



## The Hammersmith Society Newsletter Spring 2018

### TRANSFORMING THE TOWN HALL AND ITS SURROUNDINGS: FINAL PLANS



Following a second exhibition of plans in February and a final display showing further development of the scheme in April, the scheme is being submitted as a planning application as we go to press. Most members will be aware of the main features of the scheme – the welcome removal of the 1970s Town Hall Extension, creation of a public open space in front of the original Town Hall, construction of 200-plus apartments (52% affordable) on Nigel Playfair Avenue and to the east of the Town Hall square, new commercial offices and a cinema to the west of the town square, and new Council offices housed in a glass extension above the original Town Hall.

The Hammersmith Society has broadly supported the scheme so far. The design has developed since the February exhibition and the glass extension above the Town Hall has been capped with a *brise soleil*. Members of the public and local groups will be able to comment on the application once it has been published on the Council website.

## NOMINATIONS FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT AWARDS



We have been running our awards scheme since 1989, in order to raise public awareness of new developments in our townscape – whether buildings, renovation of older buildings, green space, streetscape or shop fronts.

We also invite nominations for Wooden Spoon awards to architectural or environmental blots on the landscape. You can see a complete list and images of past award winners on our website [www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards)

Nominations are invited from anyone living or working in Hammersmith. Schemes must have been completed within the last 2-3 years, and must be visible from the public highway or readily accessible to the public. Nominations close on **16<sup>th</sup> May**, the awards will be announced and presented at our 2018 AGM on 5<sup>th</sup> July at the Bush Theatre.

If there is a scheme you would like to nominate, please send details to Melanie Whitlock, Vice Chair, at [vice.chairman@hammersmithsociety.org.uk](mailto:vice.chairman@hammersmithsociety.org.uk) or 38 Ashchurch Grove London W12 9BU, providing a brief description of your nomination and why you have chosen it, the name of the architect or client if known, and your name and address or email. State whether this is for an award or wooden spoon. You can also see and comment on the current nominations at [www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards/award-nominations-2018](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards/award-nominations-2018).

## 2018 AGM – AN INVITATION

Members and friends are warmly invited to our 56<sup>th</sup> AGM on 5 July at the Bush Theatre, Uxbridge Road, winner of our 2017 Conservation Award.

Further details will be circulated by email closer to the time, and will also be posted on our website. Do bring friends and neighbours along for this opportunity to discuss our urban environment and to hear which schemes are the winners of this year's Environment Awards – and Wooden Spoons.

### Current Committee Members

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Hans Haenlein MBE RIBA (President)

Melanie Whitlock (Vice Chair)

Annabel Clarke (Secretary)

Richard Tollemache (Treasurer)

Richard Farthing CEng (Membership Secretary)

Angela Clarke

Julian Hillman

Annabelle May

Chris Tranchell

Richard Winterton RIBA

Derrick Wright

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## Tom Ryland RIBA 1947- 2018



It is with great sadness that we record the death in March of Tom Ryland RIBA. Tom had been Chairman of the Hammersmith Society since 2015, had served as Vice Chairman since 2003 and had been on its committee since 1992. His long connection with the Society reflected a deep commitment to the local community, and a belief that it was always possible to achieve a better urban environment.

Tom was equally committed to preserving and enhancing the Borough's historic buildings and seeking to ensure that new development contributed positively to Hammersmith's townscape. His architectural expertise and knowledge of the planning system gave invaluable support to the Save Our Skyline campaign, which successfully opposed the first, highly inappropriate, Town Hall redevelopment scheme in 2010, with its 15-storey glass towers and bridge over the A4.

It led him to promote a vision of reconnecting Hammersmith to the river with pedestrian crossings across the A4. With a team of local architects and engineers, he built on this idea to initiate the "Flyunder" scheme, to explore how the

A4 could be routed in a tunnel under Hammersmith. The idea, ambitious though it is, is a policy objective of H&F Council, and may yet one day become reality.

The Hammersmith Society Awards flourished under Tom's flair for finding intriguing new buildings locally from year to year, brilliantly fulfilling the remit of making residents more aware of their surroundings and showing how good design can transform development.

But Tom was also painstaking in the arcane world of the Local and the London Plans, and the policy documents underpinning the new spaces such as White City and the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation Area, leading our team's contributions, always aware of the need to affirm Londoners' needs for a better urban environment against developers' demands for greater intensification.

Tom's activities were not confined to the Hammersmith Society. A past chairman of the West London Architectural Society, and locally of St Peter's Residents' Association, a founder of the Askew Business Network, a board member of



Hammersmith BID, long-time committee member of the H&F Historic Buildings Group, all were ways in which he made a difference to our locality. And all this while founding and running CPA Architects in Askew Road, the practice he set up in 1992, where he had retired from day to day management but remained a director.

It gave his many friends great pleasure that in early March Tom was awarded Hammersmith & Fulham's Civic Award for promoting and defending local heritage. It was typical of Tom that that he continued working tirelessly for the Hammersmith Society through his illness, monitoring and commenting on developments in the Borough and on the draft London Plan. Working with Tom was always a pleasure. He was unflappable, interested, sociable, kind, and had a wonderful quiet sense of humour. His death is a huge loss for the community, and he will be much missed.

## **CYCLE SUPERHIGHWAY (CS9)**

The Society's principal objections to CS9 relate to the unsuitability of a two-lane cycle path through the narrow and very busy 'high street' section of King Street. This will delay bus journeys and affect pedestrian shoppers by narrowing the pavements. Stationary vehicles will increase the levels of pollution. Some existing bus lanes will be removed and bus stops relocated, sometimes onto 'traffic islands'. In our view, these will be intimidating for users, particularly for disabled, frail or older people and shoppers with pushchairs.

CS9 also involves proposals to close off and restrict use of some turnings off King Street (e.g. British Grove and Nigel Playfair Avenue). This will be disruptive to local residents and businesses, and often quite impractical. The many other turnings (e.g. Cambridge Grove, Leamore

Street, Weltje and Rivercourt Roads, Beavor Lane, Tesco car park, Black Lion Lane etc.) will involve hazardous vehicle and pedestrian crossings in both directions across the two-way cycleway as well as across two lanes of vehicle traffic.

The Society cannot support a scheme that is so detrimental to both pedestrians and bus services. We therefore urge both the Council and TfL to reconsider the proposals, and come up with a more appropriate scheme.

## **EARLS COURT**

Ten years ago, there were plans for four 'urban villages', a Canary Wharf style cluster of towers, with high-density residential, retail and offices, decking and a linear park.

Developers Capco and their tangled web of consultants threatened two popular estates with demolition, putting nearly 2,000 residents in fear of losing their lifetime homes.

Today, destruction of the internationally known Exhibition Centre has ripped the heart out of Earls Court, leading to the collapse of many local shops and other businesses.

Meanwhile the current slowdown in the luxury property market means that the site is said to have lost nearly 30 per cent of its former value, and Capco is seeking a new masterplan to increase the overall density.

Both councils involved – H&F and Kensington & Chelsea – have rejected this, saying they do not believe that the proposed levels of density and affordable housing can be supported or delivered.

Critics of the scheme might hope that Earls Court is the last gasp of an era of such hubristic projects. But who can count the cost of the trail of human and environmental wreckage this vandalism leaves in its wake?



## OLD OAK AND PARK ROYAL DEVELOPMENT AREA (OPDC)

Covering parts of three boroughs – Hammersmith & Fulham, Ealing and Brent – the OPDC describes itself as the largest regeneration project in the UK. OPDC officers are still working on the consultation responses to their draft Local Plan before this goes to Examination in Public, which they hope will be this coming autumn. We will wait to learn whether they have taken any notice of our comments. Our key objectives are listed in the box below.

Meanwhile we welcome their consultation on which buildings should be added to a proposed Local List of Heritage Assets. Our full response can be seen on our website, but it includes the former Rolls Royce Factory and some canal-side warehouses in Hythe Road. We have also suggested that the buildings on Scrubs Lane currently occupied by Portobello Press should be Locally Listed for extra protection.

- The need for effective community and business involvement in developing the proposals and inhabiting the new development.
- The need to balance the global city development values with appropriate local neighbourhood aspirations.
- The importance of protecting existing facilities and land uses and delivering a balance of employment space, housing, social infrastructure, green spaces and amenities to serve local needs.
- The importance of developing walkable neighbourhoods and a sustainable movement network within the Opportunity Area and connecting neighbouring communities.
- The importance of learning from the mistakes of previous Mayoral Development Corporations and other Opportunity Areas.
- The importance of specific reassessment with regard to tall buildings in the light of the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy.
- The area must be open to all and not gated in the manner of Canary Wharf. To this end all roads should be adopted. The future cannot be predicted so the plan must have flexibility to adapt and change.
- As the Original Draft Plan stated, (para. 12.3), OPDC is in a position to push the boundaries of UK best practice in development and infrastructure and has an objective to be recognized as a leader in sustainability.
- The importance of the canal for open green space, leisure and sport, the attractive environment it can provide for nearby housing and for the preservation of existing heritage buildings.
- The importance of the retention and limited enhancement of Wormwood Scrubs as important open space for the enjoyment of local people as a nature reserve and its many sporting activities.



## WHITE CITY BLUES?



*St James/Pilbrow & Partners*

The new John Lewis opened at Westfield on 20 March. Splendid as this is as a retail opportunity, we regret that the store's design is not on a par with some of the partnership's fine architecture elsewhere. Of equal significance for the future of the area, the construction of the future 1350 apartments on the Westfield site can be seen from the Hammersmith & City Line – up to 23 storeys in height.

John Lewis's 3<sup>rd</sup> floor café commands a fine view over the changing landscape. We can see the rapidly advancing development at the former BBC Television Centre, which will include 950 flats and office space. On the other side of the Hammersmith & City Line viaduct buildings are going up for the first phase of White City Living's eventual 1500 homes, rising to 30 storeys.

Just south of Westway, the former Dairy Crest Site belongs to Imperial College

London and a masterplan is proposed for educational/academic commercial uses, with temporary “meanwhile use” commercial space buildings coming on stream in the short term. The Imperial scheme also includes 18 and 32 storey towers on this site, and another as part of a building proposed for the plot bordering Wood Lane, currently occupied by the UGLI building. This one will consist of 544 accommodation units for Imperial students and staff.

Why so high? One reason is the requirements of the London Plan and H&F Local Plan to generate 6000 homes in the White City Opportunity Area. The Imperial site originally had planning permission for 1150 homes – but with Imperial opting for primarily laboratory or commercial use, homes are no longer on offer in that location. Like a toothpaste tube, what is squeezed at one end bulges at the other. More homes have to be

packed onto the other sites. In the Society's view, this looks likely to become all too tall, too dense. There is pressure from the Mayor of London in the new draft London Plan for densification and intensification of London's residential development, and the previous housing density matrix is being abandoned.

We and many other groups consider that the GLA should commission a study of the long-term effects of living at greater density, to establish whether it creates satisfactory environments for lifetime communities and to ensure that social and economic problems are not being created for the future.

The GLA should also publish data on the efficiency of high-rise as a way of achieving more occupied homes throughout a development, as dwellings at higher storeys are often let or sold at premium rates to occupants whose density per apartment is low – or, indeed, such apartments are not occupied at all.

## THE CECIL FRENCH BEQUEST

There is a rare opportunity to see our borough's own collection of Pre-Raphaelites, the Cecil French bequest, on display at the Watts Gallery, Down Lane, Compton, Surrey, GU3 1DQ, until 3 June.

The exhibition shows fine works by Lord Leighton, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edward Burne-Jones, and Albert Moore and includes some particularly lovely Burne-Jones drawings.

The gallery is accessible by rail to Guildford and a 15-minute bus ride, and residents of H&F can have free admission (normally £11.50) with proof of residence. For more details see <https://www.wattsgallery.org.uk/>

Due to the value of the collection and the need for security and controlled light and air conditions, display in the borough has

been an insoluble problem for many years, and the bequest is normally in storage. We would love to see it on permanent public display, and continue to hope that one of the major developments in the pipeline locally may be able to provide a permanent exhibition space.

## HEATHROW THIRD RUNWAY

You may have been aware of a consultation on Airspace run by Heathrow Airport Ltd (*not* the Government) earlier this year. It covered the potential principles Heathrow could apply when designing the new airspace required for an expanded airport.

There was no statement of actual flight paths proposed, and therefore no opportunity to comment on them.

The consultation process gave rise to the mistaken assumption **that permission for expansion has already been given. It has not. Parliament is required to vote on this before it can go ahead.**

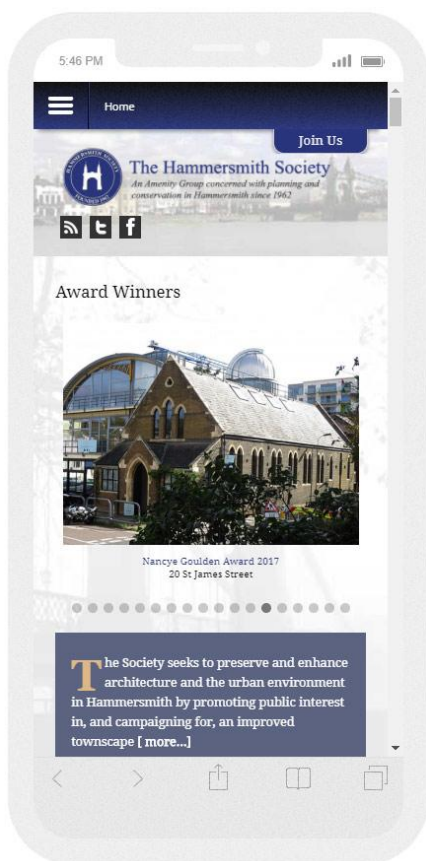
The Transport Select Committee Report into the National Policy Statement (NPS) on Airports was published at the end of March. It backed a third runway at Heathrow, but with some challenging conditions including tougher air pollution targets and a seven-hour night flight ban.

The Government doesn't need to accept the conditions, but the Committee warns that unless it does it could leave the NPS open to a legal challenge.

A Parliamentary vote is still expected in the summer. If Parliament backs a third runway, it will become official Government policy.

With passenger numbers predicted to more than double to 149 million in 2050, the Society's concerns centre on noise from new flight paths and on crowding and congestion on public transport and roads.





This year we have launched a completely new mobile-friendly, and highly pictorial website, containing the society's news, information and the essential content of email updates from the last four years, searchable and cross-referenced by topic "tag".

There's also a live events diary, all newsletters, award details and photos going back to 2006, plus an entirely new history section with high resolution photos and slide shows, including a section about the Hammersmith Study Group in the late 1960s.

The site has reverted to our advert-free domain

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



We are also now active on social media, and have a Twitter account **@HammersmithSoc** and a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hammersmithsociety>

We typically use social media to announce news stories and updates about local events of interest, so please **follow us** or **like us** if you have an account and keep yourselves up to date.

We are Hammersmith's only borough-wide dedicated amenity society, and are keen to recruit new members. Do you know of a neighbour, friend or family member with an interest in the built environment, in architecture, and in the open spaces of our borough? Please direct them to [www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/about/membership](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/about/membership) for details or contact our Membership Secretary, Richard Farthing at [membership@hammersmithsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@hammersmithsociety.org.uk)

Subscriptions remain at £6 for individuals, £8 for a family or couple, and £15 for organisations. Please do check you have paid your subscription for this year - we would prefer payment by standing order if possible. Please refer to the membership page above for how to pay, or contact our Membership Secretary.

*Benham Reeves residential at Fulham Reach has again kindly sponsored the printing costs of the newsletter. This will release Society funds to make small donations to worthwhile projects.*

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