

# THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## You need to get out more!

We mostly expect to be out and about during the Summer months, but we can offer you some opportunities even at this “quiet” time of year. Firstly, if you missed out on the “sneak preview” tours of the “New” **Town Hall**, another batch of tours has been laid on by Doug Black of the Council’s Conservation and Urban Design Team – details are on page 4 inside.

Another tour is offered on page 5, this time of the **Cinema Museum** in Kennington, whose survival hangs in the balance as we go to press – so this could be your last chance to see their collection.

Remember also that on the second Saturday of each month, we run a stall as part of the Makers’ Market in Station Road for a couple of hours prior to our **Market Walks**. Even if you have been on a walk already, it’s a chance to pick up some of our publications without postage costs – next dates are **13 January and 10 February** - see page 2.

Looking further ahead, if you would like our presence at a local festival or street party, tell us soon, because we need early notice to line up our volunteers. Even more urgent, if you would like your neighbourhood to feature in one of our Summer Walks, tell us within the next week or you may miss the print deadline!



*In this issue we review two recent restoration projects. Above is an interior view through a metal-framed window on the main frontage of Toplin House, with the upper part of the former Bon Marche department store beyond.*

*(Toplin-Jn17-01.jpg)*

## Windrush Square news

For several years past, the Brixton Society had laid a wreath at the Stockwell War Memorial as part of the borough’s Remembrance Sunday commemoration. For November 2017 we joined in the well-attended ceremony in Windrush Square instead, laying our wreath at the new Afro-Caribbean War Memorial. At present the memorial is protected from passing skateboarders by temporary barriers, but the aim is to replace these by carefully-sited planters. In the meantime, a pair of white circular planters have been recycled from another site to flank the approach to Rushcroft Road – though somebody’s recent addition of a recycled Christmas tree was not part of the plan!

# Diary of Events, Autumn 2017

## Market Walks

Our guided walks around Brixton's markets continue on the second **Saturday** of every month, at £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route. Tickets are best booked in advance via [marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk](mailto:marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk)

Walks start from Brixton Station Road, corner of Beehive Place, at **2-30 pm** and take about 80 minutes.

## Committee Dates

Our Executive Committee meets monthly, on the second Thursday, to plan activities and agree our response to current issues. Meetings are at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 (facing Windrush Square) at 7 pm. These meetings are open to all our members, but if you want to raise a specific issue, it helps if you can tell the Secretary beforehand.

- 8<sup>th</sup> February
- 8<sup>th</sup> March
- 12 April.

## Editorial Notice

Space permitting, we try to feature local events, issues and reminiscences in our newsletter. We welcome news and comments from all who are interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society. All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to [apiperbrix@aol.com](mailto:apiperbrix@aol.com)

## Events arranged by other groups

*Please check directly with organisers if any queries over times or charges.*

### Saturday 20 January – Park Bird Walk

Meet the birds that winter in Myatt's Fields Park, 10 am, free but booking essential, [manager@myattsfildpark.info](mailto:manager@myattsfildpark.info)  
*Myatt's Fields Park Project*

### Sunday 21 January – Winter Tree Pruning

Workshop from 11 am to 3 pm, at Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses, run jointly with the Orchard Project. Fee £5, book via [www.brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk](http://www.brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk) and see "upcoming events".  
*Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses*

### Sunday 21 January – Holocaust Memorial

3 pm to 4-30 pm in the Ashes Suite at the Kia Oval, Harleyford Road, SE11. Lambeth's commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day, all welcome, no need to book.  
*Lambeth Council*

### Monday 22 January – Secret Underground London

Nick Catford illustrates many disused or mysterious underground spaces. Open 7 pm for 8 pm start, at the old Clapham Library, now Omnibus, North Side SW4.  
*Clapham Society*

### Monday 5 February – Conserving London's Waterway Heritage

Projected canals never quite reached SW2 but Phil Emery describes efforts to save other London canals. 8 pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Rd, SW16.  
*Streatham Society*

### Wednesday 14 February Crystal Palace Subway

Speakers from the Friends group describe efforts to restore the old subway under Crystal Palace Parade, one of the last traces of the old Palace complex. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Herne Hill and Redpost Hill, SE24.  
*Herne Hill Society*

### Saturday & Sunday 24/25 February – the Listed Property Show

At Olympia, for ticket offers and more details, see [www.lpoc.co.uk](http://www.lpoc.co.uk)  
*Listed Property Owners' Club*

### Thursday 15 March – Biggin Hill Airport 100

A talk by Alan Piper to mark the recent centenary of this historic airfield, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.  
*South London Local History Group*

### Sunday 15 April – Dawn Chorus Bird Walk

Meet at 6 am (!) by the clock tower in Brockwell Park for a special walk led by RSPB members.  
*Friends of Brockwell Park*

# Regeneration Results

## Regeneration Case Studies

We have always encouraged the creative re-use of older buildings, rather than see them be swept away. In the centre of Brixton, 2017 saw two Edwardian landmark buildings remodelled – Toplin House in Ferndale Road, and Lambeth Town Hall at the foot of Brixton Hill.

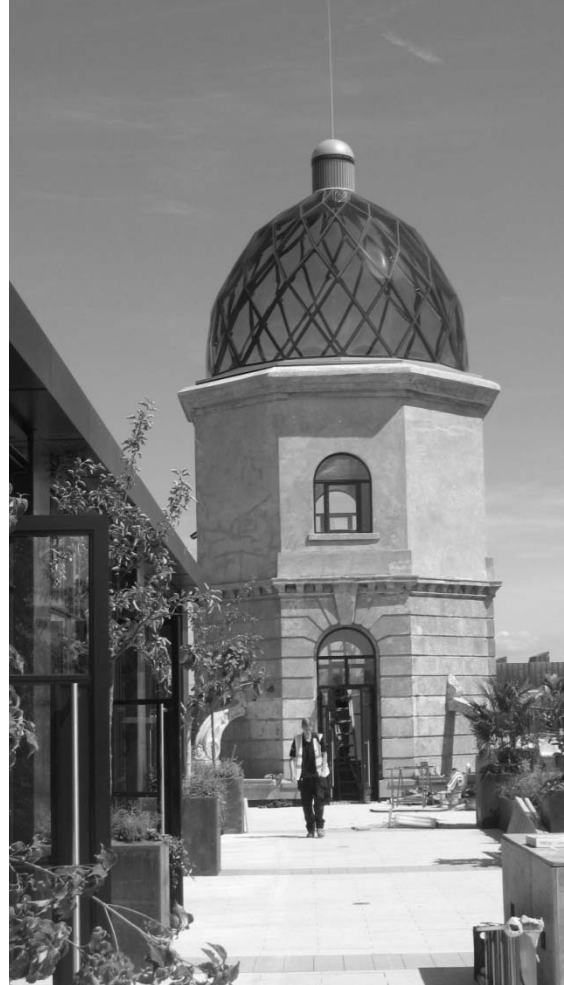
### Toplin House Reborn

This building began as an annexe to the Bon Marche department store, separated from the main building by Ferndale Road. It was built with a grand street frontage, but also included at the eastern end, an impressive tower with a copper dome, to catch the attention of people passing along Brixton Road. After World War II the main Brixton post office took over part of the ground floor, and in the mid-1950s most of the rest was used by Harry Rael-Brook for making his popular line of men's shirts, and so became Toplin House. In 1965 the newly expanded Borough of Lambeth took over most of the office space for what eventually became its Social Services Department. By the 1980s they had dispersed to local offices, keeping only the old fire station building as their Brixton base. The main office space was then let to a series of charitable organisations, notably Christian Aid and later the Refugee Council. During this century, a number of refurbishment plans were considered, including a proportion of residential use.

Eventually an architect living further along the road saw the potential of the building as a potential base for his growing office, Squire and Partners. Critically it offered space at much lower rents than the firm's then offices at King's Cross, with scope for letting ground-floor space to other enterprises.



*Upper floor office space before refurbishment, May 2015 (BTC-tpin15-04.jpg)*



*Restored tower with new glazed dome, as seen from new roof terrace (Toplin-Jy17-04.jpg)*



*Next to the main building, the 1877 facade of Brixton's first fire station has also been restored. (BTC-Jn17-02.jpg)*

A new bank of lifts has allowed the old main staircase to be opened up, and many old features or finishes have been retained, with some parts cut away to expose the underlying materials. Partly this serves an educational purpose, with many young staff still working towards their professional qualifications.

## Regeneration Results

Your Chair and Secretary were shown round the building in May 2015 when plans were still being firmed up, and again in July 2017 when finishing touches were being applied. Internal views were embargoed at that time because the project was about to be featured in the architectural press. Since then the building has hosted several events, including some for Brixton Design Trail during the London Design Festival in September.

### Your “New” Town Hall

Early in December, some of our committee members joined in the “sneak preview” tours of the refurbished Town Hall. The main effect of the work has been to take the 1908 core of the building back closer to the original design, restoring the original light wells which had become cluttered with later additions. The most ambitious change is to enclose the central light well with a transparent roof, while a footbridge links the original front entrance to a new reception desk right in the centre of the building. The Town Hall had been built when the fashion was to have “one great staircase just going up, and one more going down, and one more going nowhere, just for show” but level access for wheelchairs (and prams and bikes) has finally been provided via the rear courtyard from Buckner Road.

To make room for the central reception foyer, the old Committee Room 8 has been replicated directly below, in the basement, but without the absorbent ceiling which prevented the audience hearing what was being discussed. Part of the basement has been set aside as small lettable offices for businesses or local organisations.

At the time of our visit, work was still underway on the 1938 Assembly Hall, and we were not allowed up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor offices which were added at the same date, so I cannot tell you if it is still possible to climb up to the flat roof, as it was 50 years ago! The obvious change to the main rooms on the ground and first floors is that fixed secondary glazing has at last been installed to keep out traffic noise, and the heating and other services have been rationalised behind bigger ducts. The Council Chamber and Mayor’s Parlour are otherwise

much as before, apart from the fresh coats of paint.

We recently heard that a further series of tours are being offered, by which time staff will be moving back in and there’s less risk of finding wet paint! Dates are **17 January, 31 January, 7 February and 28 February**, all Wednesdays at 6 pm, starting from the Town Hall main entrance. To reserve a place, please e-mail to: [DCMascoll@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:DCMascoll@lambeth.gov.uk)



*View from Town Hall foyer towards new rear courtyard entrance, with original corridor on the right. (BTC-TH17-04.jpg)*



*Rear courtyard under construction, to provide level access from Buckner Road; Also note the side wall of the Assembly Hall on the right, and Porden Road houses in the background. (BTC-TH17-06.jpg)*

# Museums News

## Cinema Museum



The Cinema Museum is one of Lambeth's hidden gems. It is housed in what is left of the Lambeth workhouse where, for a short period in his childhood, Charlie Chaplin lived. The museum is run entirely by volunteers.

Appallingly, the museum is under threat because the owners of the building the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (a public body) have put it up for sale. You can find out much more detail from the museum's website: [www.cinemamuseum.org.uk](http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk).

One element in the fight to save it is an on-line petition. More than 25,000 people have signed it. If you are not yet one of them, you can find it here: [www.change.org/p/love-cinema-save-the-cinema-museum](http://www.change.org/p/love-cinema-save-the-cinema-museum).

### Visit the Museum

We are organising a visit to the museum on **Saturday, 3 February**. The visit will start at 2:00 pm and last about two hours. This will include the screening of a short film and a refreshment break, all included in the price of £7 per person. Do come and enjoy an amazing afternoon at a very modest cost which will help support the museum.

The Cinema Museum is located in Kennington, close to the Elephant and Castle. Address: The Master's House, 2 Dugard Way (off Renfrew Road), London SE11 4TH. Kennington and Elephant & Castle stations, and 133, 155, 159, 196, 333 and 415 bus stops are within easy walking distance.

To book, email [bill@linskey.org.uk](mailto:bill@linskey.org.uk) or leave a message on 020 7274 3835. Numbers are limited and booking must be received by **Friday 19 January** at the latest.

*Bill Linskey*

## News from the Garden Museum

In June last year, we reported the re-opening of the Garden Museum in the former parish church of St. Mary, Lambeth. More details of visitor arrangements are now available on their website at <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk>

Visitors also have the option of climbing the old church tower without paying the full entry price of £10. Tower-only tickets are just £3. Those who can manage the 131 steps are rewarded with views across the Thames to Westminster. Please note the tower closes 1 hour before the museum, and may be closed in inclement weather – it's advisable to call first to check the tower will be open.



Last month the museum hosted a recording of Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time, and they have just announced their first exhibition of 2018, from 18 April to 22 July. It's the first show in 30 years of the artist Cedric Morris (1889-1982), a friend of Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson, and who later taught Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling. His expressionist style of painting plants and landscapes was complemented by his own gardening skills, including cultivating 90 new varieties of iris.

## London Fire Brigade Museum

The museum continues to operate on a "pop-up" basis in the old workshop on the opposite side of Lambeth High Street to the Brigade HQ fronting Albert Embankment. Ambitions are for a permanent museum once this and the old Southwark HQ have been redeveloped. Meanwhile, the museum is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10 am to 4 pm, and will host a number of special events in 2018. Enquiries to [museum@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:museum@london-fire.gov.uk) or see website [www.london-fire.gov.uk/london-fire-brigade-museum.asp](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/london-fire-brigade-museum.asp)

### Award for Chair of the Black Cultural Archives

BCA announced on 30 December that their Chair, Dawn Hill, had been awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours list, for services to Culture. Dawn has been a Trustee of the Black Cultural Archives since 1988, becoming Vice-Chair in 2001 and Chair since 2012.

Dawn commented, "I am delighted to have been awarded a CBE. I hope that the award helps to advance our cause to appropriately recognise the tremendous contributions that African and African-Caribbean people have made to these shores, and as importantly, how we can all perform a role to ensure that we learn from each other, and fully appreciate what we contribute to British cultural life."

BCA Director Paul Reid added, "For nearly three decades, Dawn has been a leading light in the development and delivery of this award-winning facility, and inserting largely unknown Black history into British and global history."

The Black Heritage Centre on Windrush Square was finally launched on 24 July 2014, and now engages 50,000 learners and visitors per year.

BCA recently launched its **We Are One** fundraising campaign to ensure that it remains a lasting institution. People wishing to support the organisation are asked to visit the special website [www.bcadonate.org](http://www.bcadonate.org) to donate and share.

The current exhibition at BCA, **Black Sound**, Black British music's journey of creative independence, has been extended until March. Admission free but audio-guided tour available for £3.

### The Advent of Calendars

Dates are unavoidable in history research, if only to remind us of the order in which events took place, and who else was active at the same time. And increasingly the more commercially-minded love to latch on to a centenary or anniversary to drum up interest in a neglected market town or a weighty book.

Yet these anniversaries may not be as precise as their promoters claim, given the vagueness of early sources and crucial changes in the way that calendars have been organised since ancient times.

When early cultures adopted agriculture, they needed to keep track of the seasons, and to know the best dates to plant staple crops so they would have time to ripen before the onset of winter reduced the hours of daylight or froze the ground. These cultures devised basic astronomy to track the path of the sun and the phases of the moon. The summer and winter solstices (the longest and shortest days), and the Spring and Autumn equinox (when day and night are equal in length) became key way-points in the agricultural year.

You might think the Ancient Romans would have as good a grip on this as anybody, but before Julius Caesar reformed their calendar, it tended to drift badly, with the odd leap month having to be inserted occasionally to restore balance. Caesar's expedition to Egypt led not only to his involvement with Cleopatra, but also to contact with Greek scientists in Alexandria, whose advice resulted in what we know as the Julian calendar, with 12 months, and an extra day tacked on to February every 4<sup>th</sup> year. So any dates Caesar quoted for his expeditions to Britain a few years earlier could be a couple of months adrift.

Last year was the centenary of the Russian Revolution, generally remembered as the October Revolution, yet the commemoration peaked in November. This was because in 1917 the Russian Empire and the Orthodox Church were still using the Julian Calendar. Meanwhile Western Europe had long since adopted the Gregorian calendar, as reformed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Discrepancies had crept in during the sixteen centuries since Julius Caesar, because the standard spacing of leap years was not exact enough. So Pope Gregory had decreed that the next day after 4<sup>th</sup> October 1582 would be 15<sup>th</sup> October.

At first Protestant Britain held aloof from these changes but the growing importance of international trade obliged Parliament to switch to the new-style calendar in the autumn of

## Heritage Focus

1752. Some documents produced around this time helpfully stated dates as new style or old style.

At the same time, the New Year was changed from the end of March to 1<sup>st</sup> January. This only causes more confusion over dates in the early part of the year, so you sometimes see an old date given as, say, February 12, 1751-52. Despite this change, most public bodies, businesses and charities continue to organise their accounting over a financial year from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March (or from 6<sup>th</sup> April for tax inspectors).



*London's New Year's Day Parade included a practise outing for this dragon prior to the Chinese New Year on 18 February.*

We are used to years being stated as BC (before Christ) and AD (anno domini) but this scheme was only devised in 525 AD by Dionysus Exiguus. This was rather too late to be exact about the date of Jesus' birth and the best guess of modern scholars is about 6BC. It has been suggested that the Christmas Star was a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, but even that means a spread of 3 dates. Also, Dionysus neglected to allow a year 0, because the concept of zero was not yet known to the Roman world, so it's straight from 1BC to 1AD.

Increasingly nowadays we see dates expressed as BCE or CE (common era) though nobody is sure who this is common to! While this seems to be meant as a straight alternative to BC and AD, I still have a nagging feeling that I ought to apply a conversion factor, like converting pounds to euros.

Christmas is the supreme example of all the above factors coming into play. Cromwell's Puritans were notorious for banning Christmas in 1647, but not just because they discouraged seasonal enjoyment. They had noticed that

there was no authority in the Bible for the date of Jesus' birth being 25<sup>th</sup> December.

In fact, this date was a late adoption by the newly-legalised Christian Church, in 325, of the birthday of Mithras, already a popular deity imported from the Middle East. 25<sup>th</sup> December was being celebrated at his temple in the City of London from at least 240 AD. (Its ruins below the new Bloomberg HQ were recently re-opened to public access – see [www.londonmithraeum.com](http://www.londonmithraeum.com) )

In the broader range of beliefs, a feast around the Winter Solstice was a long-established feature of the calendar. For example, it is now thought that this was the main annual event at Stonehenge a couple of thousand years earlier, rather than the modern pseudo-Druid commemoration at mid-summer. To ensure a smooth transition from the old beliefs, the Christians adopted the winter festive season as their own – though the Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches, still being on the Julian calendar, only celebrated it last week.

*Alan Piper.*



DL 2015-09-04\_16.jpg

### Painting the Town Red?

Piecemeal changes in the street scene mean you do not need to go back very far to find yourself in a different era. This was 146-166 Stockwell Road in 1980, when many shops were still painted bright red as part of the Pride and Clarke empire. They peaked in the 1960s, offering everything for the cyclist, motorcyclist and motorist. The nearer block of shops was Queen's Row, built in 1786 and comfortably outlasting Thrayle House across the road, part of the Stockwell Park Estate which is now being replaced by an unsightly 20-storey tower block. Any reminiscences welcome!

# Planning News

## Planning Policy Updates

During the Autumn, Lambeth Council issued draft planning guidance on extra topics, and also invited comments in readiness for a major overhaul of the borough-wide Lambeth Local Plan, expected to appear in the summer. We had no great concerns over the guidance on basement extensions, or skills training obligations on larger developments, and even welcomed a firmer line against developers who claimed they could not afford any affordable housing. We put our main effort into scrutiny of existing policies in the Local Plan, as summarised on p.9 following.

## Neighbourhood Plans



*Representatives of Neighbourhood Forums around Lambeth met on 26 September to discuss Neighbourhood Plans for the first time. (DL file 27.9.17.jpg)*

It's a relief to report that the bid by the Herne Hill Forum to annex tracts of Brixton was rejected by Lambeth's Cabinet in December, on the advice of Lambeth planners. Several objections were sustained, but consultation also exposed a pocket of residents in Romola and Deerbrook Roads, south of Brockwell Park, who want to be included in any Herne Hill plan. The episode highlighted the need for more thorough consultation with the people on the ground, but the promoters of the Herne Hill plan remain reluctant to talk.

Meanwhile, we are becoming more hopeful about the Tulse Hill plan, but these pages must go to the printer the day before a full presentation on progress so far.

## London-wide Plans

Reverting to the bigger picture, the Mayor is currently consulting on his proposed update of the London Plan, launched on 1<sup>st</sup> December. The draft is available on-line at: [www.london.gov.uk/new-london-plan](http://www.london.gov.uk/new-london-plan)

Please have a look, and if there are any topics which you think we should take up, or where you would welcome support, please contact us at [planning@brixton.org.uk](mailto:planning@brixton.org.uk) ideally before our February committee meeting. The deadline for all responses is 5 pm on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, to [londonplan@london.gov.uk](mailto:londonplan@london.gov.uk)

## Things to Come

A healthy trend is that more developers are consulting with us before making their planning applications. Here's a few that we expect to see in the next month or two...

### Brixton Recreation Centre

The huge volume of the Brixton REC includes some spaces which were never completed for their intended use. These have ended up being used for storage of surplus furniture and fittings, some for so long they have become time capsules of 20<sup>th</sup> century office technology.

Lambeth's Regeneration Team are considering using some space behind the Station Road shops to provide workspace for small manufacturing and craft enterprises, with access opened up from Beehive Place. This all sounds positive, but now that the REC is listed, more care will be needed in the external design.

### Hardess Street

Proposals were exhibited in November for a couple of 6-storey blocks rising alongside the railway arches which carry the London Overground. As ever, we are concerned at the unhappy mixing of housing and ground-level employment, creating an environment which is likely to be unsatisfactory for both uses.

### 198 Gallery, Railton Road

The gallery on the corner of Hurst Street is planning to add a couple more storeys above the former shopping parade for extra studio space, including provision for their Factory youth employment enterprise.

This could be perhaps an echo of the 2/3 storey terrace that used to stand here before the adjacent tower blocks were built some 50 years ago.

*Alan Piper.*



### Time for a change of Plan?

This is an abridged version of our comments on the Lambeth Local Plan.

#### HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

##### High Density Development:

This is already leading to overcrowded public spaces around transport hubs. Present policies encourage an oppressive environment dominated by tall or bulky buildings to the exclusion of natural features, characterised by high ambient noise and poor air quality.

The Council should resist development proposals which exceed the London Plan targets, or which produce excessive local densities. High-density developments should demonstrate how they will mitigate their impact by contributing to local infrastructure.

##### Dwelling and Room sizes:

These should not be reduced, though flexibility in room sizes is acceptable in conversions, due to structural constraints. Pocket Living, starter homes and apart-hotels should be resisted.

##### Build to Rent:

Owner-occupation within Greater London appears to have peaked, so policies should assume the return of Build-to-Rent, but should not accept higher densities or lower standards for this form of tenure.

##### Conversions policy:

Street-by-street limits should be removed on the percentage of large old houses which may be converted. In areas with a lot of large properties, this has led to a rising number of unauthorised HMOs where non-related residents share a house, while other houses are under-occupied, often by older residents, in both cases leading to poor maintenance. Instead of protecting the supply of family housing, the policy tends to exclude family use because the original dwellings are too large to be convenient or affordable for most families.

##### Amenity Open Space:

Existing outdoor space requirements for dwellings should be maintained. More effort should be made to provide balconies and roof terraces for apartments above shops or in converted properties, subject to respecting the privacy of neighbours. An obvious opportunity is where shop-

fronts project in front of residential upper floors. Adopting clearer guidelines on overlooking distances and angles would reduce potential conflict and privacy issues.

We are also concerned that shared open spaces within existing estates are at risk from infill development. Such estates were constructed to careful density guidelines and to provide on-site amenity space for residents. These spaces should not be removed for short-term advantage. Initiatives such as gardening, food-growing and dedicated play-spaces are welcome, subject to safeguarding residents' privacy.

##### Green Infrastructure:

Areas of Open Space Deficiency should be identified more clearly in the Plan. It may suit the Council to accept capital contributions for works in existing parks, but in the long term it would be better to create additional public open space in areas which are deficient.

##### Affordable Housing:

More planning permissions have been granted than London Plan targets, but the percentage of affordable dwellings being achieved is disappointingly low. We cannot accept intensive housing development when it makes little contribution to local needs. The main housing need locally is for affordable rented accommodation for families. Schemes should provide at least 40% affordable housing.

We deplore the practice of dividing sites into separate phases or ownerships to evade affordable housing contributions. Smaller sites should also contribute to affordable housing provision, even if not practical to do so within each site.

##### Housing Estate Regeneration:

The Council's current policy of redeveloping existing estates at higher densities is deeply flawed and a poor use of resources. It means existing Council dwellings are taken out of use for several years while estates are emptied and rebuilt. For estates like **Cressingham Gardens**, Council tax-payers will still be paying off the original construction costs for another 20 years.

Even with 50% "affordable" housing, the original number of Council dwellings can only be restored by unsustainable increases in density, to add enough

private dwellings to subsidise the re-building.

A more sympathetic approach of infill development, extensions and better maintenance would be less disruptive and better value for money.

### **Housing for Older People:**

We accept retirement housing being provided for sale, or on a shared ownership basis, but CIL contributions should match other housing because new developments will place demands on local health services and public transport.

Sheltered housing schemes by the Council or RSLs typically offered higher levels of support to residents 30-40 years ago, but since then staffing has been scaled back, removing the leadership to encourage self-help activities, with communal facilities closed or neglected. This arises from inadequate funding for running costs rather than shortcomings in the original design or standards.

### **Self-build and Custom House-building:**

In this borough, opportunities for **self-build** housing are limited to small infill sites for one or two dwellings, rather than the small co-operative estates that were envisaged when this approach was last promoted 30-40 years ago.

Small-scale **infill development** is more likely, but these sites are tricky for both developers and neighbours because existing policies are too vague about overlooking, as already stated in respect of balconies.

Backland sites usually increase density, so the land tends to be used more efficiently.

### **BUSINESS AND JOBS:**

There is a growing need for **affordable business space**, but the supply has been reduced over many years by residential development. Preferred sites would be Town Centres, KIBAs, and those sites where actual employment density is low.

### **Key Industrial & Business Areas:**

Broadly, we wish to retain these, and Article 4 directions to prevent piecemeal loss of employment space to residential use.

Some uses will not be suitable close to residential sites, so space must be reserved in the Local Plan for the continuation of functions like vehicle

repairs, waste handling and recycling activities.

### **Workspace and Housing:**

Token employment space is often included in residential-led developments, but it is rarely purpose-designed. The resulting low take-up gives developers an excuse to come back and seek consent for its change to residential use.

### **Local Workspace Needs:**

The key types of business space we need were identified in the **Brixton Economic Action Plan** compiled jointly by Regeneris Consulting and We Made That, published in Spring 2017. In addition to space for small and start-up businesses, there also needs to be provision for firms to expand locally, so that the wider community can benefit as firms begin to employ more local people.

### **TOWN CENTRES:**

Brixton's Town Centre boundaries have been changed from time to time to suit the Council's own development ambitions. Policies affecting shops and business premises should follow the boundaries adopted for the Brixton Business Improvement District (BID), including shops extending westwards along Acre Lane.

### **The Night-time Economy:**

In Brixton, any policy must cover major entertainment venues and "vertical drinking establishments". Over the past 20 years, the Council has encouraged Night-time and Entertainment uses within Brixton Town Centre, but without planning for its implications or imposing conditions on planning permissions and licences.

Over the same period, the Town Centre has attracted more residents because of its public transport links – partly through new developments but also due to upper floors over shops being brought back into residential use. Conflict is inevitable. The greatest problems now are:

**Street Urination:** Problems peak overnight when there are no public conveniences open, resulting in much of the public realm being treated as a public urinal. Provision of temporary urinals and portaloos is desultory and needs to be greatly expanded. New and existing venues need to be compelled to increase their customer toilet provision.

## Planning News

**Noise:** particularly from customers leaving bars, clubs and entertainment venues, but also from unlicensed buskers, hawkers and preachers, operating late at night. Problems are worse now in the absence of a noise-monitoring service to gather evidence to prosecute offenders. Hours of operation of A3, A4 and A5 uses should be more tightly restricted, particularly for night hours close to residential buildings.

### **Public Houses:**

Generally, the loss of public houses should be resisted. Those that host entertainment or other activities are particularly valued, provided that opening hours are reasonable in the context of neighbouring uses. However, some pubs have been rendered unviable by residential development being allowed above or adjacent, without considering the established pub use.

### **Arts, Heritage and Culture:**

Policy on Visitor attractions needs to give more guidance on management issues, such as handling pedestrian flows of visitors arriving and departing the building.

### **Shopping Frontages:**

Brixton's shopping frontages have been too diluted by unrestrained growth of A3, A4 and A5 uses. The proportion of these uses must be limited. Now that betting shops and loan sharks have been removed from the A2 use class, there is no need to limit this class. Take-up by banks, building societies, insurance brokers and travel agencies is falling as more business is carried out on-line.

### **Hotels & Visitor Accommodation:**

We oppose further hotels in Brixton Town Centre. This is already a difficult location for car or coach access, plus the night economy is not conducive to a good night's sleep. Impact Assessments should include the effect on nearby commercial activities.

Short-term lets and Serviced Apartments should be resisted, because they can too easily become long-term accommodation at inferior standards.

## **TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT**

What Brixton most needs is the **re-opening of East Brixton Station**, to give access to the London Overground service between Clapham Junction and Canada Water.

Cycling would be safer and more attractive if dedicated routes were provided in the form of "Quietways" via back streets, rather than "Cycle Super-highways" alongside heavy motor traffic.

While cycling facilities have begun to improve, pedestrians are still treated as the lowest priority. For pedestrian safety, schemes which expect pedestrians and cyclists to share space should be prohibited.

### **Car-free Development:**

We support the long-term objective of reducing car use. However, the shared enthusiasm of planners and developers for car-free developments means that their residents depend entirely on public transport, cycling, or jobs within walking distance. The first of these is overloaded, the second is still hazardous, and the last unlikely when so much residential development has been achieved by displacing employment uses. In practice, a new development needs provision for disabled parking bays, car club or similar pooled usage, cycle stands and space for delivery or service vehicles.

### **Rat-running:**

We see little scope for further restrictions in the Brixton area, given the need to maintain access for emergency services. There is still deep resentment locally following the experimental road closures around Loughborough Road in 2015.

### **Improving Air Quality:**

Major developments should address both the emissions generated from the development, and protection for occupants from ambient pollution.

Air pollution is not limited to noxious or greenhouse gases, or particulates. The existing Plan is vague on requirements for extract ventilation from catering uses, so it fails to protect neighbours from intrusive cooking smells.

### **Waste:**

The plan should set explicit waste and recycling storage standards for shops and businesses, not just for residential. Existing arrangements for shops and restaurants are primitive, unsightly and unhygienic, and there is no incentive to raise standards when premises are fitted out or refurbished.

*Alan Piper.*

## Notes and News



Unused space within the Brixton REC – see news item on page 8 (Bx-Rec-J16-06.jpg)

### A Digital Challenge for 2018

In the coming months, voluntary organisations and many other enterprises will need to get to grips with GDPR. This is nothing to do with the former East Germany, but rather an updated version of previous Data Protection legislation, coming into force on 25 May. Although it's a European Union initiative, the basic principles follow on from a 1998 Act of Parliament, so don't expect Brexit to let you off the hook. Now training is becoming available to help groups find a way through and stay legal.

First, Lambeth Council is offering free training for up to 48 Lambeth-based charities on **5 & 6 February** at Roots & Shoots in Kennington. Look for Cybersafe Lambeth on the Council's website and book via Eventbrite.

The Small Charities Coalition is offering an update on the GDPR guidelines for £30, see <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gdpr-for-small-charities-tickets-41040987699>

There is also a helpful briefing note on the **Directory of Social Change** website.

### Norwood & Brixton Foodbank

*From John Taylor, Manager of the Foodbank:*

We first launched our Foodbank back in September 2011. We had no idea of the scale of the need that was on our doorstep, and certainly no idea of how much we would need to expand over the coming years.

We provide emergency food for those in crisis via a voucher referral system, and distribute

non-perishable food received via donations from the local community. We also offer a comprehensive sign-posting service and advice on social housing, the benefits system and debt, through our onsite advice team. We are supported by an amazing team of volunteers.

Nearly 8,000 3-day emergency food supplies were provided to local people during 2016-17, some 1500 more than the previous year. The top 3 reasons for referrals were benefit delays (20%), low income (20%) and no recourse to public funds (19%). Over the past year, local people donated 61 tonnes of food, and 200 people volunteered their free time. Local faith groups, schools and businesses have provided vital support.

Now as winter bites, your support is needed more than ever. Donations of non-perishable food are welcome, and also washing powder and shampoo.

Our nearest drop-off boxes are in Tesco in Acre Lane and in Sainsbury's on the Brixton Water Lane/ Tulse Hill corner. We are also grateful for money donations to cover the costs of storing and distributing groceries. For more information on how to give, visit our website at <https://norwoodbrixton.foodbank.org.uk/>

### Where to get the team together

Here are some suggestions if you need to find somewhere different for your group's special event:

Lambeth's **TRA Network** lists on its website a wide range of community halls and meeting rooms on housing estates, 50 in all - see <https://lambeth.network/2015/09/04/community-hallsrooms-in-lambeth>

Still need a space for a meeting, training day or studio work? **Art4Space** at Stockwell tell us their studio is available most weekends and some weekdays – location is Art4Space Community Arts Centre, Unit 1, 31 Jeffreys Road, London SW4 6QU

Enquiries to [jewels@art4space.co.uk](mailto:jewels@art4space.co.uk)