

Passivhaus



Photos: Alex Sarginson and Bernard Tulkens

Hackney-based Tectonics Architects have completed Hackney's first new-build certified Passivhaus, one of only five in London. Built on a small infill plot in the Graham Road and Mapledene Conservation Area, 32a Lansdowne Drive was designed by Tectonics director Bernard Tulkens. Peter Ranken of Accredited Passivhaus Design was consultant on the project.

Passivhaus is a comfort and very low energy standard for construction, developed in Germany by the Passivhaus Institute, using high insulation, low air leakage and ventilation control. This results in the house not requiring central heating. Measurable criteria require 'passive' methods to save energy. The house is mainly heated by sunlight and internal heat gains from the occupants and their activities, e.g. cooking and showering, the heat being retained through insulation and triple glazing. Only a small amount of extra heat is needed. The estimated heating bill is £170 a year.

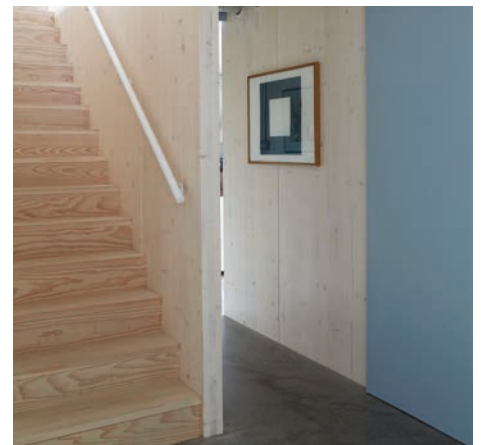
High air quality is essential, and continuous filtered fresh air is provided via mechanical ventilation that preheats the incoming cold air by using heat from the stale air that is extracted. The low air leakage, combined with insulation, makes this house very quiet and the internal temperature very stable.

The site does not benefit from direct sun from the south as it is adjacent to a four-storey Victorian terrace, but the design uses additional insulation and the good exposure to the west to meet the certified Passivhaus energy and comfort standards.

Planning regulations required that the two-storey house be set half a level down from the street. The house's bedrooms are located on the lower ground floor with an open plan living space above.

The building, which is constructed from concrete at the lower level and has a prefabricated cross-laminated timber upper storey, is clad in brick and zinc. Bernard Tulkens commented: 'Quality of construction and simplicity of details are key to achieving

Passivhaus: low air leakage construction requires careful attention to all the joints between construction elements, so the whole building team needs to understand the principles of the construction'.



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A Tale of Two City Buildings

By Nick Perry*

Tall buildings – these days commonly regarded as 20 storeys and above – are as divisive on the nimby scale as it's possible to be. And not without good cause. Amid yet another housing crisis, when there are massive profits to be made, house builders and developers are keen to build as much housing as they can and face a planning system that accedes to demand under the illusion that simply building more houses solves the housing crisis.

This is playing out at the moment on the fringe of the City, at the borough border in South Shoreditch.

An American developer, Highgate, has proposed new office space with a 200-room hotel and some shops, towering 30 storeys high, at 201-207 Shoreditch High Street – a site currently occupied by the modest Majestic Wine, Chariots and a car park. The proposal increases the floor space 12-fold. It looms large over the Tea Building opposite and seemed, at first glance, to be a sacrificial application – intentionally too tall so it would get knocked back first time round and granted when the developer removed a few storeys to show willing. The Hackney Society Planning Group felt the proposal was about 10 storeys too tall and it's a view seemingly shared by others. So it came as a surprise to see the application strongly recommended by officers for approval by Hackney's Planning Sub-committee in December. Businesses and even former Hackney officers had written in to encourage approval of the scheme, hailing the 'hundreds of jobs it will deliver'. A good thing, to be sure. But the impact is not on jobs alone, but on the built environment and our built heritage too.

Another former Hackney officer had an altogether different view. Ray Rogers, well known to many of our members as an acknowledged heritage expert on the area, had written to raise his concerns and spoke to the planning committee in the strongest terms – describing it as an 'opportunistic development'. He reminded

members that the Conservation Area in which the site sits was extended in 2009 expressly to pre-empt this scale of development. At the time he hailed it as an 'opportunity for a more co-ordinated approach to planning and design guidance'. His response to the Highgate proposal was damning. 'This tall building is in the wrong place, [...] threatening the very survival of this historic district,' he said, appealing to the committee to judge the 'undoubted harm [to the setting of historic buildings and views of the area]' against the purported benefits and to 'come down on the side of Hackney's heritage'. If they were to approve it, Ray said, 'the council would be betraying its role as stewards of Hackney's irreplaceable historic heritage.'

But approve it they did. Against an extraordinarily solid defence of the scheme by Hackney's current planning officers, the Chair metaphorically wagged his finger at Ray claiming 'things had changed since [his] day'.

The enthusiasm displayed by officers towards the Highgate scheme was all the more surprising in light of the even stronger stance they were taking against the neighbouring Bishopsgate Goodsyrd scheme which has recently been 'called-in' for determination by the Mayor of London. Indeed they cited it in their report: 'The [Highgate] proposals respond to and mediate between the scale of the emerging Bishopsgate Goodsyrd scheme and the consented [Principal Place scheme] further to the south along Bishopsgate'.

A week after the Planning Sub-committee recommended approval of the Highgate Scheme, the same committee sat to consider the adjacent Goodsyrd proposals, though the atmosphere was altogether different. Officers had written a strongly worded report criticising the Goodsyrd scheme citing, amongst other things, bogus figures and excessive profits used to excuse delivering no affordable homes on site, poor design, harm to heritage and, of particular relevance here, the 'overbearing scale' of two of the more modest of the proposed buildings at 10 and 12 storeys.

The Goodsyrd developer had long since known it did not have the backing of Hackney Council. The Mayor of Hackney, Jules Pipe, had overcome his usual aversion to planning issues and launched a campaign against the Goodsyrd proposal citing its scale and unaffordable housing.

In fact, at the time, the same former council officer who had written in to commend the Highgate scheme, had, whilst still at Hackney, commissioned Gensler to draw up an alternative scheme for the Goodsyrd to show that a scheme on a scale with the adjacent, eight-storey Tea Building could deliver a viable, employment-led development.

The Goodsyrd developer was so sure of the Council's position it chose not to speak at the planning committee which ultimately objected to the scheme. No doubt it would have loved to have had the unswerving support from officers that Highgate had benefitted from.

The two decisions sit uncomfortably next to each other – literally and metaphorically. It remains to be seen if the officers' enthusiasm will persuade the Mayor of London with quite the ease with which it normally persuades Hackney's own planning committee.

**Director of the Hackney Society*

Holborn Studios

The locally-listed photography studio Holborn Studios is once again under threat (see *Spaces 39*). Developers are seeking partial demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide 64 residential units and 4,393 square metres of commercial space.

Save Hackney's Pillories

By Sean Gubbins

If you knew Hackney more than 16 years ago, you may remember there stood under cover in the north-east corner of St John-at-Hackney's churchyard the parish's pillories. They had rested there for about 100 years until they were vandalised in 1999. To save them from further damage, staff of neighbouring Groundwork, who worked closely with the Parks Department of the London Borough of Hackney (LBH), moved them into the back garden of their offices in Lower Clapton Road for safe keeping.

Despite various unanswered approaches to LBH (including by members of the Hackney Society), the pillories, initially under cover but then moved into the open, remain there rotting. A few members of the Friends of Hackney Archives Committee are now working to save them. So far we have secured a tarpaulin cover over the structure, to keep out the worst of the rain and wind, and obtained three conservators' estimates to conserve and restore the pillories. But work to move ahead is held up on two accounts. Firstly, finding a place to temporarily accommodate the pillories, allowing them to dry out in a secure, well-ventilated space, prior to conservation. We are still trying to establish whether, in all its estate, LBH can spare an empty space to accommodate this structure: 190 cm long, 150 cm wide, 150 cm tall.

Secondly, until it is clear whether the church or LBH owns the pillories, no conservator will start working on them and funding cannot be sought. As you may appreciate, it is never easy to get LBH to take responsibility and at the moment St John-at-Hackney is going through an



interregnum, so has no Rector to make a decision. Once we can overcome these two obstacles, we can start seeking funds to pay for saving the pillories as well as identifying where they could be put on permanent display.

The pillories would originally have been kept originally next to the parish's Church House, later the site of Hackney's first Town Hall on today's Narrow Way. Benjamin Clarke, in his *Glimpses of Ancient Hackney and Stoke Newington* (1894, republished 1986), mentions coming across 'some strange lumber ... in the bell-ringers' chamber' of St Augustine's Tower in about 1892. His description fits what is now sitting in Groundwork's back garden.

In 2000, paid for by its education budget, Groundwork had a model made of the pillories (see below, right), which Groundwork kindly donated last month to Hackney Museum, where it will be used with the schools' programme. Benjamin Clarke identified what he saw as the 'whipping post' ordered by Hackney Vestry in 1630. It is not likely it is that old nor that

it is a whipping post. More probably it was a pillory providing punishment for three people simultaneously; the provision of a bench to sit on during the ordeal seems surprisingly considerate. Pairs of handcuffs half way up the structure's inner upright do beg the question what they were used for: to secure people for whipping or to secure children for punishment. An expert in 17th and 18th century punishments might have answers as to what exactly this structure was used for and the period it dates from.

If you would like to help in saving Hackney's pillories, please register your interest at hackneypillories@gmail.com. You may be able to suggest, or offer, a place which could temporarily accommodate the pillories. Do you remember how they were vandalised in 1999? Are you aware of experts who could date the structure and identify its purpose? Would you be able to pledge money, when we come to raise funds to pay for the conservation? Are there other ways you could offer assistance to save what is an important part of Hackney's history?



Noticeboard

Shoreditch Town Hall



The assembly hall at Shoreditch Town Hall has been renovated by the architects Reed Watts. The £1 million upgrade to this Grade II listed building ensures that the venue will be able to operate at full capacity for the first time since the 1960s. The upgrade includes reinstatement of balcony seating and the installation of a high quality audio system.

Haggerston Baths



Almost 400 people responded to a survey about the future of the Grade II listed

Haggerston Baths. Most respondents (86%) felt it very important that a swimming pool is reinstated in the building. Other popular uses included a community space, a café or restaurant, and an arts and cultural venue.

Mabley Green



An edible park is to be created on Mabley Green. Based on an idea by the Mabley Green Users Group, fruit trees will be planted for local people to enjoy. Planting is expected to begin in early 2016.

Hackney Society Events

Quiz Night

Wednesday 17 February 2016, 7.30pm

Fundraising event

Meet at 7.30pm at the Old Schoolroom, Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, E5 0PU

Booking essential. Book online at <https://billetto.co.uk/hackney50quiz>

De Beauvoir

Saturday 2 April 2016

Walk

To be confirmed. See website for details.

Publications

Hackney by Night by David George is a collection of photographs of Hackney taken at night between November 2014 and June 2015. The images are accompanied by a short story by Karen Falconer. Hoxton Mini Press, £12.95.



In Search of Mary: The Mother of All Journeys by Bee Rowlett relates a journey in search of the life and legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, who started a school on Newington Green in 1783. Alma Books, £12.99.



An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in London by Nathan Penlington and Sarah Lester is a response to Georges Perec's 1974 book *Especies de Espacios* (*Species of Spaces*), but is set in Hackney rather than Paris. This exploration of urban life is part poetry, part catalogue. Burning Eye Books, £9.99.



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THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

QUIZ NIGHT

Hackney @ 50*

A fundraising evening

WEDNESDAY 17 FEB 2016 • Doors open at 7pm, quiz begins at 7.30pm

At the Old Schoolroom, Round Chapel, Powerscroft Road, E5 0PU

Test your general knowledge and your knowledge of Hackney history to win prizes! Come with your own team of 8 people, with a friend or on your own.

Book at Billetto: £15 each or £100 for a table of 8. Light Vietnamese supper included. Cash Bar. We are grateful to the local businesses who have donated prizes for our raffle – from jam to books, flowers to electrical equipment.

Beer at a great discount from The Five Points Brewing Company, who are generously supporting the event.



* We are raising money for our new book to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Hackney Society. Please make a donation at www.hackneysociety.org.uk if you are not able to come to the event.

Help support our work by joining the **Hackney Society**. Call on **020 7175 1967** or email membership@hackneysociety.org or visit www.hackneysociety.org