



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

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News and views about Hackney's built environment

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The Black and White Building



Picture Paul Bolding

The Climate Change and Sustainability Award in last year's Hackney Design awards went to the Black & White Building on Rivington Street in Shoreditch. Architect Ewa Effiom looks at what makes it stand out.

The Black & White Building, which was completed in 2023 by Waugh Thistleton, is London's tallest mass-timber office building and hence an exemplar of sustainable architecture.

Commissioned by FORA, formerly known as The Office Group, it was built using a combination of beech laminated veneer lumber (LVL) for the structural frame and cross-laminated timber (CLT) for the floors and circulation core. By opting for timber over the more traditional concrete and steel, the scheme achieves a 37 per cent reduction in embodied carbon, saving about

1,083.7 tonnes of CO². In addition, 55 per cent of the building's embodied carbon is sequestered within its structure, sourced from sustainable forests in Austria and Germany.

The structural frame is designed to be demountable, with components that can find new life elsewhere, fully aligning with circularity principles. The building's components have been engineered to be slotted and screwed together, avoiding the use of adhesives, which often obstructs reuse. Beyond its structural and tectonic merits, the building operates entirely on



renewable energy sources which further minimises the building's environmental footprint.

Every design element from material choices to spatial layout is rooted in principles of sustainability. The façade, which incorporates thermally modified tulipwood louvres, filters sunlight and reduces overheating while allowing daylight through. These louvres were developed in collaboration with the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), whose involvement reflects the project's commitment to responsible timber procurement and innovation in hardwood applications.

The use of timber is more than a just a gesture towards sustainability; it is also a nod to place. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Shoreditch was central to London's timber economy thriving on carpentry, joinery, and wood and veneers. The building sits on the site of a timber yard owned by Lathams, one of the largest independent timber suppliers in the UK. Now, Lathams have supplied the timber used in the construction of the office building.

By reintroducing timber as the dominant structural material, the Black & White Building reconnects Shoreditch with its material past. In doing so, it demonstrates how contemporary architecture can honour historical contexts while embracing environmentally conscious practices. The Black & White Building stands in homage to Hackney's history while offering a prototype for its future.

The author has recently become a trustee of the Hackney Society.

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Ashwin Street terrace saved?

Arts cooperative V22 says it has been granted a short extension to remain in a terrace of Victorian houses in Dalston controlled by Hackney Council while talks on its future continue. There have been fears that the buildings at 10-16 Ashwin Street, in poor condition, might be sold or demolished, despite a long-running local campaign. Bill Parry-Davies sets out how we got here:

The terrace at 10-16 Ashwin Street has a story to tell of the street's 150 year architectural, industrial and cultural history. The three houses were built in 1870 to the designs of the noted Victorian railway architect Edwin Horne, of which his locally listed Reeves and Sons Artists Colour Works and Hackney Central and Grade II-listed Camden Road stations still survive today. Designed in the Italianate style, they bear his characteristic decorative brick, stone and ironwork detailing - sadly all currently defaced by shabby white paint. To the rear is the former engineering works of Tyler & Co, who moved to Dalston in 1862 to manufacture their patented railway signalling system which was adopted throughout the UK and parts of France.

The buildings were purchased in 1985 in Hackney's name, although with grants and private donations raised by the charitable community company Pyramid Arts Development Ltd., for education in the creative arts. With Pyramid's demise in 1994, the buildings became neglected and squatted. In 2005, Hackney finally recovered possession and V22 London Limited refurbished the buildings and has

managed them ever since as affordable studios for artists, who have included Dame Phyllida Barlow DBE RA.

By 2008, Café Oto had moved into the Reeves Colour Works, followed by Arcola Theatre in 2010 and the community's Eastern Curve Garden opened on the former railway line behind Ashwin Street, which Hackney continued to designate as a planned "shopping circuit" linking Dalston Square with Kingsland Shopping Centre.

It took 15 years of community campaigning for the Council to finally recognise the architectural and cultural legacy of Ashwin Street. In 2017, the Dalston Lane (West) Conservation Area was extended to include the Ashwin St enclave and 10-16 Ashwin Street were locally listed. Finally, the need to retain and protect the Garden, and recognition of Ashwin Street as Dalston's "Cultural Quarter", were formalised in its recently adopted Hackney and Dalston Plans.

Unfortunately, since 2005 Hackney had failed to maintain 10-16 Ashwin Street and, despite £800,000 of recent structural works, the outstanding repair costs needed to make them safe ceased to be a priority for the council. Both V22, whose lease had expired, and the Garden which shared some of the land, were in peril. On 24 March, its cabinet delegated its powers to officers to sell the buildings for "best consideration" without any restriction on



Ashwin Street houses. Picture Bill Parry-Davies

future uses or further oversight by elected council members.

The following day a new association, Friends of Ashwin Street, made an application nominating them as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) so that "future uses of the asset shall continue to serve the social interest and wellbeing of the local community ... in particular by the promotion of the creative arts".

As talks continue between the council and V22 for its private purchase of the building, V22 has confirmed to the Friends that the conditions of purchase will now include restrictions for exclusive community use, including creative uses, for the next 25 years. In view of this the ACV application, which was obstructing the sale, has been withdrawn.

V22's plans include assisting Café Oto and Eastern Curve Garden to expand their businesses and the ambition to create an Ashwin Arts Centre. Ashwin Street holds its breath.

Grant for Hackney Museum

Hackney Council has been awarded a £2.2m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to redesign and modernise Hackney Museum, which it said it would use in "creating a more dynamic and inclusive space for residents, with the aim to use the museum's unique historical collections in bold and exciting new ways".

The new permanent exhibition at the museum will highlight how the local area has been shaped by 300,000 years of migration and settlement. Alongside the redesign and redisplay of the permanent exhibition, other significant changes will include a new visitor reception, two temporary exhibition areas, a redeveloped community room, an improved shop, events and teaching spaces, and enhanced digital resources so more people can access Hackney's rich histories.

Local community groups and organisations will play a key role in shaping the

redevelopment, contributing ideas towards permanent and temporary exhibitions, digital content, and skills development programmes. There will be opportunities for volunteers to get involved and help reveal local histories about the impact of the Blitz, activism and social change.

Stories and objects in the new permanent exhibition will explore the social and economic changes which have made the area a desirable place to live, as well as a range of issues which have challenged communities too. The borough's long



Image GUM Studios

history of community solidarity and activism will be showcased. Hackney's famous Anglo-Saxon longboat, discovered in Springfield Park, will be redisplayed, alongside the much-loved replica of the boat which thousands of children have sat in. Remains of a 300,000-year-old straight-tusked elephant - the world's largest ever land mammal - discovered in Evering Road, Stoke Newington, will be displayed to show a time when the local climate and landscape were dramatically different, with Hackney resembling a South African savannah.

King's Hall plans approved

Plans to refurbish King's Hall Leisure Centre in Lower Clapton Road have been approved by Hackney Council's planning committee at a cost of £71.4m. (See Spaces 84). The Grade II-listed building dates from 1894-97 and was designed by Edward Harnor and Frederick Pinches as a public baths.

Parts are in very poor condition and the plans intend to safeguard the building as well as reinstating for swimming the original ladies' pool, which has been used as a sports hall. Existing pools and changing facilities will be refurbished and new fitness and studio facilities added.

The existing Lower Clapton Road elevation would be restored but would not be used as an entrance. Access will be through a new block in Portland stone on Clapton Square.

The plans were developed by FaulknerBrowns Architects, which designed Hackney Council's award-winning Britannia Leisure Centre. A contractor has yet to be appointed but the work is expected to start in late 2025 and be complete in late 2028. The centre will close for the period.

The planning application says: "Kings Hall Leisure Centre presents a challenging site context as an infill site surrounded by residential and commercial properties. The project not only involves preserving the historical integrity of the Grade II listed building but also addresses critical health, safety, and accessibility concerns. Additionally, it aims to replace outdated facilities and services, while enhancing

the Centre's role and impact within the community.

"The proposal encompasses a full refurbishment, retrofit, and extension of the existing facility, complemented by an extended public realm design to seamlessly integrate the new extension with the adjacent park. This public realm will feature both hard and soft landscaping, as well as necessary highways works, parking, servicing, and access improvements, including associated plant."



Images FaulknerBrowns



Kingsland shopping centre application

Criterion Capital, the owner of Kingsland Shopping Centre, has applied for planning permission to redevelop part of the centre. It would demolish the Matalan store and build a series of tower blocks across the site including the present car park.

Residential blocks of up to 14 storeys would provide 254 homes and there would be a community centre, all within a landscaped site. The Sainsbury's store would remain but would get renewed underground access for deliveries. Application number 2025/0167.

It says: "The proposals seek to deliver a comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of the site, providing significant new public realm at the heart of the proposals, alongside high quality residential accommodation, commercial office space and other ancillary non-residential uses."



Kingsland shopping map © OpenStreetMap contributors with annotations

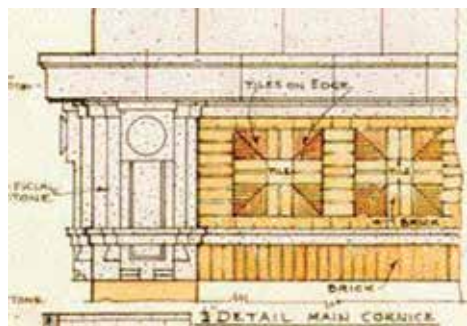
Noticeboard

Santander leaves Mare Street

The unbanking of Hackney Central continues with the imminent closure of the Santander branch at 392 Mare Street, leaving the future use of the attractive building uncertain. The area hasn't had any branches of the "big 4" banks for a while and after Santander goes on 15 July, only Nationwide and Halifax will offer banking in the Narrow Way.

The Santander building dates from 1929 when it was designed for grocers Sainsbury's. The front elevation includes interesting detail in terracotta tiles on edge in the cornice. Drawings from the Sainsbury's architects' department show plans for cold storage in the basement using ice delivered twice a week by the North Pole Ice Company.

Sainsbury's occupied the building until 1972.



392 Mare Street – detail of cornice. Image The Sainsbury Archive.

Publications

Women from Hackney's History II

The second volume of Women from Hackney's History was published on International Women's Day (8th March), four years to the day after the first volume appeared. It has been written, like the first, by a team of contributors, all but one a Hackney woman.



The 115 women featured include:

Emilia Lanier From a family of Tudor court musicians living in Hoxton, Emilia was the first woman in England to publish a book of original poetry, and with it the first genuine feminist tract in English – more than 200 years before Mary Wollstonecraft published Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Katharine Bruce Glasier Born in Stoke Newington, 'Fighting Kate' was a founder member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893. She attended the North Hackney High School for Girls in Stamford

Hill and became a committed socialist after witnessing a strike by women cotton workers. She was a lecturer, writer, editor and the only woman on the ILP's National Council.

Agnes Marshall Agnes was a brilliantly successful businesswoman, running a culinary empire of cookery lessons, cookbooks, branded goods, kitchen equipment and a patented home ice cream maker. She can claim to be the person who invented the ice cream cornet.

May Nelson Champion boxer and chimney sweep, May was born in Homerton and spent most of her life on the banks of the River Lea in Upper Clapton. Starting as an acrobat in a music hall act, she took over her husband's chimney sweep business when he was incapacitated.

Alice Paul During her time in England (1907-10), Pennsylvania born Alice was a militant suffragette, arrested and imprisoned three times. In between studying law, she trained as a social worker in Hoxton and worked in Dalston. On her return to the US, she carried on the women's suffrage fight. Hers was a lifetime of commitment, lobbying for equal rights in Civil Rights legislation and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Cleo Sylvestre Actress, singer, theatre manager and much loved within the De Beauvoir community that she had called home since the 1970s. She was the first woman to sing with the Rolling Stones and acted at the National Theatre and with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Her own favourite performance was as Mary Seacole in a one-woman play.

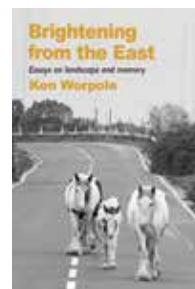
Mary Ann/Thomas Walker Held at the Elizabeth Fry Refuge in Mare Street after being caught stealing, it emerged that Mary had been living and working as a man for years. Thomas earned his living as 'the female barman' employed by various pubs as a novelty to attract customers. His fame was such that a street ballad was written about him. After an arrest for destitution, he was sent to the workhouse where he disappeared from records.

Women from Hackney's History II costs £15 (£10 to Hackney Society members via the website). It is also available at all Hackney bookshops and from the Hackney Museum and the Museum of the Home.

Brightening from the East by Ken Worpole

Ken Worpole, 'a literary original, a social and architectural historian whose books combine the Orwellian ideal of common decency with understated erudition' (New Statesman), has written on many subjects during his long career, from cemeteries to

hospices to the novels of Alexander Baron, but has often returned to the subject of his beloved Essex. His latest essay collection Brightening from the East (Little Toller) focuses on the natural and built landscapes of the 'region of the mind' that is the estuarine marshlands of the Thames and the East Anglian coast, bringing us stories of radical communities and arcadian dreams of new ways of living.



Available from Pages of Hackney £16

Hackney Society Events

Wed 21st May evening London Fields walk led by Sean Gubbins

Tue 24th June evening Space Studios visit and walk and talk at Space HQ with Eline van der Vliet (Director), Karen Davies

Sat July 19th TBC evening Millfields substation tour underground and across site with James Watson

See the HS Eventbrite page for details

Hackney History Festival

The festival returns in May with over 70 walks, talks and tours – see hackneyhistoryfestival.org for details.

On festival days, the Hackney Society will have book stalls at The Round Chapel on Sat 10th May, Sutton House on Sun 11th May and Hackney Archives on Sat 17th May so please drop by and say hello (and if you're able to help out on stalls or with other tasks such as stuffing envelopes, delivering Spaces, social media or on our planning or buildings at risk groups, please do get in touch).

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

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