A planning application has been submitted for conversion of this uninspiring office block between Hammersmith Central Library and the Broadway into a Premier Inn hotel. The scheme would re-clad the existing building rather than rebuild, so while the height will be increased by a double mansard storey, overall the front elevation will be somewhat improved.

The Society made the point that some positive contribution to the public realm should be expected, however, and in response the developers have softened the frontage with a small section of green wall – we would have hoped for more. And we will be seeking to ensure the trademark purple lighting used by Premier Inn is heavily

restricted by planning conditions. There are several listed buildings very close by – the Library, the Laurie Arms, Hammersmith Police Station - and their setting would not be improved by purple floodlighting next door. If Hammersmith Town Centre is to be promoted as a desirable, dynamic location, then garish and excessive commercial lighting should be avoided.



## HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE



The Bridge is scheduled for major repairs and repainting soon, once the results of detailed structural surveys carried out earlier this year have been assessed.

Residents of both Hammersmith and Barnes and other users are worried about the disruption that a prolonged closure will cause, though TfL has said it will do everything it can to ensure one lane is kept open throughout. It is also a matter of considerable concern to many in Hammersmith that, over the last two years, as the Queen's Wharf/Riverside Studios development south of the Bridge neared completion, the well-known view from upstream, with the characteristic profile of the Bridge, disappeared.

The background of the new development – its height and greenish bronze colour – have effectively absorbed the silhouette. The Bridge (north side suspension towers and much of the span) is no longer visible in profile against the sky. This was as foreseen by local groups commenting on the planning application. The colour of the Bridge is no longer distinct enough to stand out.

In our view it is natural to want a much-loved landmark to be visible, to continue to enhance its setting, rather than be diminished by its surroundings. Our own suggestion is that the repainting is an opportunity to reassess how the heritage asset can be seen to best advantage. We

consider that a lighter shade of green or a lighter colour altogether would enable the Bridge to be seen and appreciated much more clearly. Our website reported in April on the evolution of paint treatments of the Bridge, from the green which it was painted after its opening, through to the grey-blue and white of the 60s and the exuberant gold and coloured touches of the 80s. Over the years succeeding generations have found it appropriate to apply different treatments.

One of our members recently saw a 1963 architectural drawing of the “Proposed Repainting of Hammersmith Bridge” from the Richmond Borough Archives, on exhibition at Orleans House (see overleaf).



This was a good-mannered approach, respectful of the Bridge, and we feel gives a pointer as to how the Bridge could be helped to regain its proper status in its surroundings: not necessarily using those colours but indicating how a lighter treatment might be applied.

We accept the original colour was something very close to the present green. But given the changes in the Bridge's setting, it is a case where literal historical accuracy may not best serve the heritage asset. Do let us know what you think.

## ON-STREET CYCLE STORAGE



*Cyclehoop's "Bikehangar", photo: H&F Council*

In common with some other councils nationwide, H&F has recently begun to install "bikehangars" in several locations to provide on-street secure storage for rent to those without space in their homes, especially in older and conversion flats. You can request one in your street, though the

criteria are unclear, other than as dictated by an overstretched budget of course.

While supporting the general principle, we received comments that the selected model is too functional in appearance, given that they are fixed pieces of street furniture rather than parked cars, and that they are not being installed particularly well or placed necessarily in the most appropriate locations, for example Wingate Road which has few, if any, flats, rather houses with front gardens. It has also been suggested that other underused locations may be better than using precious parking space, as shown in examples below.

We also noted that we have not seen planning applications for the ones so far installed, and that the rental cost (£80/yr) appears to be going to the suppliers of the *bikehangar* (Cyclehoop). We're concerned that the choice of the *bikehangar* may have been skewed by the offer of a "one-stop-shop" supply & rental service, rather than by any wider community consultation. Other designs are available, costs appear similar, and several would be a more fitting part of the streetscape, especially when they include green roofs or visually interesting design work. Members' comments would be welcome.

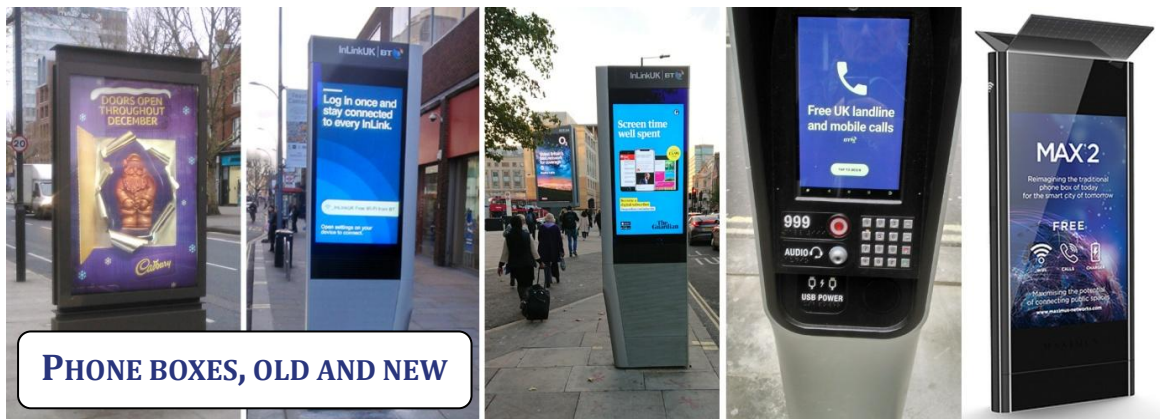


*Cyclehoop's green roof storage box*



*"Bike Box"*





**PHONE BOXES, OLD AND NEW**

You're doubtless aware that the Society awarded wooden spoons to a range of "phone boxes" in two successive years. However it now appears that there's a significantly larger story here. There are many competing designs, some examples shown above, left to right, ranging from relatively old to new and proposed. H&F has received over 100 applications from 5 main operators since 2016, and refused the majority where they can. A quick summary:

Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Public service provision - generally providing free phone calls, Wi-Fi, some, such as BT Inlink have phone chargers should you wish to stand in the street charging your phone.	Degradation of the streetscape, with advertisements prefacing a dystopian 2019 <i>Bladerunner</i> environment, as shown above, centre, at the Broadway
Generally a clean "monolith" design, with a smaller footprint than traditional "phone boxes" - not so easily used as a urinal.	Additional street clutter, many more "boxes" than exist now, moving in the opposite direction to council policy to reduce street clutter
in 2019-2020 many will be used as 5G mobile phone base stations in addition to the familiar roof-top base stations. This will improve mobile phone coverage nearby.	Pedestrian impediments, potentially made worse if pavements are too narrow to accommodate cycle tracks
	Driver distractions, light pollution & unnecessary energy consumption
	Possibility of snooping by collecting data about who is connecting and their location

The *Institution of Engineering and Technology* have done extensive research (their interest being principally the 5G rollout). 5G mobile requires smaller "cells", meaning more base stations, for which these "boxes" may do double-duty. In a further twist it appears that some councils may be opposing the installation of some types on planning grounds partly because they have been able to cut deals with other companies to share advertising revenue. Court battles have ensued (Westminster in August), though *The Communications Act 2003* and *The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) order 2015* specifically allows them as permitted development (PD), restricting grounds for denial.

Some councils have argued that sharing advertising revenue is better than operators taking all the revenue, so reducing council tax. The question is, at what cost are we prepared to accept the new dystopian streetscape? Central Hammersmith already has 3 new BT Inlink boxes, Shepherd's Bush Green no less than 5, and that's only on the South & West sides of the green.

Some phone box operators, carrying significant losses and public service obligations, have been bought as "loss leaders" with access to sites with limited planning controls and an eye to this lucrative new market. Some boxes are proposed *without* eye-catching backlit screens (Max 2 above, proposed at 16

locations so far in H&F), perhaps to avoid immediate public ire, but designed to be the same size as, and therefore ready to drop in, the "next generation" that *does* incorporate screens, and presumably 5G base stations, in a year or two. The current land-grab we observe, with planning applications for tens of "boxes" at a time is excessive. So much so that even the New York Times has picked up the story: *"On Crowded London Streets, Councils Fight a Flood of Phone Boxes"*. As widely reported, the Local Government Association is now lobbying for a change to the PD rules against the "Trojan boxes".

Finally, the largely unreported shenanigans around the ill-advised Freeview TV channel moves in March this year, with the loss of nearly half the available High Definition channels, including BBC4 HD, for many Londoners, is part of this larger 4G/5G rollout picture. The move cost two of your committee members new TV aerials, but with enough sleuthing, Freeview picked up a not inconsiderable bill ! If you've suffered similar, call Freeview on 0808 100 0288.

## LINFORD CHRISTIE STADIUM



Wormwood Scrubs:  
Yellow boundary indicates nature conservation area

In a borough short of green spaces and school playing fields, a sports stadium in the north is currently the focus of debate about its long-term future. Located on the Metropolitan Open Land of Wormwood Scrubs, the Linford Christie Stadium (LCS) has outdoor facilities including several football pitches and an athletics track.

Built by the GLC and now run by the council, it is home to a number of groups and clubs,

including the Thames Valley Harriers and the Kensington Dragons Football Club.

But playing and changing facilities are now in a poor state of repair, inhibiting wider use. And the LCS cannot operate without subsidy. In common with other local authorities the council is experiencing severe financial pressures; continuing to fund the stadium as a community facility seems unsustainable.

An area of open space since 1879, the Scrubs is designated as an important site of nature conservation. Soon to be surrounded by some of the most densely populated high-rise development in the UK, it is imperative to protect its integrity and 'wildness' for future generations.

QPR, with a 18,500 capacity stadium in Loftus Road have expressed an interest in developing a 30,000 seater stadium on the LCS site. Proximity to Hammersmith Hospital has sparked local opposition, with fears of football crowds, noise, floodlighting, and traffic congestion.

The LCS is also adjacent to the Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre, which for 30 years has provided riding lessons for children with disabilities. The Centre says a QPR move would force them to close down.

A project initiation document by the council's management team looks at the future in terms of residents, schools and employers, including the prison.

Another document, commissioned by the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs (FOWWS) explores options that might facilitate the refurbishment of the LCS while protecting the sensitive wildlife habitat of the Scrubs and respecting its diversity of users. The council has commissioned a feasibility study to explore development potential, possibly as a music venue.

There is consensus that the LCS urgently needs investment. But with such a complex web of stakeholders involved, aligning the diverse priorities will not be an easy task.

## OPDC – OLD OAK



“The UK’s largest regeneration project,” much of which is in Hammersmith & Fulham, is proceeding very slowly and encountering a number of challenges. The core of the new area will be the HS2 station, the only place where HS2 meets Crossrail, this high degree of connectivity accounts for the “hype” which has surrounded the proposals. But things seem to be slowing down as economic and engineering realities begin to bite. The Society – together with the Grand Union Alliance and the St Quentin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum - wrote last month to the OPDC Board setting out its concerns about heights and densities but has received no response.

The area is scheduled by the London Plan to provide 24,000 new homes. To accommodate this target, proposed densities have been raised in each successive version of the draft Local Plan. An earlier draft mapped out ‘sensitive edges’ with expected densities of 300 units per hectare. This has disappeared from later versions, along with ideas for a transition or ‘buffer zone’ between areas of very high density and the existing residential areas surrounding Wormwood Scrubs. The Mayor of London’s affordable housing quotas (together with developers’ demands for high returns) mean that densities will be far higher than those in the current London Plan density matrix – from current highest density for “central areas”

of 405 to an average density of 600 units per ha. In response, heights will have to go up to 30 storeys and higher. Last year postgraduate students from Cambridge School of Architecture and the University of Berkeley USA did a detailed case study on Old Oak. They looked at development capacity, calculated the housing target and available sites, and concluded that Old Oak would indeed see building

typologies similar to the ‘hyper-densities’ of Hong Kong, Singapore or Shanghai.

Meanwhile, engineering challenges beset the site: the railway viaducts mean there can only be limited north-south movement for people or vehicles unless rebuilt or tunnelled through. The high densities scheduled for the area depend for their planning justification on exceptional access to transport, but the Overground stations which were proposed for Hythe Road and Old Oak Common are not on TfL’s funding programme – meaning transport connections other than HS2 and Crossrail will depend on local buses, which experience serious congestion already. But the OPDC Planning Committee continues to justify high-density planning permissions by pointing to the exceptional accessibility provided by two Overground stations which will not be built in the foreseeable future.

The development of public land at Old Oak South (the area expected to be the “heart” of a new Old Oak) has now been deferred beyond the local plan period. The original vision of Old Oak South round the HS2 station will be paused while the Crossrail sheds and the rail tracks on the site stay as they are, with just some land developed to finance the HS2 station works. The focus for early development is now on ‘Old Oak North’, the area made up of the Cargiant / London and Regional Properties landholding along with Scrubs Lane.



Meanwhile, roads and the utilities infrastructure is not funded automatically by central government. The OPDC is bidding for funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to meet the costs of the key through road from Old Oak Common Lane to Scrubs Lane and routing heat, power, electricity and water for the future community along it. If the bid is not successful, building heights are likely to increase to 40 storeys, to pay for the infrastructure.

The OPDC has just announced its new Board. There is no longer a community representative as there has been since the Board was set up – and not for lack of excellent potential nominees. This is an extraordinarily disappointing sign of the OPDC's direction of travel, which really calls its objectives into question. Meanwhile the Masterplan for the area, which is an absolutely fundamental part of the planning process and which should have appeared last year, remains unpublished.

*What is the OPDC up to?*

London needs housing, and it needs visionary new areas where residents and businesses can be part of mixed and lively communities – a programme involving generous spaces for education, culture, and

social exchange – and let's also see the "cultural catalyst" (mentioned in the past, but no longer) which could give the area something unique to make people proud of it. But, as the easily developable sites round the outside slowly creep up, leaving the problematical centre languishing apart from HS2, it looks as though this may be turning into a missed opportunity. Let's hope we are wrong.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership subscriptions are due again on 1st January, and we'd like to take this opportunity to remind you to please double-check that your standing order is setup correctly: sort code 40-02-12, account 80414069.

Subs. remain £6 for individuals, £8 for families or couples and £15 for organisations, as they have for many years.

Unfortunately earlier this year we needed to remind a significant number of members about overdue subscriptions. It very much helps our administration if you pay *by standing order* on 1<sup>st</sup> January rather than any other time of year (and avoid those pesky reminders!). Thank you in advance.

*Benham Reeves residential at Fulham Reach has again kindly sponsored the printing costs of this newsletter*

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