



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

SPACES 2018

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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Garden House By Jonathan Nicholls*



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Garden House by Hayhurst and Co. is a new home, studio and gallery under a 'hanging-basket' roof for Whitaker Malem: the artist and costume-maker duo behind works by Allen Jones, fashion designers Hussein Chalayan and Alexander McQueen and costumes for films such as Wonder Woman and Batman.

On the site of a single-storey workshop they built in the mid-1990s, the clients wished to maximise the sense of space and natural light available within their small, north-facing site located behind Victorian terraced housing in the de Beauvoir Conservation Area in north London.

Hayhurst and Co.'s design, built within the original brick party walls to the neighbours

on all sides, has three different roof pitches that create a 'form of best fit' – a negotiation between maximising internal accommodation and protecting adjacent residential amenity.

The building is entered through a winter garden with a large skylight and mirror-polished stainless-steel reveals which ricochet light around the entrance, distorting the scale of the space and the fall of light. This leads on to a connected set of living spaces lit by natural light through sculpted shafts from the roof and studio spaces to the first-floor.

Externally, the roof is a bespoke hanging garden formed from lapped, stainless-steel profiles. These are planted with a habitat

of over 800 sedums – hand-planted by the client – to realise a unique green roof that can be actively gardened.

The project won an RIBA Award in 2016 and was shortlisted for the RIBA House of the Year. Described as 'bloody brilliant' by Kevin McCloud on *Grand Designs*, the project has been published to critical acclaim in the national and international press. The project was one of the *Architect's Journal's* top 10 buildings and *Dezeen's* top 10 houses in the world of 2016.

*Jonathan Nicholls is the Director of Hayhurst and Co.

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Hackney Characterisation Study By Sue Cooke*

Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners were commissioned by the Council in April 2017 to prepare the Hackney characterisation study. Hackney Council is producing a new Borough-wide local plan LP33 and the planning team had identified a need to carry out a thorough investigation into what determines and contributes to local character in Hackney.

Following community consultation on Hackney's future, the Council decided it needed to develop a new policy approach to design in the Borough – an approach that would identify new opportunities for future growth, whilst acknowledging and enhancing local character. The study explores the physical, social, functional and historic evolution of the Borough in order to better understand what determines and contributes to local character in Hackney.

The study sets out the historic development of the Borough and its people. It then moves chronologically through the economic and social factors that have shaped the Borough and how that history has shaped Hackney's character. It also analyses the building typologies found in the Borough and attempts to identify what makes the Borough distinct.

Hackney's long and fascinating history has shaped the remarkable diversity in its built environment today. Each neighbourhood in the Borough possesses a unique historical and socio-economic character. The southern part of the Borough, which forms part of inner London, is characterised by a high-density built-environment with a complex mix of uses. The central part of the Borough contains several town centres, historic Georgian and Victorian areas, large and popular open spaces and parks, social housing estates of varying periods, and employment uses. The north and north east of the Borough, which is predominantly residential, is home to diverse communities and is built at a lower density.

A number of consultation events were held with the community in Hackney and the feedback used to shape the final report. The consultation events asked residents to consider how the Borough has changed over time and to reflect on its development and their memories of living here. Residents were also asked to think about priorities for the future of the Borough. Is there any particular character that should be protected and could help to inform development in the Borough in the future?

A number of older people living in the Borough were interviewed about their

memories of living in Hackney. A community workshop took place in Hackney Central with local stakeholders including residents associations and conservation groups. People were asked to talk about their neighbourhoods: what makes them special, where they are and how they overlap. The stakeholders were asked whether the neighbourhoods mapped in the study were correct and to identify any changes which could be made. This is an important part of understanding the character of the Borough in terms of residents' perception of where places begin and end.

Residents described the spirit of Hackney being about diversity in everything (e.g. buildings, people, activity). This is shown through the different street markets and 'villages' within Hackney. However, it was felt that the identity of Hackney is currently being threatened by rises in rent causing disenfranchised communities to be pushed out. Similarly individuals who need studio spaces and workshops are being pushed out due to an increase in land value. Residents supported the Council's commitment to provide more genuinely affordable housing and protect light industrial spaces to help keep the creative feel.

Residents at the workshop were also keen to see fine grain development delivered that is in keeping with the surrounding character. They liked the idea of using creative typologies for delivering more dense development such as the modern interpretation of the mansion block at King's Crescent, which demonstrates that high density does not necessarily mean tall buildings. Estate regeneration was considered to be a big opportunity as new/improved spaces within the developments could be provided for both people living in the estate but also local residents. Car parks within estates could provide opportunities for infill development, rather than wholesale redevelopment.

Trees, parks, gardens and waterways were all considered important components of Hackney's character. Heritage was a key; the historic canal-side character and smaller urban green spaces such as the Eastern Curve Garden in Dalston were

considered important. People felt that adding extra storeys using roof extensions, instead of demolishing whole buildings, was a successful way of densifying the area without changing its character.

The story of Hackney is inextricably connected to its people and its social history. Hackney has consistently been a retreat – initially for the wealthy looking to escape the London smog, then for waves of immigrants looking for new homes. In the last few decades the borough has been a retreat for artists. What is clear is that Hackney is a diverse borough with a mix of ethnicities across the Borough. The layers of redevelopment and repurposing in the Borough have introduced a huge mix of building types and forms. The historic street pattern in Hackney has stood the test of time and endured throughout these changes.

The characterisation research provides a strong understanding of the historic evolution of the Borough and the character of each part today. Hackney has consistently pioneered new and different approaches in housing. Whilst there are extensive areas of post-war development which are non-perimeter in form, by far the majority of the Borough is characterised by houses and perimeter blocks and it is this form that has stood the test of time. The quality of the streetscapes and public realm in Hackney is highly valued and the policies in the new local plan LP33 will help protect this legacy for the future.

The characterisation study sets out three guiding principles to help the Council achieve this quality of development in the Borough. The Council will work to ensure that development:

- *Reinforces* the current character and condition
- *Repairs* the historic fabric
- *Reinvents* local character through development which is informed by lost grain.

The new local plan LP33 (<https://www.hackney.gov.uk/LP33>) has incorporated the findings of the study and developed a new policy approach to development in the Borough.

* Sue Cooke is Project Manager, Strategic Policy Team, LB Hackney.

Hackney Design Awards – Hackney Council has announced a shortlist of 15 for the 2018 awards (<https://www.hackney.gov.uk/designawards>). There were 42 nominations of the best buildings and public spaces in Hackney, ranging from workspaces to extensions, office developments to social housing.

Picture from a *Portrait*: Broad Street Nocturne

By Laurie Elks



© Gordon Edggar

Our 50th anniversary publication, *Hackney: Portrait of a Community 1967-2017*, was published in October 2017. This is one of the photos from the book.

Hackney used to be famous as ‘the Borough without a tube line’. Not quite true because Manor House station is just in Hackney – but near enough. Meanwhile, the Cinderella line from Richmond to Broad Street via Dalston Junction was affected by under-investment and recurrent threats of closure. Broad Street finally closed in 1986. Two chapters tell the phoenix from ashes story of Hackney’s railways. Campaigners fought to get the ‘missing link’ between Dalston and Stratford, including a revived Hackney

Central station, re-opened to passengers as a new North London Line. They finally succeeded in 1980. Later, the Broad Street branch became the spine of the fabulously successful East London line. Laurie Elks and Roger Blake tell these stories. Our photo shows an ancient train about to set out from Broad Street in its last days. The inset shows a campaign lamppost sticker, calling to bring trains back to Hackney.



Toynbee Hall

Toynbee Hall has reopened after three years' renovation work. It is unveiling a new permanent exhibition showcasing stories of community led social action from across its 134-year history.

The exhibition – *Toynbee Hall: A Powerhouse for Social Change* – shows the extent of Toynbee Hall's contribution to some of the most defining moments in London's social history: from the role of the co-founder Henrietta Barnett and former residents William Beveridge and Clement Attlee, right up to the involvement of the Bengali Community and the innovators whose ideas still shape its work today as it aims to inspire future generations to challenge inequality and social injustice in East London and beyond.

Toynbee Hall continues to tackle poverty and inequality. The reopening of the building serves as a catalyst to inspire future social action, with a programme of community engagement work running alongside the new heritage displays, and community-led exhibitions.

The redevelopment of Toynbee Hall was part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and was designed by Richard Griffiths Architects. It is just one phase of a much larger regeneration project which will enable the organisation to expand and improve its advice and wellbeing services, create a more sustainable future and embark on a series of heritage learning projects that will inspire people of all ages to follow in the footsteps of the great social reformers of the 19th and 20th century.

Noticeboard

Parklets

Hackney Council has invited residents to come forward with ideas for parklets (mini-parks) on their streets. The idea stems from the Council's commitment to reducing the dominance of cars on our roads. Community parklets repurpose a parking space on the street for community uses other than the storage of cars. They can include planters, benches, games or notice boards.

Kingsland Market

Kingsland Market relaunched on 28 July 2018. It originally opened in 1880 as a 'waste' market for people to trade their unwanted goods. Once it was the place to go for spare parts, secondhand goods and odds and ends. But by 2015 trading had dwindled to just one stall. In addition to the traditional 'waste' traders, the relaunched market is offering antiques and vintage clothing.

Earth

The recently revamped Savoy Cinema in Stoke Newington Road has reopened as Earth (Evolutionary Arts Hackney). The art deco cinema, which was designed by the architect William R Glen, opened on 26 October 1936 and screened its last film in 1984. Since then the foyer has been converted into shops and the main auditorium – comprising stalls, balcony and stage – has been divided up to create various licensed venues.



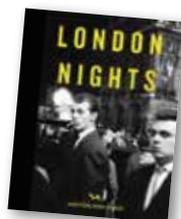
Publications

The Perseverance by Hackney-born Raymond Antrobus is a debut collection of poetry. Penned in the Margins, £9.99.

London Nights

by Anna Sparham and Inua Ellams features over 100 images from an exhibition at the Museum of London (11 May to 11 November 2018). This collection of historic and contemporary images – which spans the genres of architectural, documentary and portrait photography – includes work by Bill Brandt, Colin O'Brien and Tom Hunter. Hoxton Mini Press, £19.95.

Woodberry Down: How We Saved the Reservoirs by Emma Miller tells the story of the campaign to save the Stoke Newington Reservoirs. Woodberry Down Community Organisation, £3.50.



Atlas of the Unexpected: Haphazard Discoveries, Chance Places and Unimaginable

Destinations by Hackney author Travis Elborough is a journey to far-off lands and obscure discoveries. It includes 45 maps. White Lion, £20.00.



Hackney Society Events

Jam for the Rich – A Short History of Hackney's Fight Against New Roads

Thursday 8 November 2018, 6.30pm

Talk with Wayne Asher and Stella Bland

Joint event with Friends of Hackney Archives (following the latter's AGM, which begins at 6pm). Wayne Asher wrote '1973: The Scrapping of the "Motorway Box" in Hackney: portrait of a community 1967-2017'. Stella Bland was part of the Hackney No Through Road Campaign in the late 1980s.

Meet at Hackney Archives, E8 3BQ.

Booking essential.

Book via hackneysociety.org

FREE to all.

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