

Wandsworth Society



Newsletter Summer 2026

A new hat

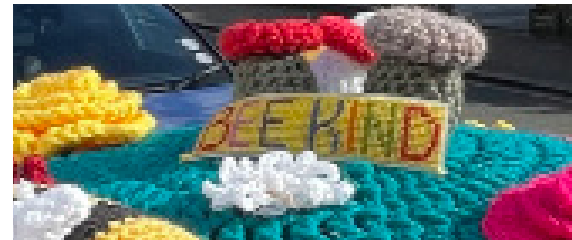
Our crotchety friends, I beg their pardon, our friends who crochet, have been at it again. The pillar box nearest to Newsletter Towers has a new hat, and here it is, with a gently imperative motto - heed and follow.

At first sight of its label, I thought it read Crew C, identifying the creative team. Extensive research (ten minutes on the internet) drew a blank on Crew C. The search was widened.

Turned out to be a mistake entering 'pillar box hat' into the search field. The rabbit hole that opened up was 'pillbox hat'. Who knew there were such things? Well probably some half of the readership, by which I mean the distaff part, and possibly one or two among the remainder, but not me. Close to the top of the suggested list of pillbox hat sellers was our favourite hatter Locke & Co of St James's Street. We favour them, or would if we wanted a hat (and had the money) partly as it is difficult not to be impressed that the shop has been there for 350 years, but chiefly because, a few years back, showing off the sights of London to a relative from the north, courage in both hands, we went in, were not thrown out, were treated kindly and given a branded measuring tape sufficient to measure a head as a souvenir. Should you be rich and want a hat look no further.

But a second opinion, thank you Wilf, as to the wording of the label was that it read [rev C] indicating it was the third iteration, but annoyingly we only remember one other.

Whoever you are many thanks again for bringing a little more joy to the neighbourhood.



Jackie Navy Pillbox
£1,295.00
UK VAT included.
How much ? Me to, can't believe it either

pf

This is the Newsletter of **The Wandsworth Society** a registered charity no 263737. The Society is concerned with the quality of life and the environment in Wandsworth town centre, Wandsworth Common and adjacent areas.

If you are not already a member and would like to join please contact the Membership Secretary Gill Gray, details opposite. Please address, any comments, or even better contributions, to newsletter@wandsworthsociety.org

Wandsworth Society

Newsletter
Summer 2026

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Current news and a welcome to our new committee

Writing in mid-May, we have just received the excellent news of the inspector's dismissal of the developer's planning appeal, to the Council's refusal to approve the 'Glassmill' point block at the Thames by Battersea Bridge. Philip, wearing his planning group's convenor hat (non-crocheted sadly) had led our Society's contribution to the preparation of the support of the Council's refusal. In his accompanying report on the recent public inquiry Philip explains the successful collaboration between local amenity societies Putney, Battersea and ourselves, and representing those facing the development site across the river, the Chelsea Society and the Cheyne Walk Trust, together with the Friends of Battersea Park. Our joint case was successfully presented to the inspector by Michael Jubb, chair of the Battersea Society. This close collaboration of various groups is to be most warmly welcomed, confronting the developer with a comprehensive community objection to the Glassmill block.

The purpose of our Society and others is to represent wider community views, liaise with our council and with it to try and steer current and future development within the borough. For example, at the start of the New Year we presented our detailed

continued on page 4

Front cover

Trees in threes

The trees in the photograph on the cover are the example given in the Wandsworth Common Management and Maintenance Plan published in 2019 of an *unusual feature at the Common ... the planting of groups of three trees in triangle formation*. There are more.

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observations to the council in response to its public consultation about improving Wandsworth town centre - sadly with 'traffic' omitted as a point of discussion.

To return to immediate Society matters, I welcome the return of the executive committee with two changes, in Philip's standing down to take the Vice-Chair's role, and my election to Chair. Following Philip will be a challenge. He has led the Society for some four years and in the last year has been involved in two major planning inquiries, the Glassmill and an earlier one in November 2024 to assist and represent the West London River Group, to which our society is affiliated,

objecting to a substantial development on the Mortlake Brewery site. Our thanks to Philip, who will continue to lead the planning group.

Lastly, I am pleased to report that we have been approached since the AGM by several interested people asking if they could assist the Society, which we trust will help bring in new skills of which we are currently light, for example the website, and the media too perhaps?

John Dawson, Chair

The Transport Group reports

Wandsworth Town Station – current progress:

The installation of three lifts and the opening through of the entrance tunnel to serve the new, dense housing developments on Swandon Way seem to be advancing well; the tunnel is unblocked and the contractor working around the station. The progress of the works has just caused some mid-day trains to be reprogrammed from stopping at the station to assist with construction, but for a limited period only returning to normal times on 26 July. There is no planned cutting back at other times nor after then of which we are aware.

Heathrow:

A gentle reminder that the third runway project remains lurking in the background as a significant and divisive topic, possibly coming alive later this year when a planning application may be due.. It remains high on the Government's agenda as a means to assist the growth of the economy, but in south-west London and especially here in Wandsworth where the earlier airport expansion planning proposals of 2019, showed we are due to sit below an increased noise shadow due to a planned increase of 276,000 Aircraft Traffic Movements [+57.5%] from the current 480,000 to 756,000 ATMs.



The opened north tunnel entrance

Reports on the progress of the planning specification for the third runway currently seem to be concentrated on the costs of the proposals, due to an approach by a competitive consortium claiming it can build a terminal with a shorter length runway than that preferred by the Transport Secretary avoiding the bridging of the M25, at less cost and managed more efficiently than Heathrow Airport's current operator. Irrespective of who would eventually manage a larger airport, will the extra flights, surface access/traffic, air quality, noise pollution, and carbon omissions arising, be capable of being absorbed by the current roads, public transport, and by the millions of Londoners who will undoubtedly be adversely affected by these factors into the future? We shall approach our new council to learn of its stance in respect of Heathrow's plans

Burntwood Lane road improvements

The improvements are virtually complete, having first been mooted by the council in November 2023 with road works starting in January last year.

Our autumn petition last year and its submission to the council as a call by the local residents of Lyminge and Marhem Garden neighbourhoods for an additional zebra crossing on Burntwood Lane, was heeded by councillors. However, at the final, mandatory consultation with affected residents in January, strong objections were raised to the council's plan, and it was cancelled regrettably. We remain concerned about the speed of vehicles especially now the road has been straightened, but speed is not a council responsibility to police.

Wandsworth Town Centre - 1

Early in the New year our transport group met Cllr Jenny Yates, the council's Cabinet Member for Transport and her highways officials, for a meeting at the Town Hall to discuss the repercussions of TfL's cancellation last July of the proposal for Wandsworth Town Centre's gyratory road scheme, which has plagued it for some 60 years. We called for the meeting

before Christmas following the council holding a public consultation seeking views about how to make improvements to the town centre to make it attractive and welcoming to residents, businesses and visitors alike. Subsequently, after the meeting we submitted a detailed list of our proposals.

We have suggested a number of aims and objectives which we have listed as 'Quick Wins' and 'Longer Term.' 'Quick wins' include practical ideas requiring relatively moderate expenditure and should be relatively straightforward to do. 'Longer Term' suggestions include ideas of substantial benefit long term, although we would like to think that prioritising a 'Causeway Route' to the Thames could get earlier consideration as it is largely in the hands of the council to proceed on its own territory – it owns the Causeway land. Two hurdles to this particular proposal, which were mentioned at the meeting, were the need for substantial new road crossings from Southside across the High Street to the Ram site, and across Armoury Way from the Ram site to the Causeway. Together, these two crossings would successfully enable the formation of a continuous walking and cycling route to the Thames from the Southside shopping centre and King George's park in the south to the Thames in the north along the historic Wandle River. The Society has been campaigning since its outcome over 50 years ago for this route to be opened up to attract and draw the public to the Thames riverside.

We were advised at the meeting that the council was tabling proposals to TfL for revisions to the provision of road crossings generally throughout the area to make walking/cycling/wheeled access much improved, and which we believe need the above named major new road crossings to be prioritised.

What did the actual meeting achieve? The council was reminded of our long knowledge and experience of the town centre's issues. We have put down a marker that we are seriously

interested and willing to assist the council in reaching its conclusions before they present a fait-accompli report in due course by which time genuine collaboration is too late as we know from experience. There was a vague promise made under pressure of another similar meeting after the May election, but some four months away! Since then the council has issued a press release following its report on the consultation. This seems to point in the right direction, but is aspirational at best. It will be interesting to gauge the mood of the new council for continuing to consider the need for improvements to the town centre. Will 'traffic' still be a no-go subject we wonder?

Wandsworth Town Centre - 2.

Following from the circulation of our detailed submission to the council of ideas to raise the public's interest in the town centre we have received one particular feedback bringing to our attention the plight of the empty Court House building and the building complex at its rear at the north end of Garratt Lane. Suggested as suitable for a restaurant, (yes! - another one), by WBC some years ago, the Court House remains closed and locked up which is not good practice for maintaining a building in good condition, especially one of such significance - it is Listed Grade II. Behind the actual Courthouse is a set of outbuildings..

This has reminded us that the borough remains desperately needing a local museum, to record its most interesting history, and to drive forward the thinking, of the young in particular, of its future. The Court House complex is quite substantial and perhaps it could, with a museum, become a community centre in the wider sense to benefit the town centre. Frankly, such a facility, would be a feather in the council's cap to climax its recent Year of Culture. It need not rest heavily on the council's purse as it could largely be run and managed by volunteers as are most town museums elsewhere in the country.

We would like to see this proposal added to the council's list of improvements as a significant attraction to boost the town centre's image.

Other transport matters:

Speed reductions:

TfL is progressing its 2026 Phase 3, Lowering Speed Limits programme for London. This phase involves reducing speed limits on the Transport for London Road Network in nine more locations. One includes the A214 Trinity Road/Tooting Bec Road: from Windmill Road to the Wandsworth Borough boundary with Lambeth at the railway bridge by Tooting Common. From the dual carriageway at Windmill Road to the County Arms at Alma Road, traffic speed is now reduced to 30 from 40mph. From the County Arms to the Lambeth boundary the speed limit is reduced to 20mph.

Statistically, it is clearly shown that reduction in speed reduces collisions resulting in fewer deaths and serious injuries. A detailed 'action plan' commissioned by TfL to be published later in the year will provide more information on 'safe speeds'.

We are aware that some members have mixed views about the reduced speeds. However, the lower speed limits are clearly here to stay, and in any case traffic from Windmill Road south to Tooting Bec and beyond hardly moves above the speed limits. From the County Arms to Tooting Bec it is the narrow traffic lanes and very narrow central crossing refuges which are perilous for pedestrians and cyclists with large vehicles and buses leaving little room for errors of driving judgement. It is the issue which our council has tried to rectify at Burntwood Lane.



RIP

St Anne's C of E primary school

1859 - 2025



St Anne's primary school, on St Ann's Hill, closed at the end of the summer term last year after educating local children since 1859. A number of our members have had children attending the school or been governors (or both) and all are sad about the loss of this institution.

The issue did not reflect the leadership or educational performance but the declining pupil numbers due to demographic change and a surplus of primary school places over the last five years in this part of the borough. The school's governors proposed its closure in November 2024 when the school had 132 empty places out of 210 places overall, with only eight children joining its reception class in September 2024.

Year groups had already been amalgamated and the nursery class closed in 2024. When the top year, Year 6, left for secondary school in

July 2025 there was predicted to be fewer than 60 children remaining. The number of pupils affects funding, resulting in difficult decisions to balance budgets.

Numbers in primary school are unlikely to improve; London Councils (a local government collective) reported a predicted decrease of 3.6% in London's reception pupil numbers over the next 4 years which is attributed to a 20% decrease in the birth rate in the city between 2012 and 2022. This reflects not only fewer babies born, but domestic and international migration post COVID and Brexit. But wouldn't all those new flats bring more children needing a school place? With so many one- and two-bedroom flats, the incoming households are just not families with children.

But it is not just demographic change which has impacted St Anne's: a new state primary

school, the Anglo-Portuguese school (APSoL), opened in 2020 just a couple of hundred yards away in newly refurbished and well-equipped space at the back of the South Thames College buildings. Furthermore, competition for new pupils is strong; there are six other state funded primary schools within a mile: Allfarthing, Swaffield, St Faiths (CofE), West Hill, St Josephs (Catholic) and, since 2015, Floreat. And there are also the fee-paying Wandsworth Prep and Roche schools. The built layout of St Anne's, with disparate and dated buildings, inevitably detracted from the school when parents were making their choice and contrasted the built environment with the alternative schools.

While day nurseries for the children of working parents are springing up like mushrooms (partly helped by childcare subsidies to parents), the primary schools are closing. Oasis Putney – the free school in the former Putney Hospital on Putney Common – will close in the summer. Broadwater (2023), Christchurch (2024) and Goldfinch (2025) have like St Anne's already closed. Meanwhile one independent school shut their doors in 2025, Falcons, where 126 pupils were enrolled despite space for 350 - and that was before the impact of VAT on school fees.

The frontage on to St Ann's Hill consists of traditional 'village school' buildings topped by a spirelet which may have once housed the school bell to call the children to their lessons. This frontage falls within the Wandsworth Common Conservation Area.

A recent planning application has confirmed the proposed new use; the nursery chain, *NFamily Club*, have made an application for the main school building to become a nursery (potentially to replace their multi-level building in St Ann's Crescent). The application does not include the 1990s additional classroom on the south side, nor the 1960s hall, Library and kitchen building at the rear with vehicle access to East Hill.

Caroline Pook



No more Zipping about

Zipcar, which was launched in the UK in 2003 under the name Streetcar, rather dramatically pulled out of their UK (but not US) operations in January. For those unfamiliar with the concept, members could go on their phone, find the nearest vehicle, book it, open up using their phone and drive away, paying by hour or by day with no charge for petrol.

For many this convenient way of driving, without owning, the closure is a minor disaster. Reportedly Zip Car have pulled out because of a combination of rising costs (including insurance, electricity for charging and parking), decreased revenue from the 'cost-of-living crisis' and increasing competition from Uber and traditional car hire firms. The nail in the coffin was the significant financial impact of the January 2026 change in Central London Congestion Charge rules. With a large EV fleet, the business model was unsustainable despite streamlining efforts by the parent company Avis-Budget Group who acquired the business in 2013.

It is paradoxical that the London Mayor, who is so keen to reduce car use and car ownership, should have killed London's dominant easy to use car club by removing the 100% congestion charge exemption for all EV cars. There are reportedly people so dependent on the flexibility of Zip Cars that they are contemplating buying their own small car. Others will be turning to a Lime electric bike with the apparent added advantage of being able to use the pavement as well as the road!

Caroline Pook

Planning News Summer 2026

Thank goodness summer is finally here. Daffodils have been and gone, most of the candles on the chestnut trees now a memory after some unseasonal high winds and the birds are starting the dawn chorus at some very early hour, cheeping again to welcome the new day.

What is new? The simple answer is not a lot.

The planning group have kept an eye on new applications in the area but almost without exception, these are for side, upward and rear household extensions and use. Not many yet for air conditioning units on the back additions!

Riverside Quarter

We have been alerted to a new proposal at Riverside House, Riverside Quarter which will involve the demolition of a relatively new 1980's building, refurbished in the early 2000's which was designed for office purposes but in the past few years has been predominately vacant as there appears to be little demand for office space.

The proposal will involve rebuilding a series of interlinked residential blocks, possibly up to ten floors in part, which will provide both open market and affordable housing. The plans are quite a long way from application submission but the project managers Aberdeen Investments (they do not own the building) are hopeful that the pre application discussions with the council will lead to an acceptable scheme.

The Glassmill 1 Battersea Bridge Road Planning Application No 2024/1322 Appeal Reference 6002127

Members may be interested to learn of what happened to the outcome of the public inquiry into the application for the redevelopment of this site, and I set out the procedures involved with, and leading up to, the decision of the Inspectorate to refuse the appeal, following the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) decision to refuse the application. I shall explain a long story, but foreshortened!

Pre application discussions with council officers started in 2022 following previous discussions from 2017 at which some encouragement had been given to developers of the possibility of a significant building being permitted on this very small site immediately adjoining the eastern side of Battersea Bridge. After some months of discussion with officers and various proposals being put forward, meetings were requested and held with members of the council. The number and timing for these meetings only came to light at the inquiry as the council hold that all pre-application meetings are confidential.

The first real evidence of a proposal came with the application for an Environmental Impact Assessment. This is not a planning application but merely a 'sighting shot' as to whether the planning authority consider such an EIA is required under current legislation. This was most confusing as NO suggestion was noted on the website for the application that this was not a planning application. However the images in the application alerted the public that a massive building (of about 38 floors) was envisaged. Inevitably this caused alarm and the council were forced to re-advertise with the note that this was ONLY an EIA!!!

Following the inevitable response, for a little while everything went quiet then a further plan was presented and public consultation took place. This was for a scheme pretty much the same but for about 32 floors (great relief!!!). A similar public reaction; horror. Then, after further

delays the planning application was delivered. Clearly, there had been further discussions with the officers and councillors which resulted in some of the elected members making official objections on their constituents behalf. The Society objected at this stage. Finally, after the applicants clearly required a decision the members considered the proposals and unanimously voted to refuse the application.

An appeal against a decision is required to be lodged within a specified time and towards the middle of December of last year the council received the Notice of Appeal, just within the time permitted. Then, all hands to the pumps!!

The Society had previously submitted an extensive objection with images and reasons, and a brief discussion followed with the Battersea and Putney Societies who agreed that as objectors, we were likely to be taken more seriously as one 'body' than submitting almost identical objections. In early January I received an approach from William Walton an Associate Professor in Urban Planning Law at the Bartlett

School of Planning who offered to assist pro bono as he had nominated this application/ inquiry for presentation by his students as part of their course work. After further discussion we were asked if other bodies could join in the joint representation which eventually consisted of the Battersea, Chelsea, Putney and Wandsworth Societies, The Friends of Battersea Park and the Cheyne Walk Trust. The Battersea Society was to act as lead member. As a result an application to the Inspectorate had to be made to appear as a Rule 6 Objector (there are criteria required) which the Inspectorate swiftly acknowledged and agreed that the consortium of societies should be represented by the Battersea Society.

We then had a relatively short period to pull together any and all evidence which we could proffer to support our case. Mr Walton was most helpful in guiding us to target specific matters; for example townscape and heritage., The inquiry rules permit Rule 6 objectors to appear at the inquiry and cross examine other witnesses. The council as the Planning Authority were represented by a leading KC with support from various experts on town planning and historic environment. The Rule 6 consortium were fortunate to be ably represented by Michael Jubb the chairman of the Battersea Society and William Walton. Other members of the consortium attended and supported during the hearing.

The inquiry opened at the Town Hall on Tuesday 17 March, sitting for four days that week, and the following week. All the evidence was very detailed from all parties and the Inspector showed great patience and concentration while listening and taking notes on her 'high stool', the dais where the Leader of the council sits during council debates. The consortium was the only Rule 6 objector. There were 'round table' discussions on some matters but

principal witnesses were 'on the stand' for examination and cross examination daily. The KC for the appellant had represented the appellant at the Mortlake Brewery inquiry and much further back for the appellant for the Ram Brewery site in the town centre. We believed that we made a good supporting case touching some different aspects, somewhat more human and personal, than the council whose case was very clearly based on the Borough's approved Local Plan.

As the Inspectorate do not seem to have an enormous case work load at the moment(unlike times past) the Inspector on the final day said that she hoped to report to the Minister/

Department shortly after the local elections and lo and behold on the 14th May the decision was published. Thankfully, the Inspector upheld the council's decision to refuse the application with her 36-page report picking up some of the points which we made in addition to the council's main objections.

This was a good case for collaboration between various parties with the same goal. My thanks go to all who took part, helped, supported and kept us going.

Philip Whyte
Leader Planning Group.

Shades of green

The Society's April Talk, by Fred Pearce, complemented by his excellent book 'Despite it All', provides reasons to be, if not cheerful, less pessimistic about climate change and therefore less prone to inaction. He offered some tangible reassurance as he explored how, as a species, we have recently learned to heal much of the damage we've have inflicted on the home planet. He focuses on the rain forests lost to farming explaining that, 'swidden farming' - a controlled version of slash and burn, using the ash as fertiliser and a fallow cycle doesn't mean the end of the Amazon rain forest. He informs us that WWF thinking has changed since they insisted the biosphere be protected from the ravages of indigenous people. Now the evidence indicates that the reverse is truer and indigenous management of land has given very promising results. Put that next to our rapid conversion to green energy and our children have a chance of living a good life.

He informed us that population growth is now forecast to contract - which has both an upside and a downside, and he touches on the new driver of CO2 emissions - AI data centres - they consume as much energy as a town. Amusingly, he recalls asking an AI chatbot what

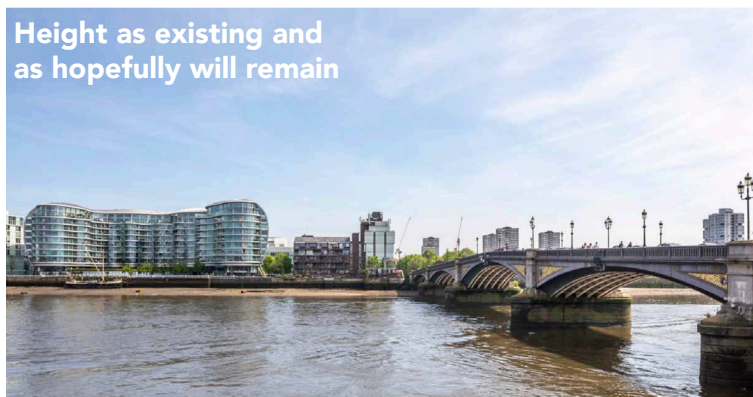
it forecast for its own longevity - it stressed the complexity of the question but failed to offer a prediction.

I asked why he made no mention of the rise in sea level forecasts, rather relevant to Wandsworth with its own tidal stretch of the Thames. I didn't catch all of his reply but assume he concluded the long-term and rapid switch to green power will eventually stabilize CO2 emissions and therefore reduce sea temperature hopefully before we reach a tipping point. We all know heat doesn't just melt ice caps; it expands water too.

This led me to ask if he'd read another recent book on the same hopeful theme by Hannah Ritchie - 'It's not the end of the World' - it too skipped seas levels. But both authors' academic credentials are impeccable so we can respect their thesis - 'action still needed but humanity will survive largely intact'. I recommend reading them both - if we all switch some of our dairy diet to plant based milk and beef for IKEA's yummy veggie meat balls - well as Tesco says - every Lidl helps!

Bruce St Julian-Bown

Height as existing and as hopefully will remain



Height as threatened

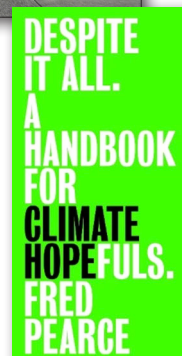
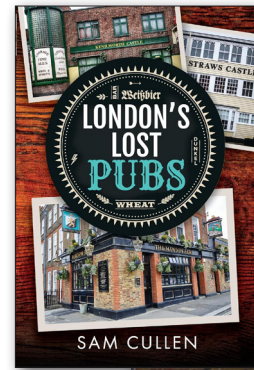


The Society talks ...

Our meetings are usually on the last Wednesday of the month held at West Side Church, at the corner of Melody Road, Allfarthing Lane and Heathfield Road unless indicated otherwise

Our recent meetings

so far this year have featured a far-ranging and fascinating series of talks - in January Sam Cullen took us on a trip down memory lane to the **lost pubs of Wandsworth** with stories from his recently published book *London's Lost Pubs* - on our February talk we were taken **from icon to masterpiece** on a virtual tour of six paintings in the Sainsbury's Wing of the National Gallery by Catherine Jenkins - in March we went further afield **by ambulance to Ukraine** with Jonathan Callaway and on the way learnt about his work with the charity Medical Life Lines Ukraine - in April Fred Pearce encouraged us to take a (slightly) more positive view of the future outlining seven reasons - for (cautious) hope described in his book *Despite It All: A Handbook for Climate Hopefuls* - and in May Caroline Pook took us on **a shopping trip** from wicker basket to delivery van via a trolley



And coming up ...

24 June - A talk by Richard Sharp from **The Urban Wine Company** the only community wine-making collective in London - and it's in Tooting - find out about wine made locally from locally grown grapes

3 July 6:30pm - **Our Members' Summer Party** 🌞🍷🎵🎉 more details in the next flyer