



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

# SPACES 2013

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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## Bridport House



photos: Iana Marinescu

**The construction of Bridport House represents the first phase of the Colville Estate Regeneration, replacing a five-storey, 20-unit building with a new development of 41 socially-rented homes. The project was funded by the HCA Local Authority New Build Programme and Hackney Council.**

Karakusevic Carson Architects were appointed to work with the Council following their successful submission of a mini-competition generated by Hackney's Architectural Framework Panel.

The design process was integrated with a full engagement programme to ensure that the types of accommodation, layouts and buildings would be popular with estate residents. The design team met the Estate Steering Group and wider resident groups on over 20 occasions to refine house types, defensible space and entrances, building layout, and landscape and security.

The building is designed as an eight- and five-storey urban block on a narrow and constrained site. While the previous building turned its back on the street, the new Bridport House creates a street frontage onto Shoreditch Park that begins to define the emerging street pattern of the Colville Neighbourhood Masterplan. This frontage is articulated by two main entrances as well as eight front doors to the family-sized, four-bedroom maisonettes at ground and first floor levels. Above there are 13 three-

bedroom maisonettes, 12 two-bedroom apartments and eight one-bedroom apartments. Many have views on two sides. There are generous storage areas, and multiple balconies and terraces, exceeding GLA space standards.

The residents and Hackney Council were particularly focused on making truly sustainable and energy-efficient housing, to set a new benchmark for the wider regeneration in Hackney and to help minimise costs for residents.

The site is made more complex by a main London storm sewer running diagonally underneath. This meant that the new building had to be as light as possible, and no heavier than the previous five-storey building. Structural panels of Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) were selected to ensure the superstructure was also essentially zero carbon.

Bridport House won a Civic Trust Award in 2011, as well as a Community Consultation Award and the Mayor's Housing Design Guide Award in 2012. The Civic Trust

described the development as an 'exceptionally successful new housing scheme' that led the way 'in terms of architectural quality and sustainability'. The Trust considered that 'this housing block is much loved by its inhabitants, decanted into very generous and stylish new units' and that the 'building sits well within its gritty urban semi-industrial setting, raising the profile of the estate and Hackney and massively raising the bar in terms of the architectural quality of affordable housing'.

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# Building Watch

## QECH to be Demolished

By David Shaw

A year ago, in *Spaces 38*, we wrote about the threat of demolition facing the former Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital in Hackney Road. In May 2013 Hackney's Planning Committee unanimously rejected the proposal, echoing our concerns over the quality of the design and the failure to consider refurbishment of the existing buildings, as well as the impact on the nearby Haggerston Park and Hackney City Farm.

In August, however, London Borough of Tower Hamlets voted for the demolition of all but the Hackney Road façade, in spite of over 200 letters of objection and a further 171 signatories to a petition.

The objectors had hoped for some changes to what they see as a poorly designed and conceived scheme that includes rooftop 'pavilions' that the developers acknowledged were added in order to allow some negotiation on design. Tower Hamlets chose not to impose any such conditions or changes. Nor did they consider seeking designs that would reuse the existing structures, an alternative solution supported

by the developers' own independent heritage advisor, who suggested this was preferable to demolition.

The result will be the loss not only of the buildings that played a significant role in the history of healthcare in East London but also of the local landmark that is the Hayward Building. Built in 1965, this Modernist research extension was designed by the firm Lyons Israel Ellis in the 'New Brutalism' style. The work of Lyons Israel Ellis includes the Grade II-listed Old Vic annexe, and the Hayward Building is worth a greater level of consideration than that afforded by both English Heritage and Tower Hamlet's own conservation and heritage officers.

The site, which had been empty for many years, cries out for development, but it is disappointing that the collection of buildings that currently occupies the site will be replaced by such an uninspired, unlovely and unimaginative proposal. Disappointing as well that other options and designs were not fully explored and the views of the objectors so readily dismissed.

Although there is no doubt that this site was a challenging one, it is perhaps not surprising that the developers always favoured demolition, given the anomalous issue of refurbishment attracting an



Photo: James Wright

additional VAT burden, which new build does not. But what cannot be excused is the poor quality of the design, and the seemingly low threshold of ambition in seeking a bold and exciting concept.

Once again it demonstrates the need for greater community action and pressure, and underlines the increasing sense that the Localism Act requires change. Perhaps additional measures should be introduced to allow communities a stronger voice to balance the 'presumption to develop'. Or, maybe, there should even be an opportunity for an independent review of council decisions that could be triggered when a key number of objections is reached. Sadly, it is too late for this former children's hospital.

## 195 Mare Street

The Hackney Society continues to be extremely worried about the state of this building. Below we reproduce a letter from our Chair, Kevin Moore, which appeared in the *Hackney Gazette* on 19 September 2013:

'The recent occupation by squatters at 195 Mare Street, better known as the Lansdowne Club or the Elizabeth Fry Refuge, as reported in the *Hackney Gazette* on 5 September, is an opportunity to ask why this important local building remains unoccupied and decaying after years of neglect.

This, the second oldest residential building in the borough after Sutton House, was built circa 1699 and is Grade II. It is in a designated conservation area and noted for both its architectural and social significance. In spite of that, it remains exposed to the elements and facing an uncertain and precarious future, crumbling in the face of inertia and inaction.

Recently the building has again been sold and, while we recognise that the new owner will need time to put in their proposals for what they intend to do with the building with regards to restoration and future use, there are urgent repairs that are necessary.

We continue to be concerned by the lack of positive action by both Hackney Council and English Heritage in ensuring the protection of this building. We were also dismayed to see that the new owners had removed the security that had been in place over the last two years while the building was up for sale.

We will be writing to both Hackney Council and English Heritage to ask what their plans are to ensure the protection and preservation of this important historical asset and to ensure that restoration finally takes place. We urge residents to support us in our efforts to secure this beautiful building.'

## Old Schoolhouse

By Julia Lafferty

A collaborative project involving Clapton Arts Trust, Museum of London Archaeology and Hackney Community College was undertaken this year at the Old Schoolhouse at Lea Bridge.

As part of their coursework, students from the College undertook a survey of the Grade II-listed building. The project was part of Clapton Arts Trust's on-going

development of academic, community and charitable partnerships with the objective of establishing the Old Schoolhouse as a river heritage and arts centre (see *Spaces 36*). The Trust is in the process of re-submitting an updated application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the production of a feasibility study and business plan.

It is therefore with concern that the Hackney Society has learned that Vision Homes, the owner of the site, has submitted a planning application to Hackney Council for residential conversion of the Old Schoolhouse. This

is in direct contradiction to their original commitment to provide the building as a centre for the community. The Clapton Arts Trust has requested an urgent meeting with Vision Homes to discuss this new development. Re-use of the building for a scheme along the lines of that devised by the Clapton Arts Trust would have the potential to bring economic and regenerative benefit to the area as well as utilising the building in a way which better respects its significance as a nationally recognised heritage asset in a designated Conservation Area.



## Wilmer Place

By Nick Perry

**For over two years proposals have been rumbling on for a 50/60-unit residential development atop a 45,000-square foot Sainsbury's supermarket. This would be fronted by a five-unit façade at one end of a Victorian terrace at 193-201 Stoke Newington High Street, hard by Abney Park Cemetery, much to the consternation of the local community.**

Although hailed by developers variously as an employment opportunity, a chance to regenerate the shabby High Street, and a contribution to Hackney's much-needed housing stock, these arguments have failed to capture the imagination of many locals. At the second time of asking (at the end of July), the developers nevertheless persuaded the Council's Planning Sub-committee to approve the scheme, having dismissed a slightly larger scheme at a meeting in April.

The scheme is much reduced from the original pre-application plans of 2011 and no longer includes an underground car park nor rises quite as high. But the development footplate does all but fill the entire site, comprising the private Wilmer Place car

park and existing functional three-storey 'Cyberplex shed' structure.

The proximity and impact upon Abney Park Cemetery – its ecology, heritage and conservation setting – had caused councillors some concern at the April meeting. However, by moving the single-storey, windowless supermarket podium a modest two metres away from the eastern edge of the cemetery, developers evidently assuaged the concerns of Committee members despite a packed public gallery expressing clear cynicism.

With local ecologist Russell Miller, I spoke against the application under the 'Stokey Local' banner, a loose coalition of over 16 groups objecting to the scheme. These included the Hackney Society's Planning Group, the local CAACs, Abney Park Trust, Hackney Unites, and the Hackney Biodiversity Partnership. Two ward councillors also spoke in objection.

At the end of a 20-minute discussion between Committee members and Council officers, four of the five members were convinced by the chair's argument that, if the Committee failed to approve the scheme this time round, the developer would appeal and overturn the slightly larger scheme that they had refused in April. The remaining member agreed with

objectors that this scheme was substantially identical to the refused scheme and urged 'consistency'. To no avail.

After the Council meeting, a planning and public law barrister who lives locally offered to look closely at the planning history and came to a clear view that the process that led to the granting of permission was flawed and put the public at a disadvantage in making their case. As a result of this, and on canvassing the community on its appetite for pursuing the matter, papers were issued in the High Court on 18 September, seeking judicial review of the Council's decision. The Stokey Local umbrella coalition has launched a fighting fund to cover the costs of mounting this challenge, which at the time of writing has raised over £8,000 from 170 people in just four weeks. The group will most likely have to fund defence of an appeal on the refused scheme whilst the judicial process takes place.

As *Spaces* goes to press, the developer has submitted a new planning application, identical to the one being challenged in the High Court. This the Council hopes to progress in a way that removes the technical concerns of the judicial review, but which will, they hope, reach the same conclusion – to grant permission – in time for Christmas.

*For more information visit [stokeylocal.org.uk](http://stokeylocal.org.uk).*

## Trustees for HHBT

Hackney Historic Buildings Trust (HHBT) is currently looking to recruit new Trustees to join the Management Committee. The Trust ([www.hhbt.org.uk](http://www.hhbt.org.uk)) was founded in 1986.

HHBT's current focus is the management of two historic buildings: The Round Chapel in Lower Clapton Road (a Grade II\* non-conformist Chapel owned by the Trust) and St Augustine's Tower (a Grade I medieval tower owned by the London Borough of Hackney and leased to the Trust). In the year 2012/13 the turnover will be circa £100,000.

In the past the Trust has worked with Hackney Council and English Heritage to prepare studies of historic buildings 'at risk' in the Borough, and on occasion coordinate emergency works.

At the Round Chapel, we employ a Venue Manager to coordinate the hire of the building and its maintenance. This community venue is used for an annual Schools Music Festival, an annual real ale festival and various other events. Our ambition is to increase the income so that we can continue to conserve, invest in and improve this important building.

At St Augustine's Tower, the borough's oldest building, the Trust has raised funds for works to improve access, and to install an exhibition about the history of Central Hackney (in association

with Hackney Museum and Hackney Archives). The Tower is regularly opened for public and school visits.

The Trustees meet as a committee every six to eight weeks to review the strategies and management of the Trust and its buildings. Meetings are normally in the evening. In addition to supporting the overall objectives of the Trust, we are looking for individuals who could bring skills or experience in any of the following: IT, particularly using the web and social media, building management, venue management and marketing, fundraising, care of historic buildings, and improving our links to heritage and community organisations.

The commitment required from Trustees can be flexible, attending committee meetings, and where possible assisting the Venue Manager to develop specific elements of the business model. If you are interested in helping us, we would be delighted to hear from you, together with some information about why you are interested, and an email address and phone number.

Contact us on 020 8986 0029; [info@hhbt.org.uk](mailto:info@hhbt.org.uk).

## Publications

**A Hoxton Childhood** by A S Jasper is a new edition of a memoir first published in 1969. The book has been described as the best working-class story since *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Blinding Books, £5.99.

**Waters of the Night: Collected Poems 1974-84** contains the work of Howard Mingham, a gifted poet who died tragically in 1984. Born in 1952, Mingham moved to Hackney when he was ten and was educated at Hackney Downs School. He was a member of the Hackney Writers Workshop. Caparison, £8.

**Contemporary Library Architecture: A Planning and Design Guide** by Hackney writer Ken Worpole focuses on the practical issues that need to be addressed by anyone involved in library design. It includes a brief history of library architecture. Routledge, £39.99.

**Too High, Too Far, Too Soon by Stoke Newington resident Simon Mason** is a rock 'n' roll memoir of a man who survived childhood tragedy, Catholic boarding school and chronic drug addiction. Mainstream Publishing, £11.99.

**A London Year: 365 Days of City Life in Diaries, Journals and Letters** by Stoke Newington writer Travis Elborough and Nick Rennison is an anthology of short diary entries, one or more for each day of the year, which, taken together, provides an impressionistic portrait of life in the city from Tudor times to the twenty-first century. Frances Lincoln, £25.00.

## Noticeboard

### New Design Review Panel

A team of 56 professionals have been selected as Hackney's new Design Review Panel. Members of the panel, which was established in 2006, specialise in architecture, urban design, sustainability and conservation. They will provide advice on development proposals, major planning applications and council initiatives with urban design implications.

### Festivals

As summer drew to a close, Hackney hosted a number of festivals. The Chatsworth Road Festival was held on 7 September for the first time in 34 years. Organised by the Chatsworth Road Traders' and Residents' Association, the festival included live music, cooking demonstrations and craft beer.

The Clapton Festival, now in its third year, was held on 28 September. Events included the official opening of the Wayside Community Centre by Hackney Council Speaker Michael Desmond, a talk (Memoirs of an East End Guttersnipe) in the Levy Centre by Brian Walker and a reading at Pages of Hackney from Travis Elborough's book *A London Year*.

Hackney Harvest on 29 September was an outdoor public feast in the Narrow Way. Tables and benches for the feast were built in public workshops with members of RARA (Redundant Architects Recreation Association) the week before the event.

### Clissold House

Clissold House has been nominated in the best small event space of the year category in the Event Magazine Awards. The Grade II listed building reopened last year following extensive refurbishment. It has become a popular venue for celebrations.

## Hackney Society News

### Mailing List

We've been rejigging the way we communicate with our members and the wider Hackney community to make it easier for us, as volunteers, to organise. And, we hope, to make it easier for you to find out what's going on.

We've been using Twitter and Facebook extensively over the last year or so and running events that are attracting a much wider community beyond our own membership. So we've decided to do a similar thing with email and create an email mailing list that anyone can sign up to. We'll only be emailing from it intermittently. For instance, when *Spaces* is published, when we have new events or books, or there's an important bit of news about Hackney's built environment.

Members for whom we have up-to-date email addresses have already been added to the list. But anyone is welcome to add themselves (or remove themselves) at any time. Visit [hackneysociety.org/maillinglist](http://hackneysociety.org/maillinglist)

### Christmas Books

The search for good Christmas presents is just over the horizon. The Society's latest two books would make ideal presents not only for those who live and work in the borough, but also for anybody who has moved to pastures new, but remains fascinated by the history of Hackney and amazed by the transformation that has taken place in a remarkably short period.

*Hackney: Modern, Restored, Forgotten, Ignored* was published in 2009 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Hackney Society. The book sought through 40 buildings to draw attention to good quality modern architecture, recent restoration projects, and buildings that were at risk from neglect or demolition. Lavishly illustrated with historic and contemporary photographs, it proved a great success, and has now been reprinted with the original contents almost in their entirety, apart from a few crucial updates. The special price for Society members is £12. We are planning events to relaunch the book. See our website for details ([www.hackneysociety.org](http://www.hackneysociety.org)).

The London Olympics may have finished, but *Hackney: an Uncommon History in Five Parts* will last much longer. Six authors tell the story of the borough over five centuries, showing how Hackney has moved from a rural community through some sloughs of despond before emerging triumphantly as one of the most exciting areas of London. The members' price is £10.

### Clapton Walk

The Hackney Society has published a new walk: *From Clapton Pond to Clapton Square – and back* (Hackney Walks No 10). The pdf of the walk, which was funded by Community First, may be accessed from the Walks section of the Hackney Society website ([www.hackneysociety.org](http://www.hackneysociety.org)).

## Hackney Society Events

### Annual General Meeting

Thursday 14 Nov 2013, 7.00 for 7.30pm

The AGM will be followed by a tour of the Hackney Marshes Centre, a winner of the 2012 Hackney Design Awards.

Meet at 7.00pm, Hackney Marshes Centre, Homerton Road, E9 5PF.

Booking recommended. Book online at <http://billetto.co.uk/hsagm2013>.

Please check our website for up-to-date information and additional events. For queries about booking, email [events@hackneysociety.org](mailto:events@hackneysociety.org) or phone 020 7175 1967.

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