

# LEE MANOR SOCIETY



[www.leemanorsociety.org](http://www.leemanorsociety.org) email: [news@leemanorsociety.org](mailto:news@leemanorsociety.org)

## Review of the Year

Reading from our constitution ‘The objects of the Society shall be to maintain and enhance the character of the Lee Manor area in the London Borough of Lewisham and its surroundings and to encourage residents and others to take an interest in their neighbourhood.’ Nowhere can this be more obvious than in our on-going scheme to replace **street trees** that have succumbed to disease, old-age and very rarely, we are pleased to report, vandalism.

From a loose association of your Society, local residents and Lewisham Council there is a planting programme in progress that is already benefitting local streets such as Effingham Road and Brightfield Road. If there is a new tree close to where you live, don’t hesitate to donate a bucket of water-especially during prolonged dry periods. We were concerned that tarmac was being laid right up to the trunks of trees in Manor Lane during the recent street-scaping, but this has now been replaced by a water-permeable surface that is far more tree-friendly. Less welcome in the



**The Leegate square**

local streets is the lamentable failure to enforce the **20mph speed limit**. We would argue that this limit is too heavy-handed for major roads such as Burnt Ash Road, but the situation in side roads where 20 mph traffic can expect to be regularly overtaken by 30+ mph traffic seeking to avoid the A20 and the South Circular, is positively dangerous.

Failure to enforce is also glaringly obvious in the case of **satellite dishes** – often sited at a position easy for the cable-layer but damaging to the street-scape. Unsurprisingly, most of the affected properties are in multiple occupation and display hoardings which proudly proclaim ‘managed and let’ by local estate agents and housing associations who, frankly, should know better since they trade in a Conservation Area. There is a similarly anarchic situation over the installation of **uPVC windows** which can be read about elsewhere in this Annual Review. We also summarise our response to the latest St.Modwen proposal for the redevelopment of **Leegate**. Whilst we are broadly in favour of the latest scheme and believe it is time to move on to the next stage of development, there is nagging

### **The Society’s 2018 Annual General Meeting**

The Lee Manor Society’s AGM will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday, September 19 in the Baring Room of the Manor House, Old Road, SE13 5SY

#### **Agenda**

Chairman’s report, Treasurer’s report, Election of officers and committee. The following officers are standing for election: Ralph White, chairman; Sheila Peck, secretary; Lorraine Burton, treasurer. Any other nominations must be received in advance of the meeting.

General discussion.

#### **Speaker**

**Ralph White.** From village to suburb, a history of Lee.

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

concern that the demands of Lewisham Council and the GLA to increase the proportion of social/affordable housing in the scheme will result in even higher towers than currently suggested when the evidence of history demonstrates quite clearly that such high-rise living was often unpopular with families. Finally, and on a more positive note, we are delighted that Manor House Gardens and Manor Park both received the **Green Flag** award in July of this year and that the **Community Library** in the Manor House has established itself as a much-loved and well-used resource. Many congratulations!

## Wood or plastic? A window frame-up

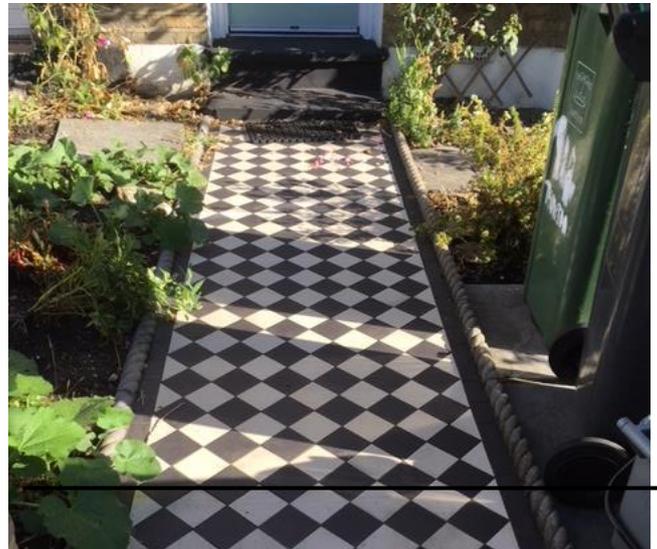
To quote from Lewisham Council, 'We aim to preserve and enhance the best of the borough's historic environment while ensuring that new development is of a high quality design'. In a Conservation Area such as ours, especially where there is what is called an 'Article 4 directive' this can be a singularly expensive business and no more so than when it comes to double-glazed windows.

The written requirement is that new windows should be timber framed and of a design strictly comparable with what is being replaced. But over time, new materials emerge which might easily be superior – and desirable (durability, life-span) – to those currently in use. So is there a problem here? Lewisham Homes, responsible for much housing stock previously owned by Lewisham Council, has embarked on a significant upgrade of its estate and this has included the installation of new windows.

The replacements are reasonably close in appearance to the originals but on closer examination the trim appears to be little more than uPVC while the main timbers look like a hybrid polymer/MDF material. In addition, the small pastel-coloured window lights which adorn some of the houses in Handen Road have been lost – an unforgivable change to what were some of the houses' unique defining features. It is hard to believe that a private individual would be allowed to get away with such a compromise. We have been reassured by Lewisham's planning enforcement department that these windows are acceptable but we are not convinced. Has Lewisham Council relaxed the regulations? We think the council should be more open about this issue.

## Bouquet of the year

To the residents who have restored Victorian-style tessellated front garden paths, often replacing poor quality concrete. These paths are an important feature of Victorian garden design.



## Brickbat of the year

Work on improving the streetscape of Manor Lane by Conway left a telegraph pole stranded in the road. The problem was finally solved by extending the pavement.



## Leegate

Plans to demolish and redevelop the rundown Leegate shopping centre have been around, it seems, forever. In last year's annual newsletter we headlined our coverage as 'The end game,' expecting the project to go ahead based on a large Asda supermarket. The traffic and pollution implications were horrific while shoppers looking to relax with a cup of coffee in the public square would have been seated on a narrow strip of pavement yards from buses and delivery trucks.

But over the past 12-18 months all that has changed. Uncertainty in the UK retail market led to Asda withdrawing from the scheme. Large supermarkets have fallen out of fashion. St Modwen, the site's owner and developer, was forced to come up with a new plan involving a much smaller 'anchor' store and a greater emphasis on housing. We have yet to hear the name of the foodstore owner though M&S did consider coming but then withdrew.

This meant there was more space in the development for a proper public square – something the Society has been urging for the past 10 years – and for convenient pedestrian routes through the site. The square, which will have trees, benches and facilities for an open market, will connect with Eltham Road to the north and a revived Carsten Close to the south. Trees will be planted on the pavements surrounding Leegate to soften its bulky appearance. A Monterey pine, an evergreen that can grow to 30 metres high, will stand as a 'signature tree' on the Lee Green corner. The Society's enamel heritage panel, which highlights the rich and varied history of the crossroads, will be found a new site nearby.

Parking, a big feature of the original supermarket proposal with 320 rooftop spaces, will be much reduced with 40 spaces for the smaller food store

at ground level and 131 parking spaces underground for residents.

## Affordable homes

The redevelopment will provide 393 homes, all flats with the exception of 14 four-bedroom houses and 17 maisonettes. St Modwen assumes that half of the homes for sale will be sold 'off-plan' – before they have been finished. It expects limited interest from overseas and domestic buy-to-let investors due to Leegate's 'secondary location', itself a result of poorer transport links than other nearby housing developments, and the less attractive surroundings.

There are several aspects of the revised scheme that we welcome since they incorporate suggestions that the Society has been making for the past decade. It is regrettable nevertheless that the improvements appear to have been delivered by changes in the state of the UK retail market rather than by any actions of Lewisham's planning department. The planners have shown no interest in following many of the guidelines laid down in their own planning documents or in listening to the views of the local community.

We are concerned that, according to comments from St Modwen, actions by Lewisham's new mayor and the London mayor Sadiq Khan to increase the availability of affordable homes could lead to up to two storeys being added to the proposed development. Additional affordable housing could be provided by St Modwen including more affordable homes in the existing plan (and shaving its returns). This will presumably be resolved by discussions between the planners and St Modwen over its calculations of the financial viability of the scheme.

We are opposed to the idea of simply adding additional boxes on the top of what is already a tall and bulky development at a crossroads otherwise characterized by lower building types. For the record, the Society is not opposed to increasing the provision of affordable homes. We pushed for more homes on the Leegate site at a time when St Modwen



The new Leegate (Images courtesy of St Modwen)

was focused almost exclusively on a retail development.

But we would not want to see the model employed in central Lewisham of overbearing 30-plus storey towers being exported to a more low-rise part of the borough. Thought needs to be given to the quality of housing provision as much as to the quantity. High-rise blocks were popular with planners in the 1960s but proved disastrous for families and the elderly and many have since been demolished. It beggars belief that the lessons of that time appear to have been forgotten.

We understand from St Modwen that a cost review of the Leegate plans has led to savings through, for example, a simpler design of window openings replacing expensive panels with cheaper brick. This sounds sensible but we would oppose any moves to reduce the overall quality of the scheme's detailing.

Care needs to be taken that the link between Carsten Close and the public square does function as a welcoming safe space. We have been told that the design is intended to provide oversight from the homes of the public walkway while giving householders privacy. Night time lighting will also play an important role here. We urge St Modwen and the planners to get these details right.

Talks are continuing about the community centre. The existing centre provides an excellent range of services to a number of different groups. It deserves a proper space in the new development to continue and expand its work.

## The Society

We are a voluntary group of local residents keen to maintain and enhance the attractive, largely Victorian character of the local area. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm.

We are always looking for new members to join in the projects in which we are involved. No special knowledge of planning or architecture is required - just a concern for the well-being of the area. Everyone who lives locally is welcome to come. If you are interested in taking an active role in the work of the Society come to one of our meetings. We have a formal role in advising the council on planning matters and see all applications made in the conservation area. We work with other local conservation groups to achieve improvements in Lee and Lewisham.

We see our role as encouraging people to take an interest in their street beyond their front gate. Past experience shows that we can make a difference. We do not win all our battles but through

concerted action we do achieve improvements and we can prevent ill-thought-out schemes by developers, the council and individuals.

Large home extensions including roof extensions may require planning permission while the demolition of buildings and changes to front garden boundaries are also controlled. Satellite dishes and replacement doors and windows in uPVC are also subject to restrictions. Contact us or the planning department on 0208 314 7400.

Why not contact us to receive our monthly Newsletter and other news from the Society? Just email Ralph White on:

[news@leemanorsociety.org](mailto:news@leemanorsociety.org) and we will add you to our distribution list. Alternatively, visit our website at [www.leemanorsociety.org](http://www.leemanorsociety.org)

### Drinking and Licentiousness in Lee

The large open space in front of the Tiger's Head was often the scene of processions and meetings. In the early part of the present century a deal of drinking and licentiousness was carried on at the various roadside inns near London, especially if there were any open spaces near. The law was often evaded, or not put in force, and when war time [came], the government was much in want of an increased revenue, which was easiest obtained by the greater sale of excisable liquors. The inns around London did an enormous amount of business, especially on Sundays, as at that time they kept open all day.

The Tiger's Head, being the first stage out of London, was a favourite resort and house of call. Cribb, John Gully and Molyneux, the noted pugilists, used to meet here before they were trained at the Porcupine Inn, Mottingham. These assemblies were attended with great rudeness, and often on Sundays men could be seen stripped to the waist and fighting. The file of chaise carts, on the side of the road, mostly covered the eighth of a mile; and all the persons, both male and female, being gaily dressed, the whole country appeared to be keeping holiday. Everybody, at this period, travelled by road as there were neither railway nor steamboat.

From History of Lee, F.H. Hart published 1882  
*Contributed by David Plumer*