

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Mayor announces proposals to close 12 fire stations

After months of phoney war during which the Mayor stated that there were no proposals to lose fire stations, a formal announcement reversing that was made on January 10th

Leaked document alerted public

The initial denial was prompted by a leaked document which suggested that 17 stations might be closed across London, including all three that serve south Islington: Clerkenwell, Upper Street, and Kingsland. Although the latter is in Hackney, it is on the corner of Downham Road and its ground includes most of Canonbury, a significant part of St. Peter's, and a little of Mildmay.

The Fire Committee no longer includes a representative from every Borough, but Islington is represented by the Opposition Liberal Democrat leader, Terry Stacy. Both parties represented on Islington Council are united in opposing the loss of fire stations, because of the resultant delay in attending any emergency. Campaigning against the closures had thus begun in earnest before the formal announcement, and indeed the Islington Society had written to express its concern (see below).

The Fire Committee, meeting on January 19th, rejected the proposal for closures but the Mayor has indicated he will ignore its decision.

Upper Street reprieved

The formal announcement of closure proposals came on Thursday January 10th. Twelve stations are earmarked for closure. The Mayor is required to consult and the consultation period will extend into the next financial year, but before then the Mayor's budget will be approved. This is bound to fetter any discretion the Mayor might wish to exercise in tempering his initial proposals when he takes account of the responses to his consultation.

Islington Society response

The immediate past chair of the Islington Society who was a member of the fire authority of the 1990s wrote to the council leader just before Christmas.

"At the last meeting of its executive committee I was asked to write to you to express our deep concern at the reported threat to fire cover in the south of the Borough. I have also

signed the e-petition on behalf of the Society.

"Although it is welcome news that fewer fires occur now than in past times, as a result of various safety measures and not least the proactive work of the London Fire Service in educating residents, even one fire a year requires the facility to respond within minutes. We have little doubt that the present response times could no longer be met if any of our fire stations were closed.

"Clerkenwell Fire Station is of particular interest to us because it is the oldest working station in London. Its location at a major junction is ideal for its purpose of reaching as many points within eight minutes as possible. In our view, more use could be made of the upper storeys of the building and if the Mayor is having difficulty in balancing his budget it is in this area that he should be looking.

"The Kingsland site is similarly well placed for ease of access and this is why it serves part of our Borough (including my own home, so I must declare a personal interest) despite being some way into Hackney.

"It seems no time at all that I was attending, on behalf of the Council, the opening of the new fire station in Upper Street. Twenty years is the lifespan of a flat roof or a plastic window frame; buildings last for much longer and it is a waste of public resources to dispense with them so quickly.

"I understand that you are taking every effort to support the Islington representative on the Fire Committee. We fully endorse the action you are taking."

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The copy date for our next newsletter is June 3rd, 2013.

Islington Society News

Islington Society Design Awards

The award in 2012 for the best building completed in 2011 is reported in this issue. Nominations are now sought for the 2013 Awards for buildings completed in the year just ended.

Web site update

The Islington Society is very pleased to report that steady progress is being made in the preparation of its new website.

As well as the existing links to past editions of *Islington News*, membership forms, our publications, the website shall also include a section entitled "About Us", which will include a link to the Society's constitution and a short introduction to each of the committee members. There will be a page dedicated to upcoming events and the news page shall contain details of issues

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

Society publications

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

New River Head appeal decision

The would-be developer's appeal against the Council's decision to refuse the planning application to convert the Pump House to residential use has been rejected by the Inspector.

that are of concern to the Society and its members. A separate page entitled "Discover Islington" will contain interesting facts, quizzes and trivia about Islington. In due course, we hope to include a page which shall serve as an online forum where members can debate and share ideas in the form of posted messages.

We will keep you posted with further updates and hope that by the time the next newsletter is published, the new Islington Society website shall have been launched. HA

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A membership reminder form is enclosed with this issue.

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

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, as above

Local News

New twist to Ashmount School building

The Society opposed plans to move Ashmount School from its present site and building designed by Cadbury-Brown and built in the 1950s. The grounds were the iconic nature of the building and the loss of Metropolitan Open Land occasioned by the siting of the planned replacement.

The last council went ahead with the plan and it appeared that Metropolitan Open Land counted for very little. The new administration voted to continue with the plans, mainly because of the chronic need for housing which it was expected would be provided on the vacated site, either within the shell of the school building or following its demolition.

The building on MOL is nearing completion, but in a new twist it has emerged that there are two bids for the old site either of which would scupper the Council's plans. Both are bids to use the building for educational

purposes: a Free School and a private school. Islington is currently the only London Borough without a shortage of school places, but the Free School bid is led by parents from neighbouring Haringey where a shortage exists. Much of the natural catchment area of the Cadbury-Brown building is in Haringey. However, the proposal would deprive Islington both of a needed housing site and of a capital receipt. From the Islington Society point of view, it would probably secure the future of the building, but the loss of the capital receipt would almost certainly have an effect on Council services the Society would wish to see maintained. It is a great pity that the governors neglected maintenance of the old building, although there are many who would question the estimates of the costs of repair.

Building Schools for the future - what regard to the past?, page 5

Campaign to SAVE Smithfield Market gathers pace

The Smithfield general market, on the southern border of Islington, has been neglected for many years by its owners, the City of London Corporation. The Henderson Global Investments financial group wants to demolish it apart from three of the four façades, and English Heritage has been at best lukewarm about the buildings, which are not listed but are in the Smithfield Conservation Area.

The Campaign group SAVE, based very nearby amongst the friends of Alan Baxter Associates, is stepping up the campaign to save it. Time may be on their side, because once the CrossRail services come to Farringdon and Thameslink is upgraded at last, Farringdon will be the hub from which five airports can all be reached by a through train service. The point SAVE makes is that for centuries Smithfield has been recognised

as a public space and the demand for public space will escalate once the transport hub is up and running.

SAVE has commissioned the architect John Burrell who has prepared a visionary alternative development, retaining the whole of the structure. As was the case at St. Pancras station, the undercroft has immense potential for conferences, fashion shows, restaurants and clubs. With only basic repairs it and the first floor could be brought into immediate use. The mezzanine level could then be extended in a second phase, without losing the extensive provision of natural light afforded by the central dome and rooves.

SAVE has previously campaigned to retain Covent Garden, threatened in the 70s with a six-lane highway, and Billingsgate Market, threatened twenty years later.

Cally Market

The Cally Market re-opened on Saturday 26th January. The market is one of the steps being taken to improve the local area and to assist the small, independent businesses along the "Cally" by

attracting more trade to the area. Quality and locally produced goods are the focus and continued success depends on lots of support from local residents.

Goldsmith's Centre wins 2012 Design Award

The 2012 Conservation & Design award was presented by the Society on October 10th, when Alec Forshaw reported on the deliberations of the panel. Here is his speech.

It is a pleasure, once again, to have been asked to organise the judging of this year's nominations, and as in other recent years, despite the recession, there have plenty of good quality schemes to consider.

Amid current governmental mantra that planning causes delay and that there are quick fixes to stimulate development, it is worth remembering that the best schemes often take a long time to achieve, from inception to completion. Even though I left Islington Council nearly five years ago, I was involved, at the early stages, with most of completed buildings which we considered this year.

One of the schemes we looked at has a very important and long history, almost iconic indeed in the post-war story of Islington. The demolition and rebuilding of the 1960s Packington Estate has been an enormous and ambitious undertaking, involving planning and design briefs, a partnership between Islington Council and social housing providers, and large amounts of public consultations. This year we visited the completed phase along the canal side. We were very impressed by the concept and the quality of design, its details and materials, and the landscaping, particularly considering the cost constraints that such schemes are subject to. The Panel wished to commend the very positive contribution that this phase of the Packington redevelopment has made to its surroundings. Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects and their clients Hyde Housing and Rydon Construction are to be congratulated on their achievements, and we look forward to the completion of the further phases currently on site. On our tour we looked at three schemes in close proximity here in south Clerkenwell, all of very high quality, and all strong candidates for winning this year's award.

First we visited the Museum of the Order of St John at St John's Gate, where the previous slightly dingy museum is transformed by a new entrance and a new top-lit glazed link creating an enclosed courtyard, with new exhibits and new facilities, all extremely well designed (by Metaphor) on a limited budget. This is a museum (free I should add) which every Islington resident, young and old, should visit.

We moved on to 24 Britton Street, a site which is tucked away behind St John's Gardens and Britton Street. Here one the best 1970s modernist office buildings in the borough, originally designed and occupied by Yorke Rosenberg and Mardall, has

been extended and brought up to 21st century environmental requirements by Archer Architects for the Portland Estates and now occupied by a well-known and highly fashionable footwear firm. The addition of solar screens and high-performance glazing is so well done that it is barely noticeable against the original building, but what does catch the eye is the new glazed entrance and basement extension, an exquisite piece of design including a stunning staircase.

Finally we came to the new Goldsmith's Centre in which we stand. This site, originally the Eagle Court School, one of the first London Board Schools (intended when in 1874 to take 800 local children!!) and then home to the Smithfield Meat Traders College and the London Institute, had been empty and seeking a new use for several years. It is a listed building, and occupies a very tight and constricted site, surrounded by narrow streets.

We are lucky that this site did not simply become just another private residential/commercial scheme, but was purchased by the Goldsmiths' Company whose vision was to create something very special, a use that would enhance the traditional crafts which for so long characterised Clerkenwell, and a building which would foster craft skills, creativity, innovation, education and public access. Their architects Lyall, Bills and Young have risen superbly to the challenge, with a spectacular fusion of old and new, replacing what had been a dull 1960s block on the north Albion Place side with a crisply detailed new wing, connecting to the retained Victorian listed building by a minimalist glass foyer.

The quality of the finishes is superb. All of us on the judging panel felt immediately upon entering the building from the street that it was a truly uplifting and welcoming experience. Clerkenwell indeed has another jewel to add to its considerable collection of gems. We agreed that the Goldsmiths' Building was a worthy and outstanding winner of this year's Islington Design Award.

So, a winner and three commendations. I should like to thank all concerned for their contributions, and also my colleagues on the judging panel for their time and enthusiasm, as well of course the Islington Society and Jack Morris at the Business Design Centre for sponsoring the award.

Building schools for the future: what thought to the past?

James Dunnett has continued to monitor developments at Ashmount School and here he brings up to date a subject on which he spoke three years ago.

A number of apparently sound or even impressive schools have been demolished in recent years in Islington. Though no more than about fifty years old, they have been rebuilt in situ, or reappeared on another site shared with another school. Islington Green School is an example of the former: an impressive neo-constructivist secondary school in the form of a slab block of five storeys showing plenty of evidence of care in its one-off design by the architects, Scherrer and Hicks, was torn down two years ago and replaced by a structure reflecting the rather less substantial but more standardised culture of our own time. Only the William Mitchell mosaic mural on a boundary wall remains, which was listed independently due to the efforts of the Twentieth Century Society. It is doubtful whether any listable art works were incorporated in the new school.

At the other end of Prebend Street Bridge School was carefully designed by Jake Brown, a noted figure in the GLC/ILEA Department of architecture and in the architectural world generally. It showed the influence of Le Corbusier in its expressive use of concrete, but was pulled down five years ago and replaced by some dense housing of questionable quality. Bridge School itself an amalgamation of Colebrook and Rosemary Schools, has been merged in a new building with Holloway School, and the sale of its old site contributed to the costs of this rebuilding. But we have lost one of the most significant and individual buildings of its time in the Borough, and two schools now to share the site formerly occupied by one.

A third example is Highbury Grove School, where an excellent design by the highly regarded practice James Cubitt Fello Atkinson (whose work includes a major extension to Kings College Cambridge) has been replaced by a more routine design by the mass practice BDP. Samuel Rhodes School has also been fitted on the site, so that it is now much more fully used - crammed one might say: the buildings now back directly onto busy Highbury Grove, whereas they were previously well set back onto the site.

These new schools assuredly meet current insulation standards much better than those they have replaced. They are universally clad in insulated aluminium cladding panels (whose robustness and longevity have yet to be definitely established but which certainly give an

insubstantial impression), or are sometimes faced in unstained match-boarding (ditto), with double or triple glazing also prone to failure. Structure is generally of steel rather than concrete and that too contributes to the feeling of insubstantiality. The architects of these structures are generally working under much more restrictive terms of appointment (mostly for Private Finance Initiative contractors) than those of the buildings they have replaced, and the time and care they can take is generally much less: there is little room for the idealism of the past.

The urge to rebuild is partly fired by overwhelming concern with the objective of energy conservation, which has come to dominate architectural discourse to the exclusion of almost all other considerations - impoverishing the wider design debate. The imperative of this objective cannot be doubted but the search for it can be distorted, not least by the fact that energy in use is theoretically much easier to calculate than the energy embodied in new construction, which thus tends to get discounted - but which is so significant a factor that authorities such as Jonathan Porritt have of late supported the retention of buildings of the same vintage as these demolished schools in lieu of rebuilding. Three years ago in 'Conservation of Modern Architecture in Islington - Current Issues', I drew attention to some of these issues and in particular to the threat facing the Ashmount School building on Hornsey Lane. Unlike any of the other schools mentioned, this is locally listed, though rejected for listing at national level in 2005 (after a somewhat perfunctory assessment by English Heritage) when nominated by Conservation Officer Alec Forshaw. The statutory five years having passed since that assessment DOCOMOMO-UK has renominated it, drawing attention to the shortcomings of the original assessment, and the outcome is not yet known. A new school has however been built on Metropolitan Open Land nearby - Hornsey Recreational Area, a 'free' site because supposedly protected from development, with the prospect of substantial gains to the Council from the sale for development of the existing site to off-set the rebuild costs. Although the Council itself 'locally listed' the existing building, they have not researched its suitability for conversion to any other function, and advised bidders for the site that they could assume that consent for its demolition would be granted. What will happen if this time it

is nationally listed remains to be seen - there will be one redundant school on the Council's hands, because it is not at all evident that it can be converted to any other purpose while retaining its architectural value.

The original Ashmount is not a building that many passers-by will find it easy immediately to like, particularly over recent years when repair has been all but abandoned. But as Alec Forshaw has remarked, it is one of the most interesting twentieth century buildings in the Borough. Its sleek metal and glass forms probably owe something to the famous Case Study houses in California of those years - the early 1950s. The architect of Ashmount, HT Cadbury-Brown, was married to American architect Elizabeth Romeyn and so had much contact with the USA. They had worked with Erno Goldfinger on pavilions at the Festival of Britain of 1951. The drawings for Ashmount date from 1954 and it was completed in 1956. The steeply sloping corner site, where two linked schools, Infants and Juniors, were to be accommodated, presented quite a challenge. The two Halls and shared kitchen were gathered in a single square block in the corner, with the Junior School up the slope on Hornsey Lane and the Infants' school, with its open-air teaching balconies, downhill in Ashmount Road, the three forming a harmonious grouping of crisp rectilinear masses. The extremely light steel construction with exposed welded steel trusses (reminiscent of the famous Eames Case Study house), and the wide views to the south over London, lend the interior an extremely light and airy feel. The school is not as fully glazed as it looks, because much of the glazing is simply a facing on solid masonry, but nevertheless there has been a problem with solar heat gain. An external louvred shading screen could be added on the south façades, and carefully designed lift towers to the north elevation of the Junior School to meet the current demand for wheelchair access. Two independent reports commissioned by the Council, which they are reluctant to divulge, both highlighted the potential for upgrading. 'Reluctant' is something of an understatement - they have refused even when faced by a Freedom of Information request, and I have only seen them because they were copied to others some years ago.

Parallel with the 'battle for Ashmount' which has been going on for six years, a risk emerged this year to another school of the same date which I will mention because of the

implications of its story, even though it is not in Islington - Elliott School (this year renamed the Ark Academy) in Putney. This large secondary school designed for 1300 pupils is the last surviving school in which noted LCC schools architect John Bancroft had a hand (his 1970 Pimlico School having been demolished in 2010, to be replaced by the blandest of boxes), and it is nationally Grade 2 listed. It is described by Elain Harwood in her 2003 guide to post-war listed buildings as 'recognised as the finest of the LCC's in-house comprehensive schools'. She also reports that 'Elliott's teachers are extremely proud of their building, and architectural education has become part of their sixth form design courses'. Perhaps it was these courses that persuaded one pupil, Ed Lattimore, to become an architect and then to head a campaign this year to save it from destruction.

The school enjoys large rolling green grounds unlike anything to be found in Islington and its plan is of a clear 'Constructivist' type, with a long four-storey rectangular classroom block, partly raised on pilotis, to which a School Hall block is attached on one side and gym and workshop block on the other - a plan followed exactly by Goldfinger at his Haggerston School ten years later. Like Ashmount, Elliott is nearly 60 years old, the design life-span of such buildings, and so inevitably a considerable amount of renewal and maintenance is required. It was to have enjoyed a comprehensive restoration under the Building Schools for the Future programme, but when this was cancelled by the present government, it was left high and dry. The Priority School Building Programme put in place 'for the most urgent cases' was specifically described as unsuitable for schools where more than 10% of the structure were listed. This is because the funding was to be via PFI, whose contractors were reckoned to be unable to put forward a 'Value for Money' bid where large-scale renovation rather than rebuilding was involved. So there was thus - as with housing in the 1960s - a clear institutional obstacle to renovation rather than rebuilding.

Wandsworth Council, perceiving the urgency to prevent closure of the school, agreed to sell off 56% of the magnificent school grounds for development, including demolition of the gym & workshop block. Ed Lattimore's campaign actively supported by DOCOMOMO-UK reduced that to 40%, whose sale has now been approved by Michael Gove. Is this a sustainable way to maintain our school stock, let alone our schools heritage?

Four hundredth anniversary of the New River

Several events will commemorate this revolutionary Hugh Myddelton's New River, bringing drinking water the forty miles from Hertfordshire to Islington in a route that flowed downwards by no more than three inches, was completed on September 29th, 1613. Several events will be held to mark this anniversary.

Together with the Archaeology & History Society and the Canonbury Society, the history of the building of the New River will be revisited by

Annual Dinner, 2012

The 2012 Annual Dinner was held on 30th October at the AMICI Restaurant in Holloway Road. The 40 members who came for the Dinner enjoyed three courses with a varied selection of excellent food accompanied by select wines.

The Restaurant Manager Sergio had reserved part of the Restaurant for the Dinner. Our Chairman, David Gibson, addressed us entertainingly and invited all to raise a glass in a welcome toast. By general consent the Dinner had once again been a very agreeable way to meet with other members and

Islington awarded funding for the

Islington will once again hold a festival celebrating reading, writing and freedom of expression, thanks to funding from the Arts Council England.

Islington is the first local authority to have funding confirmed from the new Grants for the Arts Libraries Fund to hold the Word Festival across the borough in May 2013 and 2014.

£60,000 will be made available to Islington's library and heritage, and arts services, working with local arts organisation All Change and the Free Word Centre to run a variety of cultural events and activities with residents.

Details of this year's Word Festival in Islington are still to be confirmed, but last year it featured over 30 events including graphic novel workshops, a flash mob of young people reading on Highbury Fields, a nonsense poetry slam and a Bollywood Punch and Judy show. The festival attracted an audience of over 40,000 people.

Islington Council, Crossrail, the Islington Business Design Centre and Islington UNISON will also provide funding for the festival.

Islington Council's executive member for health and wellbeing, Cllr. Janet Burgess, said: "It's

development in our history

the Islington Society at a meeting in the Town Hall on September 18th.

The Hugh Myddelton Primary school is taking advantage of its association with the pioneering engineer and pupils are already working towards their involvement in the celebrations. The school opened in 1892 (as three schools) and moved to its present building, designed for Infant and Junior schools, in 1966.

to reinforce the strengths of the Society. It is worthy of note that the idea of an annual dinner emerged in responses to a survey of members' views carried out in 1997. The Society's then President Harley Sherlock reported two years later that the Annual Dinner had become a "welcome relief from all the serious-minded discussion that take up most of our time".

Diary Date: Please note that arrangements have been made for the 2013 Dinner to be held on Tuesday 29th October at Fredericks Restaurant in Islington High Street. FH

Word Festivals 2013 and 2014

fantastic news that we've been awarded this grant, which means we can again put together two exciting programmes for the Word Festivals in 2013 and 2014. This is a great opportunity for residents to get involved, have fun and experience a wide range of arts and culture taking place across the borough."

Nicky Morgan, Director of Libraries, Arts Council England, said: "Our investment in Word Festival in Islington is the first time that we have awarded funding through the £6 million Grants for the Arts Libraries fund. We opened this fund in September 2012 to invest in ambitious projects, delivered by public libraries, which work with cultural organisations and communities. Islington Word Festival does just that. We are excited to support this fun, innovative project as it continues to build momentum - and for audiences in and around Islington to engage in some truly high quality cultural events."

The full programme of events for the Word Festival 2013 in Islington will be published in April.

Holborn Studios - Another Historic Building Under Threat

Some of the most interesting features in Islington can be found in St Peter's Ward, between the Islington Tunnel and Sturt's Lock. This area contains some of the most unspoilt stretches of the Regent's Canal and the towing path offers a unique traffic-free walk, in an escape from the chaotic pace of twenty-first century city life.

The canal lies in a conservation area and although there are several modern buildings around City Road Basin it provides an excellent connection to our industrial past. Two of the most striking landmarks are the Victorian chimneys at Diespeker Wharf and Eagle Wharf. These significantly define the canal and their reflections in the water (see opposite) are magnets for photographers.

Admittedly, the canal suffers its share of pollution but as an open space it provides health benefits. Its tranquillity can reduce stress levels. But for how much longer will it remain an open space? Is there not a likelihood that over-development will transform it from a canal into a canyon? October 2012 marked the bicentenary of the commencement of canal construction works, and 2020 will be the bicentenary of the opening of the canal. But if current trends continue then there will be nothing left along the canal environment that reflects its original purpose. By 2020 it could become a glorified water feature passing through monotonous arrays of empty offices and under-utilised modern homes, unless all stakeholders take a pro-active interest in development plans and their impact on the neighbourhood.

In November 2012 a new regeneration proposal for Eagle Wharf was revealed at a public meeting of the Friends of Regent's Canal. The proposal was to demolish the existing Holborn Studios buildings, including the Victorian chimney, and to build modern offices, shops and flats on the site, rising to six storeys. The developers feel justified in their approach because they have hired a heritage consultant to tell them that the existing buildings are of limited architectural or historical interest. They have acknowledged that the site falls within the Regent's Canal Conservation Area and that the buildings are identified as Buildings of Townscape Merit, but they proudly state that they are not Listed either statutorily or locally. They have also claimed that the state-of-the-art proposal will make a positive contribution to the historic and built environment.

A big problem with these comments is that the Eagle Wharf site hosts the only surviving heritage buildings between Wenlock Basin and Rosemary Works. If this proposal proceeds unchallenged there will be nothing left in this historic environment save the locks and bridges.

Another problem with the heritage consultants' views is that they do not take into account the contribution the existing buildings make to the surrounding area. All surrounding buildings are modern and have little or no practical association with the canal. The Holborn Studios buildings have significant architectural and historical interest relative to all the surrounding buildings in the Packington area.

Technically, Holborn Studios is in Hackney, so the planning application will be dealt with by Hackney Council, but this site lies along the border with Islington and many Islington residents have chosen to live opposite this historic site.

The proposals have conveniently sidestepped the subject of the existing employment. Anybody reading comments about the "fragmented and poorly configured" existing buildings could be forgiven for thinking that the site is under-utilised or even derelict. However, this could not be further from the truth, because Holborn Studios is a world-renowned successful family business that employs or hosts hundreds of people every day. In 2009, Holborn Studios was a joint winner of the Mayor of Hackney's Business Awards, in recognition for the contribution it has made to the local economy. If these studios are forced to close then other local businesses, such as paint suppliers, will suffer heavily, and this part of London will lose its status as a an employment hub for photographers, artists and other creative people.

As this newsletter went to press, the planning application was still undergoing validation and had not appeared on the Hackney Council website. Once it is in the public domain we will be able to see the number of affordable family homes it will provide and can then weigh up the positive contribution it could make to the neighbourhood if other shortcomings can be overcome.

There are so many anomalies in this proposal that it is no surprise that there are delays in putting formal plans into the public domain. It seems so extreme that it might even be designed to test our ability to spot deliberate errors, irregularities and planning breaches!



Holborn studios viewed from within the London Borough of Islington

The Taylor Review of planning guidance

The long-awaited Taylor Review on planning guidance reform has arrived.

As part of the Government's campaign to cut red tape and 'simplify' the planning system, Lord Taylor's small group of experts has examined thousands of pages of planning guidance - from letters to planning officers to best practise guides and secondary legislation.

The Review's recommendations are manifold. The most sweeping change would be the creation of a single web-based resource, free of charge and frequently updated to give the public the most accurate possible guidance. Only material published on this site would constitute official Government guidance signed off by the Chief Planner.

Also deemed necessary is an extensive pruning of extant guidelines. The group have arranged these into four categories;

- those to be cancelled as soon as possible (preferably before 28th March)
- those to have only relevant sections or clauses incorporated into ongoing guidance
- those to be retained until replaced by revised guidance
- those to be left unmolested.

Heritage protection guidance, as enshrined in PPS5, is to be replaced by up-to-date guidelines put together by the Historic Environment Forum - the group currently formulating practice guidance to support the Historic Environment section of the NPPF - as specifically noted in the Taylor Review.

English Heritage and the Royal Town Planning Institute have both published their responses. English Heritage highlighted the following points:

- Initial consultation runs to 15th February 2013.
- The consultation is on the proposed lists of guidance to be deleted, the nature of the proposed preparation and the future management of planning-related guidance. It will inform the Government's path for preparing the new guidance.
- The goal is 'establishing a single, coherent and up-to-date suite of only essential guidance which is easily accessible on-line'.
- Some heritage-related documents will be cancelled by 28th March 2013.
- Other documents, including PPS5 Practice Guide and Circular 07/09 on the Protection of World Heritage Sites will be replaced, most likely by July 2013.
- It is recommended that the PPS5 PG is withdrawn only once replacement guidance has been issued by sector, in order to support the NPPF.
- The Review seems to imply that the heritage text will be produced by HEF and not by Government and will thus be less definitive. HEF may wish to separate the current draft guidance into two parts with one part being included by Government in its web-based guidance, and the other more technical material being produced by HEF with EH assistance as a separate publication/web-resource.
- The position of future guidance from NDPBs such as EH and agencies is not clear. There does not appear to be a recommendation that EH guidance such as 'Enabling Development' should not be produced, but the implication is that it will not have any formal Government endorsement and will stand or fall on the weight given by Planning Inspectors at appeal.

The Royal Town Planning Institute responded to key recommendations.

Government should be clear what is government planning guidance, and what is not.

The RTPI has consistently called for a (limited) government role in planning guidance and we would take this as being an implicit recognition that there should be some. The RTPI agrees guidance should provide essential information and exclude best practice. It should not repeat statutes and regulations. We called for this in 2011 and are pleased to see this recommended.

There should be a web-based live resource hosted on a single site, accessed via links within the NPPF, kept under annual review and free of charge.

We welcome this suggestion, and indeed there is

a small precedent in the form of the Plan Making Manual hosted by the Planning Advisory Service. On charging we are concerned at the apparently increasing amount of planning data - even data pertinent to Parliamentary discussions - which is no longer collected by the public sector and which therefore is charged for. At least planning guidance should be exempted from this.

The Taylor review was not charged with reviewing guidance badged by departments other than CLG (unless jointly badged), However the Taylor review sensibly suggests that the only government planning guidance to be afforded that title must be on the single website.

We wholeheartedly support a recommendation that it should be the government's Chief Planner who manages a sign-off process for any guidance badged as government planning guidance, and therefore constitutes a material consideration in planning.

The Taylor Review was asked to consider the scope of the "planning sector" to produce appropriate guidance. The Review recommends that the guidance website could signpost best practice guidance produced outside government, stopping short of endorsing it.

Many organisations are eager to produce advice on planning matters. There was a risk at one point that there could be a proliferation of (maybe even conflicting) "guidance".

We are concerned that signposting to best practice risks being seen as a kind of low-level Government endorsement. The amount of time and effort CLG would need to commit to maintaining signposting and deciding which material merits sign posting should not be underestimated, and we would not wish to see resources unduly diverted from the more important task of updating Government guidance.

The Review contains four annexes covering guidance to be cancelled, revised, retained temporarily, and created afresh to respond to current conditions such as the NPPF.

The RTPI sent a list to Greg Clark, former planning minister on behalf of six leading organisations in the sector in May. We are pleased to see some of that list appearing in the Taylor Review list such as flood risk, updating housing assessments (SHMAA and SHLAA) and creating viability guidance.

The Taylor Review recommends an urgent consultation on the planning guidance question.

RTPI welcomes the opportunity to respond to a consultation on the work of the review. We continue to promote the very best in planning practice and look forward to continuing to work with other organisations to achieve this.

Transport News Round-up

Orbirail completed

The Overground duly reached Clapham Junction via Surrey Quays and the South London line on December 9th, making it possible to travel in either direction from Highbury & Islington or Canonbury to the world's busiest station. Apart from some initial problems with station indicators, partly caused by over anxiety to avoid people taking the train in the opposite direction to the one they needed, the service is running well and drawing yet more people to London Overground. One in eight of all journeys on the Network Rail lines is made on the London Overground.

The franchise granted via TfL, LOROL, recently celebrated five years of unprecedented growth, far outweighing the success of the best performing private sector train operating company. The greatest challenge in the next five years will be to cope with the rising demand. The cost of restoring platform 1 at Clapham Junction was deemed prohibitive, so platform 2 has been split in two with the result that only one train from either direction can stand there at any one time. At the present rate of progress, this will soon be insufficient. A million travellers used the new line in its first month. There are plans to lengthen further the four car trains to five. Six will be more difficult, because it involves platform lengthening and there is insufficient space at some stations.

There is also an overwhelming case for expanding the network used by London Overground. If trains to New Cross, which is the only station yet to benefit from significant frequency improvements, were extended to Hayes, New Cross would justify more trains and the interchange it offers with services to Sidcup and Orpington would extend still further direct access to the TfL network. Unlike the South London lines, Hayes could retain its radial link into Charing Cross if the Overground simply took over its Cannon Street services.

Upper Holloway, Crouch Hill electrification

The bizarre decision not to include the western half of the Barking Gospel Oak line in government plans for electrification is still under review. Jeremy Corbyn extracted an admission that TfL has offered a significant share of the cost of the scheme, which would benefit the country as a whole because of the line's extensive use by freight trains. These

trains may run hundreds of miles under wires but are compelled to use diesel traction because wires are absent from this 4¼ mile stretch. Platform lengthening cannot be carried out cost effectively because the diesel trains are of a different carriage length to their hoped for successors.

Access ramps retained post Paralympics

For the duration of the Paralympics, temporary ramps were installed at some tube stations which TfL planned to remove after the games. The campaign group Transport for All has managed to persuade them that wheelchair users might like to travel to events other than the Paralympics, and the ramps are now staying. The programme of lift provision has been renewed, although the Underground at Finsbury Park will remain inaccessible even though Network Rail is obliged to provide level access to its platforms as part of Thameslink 2000 and plenty.

Dalston Kingsland has still not been approved for lifts, despite the huge number of potential users, because there is an accessible station nearby (Dalston Junction). On the basis of this logic, King's Cross does not need to be accessible if St. Pancras is, and presumably wheelchair users wishing to go to Finsbury Park can do so via Leicester and Peterbrough.

Is the end of Oystercard in sight?

From December 13th it has been possible to pay the Oystercard fare for single journeys on buses without an Oystercard, if you have a debit card with a "contactless" chip, obviating the need to top up an Oystercard. But it has some way to go to replace the Oystercard: not yet available on the Underground or rail services, and no facility for daily capping, so that Oyster is cheaper if you make more than three bus journeys in a day. And some people seem to have paid twice on both Oyster and debit card for one journey.

Hybrid buses for route 73

The 73 route is now officially operated 100% by hybrid buses, the busiest route for which this is the case - it uses more than fifty vehicles. It joins the 76. The New Bus for London continues to provide a limited number of hybrid vehicles on the 38, and about 40% of the 19 route is operated by these vehicles. The main feature is that idling at bus stops should no longer take place, which can be disconcerting when first experienced.

Sesquicentenary

The Underground was 150 on January 9th. 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 7.30, Town Hall, unless stated otherwise.

February 19th: Conserving Conservation. Alec Forshaw and Kate Graham will be joined on the panel of speakers by current planning officers from Islington.

March 12th: Visit to Goldsmiths' Centre site in St. John Street. (winner of 2012 Architecture Award), 3 p.m. No charge, but limited numbers, please e-mail andrewbosi@aol.com to confirm a place. Followed at 5 p.m. by a visit to Kurt Geiger Building in same street.

April 9th: Sean McLaughlin, Director of Housing & Adult Social Services, LB Islington.

May 14th: A.G.M., then speaker from Greenpeace.

June 11th: Kenny Wiles, Head of Waste Management, north London.

June 28th: Annual pub crawl starts Pig & Butcher, Theberton St. 6 p.m. and should include the Glassworks, the Craft Beer Company, the Hundred Crows Rising & the Lexington, all new names on the list of Islington pubs visited.

Our monthly Meet the Officers meetings are at the Marquess Tavern, 32 Canonbury Street on the first Tuesday each month at 9.0 p.m., on Tuesdays 5th March, 2nd April, 7th May and 5th June 2013.

July 16th: Church crawl

September 18th: New River special: see page 7

October 29th: Annual dinner, Frederick's, £25.

November 11th (*provisional*): visit St. John's Gate

Other Events in or around Islington:

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

February 20th, 2013 "London Canal Museum: the first 20 years". Speaker: Martin Sach.

March 20th, 2013 The Peter Powell Memorial Lecture: "How far have we travelled on a green road?". Speaker: Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury.

April 17th, 2013 "Dickens 2012: a review of last year's events". Speaker to be confirmed.

May 15th, 2013 "From Islington to Central Europe" Speaker: Dr Thomas Lorman.

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

London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies

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

March 11th: Aviation policy in London

Islington Council

May 1st to 31st: Word festival (see page 7).

Rose Bowl youth club, Marquess Estate

Thursday 7th March 2013 "Annual Dinner and Auction", main fundraising event of the Friends of the Rose Bowl in support of the youth club.

See the website: friendsoftherosebowl.org.uk

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square

16th January - 7th April 2013 "Giorgio Morandi - Lines of Poetry" Etchings and watercolours in near-abstract forms of landscapes, still life and flower studies.

17th April - 16th June 2013 "The Estoricks: Dealing to Collect" to mark the centenary of Eric Estorick's birth.

The Cally Market

Every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., located along the Caledonian Road south of the Overground station to Bridgeman Road (see page 3).

Almeida Theatre,

Almeida Street, N.1 0207 359 4404

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

18th January - 16th March 2013 "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James (adapted) with Anna Madeley. Director: Lindsay Posner.

Première. Portrait of the poet Edward Thomas.