

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Hundreds of new homes approved for Dovercourt Estate



The planning committee in January approved a scheme to build hundreds of new homes on the Dovercourt estate, which currently comprises just over 400 flats.

Phase 1 is expected to involve demolition of the garages (pictured) and their replacement by four storey dwellings on the west (odd numbered) side of Wall Street. One low rise block of 18 flats will then be demolished to make way for a larger terrace behind the point at which this photograph was taken. Other garages, behind Threadgold House (top left hand of picture) and further south behind Ockendon Road, will also make way for housing.

The Dovercourt estate was one of the last to be designed by the London County Council and began life as a GLC estate. It transferred to Islington when the GLC lost its responsibility for housing. It comprised two tower blocks, three four storey blocks and a low rise block intended for older people. Demographic changes meant that demand for the latter waned and the minimum age was disappled. This is the block to be demolished and replaced, with all existing residents guaranteed a place on the estate.

Demand for the garages has also waned and many are used for storage. The photograph pre-dates Controlled Parking which ended the anti-social practice of pavement parking and dampened demand. However, on occasions there are more permit holders wishing to park than road space available and one of the objections concerned parking provision.

Other concerns relate to the loss of light or privacy, and of permeability. There are more pedestrian routes than are strictly necessary but inevitably some journeys will become too circuitous to be made. Against this there is general recognition of the urgent need for more social housing. Over 400 properties are being lost to the social

sector each year by the right to buy scheme. The subsidised rate fails to cover the cost of a replacement dwelling. There is some concern, from residents and the council alike, at the level of market housing included in the scheme (to make it financially viable) when demand for social housing is so acute.

Cllr. James Murray, who leads on housing matters, described the scheme as "ambitious". He will be speaking to the Islington Society later this month.

The scheme has been under consideration for two years and modified in the light of comments in response to the first draft. Unfortunately a gestation period of this length means that there are new tenants who were not consulted. Some were disappointed that the planning committee did not devote more time and consideration before approving the proposals. The detail of the scheme has still to be finalised however and it is to be hoped that some of the unanswered concerns can still be addressed. If the scheme is successful it can be expected that other infill schemes might follow. Camden is being forced to consider something similar on the Silverdale estate north of Euston, to compensate for the loss of housing if HS2 happens, though in reality they desperately need to retain the existing housing AND provide the infill.

Islington Society: What we do

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings
- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike
- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we publish a regular newsletter
- we send advisers to Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues and is a member of Civic Voice

2015 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members who do not already have standing orders in place are reminded that subscriptions for 2015 are now due and are being held for another year at the current rates:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| ● individual membership | £8 |
| ● household or family membership | £10 |
| ● voluntary organisations | £15 |
| ● corporate membership | £20 |

Payment should be made by one of the following

methods:

- by cheque to the Membership Secretary at 18 Bewdley Street, N1 1HB
- by bank transfer to our account at Lloyds Bank, 31 Holloway Road, London N7 8JU, sort code 30-94-21, account number 00072707 or by using the Society web site (<http://www.isingtonsociety.org.uk/membership/>) to set up a standing order or to make a Paypal payment using a credit card.

Wherever possible, we now prefer to communicate with members about Society events and activities by email. If we may do so, please send an email to Peter Kilborn, Membership Secretary at pkilborn@aol.com. The newsletter will continue to be sent by post to all members.

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Society publications [available from the Society at 35, Britannia Row, London, N.1 or from local bookshops]

Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington, by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, photographs by Richard Leeney, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

Books from our President and Vice-Presidents

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.

A History of Islington, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974

53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society

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Preventing Wasted housing supply

The Society recently responded to a draft Supplementary Policy Document from Islington Council

Thank you for meeting with the amenity groups on 19th January in the Town Hall to explain and receive comments on this and the other concurrent consultations.

The Islington Society SUPPORTS the Council's initiative to prevent the wastage in housing supply caused by deliberately leaving residences vacant after purchase, colloquially known as "Buy to Leave". We recognise that there are a number of nebulous financial factors driving this phenomenon and are pleased that the Council is intending to address the problem through the planning system.

We agree that an alternative proposal to require a financial contribution to help fund replacement dwelling, which would have the undesirable effect of legitimising the vacancy, would not be sufficient to encourage owners to occupy or let the premises. (Sections 6.1 & 7.1).

It is not clear that the use of obligations agreed under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 would entirely eliminate the problem, but we agree that it is likely to be the most effective measure for controlling lost residential units in new-build housing developments (Section 6.2).

We agree that setting the threshold for the application of the SPD at 20 residential units (Section 6.5-6.7) and that setting the start date for the S.106 obligation at six months from the relevant date (Section 6.10) is sensible and reasonable.

It is not clear from obligation in 6.10.3 (14 days in consecutive 3 months) that this means residency rather than simple short term letting. Unless the Council is satisfied that the tests in Section 6.11 are sufficient to differentiate between short term letting and residency, we believe that obligation 6.10.3 should be strengthened and

clarified to identify the three consecutive months referred to as part of a longer term lease/let.

The Council may wish to consider an obligation under Section 6.10 to use its Lettings Agency (Section 6.15) as the default agency to be used where the owner does not comply with the provisions of the S.106 agreement and enforcement is required (Section 6.14).

Our fears (expressed at the meeting on 19th January) are:

a. That the SPD applying obligations to new-build projects developers/investors will transfer the problem of 'Buy to Leave' to a portfolio of existing housing stock where, given the wealth accumulating in property values in Islington, there are very many high value premises.

b. Whether the mechanism envisaged through the planning system will, in fact, work; enforcement requiring an unwilling participant to engage of a third unidentified party (the lessee) seems unlikely to be smooth or straightforward. But we hope that the threat of strong legal sanctions (Section 6.14) will be sufficient to encourage or enforce compliance. Could the Court Action also involve a fine (not a payment in lieu) for non-compliance?

c. That the miscreant owners may find imaginative ways around the obligations. We are aware, for instance, from other European and North American experience, of the growing use of 'Air B&B' to transfer seemingly residential flats into the hotel/short term let market.

Finally, we would note, while not detracting from the benefits of preventing wasted housing supply set out in this SPD, that the essential problem of housing supply is in the affordable housing sector rather than in the high-end residential market, where Buy to Leave is most prevalent.

DG

Cllr. Burgess made M.B.E.

Congratulations are due to Councillor Janet Burgess, made M.B.E. in the New Year's honours list. Also honoured was Peter Rees, lately chief planner in the City of London, and Michele Dix, transport planner at Transport for London who has just moved to the CrossRail2 project team. They both were made C.B.E..

CrossRail 2 consultation on proposed new safeguarding

Following a lively meeting at the Town Hall, the Society submitted the following comments to the Department for Transport. Several other local amenity societies, the London Forum, and various transport user groups have also made representations on similar lines.

The Islington Society is pleased to be able to comment on the Crossrail 2 Safeguarding proposals.

Several of our members attended the presentation by DfT in Islington Town Hall on 13th January 2015 and were able to contribute to the discussion. As far as they were noted, the Islington Society endorses the comments made by the audience at that meeting with respect to the nature of the railway, the route outlined for safeguarding and the impact that the works in progress and the aboveground structures will have on Islington.

In summary, our principal comments are;

a. The Islington Society recommends the Metro/Tube option for the Crossrail 2 link in that it provides better, more frequent and more diverse links into the existing London transport infrastructure, and eases overcrowding on existing lines while improving the capacity of the system, better serving London's needs.

This system requires less disruption in construction, requires smaller working areas (and hence less demolition), would provide more frequent stations at more convenient places and cost less.

b. We recommend a south-west-to-north-east route through Islington and that the earlier proposal for a station/interchange at Essex Road is re-instated, making use of the one line in central London with spare capacity, the Moorgate branch of the Great Northern, and bringing much needed regeneration to an undervalued area of Islington.

If the Regional Railway option is adopted, whilst stops at Angel and Essex Road might be too

close together under this system, we believe that with trains a quarter of a mile long a station could be sited between the two, with an entrance at either end, and thus serve both.

c. We are adamantly opposed to the demolition of the west side of Islington High Street from Pentonville Road. There was overwhelming opposition to this proposal at the meeting on 13th January.

This is, in a literal sense, the heart of the Angel. The corner is the site of the original "Angel Inn" from which the area takes its name. There are strong landmark Listed buildings which define the character of the area.

There are alternative vacant, underutilised or unloved sites that can be utilised for works and completed system access and, indeed, for station entrance / ticket hall use:

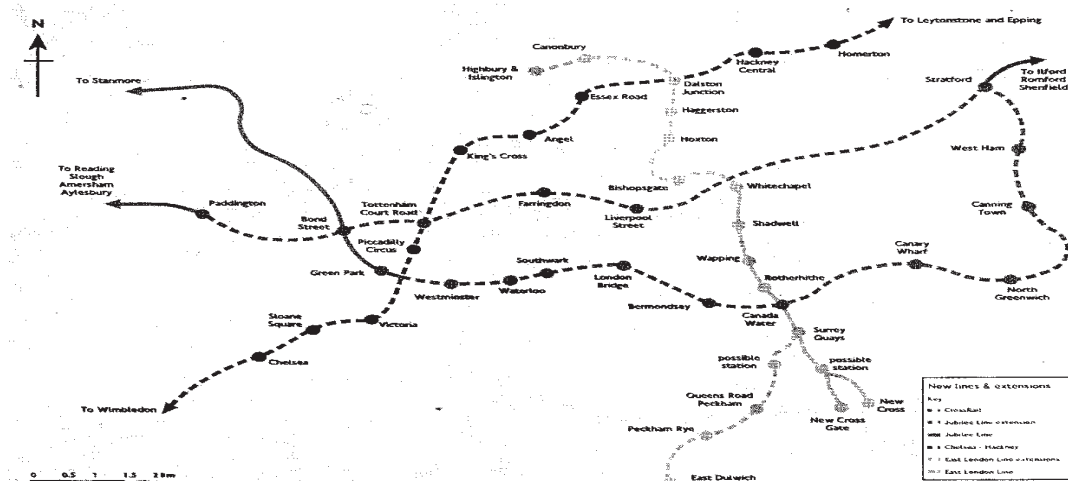
i. the Royal Bank of Scotland building occupies a large site and its loss would be widely applauded.

ii. the Sainsbury's site and car park is an under exploited very large site, and is close to other potential regenerative redevelopment sites on Tolpiddle Street.

iii. the former Public Carriage Office in Penton Street is also under-utilised, is large, and is also occupied by an unprepossessing building.

We hope that these comments will be taken into account in the next round of proposals and that we will be able continue to engage in constructive dialogue with the Crossrail 2 project team. DG

● Current safeguarded route shewn below



Home-Start Islington

Home-Start Islington, HSI, is a local charity founded in 1996, part of the national Home-Start network but autonomous and responsible for all activities, staffing and funding. It exists to provide practical support and friendship to vulnerable families and does so by recruiting and training volunteers who then visit a matched family weekly. The only conditions for families receiving help are: living in Islington and with at least one child under 5.

Families supported by HSI reflect Islington's diversity but many are financially stretched, some in high rise accommodation and the majority cite 'isolation' as a reason for wanting help; for some the volunteer is the only adult contact they have in a week.

Funding by Islington Council - who value HSI outreach work which complements their Children's Services - covers the costs of the full-time Senior Co-ordinator and a part-time Finance and Administration Officer. Since the recession and government cuts Council commitment has been only for one year at a time. This makes fund-raising

from other sources difficult. However, each year funds are raised for summer trips for the families - some have never been to the sea-side or zoo before - a Christmas party and an annual lunch for the volunteers.

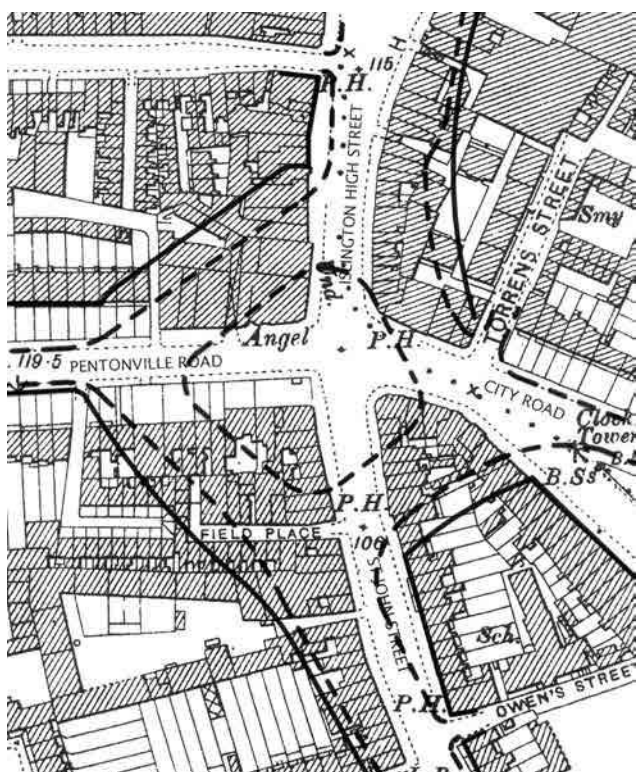
Looking ahead, Home-Start is faced with increased demand, not least from agencies (including the Council) which previously might have supported the families they are referring, and the uncertainty of continued Council support. The Trustees want to meet the demands and are starting a fund-raising campaign to increase the staffing so that more families can be supported. They have also launched Friends of Home Start, aimed at local people who would like not just to support HSI but be kept in touch with their activities.

If you would like more information or to support Home-Start go to: www.homestartislington.org.uk or email: Islington_homestart@hotmail.com. CM

The Angel

The Society's response to the proposed revised safeguarding route for CrossRail2 drew attention to the importance of these buildings in defining the Angel, Islington.

It is ironic that these buildings, having survived the road building plans of the 1980s



Traffic at the Angel

drawing by Harley Sherlock

should now be threatened by a rail scheme. It was belated recognition of the importance of rail over roads that prevented this pedestrian hostile junction and wanton destruction from taking place.

Harley Sherlock's sketch is instantly recognisable as The Angel, the point made in our objection.

Election fever

The news media is going to be dominated by the impending election, widely thought to be the most difficult to predict since modern polling techniques were introduced. It may come as a relief to know that by the time the next Islington News is published, the result of the 659 seats will be known. The make up of the next government could conceivably take longer to determine, and the switch to a fixed term Parliament may come back to haunt its protagonists. It would be slightly ironic if the one change to a system designed for a two party state (countless ideas for constitutional change fall by the wayside) were to prove unworkable as a result of a shift to multi-party government. The London Forum, in conjunction with Civic Voice, is organising hustings at which the issues facing the capital city can be aired.

The respite from election fever, even if a government is swiftly formed, may be short lived. In 2016 we have the prospect of a Mayoral election for which there is as yet no front runner. The incumbent Mayor is almost certain to be M.P. for Uxbridge and South Ruislip by then, and were he not to be elected it is difficult to see how even he could re-stand. It would make the Mayoralty look like a consolation prize.

Ken Livingstone has retired from politics, so there is no front runner. The Mayoralty lends itself to "characters" although what is needed is someone with a realistic grip on transport planning, or an ability to find people to do the work for them.

Both of the Mayors we have had so far were unlucky in that potentially excellent appointments were undermined by ill-health. The present Mayor suffered a high rate of turnover which limited his scope for making unenforced changes that might have strengthened the team.

Both Mayors also suffered from changes of mind, Ken over Routemaster buses and Boris over staffing of ticket offices and the Thames Gateway crossing to name but two.

Most of the possible candidates for Mayor touted in the Press are members of the Labour Party. Electoral defeat for the Tories in May might open up a route into the Mayoralty for a defeated candidate, while retaining power in Westminster would diminish the chances of retaining the Mayoralty. Whichever party wins is likely to be unpopular twelve months hence.

Islington interest centres on whether Margaret Hodge might stand (although Christian Wolmar is a close neighbour). Although she led Islington Council for more than ten years, her most productive years here were as chair of the housing committee, when she acquired on behalf of Islington residents a whole swathe of housing at knock-down prices. Though it was to be undermined by the right-to-buy scheme, which rewards the individual at the expense of the collective. Her Parliamentary career on the other hand has culminated in a high, her forensic dissecting of public servants and others as chair of the Public Accounts Committee making her the most well-known name on the Opposition benches. Would this experience ensure that she could run London without an effective GLA scrutiny committee running similar rings around the London administration?

This suggestion will horrify at least one of the members of the Islington Society committee. The Islington years were tarnished by a child abuse scandal which dragged on for years, due in part to Margaret's misplaced confidence in one particular senior officer. In fact, her judgement of officer's competence was found wanting more than once, notably in the first appointment of an Education Chief.

The child abuse issue needs to be viewed in the context of the time. Popular opinion could not comprehend that anything so heinous could happen, and (what now seems unbelievable) an openly paedophile group was permitted to exist and to join the NCCL. It seems to have been less socially unacceptable than homosexual acts conducted in private, which were a criminal offence before 1967.

Of more significance is whether, twenty years on and with the benefit of experience as well as hindsight, Margaret would be able to identify the officials and commissioners who could steer London away from some of the potentially disastrous proposals now on the table. Set aside whether untrammelled growth is a good thing or not. How can it be achieved with rampant "buy-to-leave" properties, long distance rail links that plough through homes and businesses and airport expansion that renders more homes uninhabitable?

What next for Smithfield?

This article first appeared in News Forum, published by the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies. We reported the successful outcome of the Appeal in our Autumn issue.

Secretary of State Eric Pickles' rejection in July 2014 of the John McAslan & Partners' £160 million proposal to fill Smithfield Market with shops and offices was reported in the last Newsforum as a 'major victory' for conservation. The decision established the importance of protecting non-listed buildings in Conservation Areas. But the landowners, Henderson Global Investors, have the right to challenge the Inspector's decision in the Courts; and the City of London Corporation, the planning authority which supported the development, has been unrepentant about their support.

Lead campaigners, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Victorian Society, held a meeting on 16th October 2014 to examine lessons learnt and next steps.

Lessons for other Conservation 'Battles'

Alec Forshaw, who was head of conservation and design at the London Borough of Islington from 1988 to 2007, and wrote *Smithfield, Past and Present* (1980 and 1990), discussed lessons for local authorities. Having appeared as one of the expert witnesses at the Public Inquiry, Alec stated that the decision implies that:

- Undesignated heritage assets can be as important as those which are designated.
- Greater weight can be given to the importance of heritage assets and alternative viable uses.
- The interiors of buildings can be just as important as the exterior.
- Even in large areas substantial harm can be caused by insensitive developments.
- Character is as important as appearances, including the history of buildings, as well as their architecture.
- Local authorities need to consider land use activity in the area in which the planned development is situated. They do not need a planning application to do such work.
- Planners should use their powers against negligent owners more.
- Deliberate neglect is not a justification for demolition.

David Cooper, a member of the Law Society Specialist Planning Panel, who acted as the advocate for SAVE, added: "This was the first time that the Secretary of State has agreed that there had been 'deliberate neglect' by a public body - in this case, the

City of London Corporation - which could dramatically cause significant harm to the conservation of an area."

Supporting the Inspector's findings, he also stated that the alternative scheme proposed by campaigners is likely to be viable. He ruled that, although there is tension between the need for offices and the need for conservation, the latter is more important. Policies for protecting heritage assets outweigh other policies.



Questions for English Heritage

David Cooper asked the audience: What was English Heritage doing to support such a scheme? Why did the City of London Corporation keep the site empty and derelict for so long - 18 years?

What Next?

Alan Baxter, Patron of the London Forum who has served on the London Advisory Committee of English Heritage, noted that Smithfield is well-spaced in relation to the other public markets in London and that the area has too many offices, and needs more cultural activities. Markets, which are enormously popular in London to tourists and residents, are a continuing part of the human experience. Smithfield has been the site of a market since the 10th Century. People come to cities increasingly to meet up, with markets providing such meeting places.

With the new Farringdon Station soon to have Crossrail (with 44 million passengers per year), and the completed Thameslink, there will be 140 trains flowing through this interchange per hour, and the station will be busier than Clapham Junction. Smithfield could be another Covent Garden, and is well-positioned to other attractions such as the Jewellery Quarter, Clerkenwell Cultural Quarter and St Pauls.

Urban Space Management, the company which transformed Camden Lock and Spitalfields Market, has put together a business plan that would turn the day-lit General Market Building halls into a new market square with 200 stalls, a ring of new shops and restaurants and small office units. Eric Reynolds, Director of Urban Space Management, is working with the Cathedral Group, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Victorian Society to apply for a change of use, proposing to repair the buildings and reopen them as a retail market and foodie destination.

In the meantime, Henderson Global Investors, the owners, have stated that they would leave the buildings empty if they could not implement their plans. And English Heritage and the Greater London Authority have not changed

their views, having supported John McAslan & Partners' plans for office blocks, demolishing the interiors to build these.

Encouragingly, the City of London Corporation has set up a Cultural Hub Working Party and is planning a cultural quarter walk linking the Barbican, the London Museum with St Pauls and Smithfield.

Let us hope that this wonderful opportunity to have another vibrant cultural quarter in London is seen as such by those with the powers to act. As the Cathedral Group wrote, in their submission to the Public Inquiry, "Smithfield is more than just part of London's flesh and blood. It is in the city's bone marrow".

For more information, www.savesmithfield.comDB

Communities need greater protection against unsustainable development, says CLG Committee

The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] is not preventing unsustainable development in some places, while inappropriate housing is being imposed upon communities as a result of speculative planning applications, a report published by the Communities and Local Government Committee has concluded.

The report, Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework, follows the recent public inquiry led by Clive Betts MP and the Communities and Local Government Committee into the Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework during its first two years. The Inquiry called for evidence specifically on planning for housing, town centres and energy infrastructure.

The CLG Committee found that developers are taking advantage of loopholes in the framework to launch 'speculative' planning applications, which is often leading to unwanted development contrary to the wishes of local communities. The Committee found that the problem was particularly acute when a local plan or five year supply of housing land was not in place. In these cases, the Committee found that developers are taking advantage of the absence of the plan or five year supply to seek planning permission in areas that local communities do not consider suitable for development.

While the Report suggests that more time is needed to allow the NPPF to "bed in" before a full assessment can be made of its operation, it makes a series of recommendations to 'improve' the planning system. This includes ensuring that the planning system delivers the "golden thread" of sustainable development objectives (environmental, social and economic) (Chapter 2), and not just economic objectives in planning decisions. The report also argues for a statutory duty to ensure that local councils put a Local Plan in place to stop the local parish being 'under siege' (Chapter 3), that loopholes in inappropriate development are closed (Chapter 4), and that the NPPF give greater protection to town centres (Chapter 5).

In response to the publication, Richard Hebditch, assistant director of external affairs at the National Trust said:

"The Committee's findings are the latest in a growing body of evidence that the NPPF is allowing developers to ignore the local communities it said would be at the very heart of its new approach. New National Trust research shows that even where a council has a local plan in place, these are being challenged by developers."

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London 2036: An Agenda for Jobs and Growth

The policy regime surrounding global access to London should be improved to take advantage of increased international tourism, while planning policy should be reformed to help sustain London's growth as a global hub, a new report published in January 2015 has recommended.

The report, *London 2036: An Agenda for Jobs and Growth*, published by London First for the London Enterprise Panel on 7th January 2015, sets out a formula for London which it thinks will achieve high levels of income growth, create job opportunities, a diverse and shock-proof economy, more homes and better transportation, as well as more balanced growth across the UK.

Broken down into nine chapters, chapter two looks at the long-term trajectory that led to London's current economic position, while comparing its performance to other cities of similar scale and type. Chapter three describes London's changing global context, looking at what kind of economic context it is likely to be operating in by 2036. Chapters four and five describe London's economic strengths and weaknesses, while chapter six describes London's context within the UK. Chapter seven and eight describe the economic ambitions for London, and the priorities for action that should deliver them, while chapter nine looks at implementation of the formula.

The report also makes a series of recommendations to accelerate housing delivery in London, including improving 'incentives,

coordination, capabilities and resourcing across the GLA and the boroughs to increase dramatically the planning and building of new homes'. This includes the recommendation to bring undeveloped brownfield sites held by the public sector into development, and 'reforms to planning policy to allow denser development around accessible transport locations and (ultimately) selective development in low-quality land currently designated as greenbelt'.

The report also shows that London's growth now and in the future is not solely due to finance and business alone, but instead tourism, creative industries and technology are also contributing to strong economic growth.

Interestingly, Chapter four finds that London has more international overnight visitors, and attracts more spend from them than any other city in the world. The report suggests that tourism to the London represents over £9 billion in gross added value and sustains 200,000 jobs across London, with its GVA contribution growing at an annual rate of 11% since 2009, and its total employment growth at 4% annually over the same period. The report also points out that strong growth in tourism numbers is likely to continue, and in Chapter eight suggests a series of policy measures to improve global access including improving airport capacity in the south east, alongside reforming the visa system for global visitors.

Green sprawl: Our current affection for a preservation myth?

A White Paper has been published seeking to stimulate debate about the future growth of London through reviewing the evolution of its green belt.

The Paper, *Green Sprawl: Our current affection for a preservation myth?*, published by the London Society in December 2014, calls for a debate on the future of development in London, suggesting that 'establishing a clear approach to London's green belt is crucial to laying the foundations on which we take these discussions forward'. Through looking at the development of London's green belt in the first half of the twentieth century, the society hopes to provide a context to initiate a meaningful debate to tackle current issues.

The London Society was founded in 1912 by Londoners concerned about the lack of vision for the future of the Capital. Early members included architects, planners, politicians and artists such as

Sir Edwin Lutyens, Raymond Unwin, Aston Webb, Beresford Pite, and Frank Brangwyn.

Speaking at the launch event, the author, Jonathan Manns said: "London faces significant challenges including the requirement for 1,000,000 new homes by 2030 but we've learned a lot over the past century about how to plan.

"Delivering the right development in the right place at the right time means focussing not only on new homes but the jobs, schools, hospitals, open space and the transport infrastructure to support them. Decisions are already being made on HS2, Crossrail and airport expansion in a separate context and we should instead be thinking more closely about how these relate to the city and its green belt."

At the crossroads: new report outlines new vision for England's Libraries

England's public libraries should be turned into more commercially-focused entities with access to comfortable, retail-standard environments that provide wi-fi, coffee, sofas and toilets, according to a new independent report published in December 2014.

The Independent Library report, commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and written by an independent advisory panel led by the entrepreneur, William Sieghard, investigates how the public library system can work better in the future amid sharply reduced budgets at the Local Authority Level, and with the changing needs of society.

The report makes three major recommendations. First, that there should be a national digital resource for libraries (extend wi-fi access, computer facilities and workforce training),

which will be delivered in partnership with local authorities. Second, the report calls for the setting up of a strategic framework and task force for England, which would help to improve, revitalise, and if necessary, change the local library service. Third, it is hoped that the task force will be led by local government with national technical expertise from Arts Council England, BBC, British Library, the Local Government Association and the Society of Chief Librarians.

The paper follows the recent publication of the annual survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in December 2014, which revealed that to March 2014 the number of libraries have fallen from 4,622 to 4,145 since 2009/2010. The statistics also show that visits to libraries had declined from 322m in 2010 to 282m in 2014 (representing a 12% fall).

Communities' need to protect local assets

[continued from page 8]

Civic Voice today (3rd February) welcomed a further report from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Select Committee which has accepted its call for greater powers to be given to communities to enable them to save local assets.

Dr. Freddie Gick, Chair of Civic Voice, said: "Civic Voice was pleased to submit written and oral evidence to the Select Committee on the success of community rights legislation. We are now delighted that the Committee has taken account of the views of the civic society movement and agrees with our recommendations that:

- the time given to communities to prepare bids for buying assets should be extended from six to nine months;
- the Government should consult on removing permitted development rights from all Assets of Community Value for the duration of their listing;
- the Government should amend its guidance so that an Asset of Community Value listing becomes a material consideration for local authorities in planning applications;

- the Government should redirect resources to community group umbrella organisations who provide face to face support;
- a nominator's right to appeal against a local authority's decision not to list an asset as an Asset of Community Value should be introduced.

The DCLG Select Committee published its report "Community Rights" on 3rd February and considered the awareness, use and operation of the community rights agenda along with how the rights can be improved.

Dr. Gick finished by saying "Individuals who take the time and effort to register community assets should have the confidence and certainty that these assets will be given the necessary protection. Our call to communities is that there has never been a better time to get more involved in your local area and to protect its assets. So, this is your opportunity to make your voice heard, to make a real contribution to maintaining and enhancing a strong vibrant community, protecting what is best and building an active, forward looking society for the future."

Transport News Round-up

CrossRail 2

After a series of low key consultations on amendments to the Hackney-Chelsea line, now called CrossRail2, the scheme returned to the public eye with a consultation to amend the safeguarded route. Anyone who has had their property sale or purchase held up in the last 25 years because of the current safeguarding will be less than gratified to find it was all for nothing.

Tunnelling under people's homes should be no big deal, but the change to a preference for a Regional style service requires bigger tunnels and bigger stations, and the latter do involve destruction. It emerges that the Co-op building, icon of the environmentalists who stopped motorway madness from destroying Islington in the 1980s, is lined up for compulsory purchase and destruction, together with the Curzon cinema in Westminster.

This has not been well received. Nor has the loss of any interchange with the under-utilised Moorgate branch of the Great Northern railway. A study in the 1970s revealed 108 lost opportunities for interchange between existing London lines - a handful, like West Ham, were addressed - and we were promised that future lines would create suitable interchanges. Several opportunities had been lost with the Victoria line in a drive to keep down costs. Crossrail 1 stations in the central zone will all cover two existing stations.

The plans are far from certain of fruition however. The Treasury is holding out for the alternatives of do nothing or the cheaper Metro alternative to the Regional option. Peter Hendy has not helped his cause by linking the Crossrail 2 plans to HS2. The Hackney-Chelsea line scheme was drawn up to meet an identified need in the 1980s, occasioned by gross overcrowding (more people standing than sitting) on the Victoria line. Very little has happened to diminish that case in the subsequent thirty years. First remove the mote from thine own eye. The Islington Society response is reported on page #.

Gyrating to the Boris legacy

Like recent Prime Ministers devoid of principle, the Mayor is anxious to have something favourable by which to be remembered. He has revived the Populist call to end gyratories and seems to have galvanised TfL into doing it this time.

The only problem is that they seem out of

practice. Although the scheme at Old Street is relatively uncontroversial (we did suggest moving one pedestrian crossing closer to the desire line), others have run into objection. Nothing as vigorous as the opposition to the Vauxhall scheme, which would have removed the relatively new bus station, but expressions of regret nonetheless.

The proposals for Archway can best be described as disappointing. Great play is made of the creation of valuable green space, but the loss of interchange facilities between buses (as well as between bus and tube) have a more telling effect on footfall within the whole area. Better Archway Forum has suggested removing a couple of traffic restrictions and re-siting bus stops. John McBryde of the Campaign for Better Transport is advocating retention of buses on the western arm in a scheme similar to that advocated by Harley Sherlock for the last three decades.

New Bus for London

In view of the developments reported last time, it was a major surprise to learn that 200 of the optional extra 400 "New" buses are to be purchased. The five year budget shews a dramatic fall in capital expenditure (buses) from 2016. Rumour has it that it was less expensive to take up half of the option than draw an immediate line in the sand.

Further routes covered by these buses have been the 453 and 137 both in south London, followed by the 55 which serves Clerkenwell.

The promise of five hundred more buses on the road by 2021 is very welcome when the buses are moving. It is increasingly difficult though to find places to turn them round. Gyratory systems, for all their faults, had the benefit of facilitating this, although they do not address a continuing increase in demand for parking bays.

Gospel Oak-Barking extension supported

A consultation on extending the line from Gospel Oak beyond Barking to Barking Riverside has resulted in general support. TfL appears to have recognised that the original scheme was inadequate in meeting longer term aspirations to create an outer orbital rail route, and the proposed new station should be deeper. Further extension can then be made beneath the Thames.

Concerns at the inadequacy of Barking station to cope with additional pedestrian movements are to be explored further. AB

From the Society

Current officers and What We Do appears on page 2

Future Society events

The Society gives reminders by e-mail of meetings about a week before they are held. Please let the Secretary have your e-mail address if you are not on the existing mailing list. Events take place at 7.0, Town Hall, unless stated otherwise. Please note the change of time.

Thursday 19th February: Cllr. James Murray speaking on "Housing Growth *versus* Budget Cuts"

Wednesday, 25th March: Piers Gough speaking on "Housing To-day". This is a joint meeting with NETAS.

Wednesday 17th June: Church crawl, close to the Town Hall for Arch & Hist. members.

Friday 26th June: Bill Manley Memorial Pub crawl. We are planning to honour both the chairman's desire to meet in the north of the Borough and Harley Sherlock's mantra that there should be more pub than crawl.

Tuesday 13th October 7.30 pm: Annual Dinner - details to be advised in the next Newsletter.

The copy date for our next newsletter is June 5th 2015.

Other Events in or around Islington:

Archaeology & History Society (8.0 p.m. Islington Town Hall)

Non-IA&HS members welcome, donation invited. Further information in the web site.

Wednesday 18th February: The Caledonian Park Clock Tower Project". Speaker Chris Hariades.

London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies

Meetings at 77, Cowcross Street, commencing 6.30 p.m.

Monday March 23rd: Election hustings, jointly with Civic Voice

Wednesday April 29th: Meeting housing need and maintaining the Green Belt

Islington Local History Centre

245 St John Street EC1 tel. 7527 2837

Until 25th February 2015: Exhibition "From East to

West. Chinese Life in London since 1900".

Islington Museum & Local History Centre

245, St. John Street. tel. 7-527 2837

Exhibitions: Friday 17th October - Tuesday 18th November 2014 "Living Africa: Through the Eyes of Children".

Friday 5th December 2014 - Thursday 26th February 2015 "East to West: Chinese Life in London since 1900".

Closed Wednesday and Sunday.

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square

Opening hours Wed. to Sat. 11 a.m.- 6 p.m., Sunday 12 noon-5 p.m.

14th January to 4th April 2015 Renato Guttuso (1911-1987): "Painter of Modern Life".

15th April to 28th June 2015 Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920):

"A Unique Artistic Voice".

Almeida Theatre,

Almeida Street, N.1 0207 359 4404

Monday-Saturday 7.30 p.m., Saturday matinée 2.30 p.m.

5th December 2014 - 14th February 2015 "The Merchant of Venice", relocated to Las Vegas, by William Shakespeare.

Rose Bowl Youth Theatre,

Thursday 12th March at 7.0 pm. Rose Bowl Gala Auction. (Website for details: www.friendsoftherosebowl.org.uk)

Islington University of the Third Age (U3A)

Thursday Meetings at 10.30 am, The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road.

Monthly talks: 26th February, 26th March, 23rd April and 28th May

For details and membership www.IslingtonU3A.org

Across London

2nd March: London, Lauderdale House, Highgate, Giving to Heritage, Measuring Success and Reporting Heritage Impact workshop

9th March: London, Burgh House, Hampstead, Heritage Fundraising in the community workshop