

# NOOKS and CORNERS

**W**ITH the threat of multiple tall tower schemes looming over south London, residents may at last be able to draw a glimmer of hope from a planning inspectorate ruling last month that lambasted a 29-storey housing scheme in Kennington as "incongruous and unacceptable".

The huge development by Anthology/Lifestory was to be built on the site of Woodlands, a former low-rise nursing home. Lambeth council ran out of time to either approve or reject the skyscraper, so it was referred to the Planning Inspectorate last year. Planning inspector John Braithwaite was not impressed by the plan, especially the impact it would have on residents nearby and in the new flats. However good the architecture and materials might be, he noted, the building would still be 29 storeys tall, casting a huge shadow and looming over other homes and gardens.

"Substantial and unacceptable harm would be caused to the character of the area, substantial and unacceptable harm would be caused to the amenities of residents of dwellings around the site," said his ruling. Not only that, but: "The proposed development would not optimise the housing use of the site, because it would cause unacceptable harm. Furthermore, the proposed housing scheme would not be a mixed and balanced community and some intended residents of the proposed development would have poor living conditions."

The decision comes as people in Lambeth await a decision on the former London Fire Brigade (LFB) HQ, 8 Albert Embankment, where a potentially splendid restoration of the grade II-listed art deco riverside building is sadly accompanied by two grotesque towers, of 26 and 24 storeys, in the plans submitted by LFB and its development partner U+I (*Eyes passim*). The site is just across the Thames from the UNESCO world heritage Westminster site and close to grade I-listed Lambeth Palace.

A planning inquiry finished hearing evidence on 18 December, with a decision not expected until spring. In the meantime, U+I announced in January that it is reviewing all its projects after making a £50m half-year loss.



The proposed Hondo Tower, Brixton

The London mayor's office is also currently reconsidering plans for the 20-storey Hondo Tower in the middle of Brixton's predominantly low-rise Victorian buildings. That scheme was rubber-stamped in December after being approved by Lambeth council, but the mayor's backing was revoked in January, after it came to light that Lambeth had not passed on all the representations received, so the process would have to start again. The Victorian Society wrote to London mayor Sadiq Khan this month, noting that the tower would overshadow the historic townscape, eroding its special character.

**An attractive Victorian "cottage" hospital, boarded up and empty for many years, stands beside the entrance to Grantham District Hospital, in Lincolnshire. The NHS trust in charge of the site wants to demolish it, citing concerns over the "safety and visual impact" of the buildings.**

Locals say this would be needless destruction of a well-loved building and an important part of the town's history. Designed by Richard Adolphus Came, when it opened in 1876 the Grantham Journal noted that: "The

building with its neatly arranged grounds, and trim Gothic porch, forms a somewhat picturesque object."

The present-day small working district hospital consists mainly of functional 20th-century low-rise brick buildings. Aside from the ugly window-security and overgrown



The old hospital building, Grantham

weeds, the visual impact of the old hospital building is far from a problem – it remains by far the most impressive and interesting building on the site.

United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust has proposed demolition before, with plans in 2014 to knock the old hospital down to make way for extra car parking space. One local councillor who opposed the scheme at the time feared the trust would deliberately leave the building "to wrack and ruin so that they can eventually come and say 'it is not fit for purpose'."

Seven years on, the trust told local press this month that it "has always been clear that the building would need to be demolished due to its overall condition and safety concerns." As a result, locals have launched a petition calling for the building to be renovated instead.

PS: Good news from Hampshire, where Hart district council has refused the Ministry of Defence's request to demolish Minley Manor Model Farm under permitted development rights (see last Eye).

As with the hospital buildings, the farm has been neglected for years while in public ownership and now looks dilapidated, although locals believe there is strong potential for restoration. Following pressure from lawyers from SAVE Britain's Heritage this month, the council says it will require a proper planning process, which will take into account the heritage value of the farm, which lies within a grade II-listed estate.



"We did have a property in your price range, Mr Hodge, but we sold it in 1977"

## Letters

Private Eye

### Taking back control

Sir,  
Wow! Just seen the front cover of Eye 1540. Is that veiled criticism of the EU? Dom Cummings will be in total shock. Looking forward to reading all the letters from Remainers cancelling their subscriptions.

JOHN MOGG,

Billericay, Essex.

...May I be the 94th person to point out that there is a "British word for Schadenfreude" ("Truss on Europe", p7, Eye 1540). The word is "epicariacy"; and using it more often might just add to our feelings of sovereignty.

ROBERT PROVAN,

North Ayrshire.

### No sweat

Sir,  
Re "Boohoo acquires Debenhams", (p34, Eye 1540). I'd like to point out that Boohoo's sweatshops are most likely to be in Leicester rather than Birmingham (see umpteen press reports). We may have the world's largest Primark but that's no excuse for lazy assumptions about sweatshops and Birmingham.

ROBERT DUGMORE,

Disgruntled Brummie.

### Driver licence

Sir,  
Why is the concept of a Covid-19 vaccination passport controversial? Along with most seasoned travellers, I have a little yellow "International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis". It complies with the WHO International Health Regulations (2005) and, as stated on the front cover, it was issued by the health departments of England and the devolved administrations. It was introduced to record yellow fever vaccinations, but records of all other vaccinations can be included. Specific details of the vaccines taken are recorded with the date of vaccination, and an internationally recognised official stamp is applied by the administering centre. Given that this system already exists, why do we not simply add records of Covid-19 vaccines?

PAUL DRIVER,

West Burton, West Sussex.

### Lesson from his story

Sir,  
"Hedgehog" wonders whether it will take "the death of a top Tory" to stem the spread of smart motorways (Road Rage, Eye 1540). The death of William Huskisson (a "top Tory" of his time) at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 did nothing to reduce the nation's appetite for building more tracks.

TREVOR CURNOW (PROFESSOR)

Lancaster.

### Hitch in time

Sir,  
I really enjoyed your new feature, The Peter Hitchens Letter (Eye 1540). Haven't laughed so much in ages. Please let there be more!

NEIL MCKAIN,

Haddenham, Bucks.