



The Hammersmith Society Newsletter Spring 2019





Overbuilt, Overhyped and Overflown ?



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EDITORIAL

Internet access, transparency and Freedom of Information have transformed public involvement in the planning process: no longer a chance discovery of an emerging development followed by a search through boxes of drawings in the planning office – the full application can be viewed on the Council's website, along with an invitation to submit public comments. But these comments go unanswered – planning strategy *requires* no response.

Development schemes tread a long and murky path between site purchase and planning approval, rarely breaking cover until the die is cast. The Hammersmith Society participates in numerous public consultations, exhibitions and meetings, normally concluding with submission of carefully considered comments and observations. But there the dialogue often ends – the design rarely changes and we are merely listed as a postscript in the catalogue of public comments in the officer's report to the planning committee.

National policy requires that larger developments are assessed by a 'Design Review Panel' normally made up of independent architecture and planning professionals. Local authorities are encouraged to engage in formal pre-application dialogue between developer and planner to enable 'improved outcomes for the community'. Significant design changes may or may not arise from these meetings, but the public are excluded from the process, and when public consultation starts, opportunities for design change have usually been exhausted.

Public comment is an invaluable resource which brings a street perspective to planning, adding an essential dimension to the desk perspective of the planning analysis. Public comments deserve serious consideration, and should receive a proper response; the absence of a response undermines public confidence in the planning process. Completing the dialogue between public and planner would both inform the public of the wider planning context, and inform the planners of the community viewpoint.

Richard Winterton, Chairman

2019 AGM – AN INVITATION



Members and friends are warmly invited to our 57th AGM on 12th June at The Upper Pillar Hall, Olympia W14 8UX, at 6.30 for a 7pm start.

Do bring friends and neighbours along for this opportunity to socialise, discuss our urban environment and to see the winners of the 30th Environment Awards – and Wooden Spoons.

2018-2019 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Prof. Hans Haenlein MBE RIBA (President)	Angela Clarke MBE
Richard Winterton RIBA (Chairman)	Julian Hillman
Melanie Whitlock (Vice Chair)	Annabelle May
Annabel Clarke (Hon. Secretary)	Chris Tranchell
Richard Tollemache (Hon. Treasurer)	Derrick Wright
Richard Farthing CEng MIET (Membership, Newsletter, Website)	Lucy Ivimy



ENVIRONMENT AWARDS: NOMINATIONS



This is the thirtieth year of our Environment Awards, created to raise public awareness of new developments in our townscape – whether buildings, renovation of older buildings, green space, streetscape or shop fronts. The 2018 Award Winners are shown above.

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 **15th May**, the awards will be announced and presented at our AGM on 12th June at Olympia.

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 the website: www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards

If there is a scheme you would like to nominate, please send details to Melanie Whitlock, Vice Chair, at vice.chairman@hammersmithsociety.org.uk or 38 Ashchurch Grove London W12 9BU, providing a brief description of your nomination, why you have chosen it, a photo or two if possible, 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 see and comment on the nominations on the 2019 page as we post them:

www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk/awards/awards-2019

THIRTY YEARS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

Our special thirtieth anniversary cover shows the variety of schemes which have won Awards over the years. Hammersmith was very different in 1989. Not yet the “West London Corridor” of the 1990s, when the frenzied demand for office space began to change the low-rise character of the area. Still less the exemplar of the booming property market which came later feeding a demand for “buy to leave” and high-end apartments. In 1989 cheap infill was the order of the day, and we were determined to show that there could be better buildings in Hammersmith.

The early awards went to modest developments – now somewhat showing their age – such as the first winner, Clarence Court in Cambridge Grove. Standards of design have risen – change was in the air with the construction of the Ark in 1992 – strange, unprecedented, and rather wonderful – the natural winner of our Environment Award that year.

And yet we still seem to be too often a parking place for second rate buildings. Hotels are the latest boom market – it remains to be seen whether they bring with them the higher standards of design and finish that we expect. More of that in *HotelsVille W6* on page 12.

NEWS UPDATE

HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE CLOSURE



Photo: BBC

As we went to press, the Bridge was closed to vehicles without warning, due to serious structural issues. In the 1870's, the original bridge was overloaded by boat race crowds, were they the final straw again? It looks as if the longstanding problems that we've been reporting on for over 4 years, have come to a head. It is clearly time to start the long-planned, in-depth repair programme which has been so long delayed, so it can get back to being a fully working bridge.

It had been undergoing a thorough health check with the oversight of consultant engineers Mott MacDonald, preparatory to repair and restoration. Detailed 3-D surveys had mapped stresses, weaknesses, materials used, (whether iron, steel, wrought-iron – all 3 in various locations), and original construction details. TfL is now in possession of the information it needs to decide on the scale of works relative to the desired goals e.g. whether to do works which would permit double-decker buses, or to aim, more affordably, for use by single-decker buses.

Contrary to what we had been told in the past, the work would have meant complete closure anyway, for as long as 18 months.

TfL's budgetary problems have not helped, the claim being that government budget cuts means TfL can no longer contribute to the planned refurbishment. With the shock unplanned closure, we can but wonder whether TfL's cycling largesse, not least up

to £70M earmarked for the problematic CS9 scheme since 2017, may have come at the cost of helping fund important basic infrastructure maintenance.

For the full repair programme, work was planned to be done with conservation principles in close discussion with Historic England – intervention must avoid destroying historic evidence. However, it needs to be a working bridge so timber decking may be replaced with aluminium or steel. Much of the work would require custom-made components. The proposal is for the Bridge to be re-lit, albeit restricted to the line of the bridge handrail, with up-and-down-lighters on the Bridge towers. Lights on the bridge chains, which we would have loved to see, are too expensive.

We met Historic England in January and put on record our concerns that the silhouette of the bridge towers has been lost against the buildings which have gone up behind them, especially Queens Wharf. HE promised to consider our suggestion in consideration of the December 1893 repainting which referred to "salient parts picked out in light green and recessed parts in dark green" which could bring the bridge into stronger relief. The early paint treatments also referred to picking out the details in "finest welsh gold" – sadly, an unlikely prospect now !

PHONE BOXES – HIGH COURT RULING



Proliferation of telecoms units on our pavements – whether by cheap-looking phone boxes or slabs with an advertising display on one or both sides – have been a bugbear for several years, and serial winners of our Wooden Spoon Award.

A problem for local councils is that utilities' structures count as 'permitted

development', meaning it is hard to stop them, and they steadily increase the clutter on our streets. A new ruling by the High Court means that they are deemed to serve the dual purpose of communications and advertising, and so should not benefit from permitted development rights. We hope Hammersmith planners will take note.

HAMMERSMITH BID & HIGHLINE



We continue to keep in touch with Hammersmith Business Improvement District, or BID. Possibly unfamiliar to local residents, it exists to provide new and expanded services within central Hammersmith, as identified by the local businesses to improve the working and trading environment. Funding comes from a small levy on local businesses and the BID is elected/re-elected by businesses every 5 years. Started in 2006, and now providing funding for two extra police officers in the area and an extra CCTV operator, BID also funds the big screen and deck chairs in Lyric Square in summer -also some of the urban greening in the area such as the pocket park at the foot of Hammersmith Grove and under the Flyover; it provides the Lyric Square Christmas Tree;

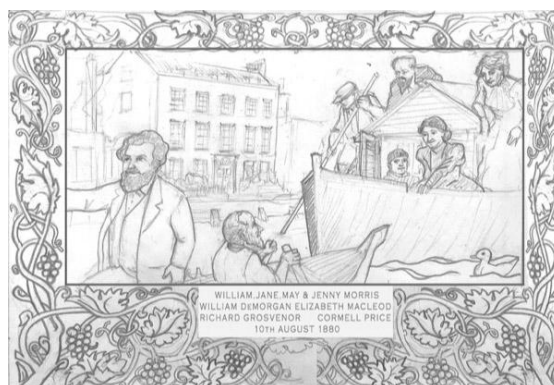
Currently, it is promoting the imaginative and inspiring competition for reimagining Hammersmith's own Highline on the disused railway track behind King's Mall. Please see:

<https://hammersmithbid.co.uk/hammersmith-highline-competition>.

WILLIAM MORRIS: KELMSCOTT VOYAGE FRIEZE

On the 10th of August 1880 William Morris with wife Jane, children Jenny and May and

friends William De Morgan, Cormell Price, Richard C Grosvenor and Elizabeth Macleod, set off in a small houseboat called 'The Ark' and a Biffen row boat called 'The Albert'. They embarked from Kelmscott House on Upper Mall on the way to Kelmscott Manor in Lechlade, Oxfordshire, both residences of the Morris family, assisted by various boatmen in the rowing and towing on the six day journey.



Relief sketches

Kelmscott Memorial Cottage has a relief of William Morris admiring the orchard there, designed by the architect Phillip Webb, carved by George Jack and commissioned by Jane Morris. The project was intended originally as a companion piece that has evolved into two friezes that commemorate the journey and reference The Kelmscott Press and the page design style pioneered by Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and others.

The proposal is for two friezes made from a reinforced epoxy resin with stone filler, similar to that shown right,



mounted on the river wall, either side of the jetty entrance opposite Kelmscott House.

The project has come this far with the ideas and research of our affiliate Hammersmith Community Trust and a long held desire to celebrate Morris' life in the borough and the discovery of documentation of this voyage in the British Museum. It has been encouraged by the Hammersmith Society, and supported by The William Morris Society and the Council. The artist Benedick Tranchell has worked on many collaborative installations, artworks and murals.

The aim is to work with interested parties to develop and finesse the idea to achieve an artwork that entertains and informs visitors of local history, encouraging them to explore the river walkway and Upper Mall, while also bringing a decorative element to the river wall for local residents.

LINFORD CHRISTIE STADIUM



Photo: Friends of Wormwood Scrubs

Our recent members' email update summarised the consultation on the future of Linford Christie stadium with its potential for a huge impact on the green open space of Wormwood Scrubs.

The deadline for consultation responses is **12 June** - more details on the website: www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS

The fitting-out of the theatre space and cinema is nearing completion, and the new premises will be opening in phases, with the restaurant overlooking the river opening first in the summer, followed by the TV studio, performance spaces, a specialist archive store for its own extensive archive materials, event and work spaces, and a cinema.

TOM RYLAND - MEMORIAL BENCH

We are pleased to be sponsoring a memorial bench for Tom, in partnership with the Historic Buildings Group, some of Tom's former colleagues, and members of the Hammersmith Society. The Council has been very helpful in identifying a location overlooking the river, which is particularly appropriate as the river and views of the Bridge are a core part of Hammersmith's identity, and Tom was a great believer in Hammersmith. We are hoping that it will be in place by the summer.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

We recently polled our affiliated organisations for their membership numbers, so can now reasonably claim to represent 2780 people in Hammersmith.

We are currently investigating a Direct Debit option for subscriptions – please send your (positive or negative) feedback to: membership@hammersmithsociety.org.uk

A new online application form on the website makes it easier to join, especially if you use *Chrome* as your browser, as it has often remembered your details, quickly auto-filling most of the form – this has resulted in more members joining this year. We also ask applicants to tell us how they found us, to help our membership efforts.

However if you prefer to use a paper form and/or pay by cheque, please complete and post the form provided on the back page.

CONSULTATION CONUNDRUMS



Photo: Lichfields

We get a sense that consultations are falling into a pattern – not necessarily one we favour. There's now an industry to handle obligatory consultations with professional 'community engagement consultants' leading the PlanSpaining.

The consultation follows the familiar pattern of a polished, often overweight public presentation setup by the consultant, with follow-up meetings, listening and nodding. But as our editorial highlights, having 'ticked the consultation box', the proposal goes to planning with minor, if any, changes, and the overstretched Council is steamrolled into accepting it, unless so outlandish that it considers a planning appeal worth defending, or it's defensible if the Mayor of London 'calls it in'. The appeal costs & time taken are huge – too much for all but the very worst schemes.

Should we be accepting 'second-worst' ?

Perhaps it's our expectations that are wrong?

The Society believes its views should be listened to, representing about 2800 members through its affiliates, with local knowledge and experience, and it expects there to be some choices available.

In reality, that 1000-page pile of documents, graphics, reports and drawings cost a small fortune, and the developer is heavily invested in what is, in their view, the best scheme, having discounted all earlier ones. Planning authorities may be already partly invested too, having had pre-application discussions as required to smooth the way.

Consultations too often end up as sales pitches. Real consultations should have happened months or years before, when options were open. Unsurprisingly, Heathrow has many of these characteristics.

HEATHROW AIRSPACE & OPERATIONS

We reported briefly on the February airspace consultation on the website & email update.

It was not perhaps emphasised enough, though the clue was in the name...

This was not really about the Third Runway per-se, it was primarily about **airspace planning as a precursor** to a Third Runway/expansion. The principal driver here is a technological change in the way aircraft are automatically guided ('Instrument Landing Systems'), many changes proposed are largely **separate** to third runway issues, allowing for a new arrivals patterns called 'Independent Parallel Approaches' (IPA).

Should the changes be approved by the CAA, it means that aircraft will no longer approach solely along the river as has been custom-and-practice for decades, but in varying patterns. Despite the stated objectives (which must) *'meet local air quality requirements'* and (should) *'limit, and where possible reduce, local noise effects from flights...'* the choice for residents appears to distil to: would you like to be disturbed a bit less, all the time, or a bit more for less of the time? i.e. *Would you like your aural punishment now or later?* Not at all was not an option on the consultation. Note also the MUSTs vs. SHOULDs.



Most importantly, those flights would bank over the northern part of Hammersmith, historically largely unaffected by noise (the diagram shows where our members live relative to main proposed flight path)

CONSULTATION DEFICIENCIES

The proposal was documented:

- In 26 long and wordy documents with hundreds of mesmerising graphics. For the most part these represent raw data, with a very low information content. *Information is very different to Data !*
- As a consultation, but in reality pitching one postcode against another.
- With no **real** options, which is why our advice for responses was essentially to answer 'none of the above'.

In all maps presented for our area, the number of overflights are '0 to 47' or '0 to 50' per hour, so it could be any number - we have no idea.

Options such as:

1. *Schedule flights from 5.30am (runway time 5.15am) using one runway.*
2. *Schedule flights from 5.45am (runway time 5.30am) using two runways.*

... highlight the impenetrability of the consultation. Where's the 'no noise before 8am' option, a standard condition long attached to planning permissions ? (and that's only for temporary building work)

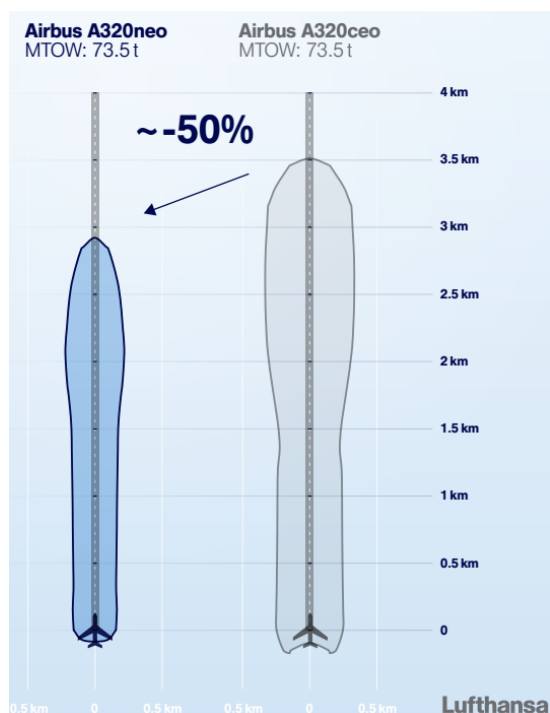
At the exhibition, there were 'auralisation' booths, allowing you to hear typical noise at differing heights. But there was no demonstration of noise at 2000-3000ft – under the purple contour shown, where members mostly live – the exhibitors were made aware of these shortcomings. What is 2700ft? The height of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, or 2½ London Shards.

More importantly, they demonstrated noise of an aircraft approaching from a long distance away, slowly building in a straight line. No attempt was made to demonstrate the considerably more troubling noise of an aircraft banking at 2700ft, or indeed planes taking off which are much noisier.

To add insult to injury, the aircraft chosen were the Boeing 787, Airbus A320neo and A380 - not the noisiest (typical older Boeing 747, 757, 767 etc., and older Airbuses with CEO "current engine option").

The A320neo as you might guess from the name, stands for 'New Engine Option', and is rare so far. However the following graphic shows why it was chosen...

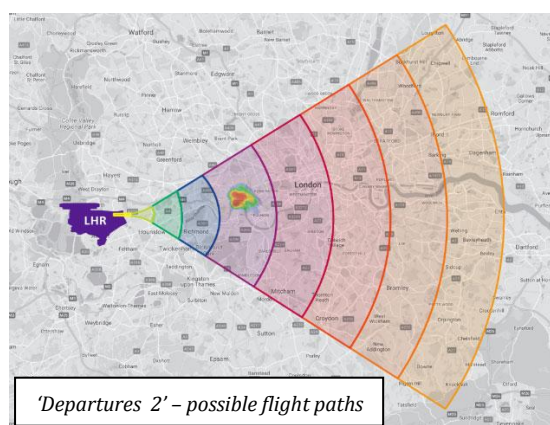
"Would you like your aural punishment now or later?"



CAA figures also show that the 787 is 6dB quieter than a 767 overflying Barnes, and 8dB quieter than an Airbus A330.

What does 6dB sound like ? it's **double** the Sound Pressure Level. When proponents crow about 1.1dB noise reductions due to this or that tweak, remember that that's a tiny amount: you'd be hard pressed to hear it, as it's a logarithmic scale.

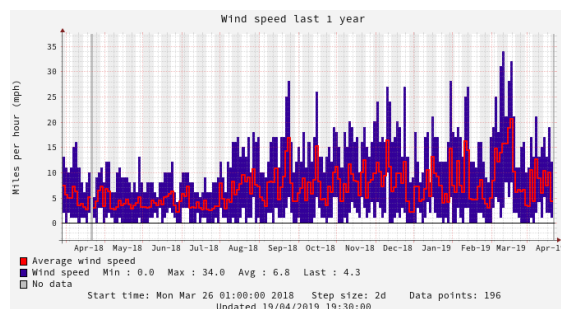
LATE NIGHTS AND EARLY MORNINGS



A further proposed option is a possible *managed preference* for easterly/westerly, so more flights could take off in an Easterly direction, towards Hammersmith, as shown above, particularly at night as there are fewer takeoffs than landings, though each

takeoff is noisier. This attempts to reduce the **average** noise impact.

The current ratio is 70% westerly operations, 30% easterly, largely because of the prevailing wind, takeoffs 'with the wind' can only be done when it's below 5 knots. Wind speed is seasonal - it's often summer when the wind drops this low for any significant time. But in summer, windows are open, residents are more sensitive.



April 2018 – April 2019 : wind speeds (BBC/Met office data)

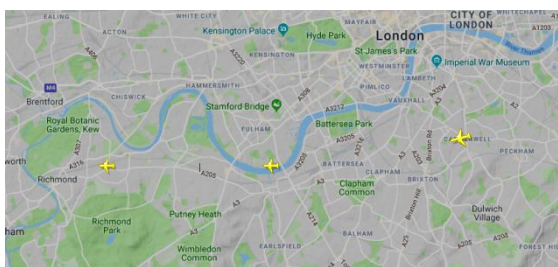
The proposal represents defective thinking – using time averages in an attempt to make a threadbare case – you only need one noisy plane to wake you up, and you might not sleep for the rest of the night !

Some ideas to ponder... News programmes have moved later, to keep up with modern lives, especially in cities. ITV once even tried moving its main news to 11pm. According to the 2013 *Great British Bedtime Report*, 24% of Londoners stay up after midnight, and they also have a later than average UK bedtimes. Yet Heathrow wants ever earlier landings and takeoffs, clinging to 1960's factory work patterns. It already grants itself a carte-blanche called *TEAM* in the regulatory vacuum between 6-7am, using both runways, including on Sunday mornings.

Why? Because people either want to arrive early to work for a day or travel on, or later to eat, get to a hotel etc. They obviously don't want to land after about 9pm in the dark, and go to bed without a decent meal. Hang around the airport after about 10pm as the News starts, and you could be quite lonely. 'Last flights' are often only just after 11 with the odd delayed straggler later.

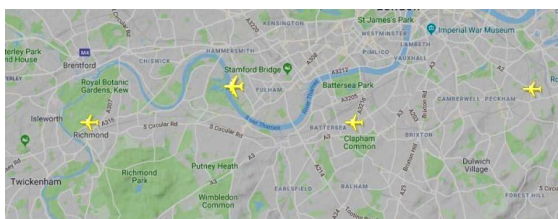
Heathrow could:

- Offer better, cost-effective hotels, providing real leisure experiences with normal service 24hrs (like 24hr news: not room service after 10.30pm), trains could run 24hrs; operations could shift an hour or so later, and better match Londoner's lifestyles. It might sound expensive, but is very little compared to the costs of expansion, and the social and economic costs to Londoners.
- Better use daytime. There are no landing fee incentives to use daytime vs. early morning or evenings, the only disincentive is 'night time' (11pm-6am), where costs are 3 times or more. This would reduce rush-hour overcrowding of public transport too.



Westerly landings, 3.30pm on a Tuesday afternoon (2nd April)

Flightradar24.com records **no landings at all** after 10pm on the Tuesday shown above



6.30am on a **Sunday** morning (TEAM) - Flightradar24.com

CYCLING – CS9

When it comes to problematic consultations, TfL has form.

This year, curtailment of the 27 bus with only 9% support is a prime local example, but CS9, or CP9 as it is to become known, is the hottest topic. Publicly it suffered badly from the 'Superhighway' name, and in line with our thesis, from TfL being too heavily invested in very detailed plans with no visible options – before consultation.

A fast, high-priority route is needed for cyclists travelling through the borough, while a slower, shared priority route is more appropriate for cyclists on local journeys, including those using King Street.



Problematic area at the top of King St

This Society and many others pressured TFL and the Council to create the faster route on the underused A4 pathways, and to avoid sacrificing so much of the narrow stretch of King Street to the detriment of 90% + of the population. They have now agreed to a 'Pathway' along Hammersmith Road and King Street, aimed mainly at people who are currently deterred from cycling by conflicts with heavy traffic.

The Council's Transport Planning Dept. will take the lead in designing the schemes, *'in such a way that they won't increase congestion on Hammersmith Broadway, Hammersmith Road or King Street'*. They further believe they can *'design the pathway to minimise conflicts with pedestrians, recognising that King Street is a major shopping centre and a destination, not just a place that people pass through.'*

We are somewhat sceptical about their assertions that:

- *'Even if a small proportion of journeys transfer from car to bicycle, this will help to reduce congestion and improve air quality. There are currently some 800 cyclists on Hammersmith Road and 400 on King Street in the morning peak (7.30-9.30 a.m.), and we expect these*

numbers to increase significantly with the installation of protected facilities’.

And

- That a cycle route can be built along both Hammersmith Road and King Street without reducing the width of the road for vehicles, so causing increased congestion affecting both bus journey times and increasing pollution from stationary and stop/start vehicles.

There is evidence from other Cycle Routes that they increase cycling numbers only marginally, and at a high cost per extra cyclist, estimated to be about £62,000 each, and that the majority of their use is during bus lane operation times, already providing some respite and priority in many areas.

We welcome the concept that faster cyclists will be encouraged to use a route along the A4 as the Society has long been advocating.

OLYMPIA



The planning application for the extensive changes proposed to the Olympia exhibition hall campus was approved on 30 January 2019. Three public exhibitions and a number of amenity group discussions had taken place during the 12 months prior to the approval, and the Hammersmith Society was closely involved, submitting letters of comment as the scheme evolved. We welcomed the bold scope and the provision of new public facilities, but were concerned

at a number of features which we considered incongruous and detrimental to the historic context - in particular the two-storey roof extension over the corner building currently occupied by Pizza Express, and the giant amorphous theatre block proposed on the southwest corner of the site. Our design dialogue with LBHF planning and the developer was cut short by an unexpectedly early submission to the planning committee – evidently causing difficulty to the design team, where the theatre design was incomplete, the external finish to the block undecided. Whilst consent has been granted, certain aspects of the design are now being discussed with the architects and planners, but the overall scope and scale of the proposals is approved and will not change.

This scheme brings many benefits, and offers an unusually imaginative vision which could transform the Olympia campus: the scale and complexity of the proposals were well served by the initial consultation process, but in line with our thesis, the dialogue was unfinished and the scheme incomplete when the application was determined.

HOTELSVILLE W6

There are currently development plans for new hotels on no fewer than five sites in central Hammersmith: in addition to the Landmark hotel development south of King Street, new hotel buildings are proposed on the former West London Magistrates Court site beside the Ark, at 2 Queen Caroline Street beside the Irish Centre, and behind 26-28 Hammersmith Grove; and the hotel conversion and extension at Brook House on Shepherd's Bush Road, on which we commented last time, has been approved.

It is ironic that hotels barely featured in the recent series of lengthy discussions concerning the emerging Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Hammersmith Town Centre.



Left-Right: West London Magistrate's redevelopment , Landmark Hotel (revised), 2 Queen Caroline St. (top), Brook House (bottom)

Landmark Hotel: We understand that work is due to start shortly on the development designed by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour Partnership, approved in July 2017 after an extensive public consultation process, which led to a significant reduction in the height of the building. Recent amendments to accommodate a change in hotel operator have had little effect on the overall massing of the building, but have included a significant change in the cladding aesthetic, departing from the expressed structural bracing familiar in RSHP buildings.

West London Magistrate's Court site: An application has been submitted for a twin hotel development providing over 850 bedrooms. While the application records significant design development through a number of pre-application submissions, public consultation has been limited. The emerging planning SPG identifies the site as suitable for tall building development, calling for appropriate deference to the Ark on the west boundary. This application design is a twin slab block, ranging from 6 to 25 storeys high, with rectilinear reconstituted stone cladding creating a joyless northern elevation and seriously damaging views of the Ark from the east. A Hammersmith Society letter of 20th March comments on the application scheme.

2 Queen Caroline Street: a planning application is in preparation for a 10 storey

building on this Broadway site adjacent to the Irish Centre. The design proposals have progressed through the Design Review Panel and a number of pre-application submissions, and were recently presented to the Hammersmith Society for comment. This is a prominent site with its Broadway frontage, and with the Landmark hotel it would form the north side of a new town square planned in the emerging SPG: this important setting requires further acknowledgment in the current design proposals. Hammersmith Society detailed comments will be issued shortly.

26-28 Hammersmith Grove is the stone-clad office building at the south end of Hammersmith Grove, on the east side adjacent to the recent developments at 10 Hammersmith Grove. The building includes an existing north extension alongside the railway line behind, and part of this is to be redeveloped as an apartment hotel of around 100 bedrooms. Outline ideas were recently displayed at a consultation exhibition, indicating there would be little visual presence on the street frontage. Further details are awaited.

We contrast the scale of many of these developments with the Town Hall where community involvement has resulted in a much improved and lowered scheme through initial opposition by *Save Our Skyline*, this Society and others, followed by meaningful public engagement.

OVERBUILT, OVERHYPED, AND OVERFLOWN?

It's been said many times, London needs more housing, but if it's high rise, expensive (unaffordable relative to incomes) and has poor transport or amenity values, then this should be challenged, as the London Forum did recently in *'Tall Buildings Everywhere?'* They, as we, note that high rise is unlikely to solve the density problem.

We have to question the merit of cramming ever more people into an overbuilt environment, helping crystallise generational inequality by denying them and their children the amenities and kind of lifestyles that largely we and the developers already have. This, while likely overloading the travel, health and other local services, that should have been planned, funded, and probably built before the population arrived, especially given infrastructure build timescales.



London model (urban75 blog)

The impressive physical London model at the Building Centre in Store St. shows us the relative development scales, but focuses on East London, unfortunately not reaching West to Hammersmith. Nevertheless, it clearly shows the disproportionate height and density of the new areas around Canary Wharf, in contrast to say Greenwich, which is perhaps more akin to much of older Hammersmith in terms of height and density.

The application for *Centre House* in Wood Lane, shown on the inside cover, illustrates. Compare the 2013 *Vertex* model of TV centre below (it was the largest building), and the models of Centre house opposite.



Many of the developments being proposed and built around the White City area, and the western corridor to OPDC and adjoining North Acton area mirror these hyped-up Canary Wharf scales, as we've reported in recent newsletters: *'White City Blues'* (Spring 2018), *'OPDC'* (Autumn 2018).

If the London model were extended, North Acton, OPDC and White City would provide

an almost continuous string of high-rise developments from NW10 to W12.



Centre House – planning approved 2nd April



'Potential development'

We see even green areas initially presented to us just a year ago in front of the already tall (100m, 32 storey) *Centre House*, possibly built over with yet more flats in the 'Potential development' shown in the planning application, also replacing White City Station itself. With the other White City high-rises modelled, this makes Westfield and TV Centre look small, yet these were much the largest buildings a decade ago.

Has **peak flats** been reached? We wonder whether a return to human-scale development can be achieved, as proposed by Createstreets. Developers build high-rise because they make best use of land and produce highest returns, plus tick the Mayor's density box, but do not necessarily provide places that a representative cross-section of society wants to live in, as the London Forum highlighted.

We contrast this with historically dense yet liveable 6-8 storey buildings in Paris (260/ha) and Barcelona Eixample (360/ha); even our own spacious Edwardian flats achieve 200-450/ha meeting or exceeding the London Plan's aims for urban areas such as Hammersmith. Not coincidentally, these are of similar scale to last year's award winner, Queen's Wharf, recently approved plans for the Town Hall, and recent sustainably sized developments such as the Royal College of Music's Prince Consort Village on Goldhawk Road, achieving a high 570/ha without high-rise.

Weren't we here in the 1960's ?
We need to be building *smarter* not *higher*.



A logical, but entirely dystopian conclusion could be a mini Hong Kong –

endless high-rise flats, with passing aircraft passengers waving to the residents.

REFLECTIONS ON WHITE CITY

What Makes A Community ?

A walk around the area prompts the question. At its North end, streams of students pour in to Imperial's campus under the controversial ziggurat tower and specialist science buildings, plus post-graduate accommodation.



Imperial's White City Campus Tower– 121m tall

Walk under Westway and cross the road to White City Place, the cluster of offices on the east of Wood Lane, where some 6,000 workers come in and out every day into slickly-presented high-end offices with boutique shops and cafés at ground level. To one side is the post-graduate premises of the Royal College of Art. In front is a very new arrival, the temporary Troubadour White City Theatre, due to open this summer, which will have two performance spaces of 800 and 1,200 seats.



Troubadour temporary theatre



Looking down Wood Lane one sees the new apartment block next to John Lewis ('White City Living' - eventually 1,600 apartments) nearing completion – the first phase is all sold and due for occupancy this Autumn.

White City and Wood Lane stations provide transport, Westfield provides for many shopping needs. This is truly a new area – no-one living here will need to go to 'old' Shepherd's Bush or Hammersmith.

But how will it be to live in? The sector will have a high proportion of students, single people and people flying in and out from Heathrow (though the presence of affordable homes will contribute to a broader cross-section of age and activity). Will people get to know neighbours, other than the flat next door? Will there be residents' groups? Will there be a familiar cat on the corner?

This will be an experiment in a new kind of urban living in our part of London - not necessarily better or worse than what we have now in Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush, but separate from the older areas, and surely very different.

OPDC AND THE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Previous newsletters have tracked Old Oak's slow journey to realisation. The OPDC Local Plan Examination took place in April.

We have logged our objections to height and density in the past, and we are indebted to Henry Peterson of the Old Oak Neighbourhood Forum, spokespeople for the Just Space community planning network, and the Grand Union Alliance for speaking at the Examination.

The following issues, each with a significant number of sub-issues, were raised by them:

- Whether the Plan's definition of Strategic Policies and its role envisaged

for Neighbourhood Plans is consistent with National Policy;

- whether the Plan has been positively prepared and subject to an adequate Sustainability Appraisal;
- whether the Plan would be effective in light of doubts about the viability of the development and funding of infrastructure;
- whether the nexus between density/intensity, height and housing targets is justified in the light of uncertain delivery of transport infrastructure;
- whether the locations identified as suitable for tall buildings are justified;
- whether the proposals for Willesden Junction would be effective;
- whether the effects on Wormwood Scrubs of the policies and proposals in the Plan would be justified and consistent with national policy;
- whether the plan's policies towards the protection of pubs is justified;
- whether the Plan's policies towards industrial intensification would be justified;
- whether the inclusion or exclusion of land from SIL (Strategic Industrial Land) is justified.

Community groups have challenged the proposed densities for the site which give rise to the figure of 24,000 new homes - which cannot be achieved without tall buildings on a scale and concentration which has not been seen in West London. Two Overground stations which promised additional transport links have dropped out of TfL's budget.

However, OPDC has now won a £250m bid from the Housing Infrastructure Fund for construction of the main through road and services. The road goes through land owned by Car Giant which, having had its own scheme for development blocked by the OPDC, now states it does not wish to move - so will have to be subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order, though Car

Giant maintain that a small change to the route would keep it off Car Giant land.

A few sites on the periphery are going up: Oaklands on Old Oak Common Lane to the west (up to 26 storeys) and at the top of Scrubs Lane (20 storeys). But there is no movement on other permitted schemes on Scrubs Lane, and the suggestion is that owners have tried to sell on but failed so far. They are unattractive sites compared to the new White City residential areas which have better transport and are building out at pace.

On the west of the OPDC area is the cluster of tightly-packed very tall buildings at North Acton, some of them branded with university names, with a 42-story block going up at this moment.

It all reinforces the view that while some of the ideas behind the project are good, the implementation, as it comes on stream, is very poor. Where is the design champion for Old Oak?

HS2



Old Oak Station as proposed (photo: HS2)

Meanwhile, the new station designs for HS2, from architects WilkinsonEyre, have been unveiled, based on a classic railway arch design. Earlier plans to over-build the station (Boris's 'mini-Manhattan') have been abandoned, probably on cost grounds, but a cluster of 20 storey-plus buildings is planned for the area in front of it, to the dismay of residents of Wells House Road opposite. The station is forecast to be used by 250,000 passengers every day, second only in footfall to Waterloo.

EARLS COURT



*Earls Court then and now. Progress – of sorts – at £100M
Photos :Independent, Capco*

Despite the demolition of the landmark Earls' Court exhibition Hall in 2017, this huge and prospectively overbuilt project covering 77 acres of Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham has been stalled for some time.

The proposal to build 7,500 homes on TfL sidings, the Earls Court site and – highly controversially – the site of Gibbs Green and West Kensington estates in LBHF, was hit by the slowdown in the high-end housing market. Developers CapCo have been in talks with far-east investors to sell its interest in the site.

Meanwhile, LBHF Council is keen to buy back the two housing estates which CapCo proposed to demolish. Last year, CapCo wanted to raise the density on the site from 7,500 homes to 10,000 but that has been ruled out after objections by RBKC. A new masterplan for the site is in prospect, but the impact on inner west London road and Underground services of a scheme on this scale would be enormous.

THE HIGH STREET



We all know the current high street situation - Hammersmith is no exception - with several empty units in Kings Mall and 20 empty along King Street. Even Chiswick is suffering. This is partly cyclical, and for reasons related to '2016 and all that' which we won't discuss here, but probably more for long-term reasons, significantly, online shopping. There seems little likelihood of this preference reverting, with even some estate agents, often a mainstay of the High Street, heading to industrial estates and/or online (Orchards a recent example), and perhaps optimistically, car retailers (Tesla). Here are some smaller-scale thoughts to complement the larger scale plans of the Hammersmith BID.

Much has been made about easier change of use to avoid empty shop fronts, and it has already become easier to change from office to residential use through permitted development. But it is not a panacea. The Government published a consultation on 'Planning Reform: Supporting the High Street and Increasing the Delivery of New Homes' at the end of last year. The aim is laudable but the London Forum of Amenity Societies points out that some of the proposals imply a free-for-all, which could actually undermine the high street and reduce its viability further. Enabling change of many high street uses (betting shops, fast food premises, financial and professional services, laundrettes) to become offices means reduction in many of the things which bring life and footfall to an area and could lead to lifeless frontages.

Many reports in essence boil down to *placemaking* – making the high street a mixed use 'destination' rather than a shopping monoculture – with parking (which seems a little retro, in London

context at least) and fewer chains; or failing that, conversion to other uses, aided by fewer planning controls.

Locally, we've also seen some retail try to move just off the high street to lower rents, yet close enough to catch the footfall from it and public transport – our example is a proposed Sainsbury Local under the railway arches at Ravenscourt Park, which we, supporting local residents, have objected to.

These are probably matters best left to local determination not central prescription. The reports are planning-heavy, aimed at a medium-long term (10-20 years), and don't fully address the best high street assets: transport, access, and the related footfall. We are to be convinced that further marginalisation of retail by applying the silver-bullet du-jour of diversity and mixed uses will help, possibly quite the opposite.

What is needed is strong local leadership and a local town centre strategy. A free-for-all under the central planning system will be counterproductive.

Can we do something more quickly, and less disruptive? **H&F already has some working examples.**

High Street businesses talk of unrealistically high rents (a modest retail unit could approach £50k p.a. in rent/rates in King St), lack of footfall, poor parking facilities, online competition, even bad weather and more. Hammersmith has no shortage of footfall. What it does have is a shortage of choice – as *Westfield* opened a decade ago, the higher-end shops migrated there (think Habitat in Kings Mall), and discounters moved in to replace them.

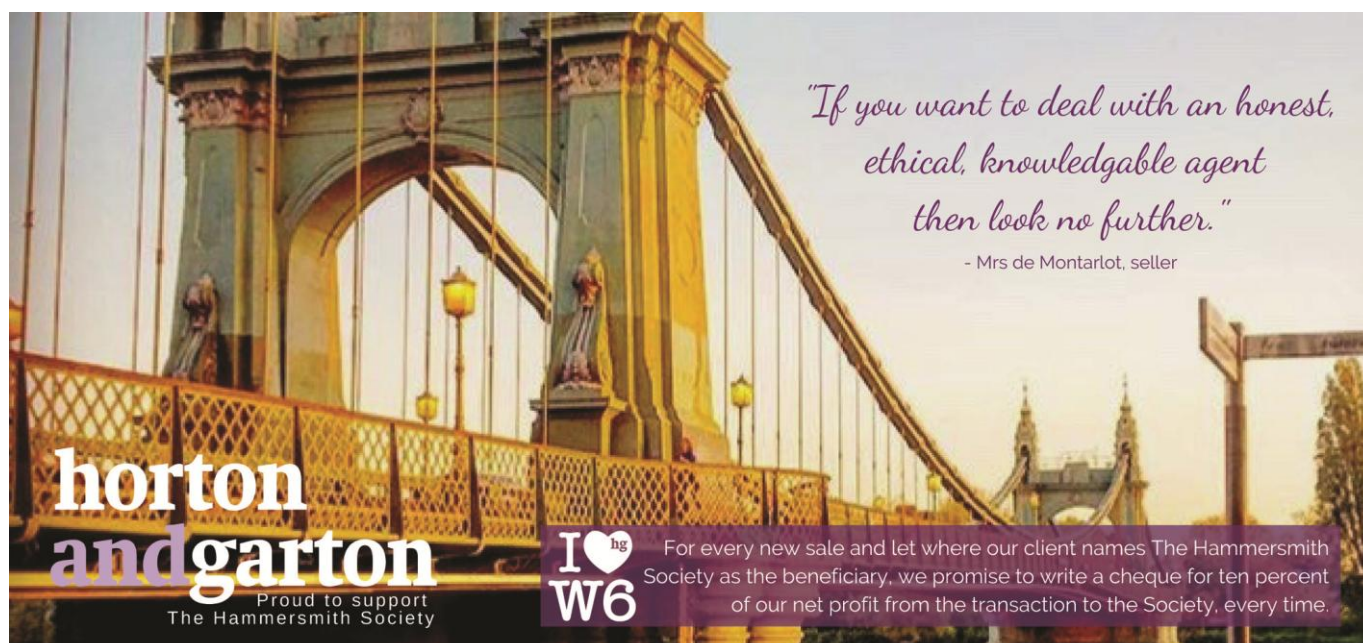
Can I buy a loaf of a certain (nationally available) bread between Kensington and Sainsbury's main Chiswick branch? No. Nor quality walking boot laces. A re-usable ice pack? No, not even in Boots. Common items one used to be able to buy in real high street shops - with choices. Now it's a long walk, bus or car journey, or online – which is easiest? Economists would tell you it's lack of demand. We contend that *me-too* shops selling essentially the same bread in different wrappers provide little actual choice, just cut each other's throats, with a stock chosen more for the *potential* (clearly not *actual*) margin, than demand. This approach clearly isn't working, and is probably actually discouraging footfall.

Ideas... Firstly, locally there are shops on our high streets that bolster their variable footfall, the limits of shop stockholding space, and weather by having a significant Internet presence: Efficient Stationers, Grow Magic, and Richer Sounds are local, real, longstanding examples, doubtless there are many others.

Secondly clustering, with complementary non-identical offers, is a solution long-favoured by some types of high street businesses because it's successful; notably estate agents, as shown above, restaurants, theatres, antique shops and others. We even observe some clustering inside Westfield. A peculiarly local example is a longstanding large cluster of fabric shops between Shepherd's Bush Green and Goldhawk Road Tube, including the market. There's the beginnings of an artistic cluster at the western end of King Street (we understand encouraged by the Council), with recent additions of Paintbox Studios, Chelsea Fine Arts and soon, a photographer's gallery.

We wonder how relatively cost-effective it would be for the Council's *nudge* to become an overt, active, well-funded public policy following a simple plan to help businesses move and cluster so as to provide greater choice and real *shopping* destinations, and to develop supporting online presences.

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