

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter March 2017



What will become of the trees on Swandon Way? Current issues...

From the Chair

Since our last 'regular' Newsletter, members will have received our 60-page Christmas 'Bedside'. Grateful thanks to Iain Gray, the editor, for an eclectic mixture of articles, reflecting the wide interests of members: from Wandsworth to Sri Lanka, café to pub, local heritage to air pollution. 'Planning and trees' is the theme of this short Newsletter*, as the picture above suggests – see what Philip Whyte (Homebase and B&Q developments) and Celia Jones (on trees) have to say.

Since Christmas Society members have enjoyed 'update' presentations by Council officers on the development of Nine Elms and Vauxhall; and a lively 'conversation' with Helen Dorfman, Principal of Burntwood School, about 'Education Matters'. We look forward to a further visit to the school.

Always behind the scenes of our activities is a group of members keeping the machine oiled, the presses rolling. Please help them and 'us' by **paying subs for 2017** promptly (now £15 per household or £10 for retired households; £30 for businesses/

organisations). Subs can be sent to The Wandsworth Society, Studio 8, Royal Victoria Patriotic Building, SW18 3SX. If paying by standing order, please amend that now, if not done already.

And, if we don't have it already, **please let us have your email address**. You will then receive monthly 'flyers' (no more than that) about meetings and events direct to your computer or phone. (We don't share your address with anyone). And please complete a Gift Aid form if you are eligible to do so.

Look forward to seeing you at our members' talks and AGM on Thursday 9 March (see back page).

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*Our next (8-page) Newsletter should reach you by early April – 'normal service' should then resume!

Planning News – Philip Whyte reports:

What next (I ask in early 2017)? Housing remains a major issue; there is increasing concern about the need to improve local air quality; there will be further restrictions on car use in urban centres for short journeys (a difficulty for those with restricted mobility!). There are 20mph restrictions on non-TfL roads in the borough, but doubts over their policing. We hope there will soon be progress on Wandsworth Town's gyratory (costs are being reappraised). We await more news on Crossrail 2.

Homebase, Swandon Way* (2016/7356) Following refusal of the 2016 application, we welcomed a reduction in height of the main tower – but it would still be very visible from East Hill. The main frontage to Swandon Way would be an almost unbroken façade of buildings, with workspace on the ground floor but limited access for servicing from the rear. The majority of accommodation is residential but there is no specific allocation of the types. A new entrance to Wandsworth Town Station is offered, but apparently no other useful contribution to the public realm. We shall soon be registering the Society's strong objections, along with the hundreds already listed on the Council's planning website. They include a petition to the Council, impressively organised at high speed by the Tonsley Residents Association,

B&Q site, Smugglers Way* (2017/0580) Another major scheme under consideration – 14 blocks, ranging from 9 to 15 storeys, mainly residential use. Some workspace proposed on the ground floor – welcome, but no replacement for the DIY store! And significant numbers of trees under threat.

Fraser Properties, Riverside Quarter* (2017/0090) – a revised final phase. A reduction in height of the main tower from 19 to 15 storeys and other changes were welcome, but our earlier concerns over the density of the scheme (now increased) were ignored. We have, therefore, along with many local residents, registered the Society's continuing opposition.

Linton Fuels site, Osiers Road* (2016/6164) - application for residential use (up to 14 storeys) on a restricted site beside the River Wandle and railway. The scheme is over dense, threatens the amenity of its neighbours and provides very little public benefit. It puts further pressure on public infrastructure but, above all, it fails inexcusably to provide sufficient affordable housing. We have urged refusal.

39-41 East Hill/94 North Side (former Trinity Cars)* Following earlier approvals for a hotel and then a residential redevelopment (not taken

forward), the Council has now approved an application for a care home for the elderly and infirm – a building of similar height and massing to the earlier residential scheme. We criticised the external appearance – resembling an office block; no softening to the elevation with trees or planting.

Gwynneth Morgan Day Centre, East Hill (2016/3761) The Council owners are proposing to add a second floor to the disability centre, but the application still remains 'invalid'(!). Meanwhile, a **hideous hoarding**, approved by the Council earlier, a 3-storey high illuminated advertising panel in the grounds of the Centre has just been erected (picture opposite). We firmly believe such panels are not appropriate in, or (as in this case) close to, a conservation area, and should only be used in commercial locations such as Southside (currently).

Tree Preservation Orders* Jointly with the Wandsworth Tree Wardens Network, the Society applied for TPOs for all trees on the Swandon Way and Smugglers Way frontages of the Homebase and B&Q development schemes. Mature trees should not be sacrificed for development in this way. They line what will be our principal road route through town after TfL's 'gyratory' plans are implemented.

Cat's Back Bridge Users of the Common will know the bridge on the Common that crosses the railway. Network Rail has recently replaced a concrete bridge with a steel one. A 58 metre crane was employed, partly to avoid the felling of some trees.

1-9 Church Row* A recent application (which we broadly supported), was withdrawn by the then owners. A new application is now awaited from Greenland plc, following a public consultation in January. First impressions were not encouraging. This Georgian terrace (Grade 2* listed), pictured below, is the town centre's finest architectural feature. We shall be studying the application carefully from a conservation perspective.

*For more, go to www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk. (Planning application numbers included in brackets)



The management of Wandsworth's street trees

Pat Langley, the Council's Arboricultural Manager, talked to the Society in October. Celia Jones reports.

One of the many reasons to enjoy life in Wandsworth is the number and variety of the borough's trees. For the past 25 years they have been under the eagle eye of Patrick Langley, Arboricultural Manager with Enable, and it is Pat and his team of five we have to thank for planting, maintaining, monitoring and fighting for the continued health and survival of these trees. Pat's excellent talk gave us a breakdown of what exactly he and his colleagues do, and the different areas for which he is responsible. He illustrated his talk with display panels and sections of trees and tree trunks.

There are some 50,000 trees on Pat's database, including 15,000 on streets and highways, 20,000 on estates and 15,000 in parks. Most of the work is carried out by contractors - currently, the tree surgeons are on an 8-year contract, which allows for a degree of continuity. Pat explained the annual selection and purchasing policy (from a variety of nurseries), the need to select trees suitable for each location - for example, the degree of robustness required for each site - and the fact that in general the best size for planting is 1.5 metres high. Delivery is in late November and the trees (roughly 250 a year), and their watering tubes, are planted as soon as possible and the young trees watered twice a month between April and September. Mature trees are checked regularly by Enable and pruning carried out on a 24-month cycle on streets, or 36 months on estates - which explains why every so often all the trees in a given area suddenly appear to have received drastic 'short back and sides' treatment.

Pat discussed the problems that his team encounters, some new, some old. Different trees have different characteristics, horse chestnut and ash are brittle and apt to damage easily; apples and pears are much stronger; horse-chestnuts have very soft wood. Trees are often hit by motorists: the damaged bark will then present an ideal opportunity for disease to enter the wound - apparently a damaged tree, whether the result of careless motorists, falling branches or vandalism, almost invariably begins a downward slide, not always visible to the naked eye. Subsidence poses other problems and can be very expensive for the Council: claims can be huge (and the Finance Department unwilling to get involved!).

The alarming proliferation of pests and diseases attacking trees across the country is not always easily dealt with: plane trees suffer from a fungus 'die-back' on the upper side of their branches which is

often very difficult to spot; horse-chestnuts are attacked by both canker and leaf miner; there is the dreaded oak processionary moth, which requires expensive spraying; and then there is ash dieback (chalara), about which it appears nothing can be done. Sometimes it seems that we are suffering plagues of biblical proportions among our trees.

But Wandsworth now has a flourishing band of tree wardens, ably led by Andrew Wills and Susy Lloyd. Wardens monitor trees in their area and liaise with Pat and his team and are increasingly involved in planning work - too many developers ignore existing trees and would fell them willy-nilly and it is more than time that they are brought to an understanding of how vital trees are to us all, both in combating pollution and increasing our sense of wellbeing. It is hoped too that in future the Society and the tree wardens can work together to influence Council policy when deciding future planning applications. Several Society members are tree wardens, and new recruits are always welcome.

So, despite the many threats to urban trees in the modern world, we are fortunate in Wandsworth - but we need to exercise constant vigilance to ensure that they remain to give us continuing pleasure.

For more information on area tree wardens, go to www.wandsworthtreewardens.org.



A hideous hoarding arising; more trees here until recently (see opposite page) picture by Peter Farrow

Wandsworth Society Events and Contacts

Our Meetings

Our regular venue is *West Side Church, corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane, SW18 2QQ*. Meetings are open to all, free of charge – but we hope of course that newcomers will join the Society! Refreshments.

Thursday 9 March, 7 for 7.15
Annual General Meeting – officers' reports, discussion and committee elections. Open to all (but only Society members may vote).

(8pm) Some Society Members' Enthusiasms:

Peter Farrow: a printer's fonts
Cyril Richert: Clapham Junction Action Group
David Kirk: Afghanistan and culture shocks

Thursday 20 April, 7.45 for 8
Community engagement: community gardens & orchards, 'Transition Towns' & 'Pollinator Paths'

A session led by Martin Coble (Wendelsworth Community Garden & Orchard) and Ollie Smallwood (Bramford Community Garden). Site visits are to be arranged – details to be announced.

Thursday 11 May, 7.45 for 8
'Uncertain Light' – illustrated talk by local author Marian Molteno about her latest novel.
Wandsworth Arts Fringe event

Thursday 8 June, 7.45 for 8
'Industrial life in the 1930's - work in a Wireless Factory' – illustrated talk by Dr Tom Going
Wandsworth Heritage Festival event

Our Outings

*start at Clapham Junction, outside M&S Simply Food, at 9.30. No booking required; pay on the day. Trips are within the Zone 6 or Freedom Pass area, and include an optional lunch gathering. caroline@pookfamily.co.uk

Thursday, 23 March – Visit to Down House ~ home of Charles Darwin for 40 years, where he developed his revolutionary theories and wrote the Origin of the Species. The garden was his laboratory and worth a visit in its own right. The visit will include a short walk from the village and

bus stop. Entry cost is £10 (free for English Heritage members). Lunch is available at a village pub.

Tuesday 25 April – Osterley Park – a visit to an imposing 18th century house designed by Robert Adam. The self-guided visit to the house and garden will be preceded by a one hour walk in the park and on the nearby canal bank. Entry to the house is £8.80 (free for National Trust and Art Fund members). There is a café for lunch.

Our officers

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