

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter February 2009

Planning news

Ram Brewery Buckhold Road

The developers Minerva plc were granted planning approval for their proposals at the December 2008 meeting of the Planning Applications Committee, subject to completion of the Section 106 Agreement.

We are concerned that the terms of the planning obligations may never be met, as there is no specific plan to be implemented. The road improvements are far from settled and the developers have no obligation to place the money required with the Council before plans are finalised. The obligation will last for fifteen years after which the Council could use any money available for other purposes. We consider this to be a most unsatisfactory situation.

Springfield Hospital

An application was submitted to the Council in late autumn of last year for the redevelopment of the site. This application did not comply with the Council's full requirements and was returned. A further submission was made later in the year and was accepted and registered by the Council.

The layout of the scheme is broadly in line with plans that we have seen in the past however the density has been reduced to approximately 1200 units together with commercial workspace, some retail units, car parking and the facilities required by the National Health Service Trust who are promoting the scheme.

We have been broadly supportive of the proposals in the past as a method of regenerating an area of the Borough unknown to many residents, however we understand there was local opposition at a public meeting recently. We are attempting to arrange a further meeting with the planning team for Springfield Hospital to consider with them the plans presented to the Council.

Clapham Junction Station

The planning application for the comprehensive redevelopment of the land adjoining St John's Hill, Falcon Road and the station was submitted late last year. Public consultation is ongoing and we submitted our Society's objections within the period required. Main objections appear to be the wholehearted rejection

of the two 42 storey towers, which will dominate the surrounding area, the density of the scheme and the fact that no social housing provision has been made. It appears that much of the station improvement has already been funded as work is underway by the rail operators or NetWork Rail, although the improvements to the station access are very welcome.

The Planning Applications Committee has indicated that they may consider the proposals in March. It is not too late to make any comments which you may have either for or against the scheme.

Former Trinity Cars site East Hill

An application has been received for the redevelopment of the site for a 158-bed hotel together with a restaurant, offices and two levels of underground parking. The applicants have shown Holiday Inn as the operator.

The proposals are for a six/seven floor building covering virtually the entire site, with vehicular access from the existing western entry point on East Hill.

We have looked at the plans submitted and have considered the planning statement and expect to submit an objection to the height, massing and the overshadowing of the Church and church buildings adjoining. The view east from The Book House and the Huguenot Burial Ground would be significantly altered if the height proposed is permitted.

We do not believe that the proposed use of the building would cause particular difficulty, although vehicular access and drop off points are likely to cause some difficulty at peak traffic times.

Please let us know if you have any comments or wish us to look at planning matters of concern to you. We are always looking for new members for both the Society and individual groups, if you have enthusiasm, expertise and a little time to spare we would welcome your contact.

Philip Whyte

our January meeting

On 21st January, Jonathan Kennedy, Executive Director, gave an enthusiastic summary of Tara's work and achievements to date to a small but interested audience.

Started over 30 years ago in 1977 as a response to a murder of a Sikh in Southall, Jatinder Verma (still the Artistic Director) wanted to do something to bring different cultures together; what better than theatre to do this?

The company is still based in Wandsworth. Have you ever noticed a little shop opposite Earlsfield Station and wondered what it was? It is the headquarters of Tara and also houses a 70-seat studio theatre. This is used to try out productions before they tour and to give performing space to a wide range of comedy, poetry, dance, music, politics and drama.

What Tara is not is an Asian company of actors doing Asian work for an Asian audience. It is a mixed company of trained actors. As well as productions of classic theatre, they do draw upon different cultures' ways in order to present their individual version of standard texts – for example this spring there is an ancient Bangladeshi form of storytelling theatre in 'People's Romeo'.

Several actors have launched their careers there; this pioneering company has performed at the National Theatre (Tartuffe and Cyrano de Bergerac); the West End (Little Clay Cart); exhibited 'The Ramayana' at the British Museum (over 114,000 visitors); participated in the Wandsworth Arts Festival; taken part at the Beijing

Olympic torch relay in Trafalgar Square; toured all over the UK (including in Junior Schools a play about Divali 'When the Lights Went Out') as well as abroad (as far away as Australia).

Youngsters involved with the Olympic torch ceremony in Trafalgar Square decided that they wanted to do more – and chose Shakespeare. Following reduced versions of Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream, this spring they will be performing a reduced version of Twelfth Night. Arts Beat is the young people's theatre group.

Despite Tara reaching an audience of over 35,000 in 2008, sadly the Arts Council funding has been halved so a renewed effort to raise funds has started – including the successful launch of Tara Angels.

This year, to pick from a hugely varied program, there will be a co production at the National Theatre (followed by a tour) of 'The Black Album', based on a book by Hanif Kureishi set in 1989, the year of the fatwa on Salman Rushdie. There is 'Sailing to Britain', a 2012 Olympic project culminating in a show on a boat sailing up the Thames to Greenwich; and to celebrate the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and the UK, the Tanabata 'Star' Festival aimed at everyone over age 14. And if that weren't enough, Tara is teaching a course on theatre design at Wimbledon School of Art

The website www.tara-arts.com is being redesigned but you can sign on for email updates. There are also posters and leaflets in your local library giving details of the varied blend of live performances.

Living Streets

tell us about the State of our Streets

August 2009 marked the 80th anniversary of the formation of Living Streets. Join our survey by following the link below, and help guide our work for the next 80 years!

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Since we formed in 1929, the way our streets are designed and used has changed enormously. We want to find out if you think this is for the better or for worse, and what changes would really improve the streets that you use every day.

We are using our 80th anniversary to get your views on what's really important about our streets. We will use your responses to guide our campaigning work, and to show

local and national politicians and Government what matters to people about their neighbourhoods.

So whether it's slowing down traffic, making safe routes to walk to the local shops, or even being able to hold street parties to get to know your neighbours, we want to know

<http://www.livingstreets.org.uk>

Living Streets
4th Floor Universal House
88-94 Wentworth Street LONDON E1 7SA

You may know Living Streets better by its former name The Pedestrian Association. It changed its name in 2001 – and as it says on its web site '... we changed our name from the Pedestrians Association to Living Streets, but our ideals have remained the same. From its earliest days, the Pedestrians Association has been scoring successes on behalf of pedestrians. In the 1920s, our campaigns persuaded the Government to introduce the driving test, the 30mph urban speed limit and pedestrian crossings. The Association also helped write the very first Highway Code!'

A walk on the east side

London Bridge to Stratford

Led by Alan Fennell, a stalwart group of Society members explored changing East London by walking from London Bridge to Stratford. We set off from the station along the traffic-free Thames path towards Tower Bridge, noticing, immediately, the handsome Art Deco building built by Goodhart Rendell, once the offices and warehouse of the Hays Wharf Company. Close by is Hays Wharf Galleria, grade II listed. Built by William Cubitt in 1856, it became one of the chief delivery points for ships bringing cheese and tea and continued in use for over a century, although with drastically declining trade after World War II. Acquired by the St Martin's Property Group in 1987, the wharf gates were permanently closed, the wharf filled and the area covered with the Victorian railway style roof we see today.

Within a few minutes, we had left Victoriana behind and were passing sleek new office buildings, including Norman Foster's City Hall, home of Boris and the GLA, which exemplifies cutting edge design for the concerns of the new Millennium. Its spherical shape means it has 25% less surface area than a cube of the same volume so that less heat escapes in winter. Its tilt exposes a minimum surface area to the sun, and each floor is stepped to provide natural shade for the floor beneath. These, and other factors, enable City Hall to do without both a boiler to generate heat and an air conditioning unit to cool the building down.

We were back to the past as we moved towards Tower Bridge whose Gothic Revival design and Cornish granite and Portland stone cladding conceal powerful Victorian engineering. When the bridge was opened in 1894, it was the largest and most sophisticated bascule (i.e. see-saw) ever built. Originally, pedestrians could use the upper level walkway, useful no doubt when the lower part was raised, but this has been closed since 1910.

Over the bridge, we turned into St Katherine's Dock, expressing differing opinions about the stolid Tower Hotel and regretting the loss, by fire, two or three decades ago of most of the old warehouses. In Wapping, the Thameside route alternates between riverside walks bringing Canary Wharf ever closer to view, and picturesque old streets, no longer seedy. Historic pubs such as The Town of Ramsgate were noted and The Prospect of Whitby proved irresistible - we stopped! Opposite

is the old Wapping Hydraulic Power Station, now converted into an arts centre and restaurant. Some of the original equipment is still in place.

Next, to Limehouse Basin, originally known as the Regent's Canal Dock and built for the transfer of cargo from ocean-going vessels to canal barges. The canal towpath took us up to Mile End Park which is a recent creation on bomb-damaged land. Of particular interest to us was its Green Bridge – literally that – a grassy ramp spanning the busy Mile End Road and successfully connecting the two halves of the park.

A little further along the Regent's Canal, we turned right into the Hertford Union Canal, built to provide a short cut from the River Lea Navigation to the Thames. It flanks Victoria Park, laid out by Sir James Pennethorne, who also gave us Battersea Park. We soon turned off the Lead Navigation and ascended higher ground on top, so John told us, of the Bazalgette sewers, one of Victorian London's grates achievements. Our route now gave us a splendid view of London's great hope – Olympic Park. 607 acres of contamination, disused landfill neglected buildings and pylons are being transformed to form, once the Games are over, the largest park built in a European city for 150 years along with 10,000 homes.

From this busy scene, it was just a short walk to buses to Stratford and then home.

Southside

On the rainy Thursday morning of January 22nd your Chairman John Dawson, Meetings group colleague Diana Godden and I gathered in Caffè Nero, Southside Shopping Centre, for a meeting with Glenn Burton of Delancey, owners for the past 2 years, in partnership with Land Securities, of the much-criticised mall. All looked forward to an exchange of ideas, observations and opinions on this site which has for so long been problematic for users and owners alike.

A year ago Glenn Burton expressed his willingness to address the Wandsworth Society about his company's plans for Southside, but difficulties in finalising these have made this so far impossible, as those who turned up for the expected meeting on November 19th last year will remember. But now, crunch notwithstanding, Delancey's intentions have progressed to the point where a presentation to us in September is confidently expected.

Delancey has already gone some way beyond mere intentions: users will have noticed some brighter, smarter 2-storey shops with wider, more welcoming access from the mall, and some neat, well-designed signage. The whole place looks cleaner and more attractive - though only in the southern and central sections: the north mall remains more desolate and emptier than ever, awaiting the arrival of a "major retailer" with a sizeable "anchor" store, 2 storeys high. We are assured that agreement on this is imminent, and then redevelopment of that end can begin, with temporary reletting of the smaller units. It appears, somewhat shockingly, that high profile retailers pay very little rent in shopping centres, their supposed capacity to attract the public being a strong bargaining point.

Glenn Burton, affable and open-minded, acknowledging the difficulties of making a commercial success and a pleasant amenity of Southside, stressed his company's determination to upgrade it aesthetically - and here they have made a start. On our extensive walkabout around the mall, both inside and outside, he acknowledged the lack of signage in many areas, and agreed that the cinema's presence could and should be far more clearly signalled - a display of posters and programmes inside and outside the mall would add to liveliness and audience numbers. The large

empty upstairs area outside the cinema entrance would be ideal for community use - performance arts, such as the Tara company (subject of our January meeting) and music, dance and gymnastic groups. A lot could be done to improve the ambience and turn Southside into a communal asset.

Under Delancey's plan the disparate untidiness and ugliness of the outside will be replaced by an integrated, harmonious construct, part newly built, part newly clad, part newly painted, and opened up to the street frontage on all sides. New parking will replace the "red" car park and the Garratt Lane ramp. Trees, already awaiting shipment from Holland, will replace those sacrificed to intended development 6 years ago - irony that will not be lost on members! - and tubs of bushes are also envisaged.

This optimistic vision is dependent on the High Street being part-pedestrianised and returned to 2-way traffic, as is intended by Minerva, developers of the Ram Brewery site. They have pledged millions towards the new traffic scheme, and their retail development is intended as being complementary to Southside, not in competition with it.

All of course is contingent on future financial circumstances. Come September will Glenn Burton be asking us to be patient yet further, or will he be confirming Delancey's plans to us? In your 40-year old dreams, Wandsworth Society!

*Wendy Cater
with contributions from
Diana Godden and John Dawson*