

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

Problems mount

Uncertainty over LURB

The Committee stage of the Levelling up bill in the house of Lord's has produced some of the most acrimonious debate ever witnessed in the Upper House. Differing views of Conservative M.P.s and the maverick nature of the Secretary of State make it difficult to predict how the legislation will pan out, and what effect it will have on housing policy in London.

Cost of living crisis

The Retail Price Index, which more closely reflects the impact of inflation on the less well off, remains above 13%, even though the CPI is down to 8.7%. This is partly explained by the CPI measure of food price inflation, 19%. The increase over the last twelve months is to an inflated level of prices from the previous twelve.

Interest rates

Higher interest rates are feeding through to mortgage repayments as fixed term deals come to the point of renewal.

Pay disputes

The goodwill that existed when key workers were being lauded during the pandemic has evaporated. If the railway companies had been willing to make a reasonable offer before inflation took off, the strikes might not have happened last year, while the teacher's dispute is as much about the requirement for schools to find some of the money (with consequences for workload) as the size of the offer.

Pressure on pubs and restaurants

Increased energy prices, and in central London increased work from home, has fuelled more closures. Rail strikes are also reported to have cost the industry £132m., although they may have redistributed customers and the cost of living crisis may be more relevant.

Loss of social carers

The vacancy rate for social workers is reportedly 12.6%, or 28,000 people, in London. This has

a knock on effect for hospitals. Housing costs are thought to be the main cause.

Falling birth rate

The birth rate has plummeted across the country and particularly in London. The impact on schools, funded largely on the basis of pupil numbers, is huge. As well as fewer births, the trend to working from home has encouraged families to move out of London in search of more space. There has been more home schooling, and resort to private education.

Islington is merging Vittoria and Copenhagen Schools on the site of the latter and consulting on closing Poole's Park school.

Climate change

The target of limiting global warming to less than 1.5° is forecast not to be met. Despite this, there is continuing opposition to the Mayor's plan to extend the ULEZ to the whole of London. It can still be cheaper to fly within the UK than travel by rail.

University finances squeezed

Universities are reliant on tuition fees from UK students and those from overseas. The former have been frozen for a decade, despite the rising level of inflation, and the latter are under threat from the hostility to immigration.

AI could annihilate the human race

Finally, and most starkly, there are concerns that the development of Alternative Intelligence will wipe out all human existence. At least that would end the cost of living crisis.

What can be done?

The belated opening of the Elizabeth line has exceeded all official expectations, generating 150 million journeys in the first year of operation. There is little evidence that these journeys were previously made by other means, and these travellers are supporting the local economy. Investment in worthwhile infrastructure brings significant benefits.

Islington Society News

ABOUT YOUR COMMITTEE

The Society's committee, though elected by the members at our AGMs, may be something of a mystery to some. Who are these people who manage the Society's affairs? As you will be aware, we are a registered charity, run entirely by volunteers who give as much time as they can afford to the Society's activities. We meet monthly at the Town Hall and assign responsibilities to those best fitted to their abilities.

The Chair doubles as membership secretary and the deputy Chair - Andrew Clayton - is also responsible for our events programme. David Trillo is our long-standing Secretary and Patrick Green has recently taken over as Treasurer following the sad death of Michael Gwinnell. Patrick is a solicitor with Colman Coyle, staunch friends of the Society who also host and sponsor our web site.

Our most important activity is monitoring and commenting on major planning decisions in the Borough. Looking after this are former Chair (and Vice-President) David

Gibson, James Dunnett and Emma Smith.

Former Chair Andrew Bosi is our newsletter editor and transport expert. Aurelia Faure and Fredrik Borjesson look after the web site and provide technical support. Stuart Scott brings a wealth of local knowledge.

It is a well-rounded and versatile committee, but we need to look to the future and encourage increased participation from members who are interested. We have recently invited expressions of interest and hope to expand the committee in the near future. We are always pleased to hear from anyone with the time and inclination to get involved. PK

Return of the Pub Crawl

After four years the Bill Manley/ Harley Sherlock memorial pub crawl returns on Friday **June 30th**. The crawl will start at the Marquess Tavern, where the first crawl began 31 years ago, at 6 p.m. Then we move at hourly intervals to the Snooty Fox, the (Edinburgh) Cellars, and finally the Lady Mildmay at 9 p.m.

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 send advisers to Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues and is a member of Civic Voice

- we publish a regular newsletter The views expressed in the Islington Society's Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Society's adopted policy.

Our web site is www.islingtonssociety.org.uk

CURRENT OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

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Moorfields hospital site - Society Comments to the Council

I write to express the Society's grave concerns about aspects of the proposed re-development of the Moorfields site at 162 City Road, EC1, near Old Street roundabout. Members of the Islington Society Committee attended a briefing meeting with the developer and also one of the public consultations.

We understand the height of one of the proposed buildings is to be approx. 150 metres above ground. Other buildings on the site are proposed to be approx. 46 metres, 23 metres and 28 metres. The Society is very concerned about the height of the proposed buildings particularly the tallest building, its impact on the townscape and local area, and especially its disregard for Islington Council's Tall Buildings Study 2018 and the emerging Islington Local Plan. The proposed building is considerably taller than the recommended maximum height for this site, and yet the proposals have apparently already progressed so far with the Council.

In the **Islington Tall Buildings Study 2018**, page 155 in part states "This study identifies the opportunity for two taller commercial buildings on the Moorfields Site that can complement and help to soften the one-sided nature of the City Road / East Street cluster. They are set back from the City Road frontage to avoid an imposing impact on City Road. With their height they step down from the Atlas Building that is the high point in the cluster.

"Development will need to duly consider how its impact on the Moorfields Conservation area is minimised and mitigated. The staggered arrangement of the two proposed tall buildings avoids overbearing on one side of the development and responds to the location of other taller buildings in the surrounding.

"No tall building should be located on the street corner of Peerless Street with Bath Street, where together with Galway House and Godfrey House it would create a wall of development that would be overly dominant and out of character with both adjoining character areas and their interface."

Atlas is approx. 146 metres tall so the proposed Moorfields tower at 150 metres is not a 'step down'. The proposed Moorfields tower at 150 metres is not a staggered arrangement and would be overbearing on one side of the development. The proposed Moorfields tower

at 150 metres competes with the other tall buildings in the area

The **Islington Tall Buildings Study Nov 2018** refers to the Moorfields G4 site as a District Landmark to be no more than 70m (approx. 17 commercial storeys). "The building is to be situated about half way on Peerless Street, sufficiently away from the City Road frontage to avoid an imposing visual impact on City Road. At this point it should mark a new pedestrian connection across the site. Its height needs to clearly step down from the other tall buildings in the cluster.

The G5 site building is to be no more than 50m. (approx.. 12 storeys). "The building is to be situated at the corner of Bath Street with Cayton Street, announcing the new commercial place in views down Bath Street from City Road. Its height is significantly lower than G4, further stepping down and mediating with the surrounding context.

"The tall building should principally rise out of the street block, with its taller element being set back clearly behind adjoining respective street frontages to avoid a sheer wall of height rising up and overbearing the public realm. Development should ensure that it retains a human scale and sense of proportion in the street space. It needs to thoroughly consider and minimise its impact on the Moorfields Conservation area."

In addition, **Site Allocation BC38** (Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road) of the current emerging **Local Plan's Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan** says: "The site has been identified as one of the sites where tall building/s (over 30m) might be acceptable in principle, subject to complying fully with the criteria set out in Policy DH3, including the maximum heights threshold. The north west corner of the site (corner of Cayton St /Bath St) could potentially accommodate a building of up to 50 metres (approx 12 office storeys). A tall building of up to 70 metres (approx 17 office storeys) could be accommodated on Peerless Street, north of the junction with Baldwin St."

Site Allocation BC38 also states "...the site is located within Moorfields Conservation Area. There are several Locally Listed Buildings within and directly adjacent to the site, as well as other heritage assets, all of which contribute positively to the character of the conservation area. Any

future development will be expected to protect and enhance the site's heritage assets"

For the Islington Society, it is difficult to see how the proposed building at 150 metres tall (in addition to buildings of 23 to 46 metres high) meets the stated requirements to: "avoid a sheer wall of height rising up and overbearing the public realm" or would: "retain a human scale and sense of proportion in the street space" or: "minimise its impact on the Moorfields Conservation area." or would be: "complying fully with the criteria set out in Policy DH3, including the maximum heights threshold."

The Islington Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies Sept 2019 DH3 Building heights Part B states:

"B. Buildings of more than 30 metres are only acceptable in-principle:

- (i) on sites allocated in the Local Plan where the allocation makes specific reference to suitability for heights of 30 metres or more; and/or
- (ii) within specific sites identified in a Spatial Strategy area."

We note that developers have attempted to argue that the Council setting maximum building heights is unduly restrictive and that buildings that do exceed the maximum stated height may still be acceptable. The Council has responded that setting maximum heights for tall buildings is consistent with London Plan Policy D9 part 2. Regarding development outside of Islington's tall building policy the Council states: "It is appropriate to proceed with this policy and not to set out that tall buildings may be developed outside of identified sites."

In **Islington Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies Sept 2019** para 8.51 states: "Maximum permissible heights for each location, as well as some site specific design principles, including guidance on siting of height within the context of the site/area boundary (where relevant), are set out in the relevant site allocation and/or Spatial Strategy policy.

The Islington Society does not necessarily disapprove of tall buildings, and agrees this is potentially a "District" or "Local Landmark" site which justifies a taller building than elsewhere. However, our concern is that at 150 metres the proposed building would be significantly taller than the maximum specified by the Local Plan in what would clearly be a departure from the Plan. We would remind the Council of the importance

of the Local Plan and the commitment that "development must not exceed the maximum building heights for that specific tall building location". The Society would ask the Council to be firm with the developers on this point of height. The Plan needs to be enforced by both planning officers and Planning Committee members to ensure the Council adheres to its own policies.

The Local Plan does not support the argument of combining two proposed towers into one large tower of 150 metres. The Society supports the Local Plan and recognises the value of adhering to its well-argued provisions.

We are also aware that there are plans to redevelop the nearby Inmarsat site on Old Street roundabout, and that the developer of that site has also proposed a tower of approx. 150 metres, again far in excess of the Local Plan stipulation. We urge the council to enforce the Local Plan in these instances to prevent inappropriate development in this area.

We understand from attending the public exhibition that the developer intends to retain and refurbish the frontages and much of the buildings of the Locally Listed Moorfields Eye Hospital, Kemp House and George V extension, with no upward extension on any of these buildings. We welcome this retention although would ask that the original internal floor levels in these buildings are also retained as part of the new development.

We also welcome the proposed public realm square - estimated to be the size of the Royal Academy or the Guildhall Square and about 2% of the total area of the whole development - but not if the price of its creation is a tall building of more than double the maximum height set out in the Council's planning brief.

We note that public space is a stipulation of the Local Plan BC38 "New public space as the focus of the development on Cayton Street".

It is most unfortunate that the multi-award-winning Richard Desmond Children's Eye Centre completed only in 2006 is to be demolished.

The Society asks that the Council addresses these concerns with the developer before they submit their planning application to the Council shortly. We would be happy to discuss this further if you wish.

Peter Kilborn, Chair

Pentonville Road proposals: Islington Society comments

The Islington Society is supportive of schemes which make walking easier in the Borough. Words of support for walking have not always been backed by action, so we welcome the proposals for Pentonville Road. However, we are concerned that, despite most Covid related measures having been lifted, the Pentonville Road entrance to the tube lines remains closed. Not only does this make a

longer and inconvenient walk to the station, the resulting closure has encouraged graffiti at the station building which in turn discourages walking.

It was particularly disappointing that you were not able to hold the drop in session at the station, as a location adjacent to the scheme would undoubtedly have drawn more people to attend.

Inmarsat, 99 City Road

The planning application has been submitted, and the Society has put confirmed its objection.

Archway Campus/Holborn Infirmary.

The Better Archway Forum and Highgate Society are progressing an application for statutory listing, to which the Society will also give its support. The developers have applied for planning permission for temporary usage of part of the site for artists' studios etc. This suggests that a full planning application is not imminent. The Furnival building on the site has also been the subject of discussions between the developers and Council. The Society is objecting to the student accommodation tower and related matters.

Michael Gwinnell

We are very sad to report the untimely death of Michael Gwinnell, our treasurer since January 2021, following a short illness. Michael provided the local list revisions in 2015 and 2016 for areas of central Islington, including for Upper Street and Almeida Street. His work was carefully researched and communicated his knowledge of, and his love for, Islington's most important buildings. As Treasurer, he quickly established a reputation for efficiency. Michael stood down on learning of the terminal nature of his illness.

If you want a receipt for that popular mystery

After years of discouraging us from taking a receipt, Sainsbury's at the Angel now requires you to have one in order to be able to leave the store.

Next Newsletter

Copy date for our next newsletter is October 1st, 2023. The views expressed in the journal are not necessarily those of the chair, the editor, or the Society's adopted policy.

Books from our President and late Vice-President

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 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

A walk up the Caledonian Road, Thornhill Arms – Prince Edward

This walk starts where the King's Cross walk ended, at the Thornhill Arms at No. 148 Caledonian Road. It then diverts along Hemingford Road and into Thornhill Square, returning to Caledonian Road for the prison and the route into Holloway. It ends at the Prince Edward on Parkhurst Road, a little-known Islington pub with a fine interior, as well as an 1860s locally listed exterior. The walk continues Andrew Clayton's series based on the updated version of Islington's register of Locally Listed Buildings, recently completed by the Islington Society.

The Thornhill Arms is an important local landmark, set on the corner with Wynford Road. It has been a public house since 1839. When it was built, its prominent position next to the Regent's Canal and the Thornhill Bridge placed it at the heart of industrial life in the area. The pub has striking features including glazed pottery tiling on the ground floor and unusual yellow columns at the main entrance. These decorations are probably later than the core of the building, late Victorian or Edwardian, when many local pub exteriors were updated. It is a fine example of Victorian pub design.

Cross the bridge with the magnificent tunnel portal on your right, suitably sinister with its heavily rusticated stonework. Turn right onto Copenhagen Street and then second left onto Hemingford Road.



From 44-78 Hemingford Road.

The first terrace you come to is **Nos. 12-42 Hemingford Road**, part of the 1840s development of the Thornhill estate. The estate surveyor was Joseph Kay, who worked there from 1810 until his death in 1847. He was a properly trained architect, a pupil of S.P. Cockerell, the designer of Sezincote House in Gloucestershire. This terrace is simpler than those we will come to in a moment further up Hemingford Road,

without the pediments and stucco detailing. But they are still stylish buildings, retaining their glazing bars and elegant fan lights above the doors.

Ahead of us are **Nos. 45 to 91 and Nos. 44 to 78** on either side of the road. They have a distinctive style, arranged in pedimented pairs, linked by recessed one window entrance bays. The odd numbered terrace on the western side is now Grade II listed. Nos 44-78 on the eastern side remain on the local list. Their doorways have pilasters carrying the cornice heads, with fanlights and panelled doors. The sash windows are arranged in pairs, and are slightly plainer on the eastern side. This terrace has been rendered and painted while the Grade II houses opposite have been left plain with stucco decoration. Otherwise, they are much the same.

The next landmarks on the walk are **Nos. 115 & 117 Hemingford Road**, on the left at the junction with Bridgeman Road, what was once the Huntingdon Arms. No. 117 is now a separate residence, though the building's elevation makes clear that they were once part of the same pub. It dates from the 1850s, just after the death of the estate surveyor Joseph Kay. The style is florid Italianate, particularly on the Hemingford Road side with a heavy bracketed cornice at roof level. This is not continued round No. 115, either because it was taken down later or the original builder decided not to continue with it. This breaks the unity of the design, though the window patterns on the first and second floors make clear that it was all once a single pub. The Bridgeman Road facade is plainer, with the Huntingdon coat of arms at second floor level, repeated at first floor level facing Hemingford Road. This is a fine pub in a prominent position with a distinctive Italianate style, an important contributor to Hemingford Road's mid 1800s architectural mix.

Turn down Bridgeman Road and then left into Thornhill Square. This, the Crescent and Richmond Road are the heart of the development of the Estate in the 1840s and 50s.



115 & 117 Hemingford Road, the former Huntingdon Arms.

They are impressively complete, curving around St. Andrew's Church. As in Hemingford Road the detail is Italianate with pediments over the windows, brackets under the eaves and ornamental rosettes. Keep walking southwards until you get to Matilda Street, to a reminder of Islington's industrial past. Tucked away in **Bramwell Mews** is an industrial chimney which served a builder's yard and sawmill (now demolished). In the 1850s the yard was owned by a builder who lived at No. 32 Thornhill Square, which backs on to it. Bramwell Mews is now gated and locked but if access cannot be gained the chimney can be seen from Matilda Street. Carry on round the square until you get back to Bridgeman Road. Turn left and then right onto Caledonian Road.

Our next objective is **Pentonville Prison**, on the other side of the railway bridge, the centre piece of this walk. The main core of the building, mostly out of sight, was designed according to the latest correctional ideas of the time by Joshua Jebb and was completed in 1842. It is nationally listed Grade II. But the project as a whole was supervised by Sir Charles Barry, the designer of the Houses of Parliament. He had worked in Islington twenty years before on the group of Commissioners churches to provide for its rapidly growing population, particularly Holy Trinity Cloudesley Square and St. John Holloway Road. At the prison in the 1840s, Barry's work seems to have been confined to the western

perimeter, particularly perhaps the Governor's Residence and the main gateway.



HM Prison Pentonville, The Governor's Residence

The Governor's Residence is the first we come to as we walk up Caledonian Road, facing towards us. It has the air of an early Victorian Italianate villa, not institutional at all. It has strong moulded detail and a pleasant varied façade towards the south. The windows are particularly attractive with original twelve light glazing bars. Next to it, towards the entrance, is a much more powerful prison-like building, heavily corniced and quoined, making a good contrast with the more refined Governor's House further to the south, **the main entrance** is opposite Blundell Street, and suitably imposing.



HM Prison Pentonville, the main entrance

It is arched and pedimented, as high as a three-storey building. The arch originally contained double doors, though the entrance is now boarded up. Whether they are by Barry or not

these buildings at the front of Pentonville Prison are some of the most impressive in the borough. Further north on the left, before you get to Caledonian Road tube station, is what remains of **Mallett & Porter House**, built in 1874 when this area of Caledonian Road was dominated by the Metropolitan Cattle Market. It is still inscribed with the name Mallet Porter and Dowd which operated as a horse hair clothing manufacturer making hard-wearing fabric which was used particularly for uniforms. It is now encased in a modern building, converted into student accommodation in 2013 and was seen at the time as one of the worst examples of “façadism”, the retention of the front of the building while everything behind it was taken down. Islington Council rejected the scheme but this was overturned on appeal. “Does façade retention get any worse than this?”, asked the Victorian Society.

At the junction with Hillmarton Road, turn left into North Road and the **former London General Omnibus Company works building**, on your left. It is a long building, hard to take in all at once. It is of functional design, built as the coachbuilding works for the bus company. The LGOC was founded in 1855 to amalgamate and regulate the many horse-drawn omnibus companies in London. It began using motor omnibuses in 1902, about the time this building was constructed, and soon began manufacturing its own. This was its coach building works, an important part of the history of the development of the motor omnibus in London. It is now Omnibus House, office space for small businesses.

Tucked in on the left is one of Islington’s gems of domestic Arts & Crafts architecture, **No. 39A North Road**, an early work of Ernest George (1839 – 1922). Although now largely forgotten, George was an architect of some importance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, specialising mainly in domestic work. His practice with Harold Peto was known as the “Eton of architects’ offices” and among its many pupils and assistants were Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. The practice developed a style which mixed motifs from the old urban dwellings of northern Europe with the plainer English Queen Anne style and was an early leader in the British Arts & Crafts movement. George was knighted in 1911.

Return to the Hillmarton Road junction and take the right-hand fork along the northernmost stretch of the Caledonian Road, until you get to Penn Road on the left. This was developed in the 1860s when the surrounding area was expanding rapidly. The railway, the prison, and the new Metropolitan Cattle Market made poor neighbours, so houses were designed for artisans and clerks rather than the wealthier residents catered for on the Thornhill Estate. The remaining open land north of the cattle market was built up in the 1860s and early 1870s possibly by HC Bunkell, a Holloway builder turned auctioneer and estate agent, who lived in Penn Road. **Nos. 2-27 and 32-33 Penn Road** are locally listed and show how Victorian builders were beginning to offer a variety of styles to their prospective lessees or buyers. Here, the builder offered three distinct designs, two from the classical tradition, one with Gothic detailing. The Gothic is a bit crude, but certainly original.



The Prince Edward

Turn right at the top of Penn Road onto Hillmarton Road, turn right to the junction with Camden Road and cross to Parkhurst Road. Walk east towards the Nag’s Head until you get to one of the nicest pubs in the area, **The Prince Edward**. It is a good example of a comparatively unaltered 1860s Victorian pub in an area of Islington where pub architecture is otherwise undistinguished. It has a nicely proportioned exterior with decorated ornamental tiles and elegant ironwork. Original features remain inside, though the bar has been replaced. It is a pleasant place to relax at the end of a rather relentless urban walk.

What's stopping us from regulating embodied carbon?

Tougher regulation may provide the construction industry with the incentive it needs to reduce embodied carbon, writes Anna Beckett

Over the last few years, the conversation around sustainable design in the construction industry has expanded massively and most companies are at least considering low-carbon options in their designs, even if these ideas aren't fully realised. And while there is regulation around operational energy use, the measurement and use of embodied carbon remains unregulated. Target values are still just targets, and most of those are relatively un-ambitious.

I think it's fair to say that most engineers and architects are measuring the embodied carbon of their buildings in the same way, but there are inevitably parts of any building that don't quite fit the boxes in the guidance documents. At that point a less prudent engineer or architect could include or exclude values to help to tell the story that their client wants, particularly as embodied carbon assessments are rarely checked or audited.

So how can we make sure the values we're comparing have accounted for the same things? And more importantly, how can we make sure that everyone is working to reduce the carbon in their projects?

Regulating embodied carbon would certainly help and is something that the Architect's Climate Action Network (ACAN) have been regularly campaigning for, including outside government. Among several suggestions, ACAN would like to see enforced limits on embodied carbon for all developments by 2025. The proposed Part Z amendment to the Building Regulations would also make the measurement of embodied carbon compulsory, together with reduction targets over the coming years. With measurement more carefully controlled and audited, and embodied carbon limits set for every project, it would level the playing field and make sure that all developments were giving embodied carbon the consideration it needs.

In other cities around the world these kinds of regulations are already starting to be brought in; Copenhagen has well defined year on year reduction targets for embodied carbon and

the city of Oslo has had a carbon budget since 2017. The city of Toronto has gone one step further and recently implemented regulation which requires new city-owned buildings to have an upfront embodied carbon of less than 350kgCO₂e/m², a target that is expected to be implemented for all buildings by 2025. Considerably more ambitious than the targets we're setting in the UK.

The problem is that the only way that the regulation would work is if it's enforced and that currently poses some difficulties. Materials with low embodied carbon are in high demand, and with finite amounts of cement replacement products or re-used steel available, it's clear that not every project will be able to source the materials they'd need. We'd be setting a target without the resources available to achieve it.

And whilst the construction industry might be open to using different materials if they're available, it hasn't yet accepted that what we really need to do is build less. It's possible we'd end up with a situation where developers would simply pay to offset their carbon instead.

But if necessity is the mother of invention, then as we try to move towards lower carbon construction perhaps this combination of increased regulation and a shortage of low carbon materials could actually help us to find more innovative design solutions. If a lower target makes it difficult to build using conventional materials, then maybe there will be more incentive to create new materials or find new ways of building that are meeting the targets. Maybe then we can start to accelerate these changes for all construction projects.

Regulating embodied carbon isn't going to fix everything over night, but it would be a step in the right direction towards reducing carbon in construction. Yes, it would make it more difficult to build, but it would also force an industry that's resistant to change to consider a different approach. And maybe that's exactly what we need.

The changing political map of Islington, 1965-2024: Part IV

In the final part of this series on boundaries in Islington, Andrew Bosi previews the reform of the Parliamentary constituencies which is anticipated next month.

Part III brought us up to date with the council ward boundaries. This final part deals with constituency boundaries yet to be implemented but confidently predicted by many to be voted into existence next month.

The process to get this far has been protracted. Its gestation was mixed up in the unsuccessful referendum to introduce proportional representation which followed the coalition government of 2010. Mr. Cameron's idea was that the number of MPs should be reduced, but too many of his own party found their seats to be at risk and this was dropped in favour of redistributing the existing 659 seats so that a more equal distribution of voters could be achieved. This was despite the fact that constituencies differ markedly in terms of deprivation and need on the one hand, and distance from end to end on the other.

The reallocation has given London a net increase of nine seats, but Islington was found to be over-represented in contrast to Holborn and St. Pancras, which has been one of the largest constituencies in England. In the first draft of changes, Islington North was to lose an Islington Ward (Tufnell Park) and gain one from Hackney, while Islington South & Finsbury was to be extended into the City of London. The former proposal was clearly anomalous from an Islington perspective, based on needs elsewhere, and the latter drew complaints from within the ruling Conservative Party that it would break a long standing link between the two cities, London and Westminster. The two cities is an increasingly marginal Tory seat, and might even have fallen to a different party if Labour and the Liberals had not split the vote in 2019.

A way was found of preserving the Islington North seat wholly within Islington, and it is now expected to be unchanged. The Boundary Commission however accepted the case against splitting the cities, and instead Islington South is to be joined with De Beauvoir Town in Hackney. This is despite the fact that

the present South is entitled to more Wards than North – further evidence, if any were needed, of the flawed approach of taking account of residential buildings under construction which may turn out to be sold on a buy-to-leave basis.

The final report, scheduled for July, is expected to be concerned only with the names of constituencies. Islington North seems a given, and it also seems likely that Finsbury will finally be erased from the constituency name after a spirited and successful attempt to keep it when the present south Islington seat was created. The name will have to acknowledge that a part of Hackney is now included. Islington South with De Beauvoir is a possibility, or perhaps Islington South and Hackney West, although that would rather exaggerate the extent to which Hackney would be represented.

For the local political parties, it means that a slightly different group of members will gather together to discuss matters pertaining to the local council, compared to the group that meets to receive reports from their MP or their prospective parliamentary candidate. Other Boroughs have not enjoyed co-terminosity before: Karen Buck for example, represents parts of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, and Iain Duncan-Smith has territory in both Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

Unless a general election is called later this year, rather than in 2024 or even January 2025, the next contest will be fought on the new boundaries. Newspapers and the political parties are obsessed with the effect the changes would have on the make up of Parliament. In reality voting intentions are never the same from one election to the next – or even one week to the next. Moreover, once a seat is identified as being marginal there is a shift in tactics of the parties and a clamour for tactical voting. In the long run, boundaries based on communities and topology make more sense than those resulting from political pressure.

AB

Transport News Round-up

Superloop planned

The Mayor has responded to criticism of the ULEZ expansion and the shortage of improvements to bus services in outer London by announcing the introduction of a "Superloop" which has caught the imagination of the press. It comprises seven orbital express bus routes and three radial routes largely inside the loop. Some already exist but will be rebranded and in some cases increased in frequency.

Unlike the bus improvements that preceded the Congestion Charge, the Loop will not be fully in place ahead of the introduction of the ULEZ. A more serious concern is whether existing services which parallel much of the Loop can be maintained. It has already been suggested the frequency on the 183 would be reduced when the X183 commences. When the X43 was introduced to demonstrate the benefits of the red route, peak hours services on the 43 were cut and the express route was not a success. A difference this time is that the Superloop will run every day at all hours.

Central London bus cuts

Further cuts were made to central London buses on April 29th. The 59 and 133 now travel along Holborn in place of the 507 and 521 which have been withdrawn. The 11 now goes to Waterloo (replacing part of the 211) and the 26 replaces part of the 11 between Strand and Victoria. There are no additional buses on the 26 so the frequency is reduced. Timetables were not in place at the start of the changes.

Threat to the one-day travelcard

As well as the changes to buses, and the imposition of VAT to certain purchases, visitors to London face up to a 50% increase in travel costs if the plan to abolish the paper one-day travel card in London proceeds. The Mayor needs the extra money this would generate to meet the terms of his funding settlement with DfT. If the cards are sold at stations outside London, as an add-on to a day return, the share going to TfL is less than it would receive from contactless payments up to the daily cap. The difference in cost to passengers is exacerbated because unlike the travelcard there is no discount to holders of Senior and other Railcards.

This measure is worth more to the Mayor's budget than the bus cuts noted above. The Mayor is only answerable to residents of Greater London

and the government to the wider British public. There is little in the way of a voice for tourists. It is hard to see how a satisfactory outcome can be achieved.

Elizabeth Line improvements

From May 21st the Elizabeth line has been further improved to provide through services between Heathrow and Shenfield. The only journeys requiring a change are those from west of this link to Reading and east of Whitechapel to Shenfield, and Heathrow Terminal 5 to stations on the Abbey Wood branch. The peak service is increased to 24 tph and the seven minute wait outside Paddington on some eastbound trains is no longer scheduled. One in six journeys on heavy rail in England are made on the Elizabeth line, and 150 million journeys were made in its first year.

HS2 two year pause

Uncertainty continues to surround the future of the HS2 project. Work around Euston is supposedly paused for two years, but irritatingly road closures for associated work on a project that may never happen continue.

London Councils is pressing for this and other mega projects in London to be given the go-ahead. Only the Bakerloo line extension offers good value for money, as it would attract passengers to the only central London tube line with spare capacity. A more constructive approach, with more chance of success, would be to press for funding for the extra two carriages on Elizabeth line trains and for resignalling of the Piccadilly line.

Government threat to Wifi

In a bizarre idea to save peanuts, the government has suggested that long distance rail companies withdraw the provision of free wifi on trains. Passenger surveys suggested this was less important than punctuality and reliability, which is not the same as saying no-one cares about it. Given the requirements of modern signalling, the cost of free Wifi extended to passengers is relatively small, but another excuse to use more convenient but less sustainable means can only result in the loss of custom.

Short haul flight ban

France has introduced a ban on short haul flights where a railway alternative exists. There is pressure on the UK to follow suit. It is still cheaper to fly from Newcastle, for example, than take LNER or CrossCountry trains. AB

Recent and Forthcoming events

Society events

Bill Manley/Harley Sherlock memorial pub crawl, Friday June 30th. N.1 unless otherwise stated.

6 p.m. Marquess Tavern, Willow Bridge Road

7 p.m. Snooty Fox, Grosvenor Avenue, N.5

8 p.m. Edinburgh Cellars, Newington Green Road

9 p.m. Lady Mildmay, Mildmay Park.

June 27th has been pencilled in for a talk on the planning process but details had not been finalized as we went to press.

A successful meeting was held on May 18th when James Dunnett spoke on 150 years of housing in London.

London Forum

The London Forum will have held its latest open meeting, on housing issues, by the time you receive this. The annual summer party takes place on Tuesday August 22nd and there is a limited number of places for the Islington based societies who are its members.

The Forum now publishes a newsletter, *Insights*, five times a year. It is available as an e-mail and any member requesting it can contact our Secretary or the Newsletter Editor.

The Forum continues to monitor progress of the levelling up Bill and the cross-party opposition to some of the proposals.

The AGM will be held in October.

Sir Christopher Wren

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Sir Christopher Wren takes place at St. Paul's Cathedral on Tuesday June 27th, at 11 a.m. This is to mark the 300th anniversary of Sir Christopher's death. A ticket must be obtained to attend but there is no charge.

CPRE London's AGM 2023 – How Can We Green the Green Belt?

The centrepiece of CPRE London's AGM this year will be a discussion of how to green the Green Belt, and evaluating how to prevent urban sprawl in the Green Belt. The AGM is on Thursday **22nd June** at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, London E.C.1

Islington Council

Meetings in July (Town Hall, 7.30)

4th: Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny

8th: Licensing Sub-committee C

11th: Planning sub-Committee A

13th: Full Council

17th: Licensing Sub-Committee A

18th: Planning Committee

20th: Executive

Licensing Committee next meeting Sept.26th

Greater London Assembly

July Meetings in the new City Hall, 10a.m. except where stated.

4th: Planning & Regeneration

6th: Plenary –full Assembly

11th: Environment

13th: Transport

19th: Housing (2p.m.) –also June 27th.

20th Mayor's Question Time

The annual State of London debate takes place at the O2 on the evening of Thursday June 29th.

Booking necessary, no charge.

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