



# The Hammersmith Society

## Minutes of the Awards Evening and 60th Annual General Meeting

On June 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 245 Hammersmith Road, London W6 8PW

Present: The Committee, Members, Andrew Slaughter MP, representatives of local societies, and Award Winners.

### Introduction

*Richard Farthing*, Chairman, welcomed members, affiliates and guests to the AGM, mentioned the absence of the President, and introduced the members of the Committee. *Annabelle May* apologised for absence.

### AGM

The Minutes of the 59th AGM held at Latymer Upper School, King Street, W6 9LR on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 were accepted. Proposer *Angela Clarke*, seconded *Matt Hedges*

Treasurer Matt Hedges tabled accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 which showed a surplus for the period of £9311.40. The accounts were agreed. Proposer *Robert Iggulden*, seconded *David Morton*.

The Committee was duly proposed, seconded, and elected unopposed, as follows: Proposed by *Roger Warry*, seconded by *Rosemary Mortimer*

President *Professor Hans Haenlein MBE*

Chairman *Richard Farthing*

Vice Chairman *Richard Winterton*

Membership Secretary *Richard Farthing*

Treasurer *Nina Jindal*

Committee Members *Angela Clarke, Robert Iggulden, Annabelle May, Michael Rivers, Chris Tranchell*

*Derrick Wright* and *Angela Clarke* are standing down from the Committee. The Society thanks them for the time and support they have given to the Hammersmith Society over many years. *Annabel Clarke* remains on the Committee as representative for the Historic Buildings Group. The Chairman welcomed expressions of interest for the position of Honorary Secretary.

### Guest Speaker

Andrew Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith since 2010 and now Shadow Solicitor General delivered entertaining observations on his relationship and interactions with the Hammersmith Society; where we have common purpose, where we complement, and occasionally, where we diverge.

Noting that he had existed in the Borough slightly longer than has the Hammersmith Society, Andy became active in local politics forty years ago and became an elected representative in 1986, first in Gibbs Green Ward which became North End Ward in 2002, on to Shepherds Bush in 2005 and then for the last 13 years, in Hammersmith.



## Boundary changes

Outlining the nature of the boundary changes associated with the newly confirmed new Hammersmith and Chiswick seat, Andy welcomed the prospect of representing this lovely riparian area, with its historic buildings and open spaces. He confirmed that the link with Hammersmith was welcomed in Chiswick and envisaged that the Civic Campus once open would also be a focus for Chiswick High Road, highlighting Westfield as an example of the commerce between the two areas.

However the changes will bring some less good aspects: whilst representing all of the Hammersmith Society's field currently, significant parts of Fulham, besides Avonmore, will now move to the Chelsea and Fulham seat and the areas to the West and East of White City are to move to the new Acton seat.

In summary: Hammersmith and Fulham will have three seats for the first time, with each seat spanning more than one borough, which does not bode well for clear administration, Andy felt.

## Planning

Many MPs will not approach planning as it is felt to be a local authority matter or a quasi-judicial matter. However, policy and decisions about place are axiomatic in determining the quality of life and of citizens and the character of neighbourhoods - it frames the place you live in, what type of housing if available, the opportunity for economic development, jobs, transportation and recreation. Hence it is not possible to represent an area without taking on its architecture and topography. But not having the same expertise as the Hammersmith Society nor the capacity to look at every scheme, Andy's focus is major regeneration projects that will change the area fundamentally over a period of a generation and those which are more political with small p, such as the Shepherds Bush Market, the management of Shepherds Bush Housing, one of the main social landlords, and discussing the future of HS2 and its effect on the OPDC.

## Development Areas

Noting three opportunity areas in a small borough of which one has morphed into a Development Corporation, which is only the third in post-war London, Andy noted that, for many reasons, the opportunities for that Development Corporation have not materialised, or left something to be desired.

Personally, Andy does not disapprove of tall buildings per se, including some in Hammersmith and Fulham. He has got used to "The Poor Man's Shard", the 35-storey block on the Imperial site on Wood Lane and actually likes both the Empress State Building and Linacre Court, the brutalist block opposite Lambda on the Talgarth Road. These are matters of taste but what is in common is that these buildings function as they should.

However, North Acton fails on every count: 55-story blocks, with a single staircase, which represents a clear fire safety issue. This is a bleak setting with very little useful accommodation - a local resident recently confirmed 56 flats on AirBnB, at prices of up to £350 per night. The key question is whether developments like this are setting a template for what is happening in the rest of West London.

Showing illustrations of the land owned by the Earls Court Development Company, Andy highlighted plans that include numerous tall buildings of up to 38 storeys, apparently needed to maximise open space and provide sufficient affordable housing. This was also the excuse at White City, where the damage was done at an early stage with consents given to Westfield and Berkeley Homes for *White City Living*, which had almost no affordable housing originally. The price for increasing this component was denser development.

Whatever view you may have about what is built or what is proposed in White City, what is true is that the demand for these developments is still being fed by the overseas market: there is neither originality or supporting infrastructure in what often remain ghost towns.

Although one might assert that all these were unused brownfield sites, this is not the case: the Earls Court Exhibition Centres were not only well used, they were quite iconic and supported a hospitality economy and hotel accommodation. In Old Oak, Car Giant pulled out of the regeneration scheme because it was a thriving business.



## Perspective on the Hammersmith Society, comments on particular schemes

Battles about preserving buildings or areas or being sceptical about plans for refurbishments often lead to accusations of the Hammersmith Society being NIMBY's but many of the campaigns we have fought, such as the Charing Cross Hospital, the West Ken and Gibbs Green Estates, and how to keep Hammersmith Park in public ownership have been inherently positive, not negative acts.

On **Shepherds Bush Market (SBM)**: this type of development, which requires trust in the integrity of the developer as well the planning process, is more difficult to deal with and get consensus on when the scheme is obviously bad, as it was previously. Andy's view is that the new plans are an improvement on the previous proposal and will safeguard the market by preserving, refurbishing and renewing it. However, it is not clear whether the character of the market will change in a direction we do not like and whether it will be affordable for some of the existing traders to stay on.

On **Olympia**: Those living nearby are concerned about noise, overdevelopment and anti-social behaviour but like SBM, the existing offer is not sustainable.

Andy concluded that "All politics is local". A student of the English Civil War, he offered that one of the most fundamental episodes in English history, the beheading of King Charles, was simply a local planning dispute involving two landowners and Pembroke Castle, originally built by the Normans.

Two local landowners in a dispute over property ownership took it through the courts, with no successful resolution. They used the First Civil war as a means to renew their dispute, by uncivil means: one declared for King Charles and the other for Parliament. At the end of the First Civil War, the one who declared for the losing side (the King) now sided with the Parliamentarians, the other too changed sides and declared for Charles II. The dispute began afresh. Oliver Cromwell besieged, took and knocked down the Pembroke Castle, took the loser to London, where he was tried for treason and shot in Covent Garden. Using the excuse of the Pembroke Rebellion and Charles the First having renewed the civil War, Cromwell had the King executed.

## Questions

Richard Farthing asked: "**Thames Water**. How do we get out of this?" (there were significant interruptions to water supply at the time of the AGM, with Thames Water on the brink of financial failure) to which Andy responded that it was not just an operational failure; there has been a failure over many years to invest in infrastructure, and the ownership model and the repeated changing of hands, each worse than the last, have shown that Thames Water should not have been privatised. A new ownership model is needed. We cannot let the existing shareholders and existing management off the hook by nationalising and taking the whole debt onto our shoulders. The regulators have let us down and not just in water. All needs to be addressed. This is not new and it's long been known but this is a long and complex task.

Chris Tranchel asked: "**Shepherds Bush Market**. Ownership of the land?" The previous sales of the land by TFL and subsequent changes of ownership were complicated. Disputes went up to the Lord Chief Justice rules who ruled the previous proposals for compulsory purchase were unlawful. It's been a long battle over 15 years and shopkeepers and the market traders have played an active part, which is laudable when trying to run businesses that are sometimes marginally successful. It is important to renew the market and make it a more attractive place for people to go but also to support existing traders. He is persuaded that Yoo Capital is a good developer and committed to the Market but not yet persuaded that there will enough care taken of existing traders who want to stay.

## Hammersmith Society Awards, introduced by Richard Winterton

Many schemes are in progress but few have been completed in this year. All nominated schemes were discussed (The full Award narrative [is here](#)).

The winners were presented with their awards by Andrew Slaughter.

**Jane Mercer Award** for Community Engagement - **Askew in Bloom**, represented by Olena O'Leary and Bryan Furlong



**Tom Ryland Conservation Award** - No nominations this year

**The Environment Award** to the **Hoxton Hotel**, W12 (Architects EPR, Project Manager for the client )

**Wooden Spoons** were awarded to those schemes which had got it wrong:

Hammersmith Council for permitting the demolition of Ada Lewis House. No alternative schemes were considered to retain the original structure and avoid release of the embodied energy. Demolition on this scale should only proceed after it has been properly demonstrated that alternative, less wasteful approaches have been fully explored.

Hammersmith Council for Clean Air Neighbourhoods, a policy and implementation on misinterpretation of air quality science. It is clear that there are traffic and cycle issues to be solved but not in the name of air quality.

## **2022-2023: Chairman's report**

Richard Farthing presented a summary and highlights of the Chairman's Report. The full text of the report is posted on the Society's website on the [2023 AGM page](#).

Theme: Big projects, bigger buildings.

**Royal Masonic Hospital.** We have seen plans come forward highlighting extensions in height that are concerning.

**27 King Street.** Several meetings with the developer who sought to present the heights as acceptable. The project has gone quiet but will return as it is part of M&S' corporate strategy. It seems that the viability of the proposed supermarket can only be assured by dint of the residential development.

**Olympia** A lot out of the ground already and this will be an exciting project on fruition, given the moribund facility that existed previously behind an attractive Art Deco facade.

**Shepherds Bush Market.** A petition is running to save the market. We are engaging with the concerns.

**Earls Court.** The Mayor of London has consented the Tesco site, at 29 storeys. A great deal more development on the Hammersmith side; the density of the current scheme greater than what was consented under CapCo. Richard Winterton has joined the Design Review Panel.

**Community Schools Programme.** We continue our drive to make the council see there are better ways to fund and do.

**The Bridge.** For members, this is our number 1 issue. The key is the funding.

**Transport and Air Quality.** We are not convinced that the Council's policy and implementation is the best way to serve the public. In our view, we are not designing appropriate infrastructure (CS9).

**Publications:** In light of an 83% member preference for the newsletter in digital form, the Society will not continue to produce a paper newsletter.

Membership: Standing orders vs. Direct Debit. DD was mentioned as the preferred option for new members to be implemented when we get online banking sorted out.

**Affiliate Engagement:** Robert Iggulden reported. Hub and spoke original organisation. The aim is to broaden the scope to address some of the original objects of the Society.

## **Questions from the floor**

Annabelle Clarke thanked the Chairman for the volume of his contributions.

The Chairman presented Andrew Slaughter with a wire crimp, a single instance of which, poorly manufactured, was identified as the cause the Grenfell Fire.