

Box House / 'Gingerbread House' By Laura Dewe Mathews



photos: Chloe Dewe Mathews

The Gingerbread House is the first new-build project by architect Laura Dewe Mathews (www.lauradewemathews.com). The motivation for the project was to create a domestic set of spaces with generous proportions and lots of natural light while working with a limited budget and constrained urban site.

Originally part of the garden of an early Victorian end-of-terrace house in Hackney, the site was first built on in the 1880s, to provide Mr Alfred Chinn (the then resident of the end-of-terrace house) with space for his box factory, making wooden boxes for perfume and jewellery.

In discovering the history of the site, Laura Dewe Mathews was drawn to assemble yet another box inside the original envelope of the factory.

The one-bedroom, new-build house uses a cross-laminated timber super structure, placed inside the existing perimeter brickwork walls and rising up out of them. The timber structure has been left exposed internally. Externally the palette of materials is limited to the original and infill brickwork, round 'fancy-butt' western red cedar shingles and galvanised steel flashings, window frames and window reveals; the soft shape of the shingles contrasts with the crisp edges of the galvanised steel.

The form of the proposal was a response to tricky site constraints, common for urban developments in already built-up areas. The neighbours' rights to sunlight, daylight and privacy needed to be respected. Consequently the only elevation that could have any windows was the north facing, pavement-fronted elevation. The proposal counters this with large south-facing roof-lights; added to this, light is brought into the main living spaces via a new private yard.

At 80 square metres, the result is a small, yet generously proportioned house. At ground-floor level, it retains the openness of the original workshop while feeling a sense of separation from the street immediately adjacent.

The project won the 2013 AJ Small Projects Prize and was shortlisted for the 2013 New London Awards. The AJ judges were impressed by the architect's 'sensitive, witty and new' approach to a type of development which is becoming 'very standard'.



contents

- 01 Box House / 'Gingerbread House'
- 02 Poor Hackney Central
- 03 Regeneration and Planning in Dalston
- 03 Building Watch: 195 Mare Street
- 03 Building Watch: Haggerston Baths
- 03 Publications
- 04 Hackney Society News
- 04 Noticeboard
- 04 Hackney Society Events

Poor Hackney Central

By Laurie Elks

As the good citizens of Stoke Newington organise, agitate and litigate to protect their local shops and open spaces, the historic heart of our borough feels unloved and short of champions. Hackney Central is hemmed in by busy and choking roads, physically and psychologically cut off (in a way that Stoke Newington is not) from its hinterland of Victorian streets. It is increasingly shunned by shoppers with proliferating pawn shops and declining footfall. And it is mostly ignored by hipsters setting up shop in Dalston, Chatsworth Road, even Hackney Wick, but scarcely in downtown Hackney. It perplexes the Council's ever growing regeneration team who are determined to Do Something to unlock its economic potential whilst searching to find the right key.

Yet Hackney has, at its very heart, a great historic core which is lacking in the heaving – but barren – urban centres of North East London such as Stratford and Wood Green, and which should be the envy and centrepiece of urban planning. It has Hackney's oldest sacred and domestic buildings in St Augustine's Tower and Sutton House, separated by the sylvan, secluded and glorious (especially at crocus time) ancient open space of St John's Churchyard. Wrapped around this open space is the historic Narrow Way, consisting mostly of decent early and mid-Victorian buildings, Hackney's retail heart since medieval times. Radiating out from this centre, the fine late Georgian streets of Sutton Place and Clapton Square represent the final phase of Hackney's development as a prosperous country village before it became engulfed in the advancing wave of Victorian London. To the south of the Churchyard there are the tremendous stock brick railway viaduct and arches of the North London railway, opened in 1851, and the late Victorian bus garage and offices, a great edifice of stock brick which frames the ancient churchyard and preserves its seclusion.

Add a sprinkling of engaging and quiet Victorian Streets such as Mehetabel Road (site of the battle for the Chesham Arms) within the encircling traffic cordon and there is surely the making of a resurgent and thriving urban centre.

Economic planners have struggled to unlock this great potential. Some years ago the buzz was around Hackney's 'Cultural Quarter', focused on Hackney Empire and the now defunct Ocean Music Centre (both recipients of major Lottery grants) which were intended to be linked with the Town Hall and the new Technology and Learning centre by a central plaza, relieved of its 1930s raised beds and thronging (at least in the artists' illustrations) with trendy and high-spending young people. Surely, it was reasoned, the funky cafés and bars would follow this pump-priming public initiative?

Later the Big Project was the creation of a vast Tesco Extra store, one of the largest in

the country, surmounted by high-rise flats, and with a new shopping mall, a scheme initiated and driven forward by the borough's planners more than by Tesco. That scheme was scotched by the planning committee, appalled by the impact of the increased congestion and pollution that would have inevitably followed.

The current Big Project is the Hackney Fashion Hub. On the north side of Morning Lane the railway arches have been cleared of the panel beaters, car wash businesses and so forth to make way for fashion and design businesses. And to the south, a pair of towers designed by the über trendy architect David Adjaye were approved by the planning committee in November. To quote the Council's own paper, *Hackney Today*: 'The renowned architect has been commissioned to develop a £100 million shopping outlet that captures the borough's creative energy Top fashion brands will be sold at discounted prices and Hackney's already thriving designer community will have a place to set up shop in this ... Bicester-style project.'

Added to this are aspirations for major additions to the housing stock exploiting the arteries of communication represented by the Overground and North London lines. Hackney Downs and Hackney Central stations are to be served by a new interchange whilst the Overground trains are soon to be lengthened to five carriages, increasing capacity by 25% at a stroke.

The full extent of the Council's hopes and ambitions are set out in the Council's Area Action Plan adopted in October 2012 and to be found at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Assets/Documents/Hackney-central-AAP.pdf> which is replete with the language of



'active frontages' and 'opportunity sites' including, ominously, the bus garage site which sits next to Hackney's ancient churchyard.

Those of us who care about Hackney's built environment and heritage should certainly applaud the objective of economic regeneration, Hackney Central certainly needs it. And we should hope the best for the fashion hub (whilst remembering that the motor businesses cleared to make way for fashion boutiques were also employers of local labour). But we should also watch to make sure that an excess of zeal does not destroy the setting of our historic heritage assets. The slogan 'I Love Hackney' should incorporate love and care for our heritage. Watch this space.



Laurie Elks and friends will lead a walk for the Hackney Society exploring Hackney Central and its planning threats and opportunities on Sunday 9 March. The walk will start with a visit to St Augustine's Tower.

See Events section for details.

Regeneration and Planning in Dalston: The People's Manifesto

By Peter Snell

Hackney Unites was set up in 2009 by 'trade unionists, faith groups, BME community and migrant support groups as well as peace activists' (see <http://www.hackneyunites.org.uk>). It is inspired by the US community empowerment movement from which Barack Obama emerged. Its initial focus here was on challenging racism. But getting local benefit from regeneration investment in Hackney has become such an issue for residents that mobilising residents to demand more has become a priority.

I cannot claim any credit for setting up Hackney Unites other than having my arm twisted to deliver their newspapers. But when they proposed a Dalston Peoples Festival from 13 to 20 July 2013 I felt I should be more than a passive supporter. I organised a seminar on planning issues on the opening Sunday, supported by Planning Chair, Cllr Vincent Stops, and leading campaign organisations on planning issues in Dalston. On the closing Saturday we held a seminar on regeneration issues attended by Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Guy Nicholson, and Head of Regeneration Delivery, Andrew Sissons. In between, I organised a series of guided 'walks and talks', led and supported by leading borough and Dalston activists on the themes:

- Respecting our Heritage – led by Ray Blackburn (Dalston Conservation Areas Advisory Committee)
- Sustainable Dalston – led by Russell Miller (Sustainable Hackney)
- The Cultural Quarter and the Evening Economy – led by Feimatta Conteh (Arcola) and Dan Hawthorn (Dalston Evening Economy Forum)
- Building a Shared Future – led by the Directors of Hackney Cooperative Development and Bootstrap.

It took ages to get contributors to confirm my records of what they had said, but eventually I was able to present the full report for the week at

<http://hackneyunites.blogspot.co.uk/>. I have subsequently summarised the points made by participants to form a 'greenprint' for Dalston, viewable at <http://sustainablehackney.org.uk/profiles/blog/list>.

Elsewhere on that site I've blogged about Hackney Unites' subsequent success in mobilising large attendance at a couple of 'Dalston Futures' open meetings. Nowhere in Britain can match London for renewal investment. Nowhere in London matches Dalston as a focus for that investment. It is difficult to defend the architectural quality of developments like Kingsland Shopping Centre and its Matalan carbuncle, but at least they respected the traditional Kingsland High Street height line more than recent approvals.

Almost every large site in central Dalston seems to be at some stage of redevelopment at the moment. Open Dalston have done a great job of publicising development issues over recent years and the challenge for Dalston Futures is to widen that engagement and increase its impact. As government has reduced councils' planning powers, it is more important than ever to mobilise community engagement in determining outcomes that respect our heritage and environment and contribute to a sustainable future. If you care, please visit http://sustainablehackney.org.uk/profiles/blogs/having-your-say-on-the-future-of-dalston?xg_source=activity and sign up to be part of 'Dalston Futures'.

Building Watch

195 Mare Street

Squatters were evicted from 195 Mare Street, aka the New Lansdowne Club, on 16 December 2013. The Hackney

Society is extremely concerned about this building, which is in a state of dilapidation. Hackney Council failed to protect Georgian houses in Dalston Lane that are now to be demolished. The state of these buildings deteriorated significantly while in Hackney Council's ownership. The Hackney Society is determined that such a fate should not befall 195 Mare Street.

Haggerston Baths

The Victorian Society has named Haggerston Baths as one of the ten most endangered Victorian and Edwardian buildings in England and Wales. Designed by Alfred Cross and opened in 1904, this Grade II listed building has been derelict since 2000 (see *Spaces* 33).

Although Hackney Council does not have the resources to restore the building, campaigners maintain there are opportunities for it to work with community partners to bring the pool back to life.

Publications



Eat Hackney by Helena Smith is a collection of recipes from restaurants, cafés, food shops and community projects in Hackney. Proceeds from sales will be donated to the Hackney Migrant Centre and North London Action for the Homeless. EatHackney (www.eathackney.com), £5.

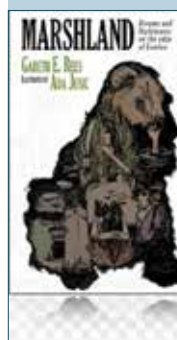


The New English Landscape by landscape photographer Jason Orton and Hackney writer Ken Worpole critically examines the changing geography of landscape aesthetics since World War II. Field Station, £15.



The Gentle Author's London Album by the anonymous blogger of Spitalfields Life is a compilation of more than 600

previously unpublished photos showing a century of East London life. Faber Factory Plus, £25.



Marshland: Dreams and Nightmares on the Edge of London

by Gareth Rees is inspired by Hackney Marshes. This deep map of East London's marshes provides a blend of local history, folklore and weird fiction where nothing is quite as it seems. Influx Press, £11.99.



Hoxton Hall: A short history of Hoxton Hall and its locality by Patrice Lawrence celebrates 150 years of Hoxton Hall. Hoxton Hall in association with the Hackney Society, £6.

Noticeboard



Nana

The Clapton Improvement Society has renovated a former toilet in Brooksby's Walk to create Nana café, a project involving a group of older women. During the evening the café turns into a bar called The Convenience. The building has been gutted and retiled, and solar panels have been installed on the roof.

Pocket Parks

Three areas in Hackney are to become pocket parks as part of a Greater London Authority scheme to transform unused areas of land into vibrant green spaces. They are: Breakers Yard, a former car scrap yard near Sutton House; Trelawney Pocket Park on the site formerly occupied by Loddiges Nursery; and a space on Woodberry Down Estate, N4.

Laburnum Boat Club

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the Laburnum Boat Club £9,600 to explore the heritage of the Regent's Canal. During the project young people will examine archival material and contrast past images with photos of the canal today.

East London Preservation Society

The Gentle Author and Will Palin have set up the East London Preservation Society, an organisation that aims to stop large-scale destruction of old buildings in the East End. The society was launched at the Bishopsgate Institute on 27 November 2013.

Hackney Society Events

Hackney Substation

Saturday 25 January 2014, 11am

Tour with James Watson

Come and see the work of the engineers at National Grid at Hackney Substation. As this facility is not normally open to the public, the visit provides a unique opportunity to gain an insight into the workings of the high voltage transmission system in London. Visitors are required to bring a stout pair of shoes or walking boots. No trainers, sandals or slippers will be permitted. Hackney Substation is a live, working, operational substation and safety instructions must be very precisely adhered to at all times.

Meet at 11am, Millfields Park South, Lower Clapton E5 OAR.

Booking is essential by 19 January 2014.

If the event proves popular the group may need to be split in two for the tour.

Book online at <http://billetto.co.uk/hackneysubstation>.

FREE for Hackney Society members, £5 for non-members.

Ghosts of Stoke Newington

Saturday 15 February 2014, 11am

Walk with Sam Roberts

This walking tour through Stoke Newington's historic conservation area features some of London's best ghostsigns (fading advertisements painted on walls) as well as many other points of interest. These include a Banksy survivor and a lethal alleyway. The signs are used to explore local, advertising, craft and design history, aided by additional photographic resources shared en route.

Meet at 11am, Stoke Newington Station, Station Approach, N16 6YA.

Booking is essential. Strictly limited to 12 people. Book online at <http://billetto.co.uk/ghostsigns>

FREE for Hackney Society members, £5 for non-members.

Hackney Central

Sunday 9 March 2014, 2pm

Walk with Laurie Elks, Sean Gubbins and Emily Jost

This walk will explore Hackney Central – past, present and future – starting at St Augustine's Tower. The walk will begin with a visit to the Tower (open from 1.30pm), where there will be a chance to climb the stairs for a rooftop view of the district.

Meet at 2pm, St Augustine's Tower, E8 1HR.

Booking recommended. Book online at <http://billetto.co.uk/hackneycentral>

FREE for Hackney Society members, £5 for non-members.

Philanthropy and the City

Sunday 6 April, 2pm

Walk with Ray Blackburn

To celebrate the 300th anniversary of the founding of almshouses on Kingsland Road by a notable City figure, the walk explores this and other connections between Hackney and the City. We will meet in the City of London and end at the Geffrye Museum for tea. (Bring your travel cards!)

Booking recommended. Book online at <http://billetto.co.uk/philanthropyandthecity> FREE to members, £5.00 non-members. Further details will be published on the website.

Hackney Society News

Book Award

The Hackney Society has won a 2013 Walter Bor Media Award for its book Hackney: an *Uncommon History in Five Parts* edited by Margaret Willes. In 2011 it received the award for *Hackney: Modern, Restored, Forgotten, Ignored* edited by Lisa Rigg.

The Walter Bor Media Awards, which are presented every two years, commemorate Walter Bor, the first President of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies.

They seek to promote high standards in the material published in all media by member societies.

LLL

The Hackney Society's database of locally listed buildings across the borough is available at www.hackneybuildings.org.uk. Each entry contains a short local list description, a photograph and a map location. The database, which was created as part of the Love Local Landmarks project, contains a tool kit aimed at local groups and planning authorities wishing to pursue similar projects. The tool kit includes tips on defining the scope of the project, best practice in identifying and training volunteers; and sample survey sheets and list entries. Love Local Landmarks was part-funded by English Heritage, the London Borough of Hackney and local heritage organisations (see Spaces 39).

New Trustees

The Hackney Society is looking for new trustees to bring some key skills and new perspectives to our work. We are particularly interested in people with experience of fundraising. Please check our website or email us for details.

Thanks to Kopykat for sponsoring this issue

Kopykat Printing Limited

76 Rivington Street, London EC2A 3AY
Tel: 020 7739 2451 Fax: 020 7729 5925
www.kopykat.co.uk

Kopykat based in Shoreditch specialises in company stationery and high quality marketing material, we cover onsite litho printing, digital printing, copying and direct mail, environmentally we have recently been awarded Green Mark accreditation and we print using vegetable based inks, without the use of alcohol and deliver in an LPG vehicle.



kopykat
Design and Print

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

Edited by: Monica Blake

Layout by: design@gloryhall.com

Contributors: Monica Blake, Laura Dewe Mathews, Laurie Elks and Peter Snell

Photos: Monica Blake & Chloe Dewe Mathews

The Hackney Society

The Round Chapel,
1d Glenarm Road, London E5 0LY

T: 020 7175 1967

E: info@hackneysociety.org

W: www.hackneysociety.org

The Hackney Society is a registered Charity (No 107459) and Company limited by guarantee (No 04574188)