



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

# SPACES 2022

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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## Windrush Sculptures

**Thomas J. Price's work 'Warm Shores' was installed in front of the Town Hall on Mare Street on Windrush Day on 22nd June. Windrush Day commemorates the anniversary of the migration of Caribbean people to England, who arrived on the ship, Empire Windrush, in 1948.**

The work consists of two 9ft (2.75 metre) bronzes of a man and a woman, celebrating the contribution made by those who arrived in England on the Empire Windrush and made their lives in Hackney. Price used photo archives from Hackney Museum and Archives, and 3D scans of Hackney Windrush residents and their descendants to create the sculptures, which the artist calls a 'abstracted composite, which uses a mixture of portraits'.

This joins the Windrush sculptures by Veronica Ryan installed last October on the Narroway, near St Augustine's Tower. Made of marble and bronze, the sculptures are of a custard apple, breadfruit and soursop, fruits that the artist recalls from shopping with her mum in Ridley Road market. Veronica Ryan has been nominated for this year's Turner Prize, the annual prize for a visual artist named after the English painter J.M.W Turner, for a body of work including the Hackney Windrush sculptures.



Ryan and Price's work, both designed to be engaged and interacted with, and therefore deliberately not placed on a plinth, were commissioned by Hackney Council "as a permanent symbol of honour, respect and commitment to the Windrush generations, their legacy and contribution to life in Hackney".

## Britannia Project By Pat Turnbull

**A viewpoint from Save Britannia Leisure Centre campaign. Pat Turnbull has led the campaign since 2016.**

A customer in the Rosemary Branch pub recently bemoaned the change in the environment on the north side of Shoreditch Park; it used to be 'like a village' he said. Recent construction of close packed and tall buildings means it's not like that now. Soon Hackney Council's Britannia Project will add a 25 storey, 20 storey, 10 storey and 3 storey collection to the mix.

Since the approval of the reserve matters in February 2022 (the full application was approved in November 2018), detailed illustrations are finally available on the council's web site. We think that these buildings will have an overpowering effect, standing directly on the north side of the park. As an objector said in February, the tallest building is taller than St Paul's.

The council as developer has packed as many flats as it can onto the site, which means the towers have each only one stairwell for escape from fire – not illegal, but not recommended either, since the Grenfell Tower tragedy. 51 will be social rented council housing, 30 will be shared ownership, but the rest – 314 units – will be for market sale at prices far beyond the pockets of most Hackney residents, which is probably why the council intends to put them on the international market.

*Continued overleaf*

View from Shoreditch Park of new BRAFA Square and North Street



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View from Pitfield Street



View from Shoreditch Park



The Project's other elements – a replacement Britannia Leisure Centre and the City Academy Shoreditch Park - are already up. But did we need them? The council gave a maximum figure of £17 million for a full refurbishment of Britannia Leisure Centre. The council's own planning application said there were 41 secondary

schools within three miles walking distance of the site which could take an additional 5,100 pupils and still not be full.

Sixty trees were cut down to clear the site for the school (these have been replaced but with young trees); the replacement leisure centre takes up a large chunk of Shoreditch Park; demolition plus all this additional

concrete add to carbon emissions. These towers will no doubt be used by other developers to justify planning applications for yet more of them – and overwhelmingly market housing, which does nothing to ease the acute housing crisis in Hackney.

Illustrations of the buildings can be found at <https://hackney.gov.uk/britannia-site>

## STAMFORD HILL AREA ACTION PLAN (SHAAP)

The article in the last issue of Spaces caused some discussion. Here is a response from the local Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

### Stamford Hill Area Action Plan – a Rejoinder to Tom Stebbing

In the Spring Issue of *Spaces* Tom Stebbing of John Stebbing Architects (JSA) writes warmly of Hackney's draft proposals found in the Stamford Hill Area Action Plan – as well he might since JSA lies behind much of what we read in the Council's draft documents.

The Clapton Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CCAAC) – which covers much of the eastern area included in the Stamford Hill Area Action Plan (SHAAP) – does not share Stebbing's enthusiasm. We believe that the proposals will harm the built environment through overdevelopment.

Stebbing with ingenious computer graphics has transformed a two-storey Victorian terrace into a loftier version of itself. It is absolutely brilliant that twenty or more neighbours in this particular street have all got together at the same time and agreed each to add an extra floor using the same materials, the same design, the same roof tiles or slates as the original Victorian builders. That, of course, is a fantasy. What the SHAAP would allow is for individual third storeys to spring up along the terrace in a raggle-toothed display of varying styles and finishes. As members of the CCAAC,

we know only too well how a street can be spoiled by such outcroppings.

Hackney's *Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document* notes that 'much of Hackney's townscape is characterized by terraced housing' [2.19] and how essential is 'the architectural integrity of a terrace' [1.18]. What the SHAAP will guarantee is the loss of that integrity.

Stebbing is, to his credit, quite open about the fact that his company was commissioned by Interlink whose 'mission' as stated on its website, 'is to strengthen Orthodox Jewish community infrastructure'. Interlink approached JSA since they believed Hackney's original document 'did not properly address the scale of the issues facing the OJC', that it, as Stebbing writes, 'fell well short of understanding the scale of the issues facing the OJC'.

The 'scale of the issues' is an ever-expanding population. Interlink's own projection is of a 3.4% annual expansion of the number of OJC households. The SHAAP, however, nowhere recognizes that in the face of this expansion in the numbers of households – as distinct from population – space is finite.



© Julia Lafferty

How successful JSA has been in answering Interlink's brief can best be read in Hackney's draft – *Hackney Characterisation: Stamford Hill*. The Introduction, 'Purpose and scope of the study', singles out the needs of the Charedi community in particular (p.4). These are elaborated on page 27: 'Setting the brief with the Charedi Community' where we see how fully Hackney has accommodated the demands of the OJC. The same detailed consideration is not given to other groups. We can well see how Stebbing finds the outcome 'heartening'. As members of the CCAAC, we believe that our hearts beat to a different rhythm.

Hackney has a duty to govern for all. The Stamford Hill Area Action Plan chooses to cater for one side only.

Clapton Conservation Area Advisory Committee

# Hackney Central Plan

## Hackney Central - What comes next?

By Laurie Elks

Hackney planners are working away at producing an updated Masterplan for Hackney Central. The last iteration dates from 2017 since when much has changed including the continued burgeoning of creative industries and the vast increase in homeworking in the wake of the Covid pandemic. It might also be fair to say that Hackney Central is enjoying something of a virtuous circle with improving public transport, a successful pedestrianisation scheme, better footfall and more Hackney vibe too in the arches of Bohemia Place.

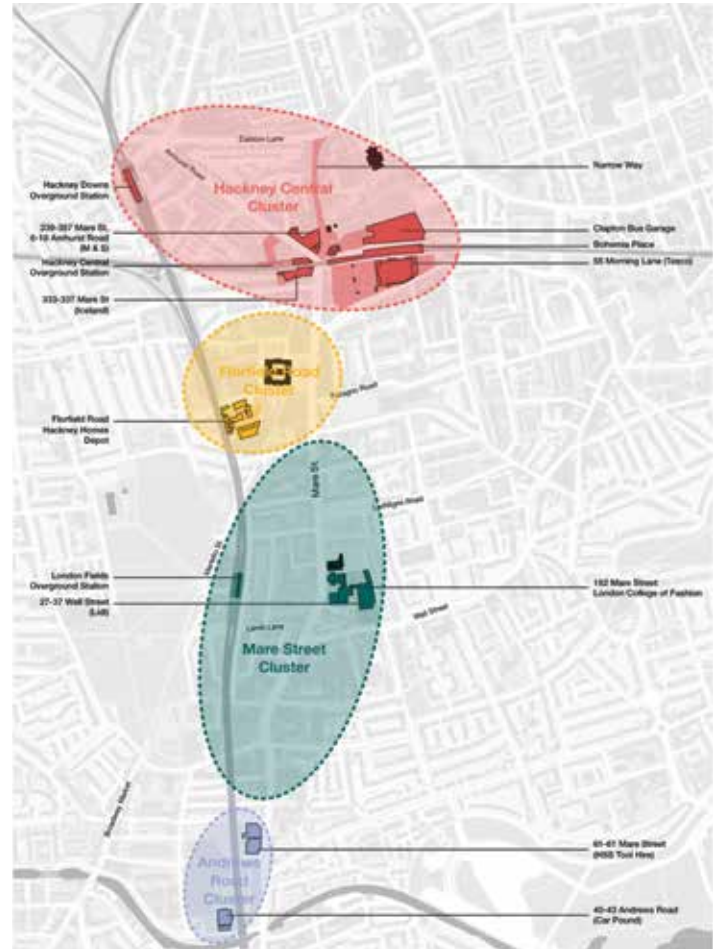
The emphasis of the 2017 Masterplan is the development of 9 Opportunity Sites along a corridor extending down Mare Street and a short distance to either side from the Narrowway to the canal. The leitmotif in the 2017 design briefs is to provide additional housing with little convincing detail on balanced development and affordable workspace. It has a somewhat old-fashioned feel. If the planners are looking more imaginatively at the design briefs this is welcome.

A major stumbling point is that Hackney has committed to a target of 3,000 additional homes in this corridor as part of Hackney's fulfilment of London Plan housing targets. In an interview for *Spaces*, the Mayor Phil Glanville told me Hackney remained committed to this target and aimed to provide the additional homes within about 15 years. This looks extremely difficult without densifying the development sites and particular attention will be paid to the Tesco site in Morning Lane, purchased by the Council for £60 million. Hackney's Option Agreement with Hackney Walk has thankfully expired: Hackney Walk's proposals for the site put out in a public exhibition were treated with justifiable derision. Hackney has tendered out to local architects a review of the design briefs for several of the sites including Tesco. The Mayor told me that densification is by no means the object of the exercise. I hope this proves correct, without being convinced. It will be extremely interesting to see what comes back. The Mayor added that at present, there are no new "Opportunity Sites" being proposed for Hackney Central and said that the Council is not looking to any extent to achieve housing targets through infilling of Council estates.

He stressed that he was fully cognisant of the concept of the 15 minutes city and was looking to create a place where people will live and work and with shops that people want to use (but not replicating the expensive boutique businesses of Stoke Newington Church Street). The aim is a second town centre for Hackney after Dalston but wholly different from Dalston because the grain of the place; particularly the importance of open space, is so very different.

To my disappointment, he reconfirmed that the bus garage site, if it becomes available, remains part of the Council's plan for achieving housing targets. It seems a strange way to develop a town centre to insert a sliver of housing right in the middle of the commercial centre of the town. Moreover it wastes an opportunity to re-use an excellent building which could have been developed to provide an artisan working space with perhaps a covered retail market. The Mayor did palliate my concerns, but only very slightly, by saying that work space would be part of the mix in any scheme for redevelopment of the bus garage.

In the 2017 Masterplan the design briefs predicate just over 1,000 houses on those 9 Opportunity Sites. This leaves a huge gap to the Council's declared ambitions for 3,000 homes. It is easy for an armchair critic to say this, but the circle would be best



squared by scaling down numerical housing ambitions for Hackney Central giving more scope for flexible working spaces; for a proper allocation for larger family houses and for all the ambitions the Council has for Hackney Central – but that of course begs the question of where all those required houses will be built.

There is in process a "Hackney Central Conversation" but the impression of those involved in the process is that planners are keeping their cards very close to their chest whilst they try to work out how their laudable ambitions to make Hackney Central an excellent place can be squared with these brute numbers. Hackney should have learned from its experience in Dalston that conversations work best when everyone is listening. It is a lesson that needs to be applied in Hackney Central.

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## Hackney Society Events

**September 21st 6:30pm – AGM, preceded by Christchurch Estate tour, by Dr Patrick Lynch, Lynch Architects.**

**October 23rd 2pm – Hackney Road walk, by Sean Gubbins, Susan Doe, Laurie Elks. To be confirmed.**

Members and mailing list subscribers will be emailed with details when bookings are open.

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## Noticeboard

### Ayah's Home



The former Ayah's Home in King Edwards Road has been awarded a Historic England Blue Plaque which was unveiled on June 16th. The Home assisted stranded South and East Asian nannies who were abandoned by their employers after the voyage to Britain.

### Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) London Awards

Hackney has received awards for four projects - Hackney New Primary School/333 Kingsland Road; Hackney School of Food; St John's Church renovation and Yorkton Workshops.

### Film showing – Women of Abney

**Tower Theatre, 17th September  
Women of Abney**

In a project linked to the publication of *Women from Hackney's History*, a film has been produced featuring portrayals of some of the women buried at Abney Park Cemetery. Tower Theatre in Stoke Newington are premiering the film which will eventually be available for viewing on the Hackney Society's YouTube channel.

### Book Launch

**Alexander Baron's memoirs are to be published in September.**

He was a prolific and highly regarded novelist who grew up in Stoke Newington. After war service he wrote a number of novels set in Hackney, often featuring Jewish characters at war with the society around them.

On 28 September his posthumously published memoir, *Chapter of Accidents*, will be launched at Hackney Archives

Archives Live! Chapters of Accidents. A Writer's Memoir by Alexander Baron Tickets, Wed 28 Sep 2022 at 18:15 | Eventbrite

### Barnett Lewis Plaque

A local war hero, Corporal Barnett Lewis is now celebrated at the house where he lived, No.9 Brooke Road, N16. He and a colleague rescued numerous civilians trapped in a bombed building and were awarded the GM (George Medal) for great courage. The plaque was installed by the Jewish American Society for Historical Preservation and AJEX.

### Abney Park – memorial for Margaret Graham

Abney Park and author Sharon Wright are crowdfunding to install a headstone for Margaret Graham, the first English woman 'aeronaut' (hot air balloonist). She is buried at the cemetery in an unmarked grave. Contributions can be made via the Abney Park website.

### Hackney Central Station - new entrance



There is a new additional entrance to Hackney Central's Overground Station on Graham Road. This entrance does not have lift access.

### Garden School/Pavilion Special School, Clapton

During a refurbishment by architects Gollifer Langston for Hackney Council, it has been established that the western block of the school was one of the earliest works by architect Wendy Foster.

The building is being nominated for local listing.

### Springfield Park event 2nd June

This was an event to celebrate the completion of the project to restore, refurbish and develop the park.

Julia Lafferty provided four walks during the afternoon which used actors playing historical characters to tell the story of the park.



The Glass House on site is now open and available for public booking.

### Building at Risk – United Services Club, Clapton

Information is requested regarding the current ownership of the building sometimes known as 'the Red House' on the corner of Almack and Powerscroft Roads.

The building, though seemingly occupied, is in need of maintenance, and its condition is causing some concern.

Any information can be sent to [info@hackneysociety.org](mailto:info@hackneysociety.org)

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## Publications

### Women from Hackney's History reprint

Originally published in March 2021, the first print run sold out within a year. The book is now available again – from local bookshops and via the Hackney Society website. Hackney Society members can buy the book at a discounted price via the website only.

### These Streets – Luan Goldie

In her new novel, Hackney author Luan Goldie tackles the theme of social mobility and the struggle of individuals on the wrong side of gentrification.

Published by HQ, £14.99

*Spaces* is published by the Hackney Society. Views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

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