



Note: This report was delivered verbally to the AGM of the Society on 29 March 2023. Although the subject matters covered below are those reported upon the specific wording will vary from the report presented as that was a verbal presentation.

## ACTIVITIES

### PLANNING AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS

In March 2023 we made representations to the Labour Group of Lewisham Councillors on items which could be included in their election manifesto.

Back in 2021 we sent in a detailed submission on the proposed Lewisham Local Plan. Since the year end, the Council has published its revised plan. The current consultation (Reg 19 consultation) on this plan is very limited and only relates to whether the Council has followed the processes in law. We will be doing a detailed review of the current draft over the next few months so that, when it goes to public inspection either later this year or next year depending on the Council's timetable, we are able to comment. However the plan, whilst saying it is looks forward for 20 years, still seems to be fixated on what the current Mayor of London wants, rather than seeking to look to what residents might want. The current draft plan is on the Council's website and our previous submission is available our website and we would welcome residents' views. If any resident wants to get more involved in commenting on the plan, please do get in touch with me via our website.

During the year we provided brief responses to the GLA on its Characterisation and Growth Studies and proposals for a Design-led Approach, and supported the London Forum of Amenities Societies in their response to the National Model Design Code, although we did not have the resources to write our own submission.

Since the year end we have responded to Lewisham Council proposals in respect of two Article 4 directions, looking to preserve our shopping centres.

On planning applications, it has been a very busy year with 67 applications to our knowledge in the Conservation Area (of which 4 are still outstanding). The tempo of this has increased again in 2023 where we have already seen 29 applications.

	Accepted	Objection	Others**	Total
Granted	14	7	6	27
Grant with amendments or conditions *	5	13	-	18
Refused	2	13	1	16
withdrawn	-	2	-	2
	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>63</b>

\*Where we have objected to items such as design, use of materials, brick bonding, non-replacement of original features, wrong window features, size of rooflights etc etc and either the applicant has agreed to make changes or the Council has insisted upon the changes as a condition of the application, and we have therefore withdrawn our objections as they had been satisfied.

\*\* Of the 7: 1 was granted by accident before the deadline for objections had expired; 6 were not notified to us and so we were not able to respond.



The table above shows the number of applications we considered during the year and I am pleased to say that of the 35 applications that were of concern to us, the great majority were either refused, amended or withdrawn: showing. I think, the impact that the Society has. Eight of these cases went to committee and in three cases the committee refused the application despite the applications having been recommended for approval by the planning department.

Sadly, we still find that the Council is taking a very relaxed interpretation, in our view, of its own policies. The structure appears geared to allowing applications and where we do not object for some reason or other – where we simply miss the application for example – there have been instances where the Council has granted approval in what seems to be breach of its own policies.

We have therefore fought a number of planning applications just to get clarity on some matters where we feel the Council is favouring development over heritage conservation considerations.

As I reported last year, to help residents in planning applications we have published guides to window, window furniture and door design on our website. We are working on guides to paths and roofs but would really like more help in producing these as they are very time intensive to get correct on a street-by-street, block-by-block basis. We hope too that these guides are useful to the Council planning department as we appreciate the difficulties, especially with their current resource constraints, of knowing intimately the design considerations of each Conservation Area in detail.

Our guides on windows and doors have been very successful: although their success doesn't necessarily feature in the statistics. For example we are aware of 6 applications the Council refused at the vetting stage, before they were even published on the Council's website, because planning officers were aware that we were bound to object. A number of residents and companies also seek our advice in advance of planning and, since we started to record the figures in March 2022, we have received and answered 61 such planning queries.

We have also been working on a couple of matters outside our area: we actively supported the attempts to preserve the White Hart – and failed – and have been helping the Harts Lane Studios in Hatcham, with the approval of the Hatcham Society, on their planning application.

In other areas of the urban environment, we have been trying to convince the Post Office to repaint the post boxes, and have been following what is happening to the Telegraph in Dennet's Road, which we hope will be sold to a new owner and reopened as a pub and community resource. We have also been concerned over the number of cases where cable television or internet providers are leaving unsightly exposed cables across gardens and looking to see if there is anything that can be done to prevent this.

TELEGRAPH HILL CONSERVATION AREA  
 WINDOW DESIGN

WINDOW TYPE

All properties in the Conservation Area except Muggrove Road have double hung sash windows except for smaller basement windows which do not open. There were no examples of casement windows in the Haberdashers' estate as originally built.

FRAME SHAPE

With the exception of those noted below all properties in the Conservation Area with sash windows have square frame for all windows		All properties with sash windows except as noted below
The windows in the main bay in these properties have a curved top to match the curve of the lintel surround. Other windows have square frames		Elmgar Road (all) New Cross Road 174-186 Pepps 1-7 (odd), 2-100 (evens) Queens Road 298-320



Finally, of course, we have been working on a number of enforcement requests with the Council where development has occurred without permission and are pleased to see that with the appointment of more enforcement officers by the Council, the backlog here is diminishing.

We are members of the London Forum of Amenity Societies, whose events in Central London are well worth attending if you are interested in planning issues.

### **LEWISHAM COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Although this is a 2023 matter, I cannot omit the subject of the Council's consultation on their Statement of Community Involvement from this report. We are discussing this further at the AGM and will be submitting our comments by the closing date of 2 April 2023.

We are specifically concerned about matters which the Council did not choose to consult upon, and which are being decided by Council the same evening as our AGM. These include:

- Cutting the number of Council planning committees in half
- Requiring 10 residents to object rather than three
- Objections by ourselves and other amenity societies will be vetted by the senior planning officer who will have the sole power to decide whether or not they will go before a planning committee for decision.

Remember those cases where the planning committee agreed with us and refused applications after the planning officers had recommended them? Will that continue to happen when it is planning officers themselves deciding? And what of those cases I mentioned where it seems to be the that officers are allowing applications which are not in line with the Council's own policies?

We objected to the changes on the grounds that they reduced community involvement and removed mechanisms for oversight and democracy. We were told by a Councillor that these changes were "constitutional"; were not part of community engagement; that the "Labour Group" had already unanimously decided to vote in favour of them; and that Councillors could not speak against them.

It seems likely that it will become more difficult to obtain fair hearings for residents in planning issues and that matters, already biased in favour of developers, will become even more so.

Our finalised responses will be available on our website.

### **TREES**

As you will know works on trees in a Conservation Area, except street trees over a certain size, require planning permission.

Corina Poore reviews tree applications on our behalf. In general we have had little issue with these applications. It remains sad however that the Council's own Highways department does not hold itself to the same standards as residents and we lost yet another street Plane tree this year which we believe should have been saved.

## **ROADS & PAVEMENTS**

Pavement works continue to be a mess. Complaints get nowhere, met with a blanket response about money, even when a proper repair would cost no more than a bad one. Residents are not allowed to justify poor work in the Conservation Area by claiming lack of funds – it seems again an area where the Council expects one standard of residents but will not apply the same standards to itself.



Along with many residents, we have also flagged pot-holes to the Council and water leaks to Thames Water. We have also contacted Lewisham Council and Lewisham Homes to clear rubbish and fly-tipping and deal with graffiti: the Council is generally good on this; Lewisham Homes don't answer our emails. We would encourage everybody to report instances of fly-tipping, dumped rubbish and graffiti– the Council have an App where you can upload details.

I will also mention here the Council's proposals for Controlled Parking Zones. We are yet to see how they might be rolled out here, but we are aware of a strong local reaction against such zones. Previous surveys carried out by the Council and ourselves have consistently shown that a majority of residents do not feel that controlled parking is necessary across Telegraph Hill. We will discuss this at the AGM and keep the issue under review.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

I have been attending the re-introduced Lewisham Public Transport Liaison committee meetings on behalf of the Society. Questions we have raised have included:

- bringing back the full service for Southern Rail
- bringing back through trains to Charing Cross outside rush hour
- allowing people onto buses when they are waiting
- better crowd management at Canary Wharf
- better TfL passenger information at stations
- more accessible toilets at London Bridge and passenger information at London Bridge.

So far, the only company we have had any direct discussions with is Network Rail concerning London Bridge Station. Lewisham Council, though an administrative oversight, failed to raise our questions at the last meeting of the committee and Southern Rail have not had representatives at any meeting.

We also continue to

- Raise cross-London links with the GLA
- Monitor the Bakerloo line issues
- Push for reinstatement of a Brockley High Level station

We would like to up the pace and pressure on these matters, but do need volunteers to help.

## **LOCAL HISTORY, EVENTS AND SALES**

We have had stands at the Brockley Summer Fair, the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day, various events in the Telegraph Hill Centre, during some Festival events and at some of the Farmers' Markets.

In addition to the AGM talk on Green Lewisham, we are currently re-printing the *History of Hatcham: Domesday to Doodlebugs* as we have very, very nearly sold out.

Our thanks to Sandra Margolies for her help in this. We continue to sell copies of other booklets, postcard and maps and have had a very successful year in this respect: in fact, we are also almost out of mugs and tea-towels. Again, volunteers to help us with new ideas and to organise merchandise and events would be very helpful as it is through sales, events and other volunteer efforts, that we have been able to hold the annual membership fee at £0 and can therefore welcome anybody into the Society at no cost.



## **PARKS**

As long-standing residents will know, we originally set up the Friends of Telegraph Hill Park and we continue to attend its meetings and support it where possible. Paul Milnes and Tamsin Bacchus are our representatives on their committee. Like us, the Friends of Telegraph Hill Parks are also always looking for volunteers and people to come along to their meetings, so please support them.

## **WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The website is still work in progress but we are adding more material as we can. My thanks to Chris Souvlis for his work on this.

We have also been working hard on communications over the period not only with the festival flyers, our stands, a mailing list of over 200 (who now get a more regular newsletter) and increasingly regular comments on the Telegraph Hill Facebook site. We now also have our own static Facebook page to refer residents to our website for queries. If you are interested, please do join our mailing list.

Contributions both the website and the newsletter are always welcome.

In addition, we are very grateful to the Telegraph Hill Festival for teaming up with us to publicise our AGM in its flyer, which was distributed to every household on the Hill, and in its printed and on-line programmes. No-one should be able to complain they have not heard of us!

## **AND FINALLY ...**

I would like to put on record the Society's past indebtedness to John Kelly who died this year and who was, for many years, our membership secretary.

And my thanks to all who have helped during year.

Malcolm Bacchus  
Chair