



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

# SPACES 2016

News and views about Hackney's built environment

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## Corten Extension London Fields



**Not just a rusty metal box stuck on the side, this modest Corten-clad addition to a Victorian end-of-terrace house in Middleton Road transforms the spaces that flow through it. Designed by HÛT, the main function of this extension, built over a dingy courtyard, is to allow light to flood into the adjoining spaces, and reconnect the house with its garden.**

Mostly hidden by the existing garden wall, large windows peek over the wall and onto the pavement beyond, bringing sunlight in and framing views of the sky and trees outside. New windows to the main house, constructed with Corten reveals, bring light into the traditional Victorian drawing room, and hint at the new interventions.

Corten was chosen because the architects were keen to use a material that complemented the colour and texture of the existing brickwork, but without copying it. Initially LB Hackney were reluctant to support the use of Corten, but were convinced that the unusual qualities of the material could be a positive attribute.

Corten is the same material used to make shipping containers, designed to withstand stormy seas and saltwater. The material has a sacrificial layer that weathers quickly, usually within a few weeks, that then protects the steel beneath, giving it a long lifetime.

The material is not expensive, but it does require careful detailing. As with any sheet material, the junctions and setting out of the panels are key to the quality of the end

appearance; it is not a material to use without plenty of research and a skilled contractor.

When working with Victorian buildings it is worth noting that they were built to different standards than modern ones; they were not designed to be airtight, and they 'move' with the changing seasons. Any new works must therefore take account of this and allow the original building to still breathe, expand and contract.

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## Hackney Fashion Hub

By Laurie Elks

**Hackney's controversial flagship regeneration project, the Fashion Hub, is starting to take visible and comprehensible shape.**

The Fashion Hub will occupy a wedge-shaped site between Morning Lane and the North London Railway viaduct. The wedge adjoins Tesco at its western end and extends to Ponsford Street, becoming wider to the east. The entire site has effectively been blighted since the 1960s, having been reserved first as part of London's Motorway Box and then for successive road schemes. Although the road threat was lifted by the 1980s, the area has remained forlorn ever since.

The objective is to create a series of connected clusters all associated with the fashion business. The first planned cluster is a retail hub taking as its point of departure the success of the Burberry outlet store close by in Chatham Place. There are two large retail units, of no great architectural pretension, designed by Pringle Richards Sharratt Architects. The first has been taken by Nike with the other due to go to an 'exciting' tenant whom the developer could not disclose at the time of writing. Between these two units the railway arches have been fashioned to form 12 retail units designed by the modernist firm Adjaye Associates. The most striking features are the gold shutters, effective and modern, although I did not appreciate they were 'iconic' until I read the publicity material. The publicity material promises an outlet village for London to rival Bicester with employment (unlikely to be well paid) directed to local people as far as possible through the Council's 'Ways into Work' office.

The other clusters will await the development of the thick end of the wedge towards Ponsford Street, the subject of an imminent

planning application at the time of writing. This is proposed as a purely commercial development, rising to six or seven storeys, incorporating offices, studios and workshops for fashion industry users. It is intended to be a fashion business cluster offering young fashion entrepreneurs a base away from the existing (and expensive) fashion business zone off Oxford Street. There will also be a fashion skills cluster including a Stitching Academy, 'highly affordable' design studios and workshop space. It is hoped that the location will prove attractive to the many young designers living in or around Hackney. Much of the detail, such as who will own and run the Stitching Academy, is unresolved but will emerge, according to the developer, through an 'iterative process'.

The Shoreditch firm, Waugh Thistleton, is entrusted with this part of the project. A third firm, Studio Egret West, has responsibility for the overall design of the project and relationship to the adjoining streetscene.

The much-trailed David Adjaye twin towers on the junction of Morning Lane and Chatham Place are possible future projects but I suspect will not be built.

The completed part works well enough for me in the hard-edged environment of Morning Lane with the caveat that the vast illuminated Nike logo dominates the street in a way which must be difficult for neighbours to live with. The railway viaduct which appalled Victorian conservationists now serves very well to seal the sylvan calm of Hackney Churchyard from the rush and grime of Morning Lane.

However, many questions need to be asked. First, is such developer-led prescriptive (as opposed to enabling) regeneration required in today's entrepreneurial Hackney? Second, will a commercial development really provide space and facilities to nurture young designers at an affordable price? A young



designer/maker with whom I discussed this doubted whether there would be genuinely affordable workspace but was willing to be pleasantly surprised. A third is whether this razzmatazz scheme is the best use of the seed money granted by the Mayor of London in the wake of the 2011 riots. The proof of that will lie in the number and quality of jobs created but there must be concern that the jobs created will go to 'bright young things', with only recent connection with Hackney, rather than less-educated people who participated in or were affected by the 2011 riots. The developers would respond that unskilled jobs such as factory assembly work are never going to be attracted to London and that job creation schemes must go with the grain of what is practicable. In any event the extent of trickle-down will only become clear over time. It also remains the case that several motor trade businesses were removed from the railway arches although Hackney Council and the developer contend that this was the doing of Network Rail and not a consequence of this regeneration scheme.

I am also fearful that the proposals for the next phase may prove excessively dense in order to accommodate the financial requirements of the developer.

There will be a chance to explore these and other questions with Andrew Sissons, Hackney's former Head of Regeneration, who is now acting as a consultant to the developer, in a Fashion Hub tour on Saturday 10 September, commencing at 11.00am. It should be a stimulating discussion.'

## 195 Mare St By Nick Perry\*

**As Spaces goes to press, some clearing of the site of the former Landsdowne Club and Elizabeth Fry Refuge has apparently begun.**

One of our eagle-eyed Trustees spotted the removal of items from the at-risk Grade II\* listed building at 195 Mare Street, and the Society's Chair, Lisa Shell, followed-up with direct enquiries to the contractor, architect, Council and Historic England. The site has listed building consent for various repair works, but before those can begin the developer is under an obligation to submit various technical details of the works for further approval – but this has not yet been done.

The contractor told us they had cleared 'loose non-specific debris' that arose from its recent occupation by squatters and provided access to 'some unsafe areas'. The owner's architect further stated there was no intention of starting any building work 'until such time as we have planning consent for the enabling development'; an 'enabling development' is one which might otherwise not receive planning consent – in order to (financially) 'enable' the restoration or protection of a heritage asset, such as 195 Mare Street. The site to the rear of the listed house is earmarked for just such a development.

The architect also reassured us that 'no work will be carried out to the building

until all documents have been agreed ... to satisfy the heritage requirements', knowing full well that it is a criminal offence to undertake work beyond 'like for like repair' to a statutory listed building without listed building consent.

A conservation officer from Hackney Council visited the site shortly after we notified them, along with representatives of the Council's Planning Enforcement team and Historic England. They explained the current planning position to the contractor and, with the public's help, will be keeping an eye on the premises over coming weeks.

\*Director of the Hackney Society



## All a Façade

**In the wake of the loss of the Hoxton Cinema, Lisa Shell, chair of the Hackney Society Planning Group, asks whether façade retention is becoming the trick by which planning approvals can be secured in the knowledge that insurmountable technical obstacles will preclude delivery.**

Following the Shoreditch Trust's failed attempts to reinstate the locally listed art deco Hoxton Cinema back in 2009, the subsequent owner of the site gained approval for 'the restoration of the historic façade... with associated new development behind'. The accompanying heritage assessment 'presented [the proposals for 18 new private tenure dwellings plus a four-screen cinema] to the council... as a "facilitating" development, with the new residential space provided being a conservative and reasonable scale... required to secure the preservation of the locally listed Hoxton Cinema façade'. The report recognises the poor condition of the structure, propped by a massive steel support behind hoardings since the building's demolition c.2006, stating that 'plasterwork and stone [had already been] dislodged or lost, along with general poor repair, [and] fabric damage'.

So was anyone surprised by the recent application by yet another subsequent owner, applying 'for full demolition ... and rebuild to match existing'. The arguments for such are devised this time by the contractor, with no contribution of a heritage consultant, but full support of the owner's new architects who indisputably demonstrate that retention could never have been possible in this approved scheme. The Hackney Society made a call for the council's reconsideration of the scheme which would be substantially different without the original façade, but before the ink was dry, the façade came down. Consented work to remove its upper level had apparently destabilised the structure, putting both contractors and public at risk. And health and safety considerations rightly override heritage interests.

The fundamental principle of façade retention demands consideration, as does the virtue of facsimile reconstruction. But of more immediate urgency is a need to understand why LB Hackney continues to approve high risk façade retention proposals, when so many are falling foul of technical obstacles across the borough.

Supporters of the regeneration of Dalston Lane Terrace were duped by the applicant's words: a 'conservation led' façade retention scheme quickly degenerated into a pastiche 'commercially led' reproduction when it



2011

2014

transpired that the removal of ground floor walls to achieve open plan retail space made it technically impossible to support the Georgian brickwork above.

The same year the façade of the modest Georgian terrace at 197-199 Hackney Road was condemned when the applicant introduced a basement to the scheme, requiring access for a piling rig. The removal of the roof structure and dismantling of some masonry during 2011 might have flagged up the owner's lack of commitment to façade retention.

In the proposed façade retention conversion of the robust industrial buildings at 102A Albion Drive, the architect promoted the patina of the existing brickwork and the deferential treatment of the new additions; the heritage consultant wrote that 'the existing brickwork will be repaired as necessary and the appearance... will be retained as an essential part of the building's character. The building will be insulated internally to ensure that the exterior appearance remains unchanged'. With Hackney's support the buildings have been fully reconstructed in cavity brickwork.

So could the fragile façade of the Marquis of Lansdowne public house on Cremer Street be the next victim of the folly of façadism? Campaigners fought off the pub's total annihilation at the hands of the Geffrye Museum's architect David Chipperfield in 2013. The museum now proposes to convert and extend the building to provide private flats to fund the open-plan café at ground level, which will in turn support one of Hackney's most loved Grade I listed buildings. Can anyone be blamed for predicting the next installment . . .

## Former Hackney Police Station: How the Planning Process Works for the Community

*Hackney Council recently considered an application for a new three-form entry free school on the site of the former Hackney Police Station. People living nearby had to rapidly equip themselves with the expertise to face the complex planning system. Local resident, Irene Stratton, explains how neighbours battled on through the consultation process.*

With the plan to turn the listed Old Police Station into a school for 630 pupils on a site facing a busy TfL Red Route, we are objecting to a plan which could destroy the historic heart of Hackney forever.

Until the Officers have produced their recommendation to the Planning Sub Committee – whether the Application might be approved or refused – objectors have no idea whether the Planners, whose salaries they pay, or the Council Members, whom they elect, will agree on or overrule their viewpoints. The objectors' one precious right in the process is that of comment. At the Committee meeting the objectors, as a group, have five minutes of carefully timed talk. If one of your Ward Councillors supports your case, is available and willing, they can speak for another five minutes.

Objectors must wait to be told when the meeting will be – usually a week in advance – and to know the Planners' recommendation. We expected a decision to be in last December. The decision was made in June 2016. One Councillor was unavailable.

Two other Councillors both live in the area and were deemed to have an interest. One agreed to speak but had to withdraw from the meeting after speaking because of this interest. Getting democratic support from your representatives can be tricky, not because of them but because of the system! We prepared reserve speakers in case our nominated ones were unavailable.

The good factor, in the objectors' favour, is the longer the process, the more time there is to become organised. Spreading the word about such a planning application is a hard slog of door-to-door leafletting. Planning the five-minute speech, registering the speakers, mustering interested parties to attend the meeting, maintaining the contact list and updating everyone takes time!

On 8 June this application was refused. It is only the end of the beginning. The applicant has the right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The Secretary of State for Education reputedly has the power to 'call in' Hackney's decision. Hence we wait...

You can read the Hackney Society's response to the scheme at <http://hackneysociety.org/page/hackneypolicestation>

## Derek W. Baker 1936 - 2016 By Amir Dotan

Derek Baker, a lifelong Stoke Newington historian passed away on 24 March. Derek and I shared a deep, some would say obsessive, interest in Stoke Newington's history, which made the 42-year age difference between us completely invisible. I first met Derek last year after a mutual acquaintance, who knew of my fascination with Stoke Newington's rich past, suggested I contact him.

Having bought every Stoke Newington history book over the last three years, I was quite proud of my collection, which occupied a whole shelf. Derek had an entire room dedicated to his life's work. It comprised dozens of books, old street directories, framed maps and 26 thick red folders he maintained on various topics which made up what he referred to as the 'Stoke Newington Encyclopaedia'. As I entered his study for the first time I was utterly speechless and couldn't begin to think where to start.

During the next 12 months we would meet every few weeks, and I scanned the photos in his carefully labelled and meticulously organised red folders. I always looked forward with anticipation to our meetings and a chance to catch up with Derek, share new discoveries and see him get excited as I did about newly found old photos,



documents and maps. We both knew that the hunt for artefacts and new fragments of information is never ending, and felt utterly exhilarated by stumbling upon anything new that answered a question or better yet, resulted in a new one for us to pursue.

Derek's collection was amazing and simply incredible. It was a complete one-man archive, a true labour of love. It detailed every imaginable aspect of Stoke Newington's long history: hundreds of old photos, his surveys of the streets, news cuttings, timelines of significant houses over the centuries, articles he wrote about notable figures and often their entire family history to name just a few items in his vast, ever expanding dynamic project.

Having spent his entire life in Stoke Newington, and working there as an electrician, Derek knew the area and its buildings intimately. His profound knowledge of his beloved neighbourhood's history was

a result of his tireless lifelong study and visits to many homes. Talking to Derek you felt he knew the story behind every brick in the area. The way he could travel back in time in his mind and describe grand manor houses and pleasure grounds, which stood where terraced houses, shops and restaurants stand today was mesmerising.

To me, Derek was very much a part of the history he loved studying with the enthusiasm of a schoolboy who just discovered his new favourite hobby. He was incredibly kind, generous with his time and knowledge and I shall miss our meetings and phone conversations very much. The people of Stoke Newington lost one of its most valuable assets and best kept secrets.

## Noticeboard

### Woodberry Wetlands

Sir David Attenborough officially opened Stoke Newington East Reservoir as a nature reserve on 30 April 2016. Now called Woodberry Wetlands, this site had been closed to the public since 1833. New boardwalks allow public access at a safe distance from reed beds and other important habitats. Screening and hides allow closer access. Some paths are closed to the public at certain times (e.g. during the nesting season).

## Hackney Society Events

### Hackney Fashion Hub

Saturday 10 September 2016, 11.00am  
Tour with Andrew Sissons  
Meet at 11am. Book online at <https://billetto.co.uk/hackneyfashionhub>

## Publications

*Orangeboy* by Hackney writer Patrice Lawrence is a thriller set in and around a housing estate in Hackney. Hodder, £7.99.

*Catholic with Confucian Tendencies: The extreme adventures of a Vietnamese refugee* is a memoir by Hackney resident Vu Khanh Thanh. In 1982 the author founded the An Viet foundation in Englefield Road.

*A Walk in the Park: The Life and Times of a People's Institution* by Hackney writer Travis Elborough provides a history of the park. Jonathan Cape, £18.99.



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