

Don't let it happen



please

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter April 2013

Citizens UK: Unlocking the Power of Civil Society

a talk by Jonathan Cox : September 2012

When I read the first volume of Barack Obama's autobiography I was fascinated by his experiences as a community worker in Chicago, enabling people to take local and individual problem-solving into their own hands.

Citizens UK is a similar movement; professional community workers train volunteers from local groups (club and societies, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, etc.) who in turn train others to exercise the power of civil society.

London Citizens' community worker Jonathan Cox arrived in Wandsworth after the Clapham Junction riots of 2011. When he discovered that local people had not been surprised by the riots, but did not understand the underlying reasons for them he arranged a meeting of local organisations and residents to try and find answers. Many of the people who helped clear up were there, but no one from where the rioters lived. Clearly there were two separate worlds that urgently needed to be brought together.

So a listening campaign of volunteers from local groups asked people in the areas of concern 'what is putting pressure on our young people and their families?' The result was some 3,000 'conversations' that were then discussed at an assembly attended by nearly 450 people, at which organisations such as Wandsworth Council and the Police (without whose co-operation Citizens cannot function) could meet face to face with people from troubled estates such as Winstanley at Clapham Junction. A number of crucial areas were identified as needing attention and action from all parties

Housing

More deprivation was found in Wandsworth than would ever have been thought possible today. However, Citizen volunteers have now started residents' associations on the tough estates to encourage local pride: Operation Brighter Future gets people around a table to find out what they want and subsequently supports representations to the Council to get at least some of their grievances into the open. For example, much stress is caused by basic services not being supplied by the Council even to those who are paying their rent. It seems that this has already been effective: the Greater Winstanley People's Organisation, which under their slogan, 'nothing about us without us', voted to form a neighbourhood forum under the new Localism Act in order to

have a say in future redevelopment plans for their neighbourhood; and the Surrey Lane People's Association in Battersea has also registered as a neighbourhood forum to enable the community to draw up their own plans for the area.

Youth Activities

Closure of a staffed youth activity centre at Winstanley has now been cancelled; meetings have been organised with Kids' Company to provide more help for young people; and other young people are now being trained to start a youth leadership programme. At St Francis Xavier Sixth-Form College in Clapham South, staff and students became aware of tensions between residents, traders and students, so a student team began knocking on doors and talking to local people. Shocked to realise how negatively they were viewed, the school determined to build bridges and has now set about improving the situation.

Jobs

The massive Vauxhall Nine Elms redevelopment will employ 22,000 people during construction and 25,000 longer term. Wandsworth and Lambeth Citizens met all those concerned, including the Mayor of London, and have secured an undertaking that 50% of the jobs created over 20 years will be for local people.

Safety on the Streets

A number of Clapham Junction traders now post stickers in their windows offering a 'safe haven' for anyone feeling threatened, and from which police or family can be telephoned.

Wandsworth Citizens get financial support partly from large companies and institutions such as local authorities, and partly from local organisations, for example Wandsworth churches St Mary's and St Luke's, among others, have been supportive. After our own meeting several people approached me suggesting that the Society should make a donation to a group working so hard to make a difference, and I am pleased to say that this was done.

For more information go to
www.newcitizens.nationbuilder.com/wandsworth_citizens
You too can get involved

Valerie Taylor

Wandsworth Society

April 2013

Planning matters

President

Shirley Passmore

Chairman

Phillip Whyte

49 West Side Wandsworth Common
London SW18 2EE
020 8874 4745

Vice-Chairman

Situation vacant

Secretary

John Dawson

210 Beechcroft Road SW17 7DP
phone 020 8785 0077

Treasurer

Norman Holmes

Flat 7 Tiffany Heights
59 Standen Road London SW18 5TF

Membership Secretary

Gill Gray

1 Keble House Manor Fields
SW15 3LS
phone 020 8780 0866

Committee

Sheila Allen

13 Earlsfield Road SW18 3PB
phone 020 8874 2341

Bruce St Julian-Bown

39c Heathfield Road SW18 2PH
phone 020 8874 6966

Iain Gray

Studio 8 Royal Victoria
Patriotic Building SW18 3SX
phone 020 8870 4567

David Kirk

Aspley Road SW18

Valerie Taylor

35 Fishponds Road

London SW17 7LH

020 8767 3814

Linda Ulrich

6a Spencer Park SW18 2SX

phone 020 8874 5648

Meetings Team

Valerie Taylor

Wendy Cater - Jenny Massey

Catherine Headley - Diana Godden

Newsletter Team

Iain Gray Wendy Cater

Distribution Team

Paschal Allen - Iain Gray

Jan Passey - Wendy Cater

Sub-Committee Convenors

Roads and transport

Harry Waddingham

61 Magdalen Road London SW18 3NE

020 8874 8784

Open Spaces

Bruce St Julian-Bown

Planning

Phillip Whyte

The Society's website is

www.wandsworthsociety.org.uk

Ram Brewery Site

The Planning Group has been involved since Christmas with detailed consideration of an Outline Application for the development of the site (no. 2012/5286) as well as detailed applications for the listed buildings and the demolition of those parts of the site that are not to be retained.

We were somewhat surprised that the overall application was for outline consent only, but this appears to be a device to allow the developer to defer payment of the whole or part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which would otherwise be payable at the outset. We are not convinced that this is a legitimate use of the legislation, but have had to accept it at this stage.

The scheme is presented in a very detailed form. It differs from the previous scheme in that there is now only one tower (about which we still strongly disagree). The majority of the development is residential. There is no provision for workspace other than retail units, which we also believe is not correct for a town-centre location.

We have submitted very detailed analysis, objection and criticism of the scheme, which we have posted on the Society's website. The main points of our objection are: that the proposals do not conform to the very recently approved requirements in the Site Specific Allocation Document of the Borough's Structure Plan in respect of heights and density of buildings; that the plans appear to ignore the effect the development will have on the Town Centre Conservation Area; that there is insufficient onsite visitor car-parking; that there is very little affordable housing, which does not conform to the Mayor of London's requirements.

The Planning Group has seen the Leader of the Council and senior planning officers and has voiced the Society's strong concerns.

What else!!

102/104 Wandsworth High Street

We have previously reported on this application, which was approved towards the end of last year, but we are continuing to press the Council for a comment on the lack of respect shown for the Conservation Area and the nearby listed buildings. The height of the building is not in conformity with the Site Specific Allocation Document. We were also alarmed to discover at a recent ... continues on page 5

Wandsworth's Five Towns

Philip Whyte, in the chair, explained that the idea for the meeting was prompted by the Council's recent call for town-centre planners to tender for consultancy work to 'regenerate' the Borough's town centres. The Planning Committee had thought it would be interesting to ask members what they think of the five main town centres as defined in the Borough Plan, why they are used, how they could be improved and what people thought of the means of access.

John Dawson opened the meeting with an illustrated presentation of Wandsworth's five main town centres: Putney, Wandsworth, Clapham Junction, Balham and Tooting. Within these five centres, which are designated and protected in the local plan, there are a number of contiguous areas that are unprotected and therefore liable to change (for example many of the offices in Putney are being redeveloped for residential use). There seems to be nothing in the Wandsworth planning policies to justify this. Also, there are of course a number of small local shopping areas (Battersea and Southfields, for example) that have no protection at all.

Roger Bone (an urban economist) then pointed out the various differences between the five 'shopping areas'. The core activity of the centres is shopping, but they perform a number of other important roles. While, for example, Tooting is the largest centre in shopping terms, other centres dominate in terms of office space, service or leisure functions: so Putney is by far the largest in terms of offices, followed by Wandsworth and Clapham Junction, while for leisure the largest centre is again Tooting, then Clapham Junction and Putney.

Ian McDonald then gave the viewpoint of a town planner and economist. By and large, he suggested, Wandsworth's centres are healthy, in part because London has largely bucked the trend of the recession. Supermarkets are still in town centres, which is enormously important for footfall. He mentioned the changing nature of town centres with the comparatively recent expansion of supermarkets, estate agents and charity shops – all of which have changed our high streets. While he agreed that the internet is an attractive way of shopping he pointed out that some of most successful retailers are those who combine internet sales with sales from a shop or shops. Retailers need to keep moving and adapting to a changing market. What does shopping mean to us? Yes, it is



utilitarian (a means of obtaining things we need) but it is or should also be a social event and so the environment matters. Wandsworth High Street is admittedly pretty horrific, yet just behind it are very attractive streets. There has recently been a big growth in the numbers of independent retailers – possibly made easier by the collapse or contraction of many of the multiples. What is needed is to provide something different in terms either of goods or a more personal service

A general discussion then followed: Jon Irvin, the co-chair of Wandsworth Environment Group pointed out that over 80% of shoppers in Tooting town centre are travelling through on foot or public transport. Can we take some of what is in shopping malls (which are managed for convenience, enjoyment, entertainment and character) and put it in the high street.

All the town centres are on major roads (A3, A24, etc.), and Putney High Street has very heavy pollution. Vehicle traffic was generally perceived to dominate all these centres in terms of noise, movement and danger and often keeps people away from them.

Su Elliott of Wandsworth Older People's Forum drew attention to the fact that the pedestrian crossing times are now far too short for the elderly. Unfortunately Transport for London is responsible for major crossings, while Wandsworth is responsible only for smaller roads and frequently there is disagreement on timing. There was then a discussion about the dangers, especially for older people, of uneven pavements. The Transport Committee has offered to assist with the Council's survey of all streets in the Borough, which will assist in determining priorities for repairs. On a related topic there was dismay that TfL are phasing out Countdown indicators at bus stops, even when it was explained that the same information is available free on mobiles and apps.

It was remarked that, since the recent riots, work done at Clapham Junction had 'hugely improved'

the area, and Lorinda Freint (Town Centre Manager for Clapham Junction) told the meeting that Debenhams have had their best year since coming to the Junction, as had Waitrose. Waterstones too does very well and is one of the best in the chain. However, recently, the owner of a shop selling electrical goods had said that customers came to him for advice but then went off and bought on the net. So businesses such as his are suffering badly. Not all retail businesses gain or lose in the same way when changes in their operating environment occur.

There was a brief discussion about commercial rents and rates, which have vastly increased recently. The Portas review of town centres raised the issue of rates. It is of course possible to appeal against the rateable value provided there is enough evidence to prove it. It is not financially in a local authority's interest to improve the rateable value of the properties in their local area – they do not benefit directly (because rates are collected centrally and then some come back to borough.) Why does the Council make its rents for stalls so high that the market traders go away? The Council have very little control over who goes into a property in a town centre: Tesco buy up pubs because they can change the use from pub to grocery without planning approval.

In addition to shops, town centres are there to provide business and employment, entertainment, transport, libraries, churches and other services. Do people want these things in their town centres? What is the right mix of activities in each centre? Overall, what seems to be crucial to the survival of high streets is that there is a mix of shops, that a good number of them are independents and that we USE THEM
The biggest disservice we do our town centres is to shop elsewhere.

Planning matters *continued from page 3*

meeting with English Heritage that they had not been consulted, as they should have been.

General Permitted Development (GPD)
We were asked to lend our support to an objection to an application in the Tonsleys. The case involved the request for a Lawful Development Certificate, to establish whether the proposed extension to a house was permitted development. We attended a meeting with the Senior Planning Officer on this case and are pleased to report that significant alterations have now been made to the application – although whether this was a direct result of our comments is unknown.

Thames Tunnel
Recent legislation means that planning applications for nationally significant projects

A Note about the AGM

A vote of thanks to Philip White is most certainly due following his first year at Chair of the Society and we are grateful that he has agreed to continue for another year.

We are indeed lucky that others willing to serve include Norman Holmes as Treasurer, John Dawson, Secretary and all those serving on the Executive and Committees. We are, however, delighted to welcome David Kirk on to the Executive and Nigel Muris on to the Newsletter team, which should relieve Peter Farrow who has produced our most elegant and erudite publications for some twelve years, I believe, and who would welcome more time to contribute in other ways.

New blood is always welcomed and it is true that, when approached, people will very often help us out for example for the Christmas Event supper and not least our army of deliverers.

Many thanks to all for the Executive Committee and from the members of it!

Valerie Taylor

such as the Thames Tunnel are made to the Planning Inspectorate. Several locations in the Borough will be affected if this massive project is given the go-ahead. An application for planning approval was made to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol on the 28 February by Thames Water. There is a long way to go and it is probably too much to hope that the project will be abandoned. London has grown by leaps and bounds in the last 100 years, shows no sign of stopping and infrastructure has not kept pace. The Thames Tunnel is a gigantic infrastructure attempt to solve a problem that the Society believes could be dealt with in a more sustainable way.

The Planning Group continue to meet regularly and will be happy to consider any matters that members bring to our notice.

Wandsworth Historian

The Journal of the Wandsworth Historical Society

Wandsworth Historian no. 95 Spring 2013



Daniel Good, who murdered Jane Jones
in Putney Park Lane in 1842.
(Illustrated London News)

The Victorian novelist who put his mentally unstable wife into a nursing home on Albert Bridge Road, how a gruesome murder in 1840s Putney led to the creation of Scotland Yard, and the towering local-history masterpiece by the 1920s Battersea schoolmaster, J. G. Taylor, which is still viewed with awe today. These are the main themes in the Spring 2013 issue of the Wandsworth Historian (ISSN 1751-9225), the journal that brings you the latest research into Wandsworth's past.

Shorter items include an amusing account of a novel set in Putney in 1860 and written by Thackeray, a commentary on an 1830 newspaper article about the totally unsuccessful Surrey Iron Railway that nevertheless envisages a brighter future with remarkable accuracy, and a description of the shampooing salon set up in Wandsworth in the 1880s by the Continental émigré, Joseph Wagner.

The Wandsworth Historian is published by the Wandsworth Historical Society, and copies are available price £3.00 plus £1.50 for postage and packing from Neil Robson, 119 Heythorp Street, London SW18 5BT or by emailing ngrobson@tiscali.co.uk. Cheques payable to 'Wandsworth Historical Society', please.

The website address of the Wandsworth Historical Society is www.wandsworthhistory.org.uk.

Email communications

We are trying to update our database and also save on printing costs as well as minimising the number of newsletters our stalwart volunteers have to deliver (obviously not The Bedside). Please therefore email me with your name, home address and preferred email address if you are happy for us to communicate with you this way.

Many thanks Gill Gray gillgray@wandsworthsociety.org.uk

Curioser and Curioser

This years Wandsworth Arts Festival (3-19 May) has at its heart a 'Cabinet of Curiosities'. Like its 17th-century forerunners, this temporary structure next to the Ram Brewery site and opposite Southside Shopping Centre will house an eccentric collection of weird and wonderful artefacts. However, unlike earlier cabinets, everything here – a child's shoe, a broken cassette tape, a shopping trolley – will have been discarded by residents of the borough, and later fished out of the River Wandle during clean-up operations. This year's Festival promises a wide range of events, while the new Fringe activities are intended to involve locals more directly.

www.wandsworthartsfestival.com
WANDSWORTH
ARTS
FESTIVAL
2013 +FRINGE
3-19 May

While the Cabinet of Curiosities itself will be the hub or starting point for a programme of events throughout the festival, the Council hopes it will suggest a variety of possible uses in the longer term. The site will of course be overtaken, in time, by the redevelopment of the Ram Brewery, but the Arts Office wants to keep the principal of the Cabinet alive by moving it to other sites across the borough in due course.

For further information
on the Festival go to
www.wandsworth.gov.uk/artsfestival

Denis Severs' House

18 Folgate Street – Spitalfields

About 20 of us enjoyed a visit to this amazing 18th Century house, belonging to a family of Huguenot silk-weavers, a stone's throw from the bustle of Liverpool Street, at rush hour on a chilly March evening.

The visit was unlike any other we have ever experienced – to share in a glimpse of by-gone times, to be led from room to room by an invisible owner/occupier – and in almost complete silence.

Once you got used to the low level candle and fire light and began to lose yourself in the different atmospheres of each room – rooms in which all were 'living' rooms – spaces which seemed to have been occupied until just before your arrival.

Newly baked scones which had just come out of the oven, a seasonal 'simnel' Easter cake on the table accompanied by the appropriate spicy smells and the crackle of the fire encouraged you to languish further into the shadows.

The clatter of hooves and the ringing of bells, a dog barking, whispered voices, all helped to ensure that you felt welcome in whichever room you found yourself.

Indeed, the shadowy figures of people you could hardly recognise helped to create an increased sense of anticipation about what was around the next corner and there were many in this extraordinary house.

Over four floors, from basement to attic, each space had its own unique ambiance to be absorbed at your own pace.

Details of the contents have been deliberately omitted – encouraging those who have not yet had the chance to enjoy a visit to Folgate Street to do so in the future.

I am in no doubt that all of us are indebted to the Wandsworth Society and particularly to David Kirk for making the arrangements for this memorable evening.

If that were not enough, most of the group then enjoyed a splendid meal in our own private dining room at the 'English Restaurant' nearby – where roast grouse and beef and onion pudding were among the delicacies on offer – yum!

Jennifer and Trevor Grubb

Wandsworth Museum Modern Masters in Print: Matisse, Picasso, Dalí and Warhol open until 21 April 2013



Wandsworth Museum explores the printed work of four of the twentieth century's greatest artists: Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí and Andy Warhol.

This, the only London showing of this touring exhibition, is drawn from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum. There will be over 50 works of art in the show, including Picasso's *Le Repas Frugal* and three versions of Warhol's *Marilyn*.

Each artist used the print in his own way: Matisse and Picasso used it to explore themes and motifs from other areas of their work; for Dalí it was an exercise in experimentation; while Warhol's prints were his primary means of expression and central to his work.

For further information go to www.wandsworthmuseum.co.uk.

The Wandsworth Society talks and walks

Thursday 11 April 2013

7:45 for 8:00 at the West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road and Allfarthing Lane

Life-Centred Funerals: changes in the funeral ceremony

A talk by John Valentine, stonemason and secular funeral celebrant, offering alternatives to the religious format so many of us use because we do not know there is another way. John Valentine tends to talk about life-centred funerals as opposed to faith-based ones, which are an act of worship. Life-centred funerals are mostly secular although may incorporate words and music from the Christian tradition.

Sunday 12 May 2013 The Return of the Soirée

Following the Society meeting in December to discuss soirées, Stefan Byron has generously offered to host a new series at 14 Patten Road – close to the former home of the Wards, who made their 'soirées' a Society institution.

A small team is now putting together a varied programme for Sunday 12 May (7.30 for 8) – to celebrate the start of summer! – and planning future events. The aim, as before, is to bring Society members together to enjoy a medley of music and words.

Tickets: £5 (to include a drink), payable on arrival. But book now to avoid disappointment (first come, first served). Your suggestions for future soirées will also be very welcome. Contact David Kirk at davidcameronkirk@hotmail.com, 020 8874 9167.

Forthcoming events

further details to follow

13 June : Karen Grosch will talk about the building of her garden in Pitt Crescent which will open on Sunday 16 June for NGS

Friday 10 May 2013

11:00 to 12:30

What's going on at Burntwood School, Tooting?

John Dawson has negotiated a tour of the new buildings under construction. Two new blocks should be well advanced and the refectory and dance studio block will be almost finished. The cost of the rebuild is estimated at some £40 million.

This tour will be limited to 15 people, so if you are interested please contact Valerie Taylor at vyt@wandsworthsociety.org.uk or on 020 8767 3814.

Thursday 16 May 2013
at 6:00

An Evening Walk: Wandsworth on Film

Wandsworth is the third most popular London borough for film locations. As its contribution to the borough's Arts Festival 2013, the Society has arranged for Maria Horn, Filming Manager of Wandsworth Council's Film Office to lead a locations walk around central Wandsworth. We will be finishing at the Ram Brewery site, where the manager, John Hatch, will welcome us with some of his home brew.

Duration approximately one hour; numbers limited; meeting place to be disclosed on booking. Contact Valerie Taylor at vyt@wandsworthsociety.org.uk or on 020 8767 3814