



CITY HERITAGE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

This has been a year of mixed fortunes for those who care about the City's heritage.

The worst outcome, by some distance, was the Corporation's approval in January 2026 of the damaging proposals for Liverpool Street station. Network Rail's original plans, drawn up by Herzog & de Meuron, were withdrawn in 2023 after attracting more than 2,000 objections — including from this Society. Rather than rethink the ambition, Network Rail parted ways with its development partners Sellar and appointed architects Acme to pursue the same basic idea: a gigantic oversite development that would destroy or disfigure the station's Victorian fabric, its magnificent train shed, and the sympathetic modifications of the 1980s.

Acme's revised plans attracted over 2,000 objections in their turn. Real estate firm JLL, appointed as part of the planning process, concluded that the scheme was "not technically viable" — unlikely, in other words, to be profitable in today's economy. The project now faces scrutiny from the Mayor of London and may yet be called in by the Secretary of State. We will be watching closely.

On the other side of the ledger, there is genuine cause for encouragement in the Corporation's approach to planning policy. Over the past eighteen months it has been reviewing its policy framework, and much of what has emerged deserves to be welcomed.

The Society commented on successive drafts of City Plan 2040 — the planning blueprint that will shape the City for the next fifteen years — and we have recently been invited to comment on new Supplementary Planning Documents on Celebrating Heritage, Planning Obligations and Offices, among others.

It is clear from these documents that the Corporation takes heritage seriously, at the very least as a driver of the City's attractiveness to businesses and visitors. That is admirable as far as it goes. But policy is only as good as its application; the willingness to override a conservation area and disregard harm to a listed building, as at Liverpool Street, is not an encouraging precedent.

Within the Society, our principal focus this year has been on reinvigorating our review of planning applications — ensuring that we are across the considerable volume of cases coming before the Corporation, and that we can make well-reasoned representations on as many as possible. One figure from this work is worth dwelling on: we have continued to support more applications than we oppose. That is, in its way, a positive reflection on the quality and spirit of the works currently being carried out on listed buildings across the City. There is much to value in what is being built and repaired around us, even as we remain alert to the cases where more must be said.

ANNUAL DINNER

Twenty three members and guests attended the Annual Dinner held on 22 May 2025 following the AGM. After dinner, the chairman made a brief speech mentioning what the Society had been doing during the past year.

On the social side the Society had arranged two guided tours around the City, one taking in the Fleet River Valley and the other centred on the Smithfield area. It is hoped to arrange further walks this year.

On the planning front the Society had made representations in respect of the redevelopment of Liverpool Street station and also London Wall West. The Society has also made a detailed response to City 2040. Finally, the chairman commented that it was a joy to see more public spaces opening up despite the

concrete and steel to be found in the City Cluster.

This was followed by the principal guest and speaker, Liz Fox – Director, Historic Buildings & Places. Liz started by urging members to get friends to join City Heritage. She continued by saying her organization was founded in 1924. It champions historic buildings and places of all ages and types and works to provide a sustainable future for them. It's a National Amenity Society and as such has a role as a Consultant on Listed Buildings Consent applications.

The guest speaker said that her organization has had successes with saving numerous buildings from demolition as well as winning a

number of appeals. Liz queried how developers view historic buildings and pointed to the Liverpool Street development plans which has drawn much criticism. She said we all have to continue objecting. Liz finished by saying that she and her organization still feel lively and full of energy.

OBITUARY

The Society was sorry to hear of the death this year of Leslie Richard Breadmore. Les was a long-standing member of the Society and was its Treasurer for a considerable number of years. He died aged 105. He will be sadly missed.

The Society's Executive Committee 2024

Desmond Fitzpatrick FSA	President
Chris Fowler	Chairman
Dorian Crone RIBA, MRTPI, IHBC	Vice-Chairman
Antony Croot	Hon. Treasurer
Patrick Burke	Membership Secretary
D Sanya Juliuson	

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