



# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2014

### Chairman's report

AMANDA FRAME, CHAIRMAN

#### Redesign of the Kensington Society's website

The website has been completely redesigned and updated. Please access it on [www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org). A huge thanks to David Campion for all the years he maintained the former website. Richard Wilding, our new website designer, has done a fantastic job in coordinating the various aspects of the website. We will be issuing regular alerts on planning issues and updating the site constantly. It is designed to be a steady source of information for all of you. It is easy to use and I encourage all of you to check in – often.

#### Examination in Public – Basements, Conservation and Design, Miscellaneous

The Examination in Public for the three consultations will be in full swing when the newsletter goes out (see page 7). It has been a long process with much coordination between our affiliated societies. The Kensington Society's planning committee, led by Michael Bach and which now includes a new member, Sophia Lambert, has continually responded at every stage and we are hoping that the hard work will result in improved planning policies.

#### Pre-application advice

The Government's advice to developers to seek pre-application consultation from the Council is fraught with complications. The idea of seeking advice before a formal application seems

reasonable, however in practice there can be major difficulties. The developer is encouraged both to consult the public and to respond to the public's concerns and then to present the results of the consultation with the application. In fact, in most cases the developer has merely ticked the box of public consultation and no adjustments have been made following the public consultation. The entire process limits, even excludes, public involvement. The Council planning officers have steadfastly refused any involvement with the public before submission of a formal application, by which time we consider it to be too late to have any meaningful impact on the proposals.

When notified of a public consultation we now immediately ask for copies of the Council's pre-application advice letters to the developers and for the comments received from the Council's Architects Appraisal Panel. It is our opinion that there should be no need for confidentiality or financial privacy once an application has been validated.

The planning department, however, will not provide us with this information unless we apply for it through the Freedom of Information Act (FIO Act). In responding to a FOI request the Council is allowed to take up to 20 working days; in other words 4 weeks. The public consultation period allowed in Kensington & Chelsea, when the public can respond and comment on an

*Continued overleaf*



Left to right: Councillor Victoria Borwick, Sir Nicholas Soames, Mayor Councillor Maighread Condon-Simmonds at the unveiling of the blue plaque at 51 Abingdon Villas.

Photograph: Lucy Elliott – [www.lucyelliottphotography.com](http://www.lucyelliottphotography.com)

### SAVE THE DATE

TUESDAY, 28TH APRIL,  
6:30 FOR 7:00PM  
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY



The speaker will be The Rt Hon Lord Carnwath of Notting Hill Gate. Lord Carnwath, British Supreme Court judge since 2011, is a resident of the Royal Borough. Prior to his appointment as a High Court judge in 1994 he practised in parliamentary law, planning and local government.



The Mayor, Councillor Maighread Condon-Simmonds, has invited the members to join her afterwards in the Mayor's Parlour for a glass of wine.

The Great Hall of Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street.

application, is still only 21 calendar days (3 weeks), the minimum required by law. The justification within the FOI Act for the 20 working days is that it may take that long to produce the information. When we ask for the advice letter on an application, it usually exists within the case file and should be accessible within a day. Tellingly, in all cases but one so far, the planning department has taken exactly the 20 working days, or longer, for the planning officers to release the information. We should not have to go to these lengths to get information that should be freely available. Again, the process excludes public involvement.

The specific developments which have gone through the pre-application process and which the Kensington Society is currently concentrating on are:

- the proposal for a large structure in front of the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road for a major casino;
- the redevelopment of 80 Holland Park, Dukes Lodge, by CPC, Christian Candy's company (part of the development team of One Hyde Park);
- the redevelopment of a line of shops and the M&S site on 146–164 Notting Hill Gate; and
- the new proposal by Minerva Limited (the developers of Lancaster Gate) for the expanded Odeon site including the former Post Office and sites along Earl's Court Road.

All of these sites and our comments/actions can be reviewed in full on the website. [www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

### Notting Hill Gate Supplemental Planning Document

In addition, there is the revised draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Notting Hill Gate. A SPD provides a framework to guide development. Our concerns are that the direction is not aspirational and that we may end up with the same buildings merely being re-clad or the developers may decide, due to the restrictions, that they will not redevelop the area. Opportunities abound but may not be taken. The Society's formal comments will be available on the website at the end of the consultation.

### Housing at all costs

Finally, the Society is yet again having to fight against another set of Government-directed changes to the planning system, proposing that almost any building can change into housing (see page 3) and changes to the controls which stop flats and houses turning into tourist accommodation (see page 5). The Government seems to not be interested in what these damaging changes mean for London.

### Lecture series

Our lecture series continues to be a success. The tour of Kensington Palace was fantastic with a rare opportunity to enjoy a wine reception in the sunken garden. The historic pub walk was oversubscribed and ended with many of us staying on for an extra half. The evening lecture on London garden squares with Todd Longstaffe-Gowan was enjoyed by all. Our programme for 2015 is being posted out with this newsletter. Have a look at the programme and join us for one, if not all, of the events. Booking forms are also available at:

[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

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## Silver Thimble Fund Memorial Shelters Listed

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Perhaps you may have walked past these two shelters near the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens many times or even taken cover from the rain in them on a weekend walk. Easily passed over as just part of the park, they are located east of the Broadwalk on either side of the paths leading to the Round Pond. They are, however, more than shelters. During the First World War Miss Elizabeth Hope-Clark of Wimbledon started a fund based on collecting silver thimbles to raise money initially for an ambulance. In one month she collected over 30,000 thimbles and bought her first ambulance, properly named "The Silver Thimble". The fund went on to raise enough money to pay for a further five ambulances, five hospital motor launches, beds in numerous hospitals and medical care and rescue services throughout the war. At the end of the war, there was still money in the fund which was spent on the two shelters as a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who gave their lives. The shelters were erected in 1919 and have provided shelter ever since.

The Royal Parks Agency manages their care and has recently renovated them. Unfortunately, it has removed the bench seating which is an integral part of the structures. The Society will be pressing the Royal Parks Agency to reinstate the seating so they can resume their role as shelters. If you

are a member of the Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, please support our bid by emailing Linda Lennon at [chiefexecutive@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefexecutive@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk)

Although the shelters are actually in Westminster, the Kensington Society has succeeded in obtaining the shelters listed by English Heritage as a contribution to the commemoration of the 1914–18 War.



Photograph by Michael Bach

# All Change – No Thank You

MICHAEL BACH

It has become obvious that the Government really does not understand London. It is now proposing to embark on yet another round of "simplifying" planning by encouraging almost anything and everything to be turned into housing without needing planning consent.

## OFFICES TO HOUSING

The Council, with strong support from the Society, managed to obtain a three year exemption for the whole Borough from this policy change which would result in our office stock, especially small offices, shrinking quickly.

Now the Government has proposed to extend the national powers indefinitely and withdraw our exemption. To stop a conversion we would have to demonstrate that the loss of the office would result in a "significant loss of the most strategically-important office accommodation". It is a case by case argument which does recognise the diminishing supply of office accommodation for the Borough's small and medium sized businesses. Such a free-for all could wipe out the Borough's supply of small offices within a few years.

The Government's arguments revolve around the benefits that easier change of use might bring – more housing and enabling owners to sell properties to the highest bidder. The exemption has no planning restrictions. Without planning requirements there is no way to control the restrictions which planning requires – parking, construction process, signage, loss of public amenities and open spaces and more.

## AND THE REST...

As well as offices, the Government now proposes to allow light industrial premises and warehousing to turn into housing – and includes launderettes, amusement arcades, casinos and nightclubs.

They also suggest that those uses could turn into restaurants and cafes or even into leisure uses, such as a gym.

You might well ask what is this all for or have they really lost the plot? Are we that desperate for more housing, restaurants and gyms that we wipe out the diversity of uses that makes Kensington thrive?

## CHANGING OUR SHOPPING STREETS AND LOCAL CENTRES

Already shops can turn into banks, building societies and worst, estate agents. This will change the mix of uses in our town centres as seen on Holland Park Avenue where a tapas restaurant and a local Indian restaurant both have become estate agent (eight already in the immediate area). Our smaller centres could end up with just cafes and estate agents. We are powerless to stop the loss of shops.

The Government claims that "deregulation" – allowing easy transfer to certain other uses – would increase diversity in the High Street. As we have seen in Exhibition Road where almost all the shops have been lost to cafes and takeaways, we will lose the diversity. In fact, leaving this entirely to the market will reduce the diversity and choice.

These new proposals, as the most recent ones have shown, will be disastrous for Kensington. Instead of creating diversity as the Government claims, it is the current planning policies which maintain diversity. We will be lobbying the Government to recognise that these proposals could change this Borough radically – and what for – more housing, cafes and gyms? Get real! What we need is premises for small businesses and even launderettes and not everything "cleansed" out to produce more housing. We still need our community services.



Photographs by Michael Bach



Residents of three streets in the St Quintin Estate are bidding to create a new shared garden in the W10 area of north Kensington. The open space involved has been used since the mid-1960s by Clifton Nursery, one of London's best-known garden centres.

The freehold of the 0.48 hectare site has recently been put up for sale, with estate agents Knight Frank marketing the land as an 'exceptional residential development opportunity'. Neighbours in the surrounding streets, whose houses back onto the site, do not agree. This piece of backland has been open space since the St Quintin Estate was laid out and built by W H St Quintin from 1896 to 1906. The site contains a number of very fine willow trees, and has become a habitat for a wide range of bird and insect life. It is one of a shrinking number of open spaces that provides a 'green lung' for the neighbourhood. The Oxford Gardens Conservation Area Policy Statement (re-adopted by RBKC in 1990) contains a clear policy that remaining backland sites should not be used for housing.

An action group of local residents has swiftly formed, and is developing proposals for the land to become a communal garden area. The site lies within the designated 'neighbourhood area' for which the local neighbourhood forum (St Quintin and Woodlands) is well advanced in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The latter would also cover three remaining green backland sites designated as Local Green Space.

The St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum, and the recently formed Nursery Lane Action Group, are determined that the few open spaces that remain in the area should not be infilled with additional housing. They pointed out to Knight Frank that two previous applications to build housing on the site were rejected at planning inquiries in the 1970s and 1980s. Knight Frank did not ask for planning advice from the Council before marketing it for housing. The freehold of the site is owned by the Legard family, descendants of the St Quintins, which is assessing a range of bids.

It is thought that most of the short-listed bidders want to build private housing similar to Argyll Place being built by Taylor Wimpey a few streets away. That was marketed offshore as soon as the foundations were laid, as a 'bespoke collection of 20 mews and townhouses'. Prices go up to £4m and sales are understood to be moving slowly. Alternative locations for new housing are being put forward in the Neighbourhood Plan, which recognises that the

Council has housing targets to meet.

When the St Quintin Estate was first built, the layout of terraced streets enclosed several backland sites for sport and recreation. Before Clifton Nurseries took on the Nursery Lane site, the Ashfield Tennis Club had flourished there until its courts were destroyed by bombs in 1942.

The streets of the St Quintin Estate are the product of late 19th century property speculation, at a time when the railways reached this part of London. Those speculators had the sense and foresight to build solid and handsome terraces with wide streets and open spaces, creating a neighbourhood that remains attractive today, with qualities much valued by its residents.

In trying to create a new shared garden for this part of London, local residents face the wall of money that developers in Kensington can afford to throw at the planning system to achieve their commercial aims.

Henry Peterson, Chair of St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum and trustee of the Kensington Society

Juha Anjala, Nursery Lane Action Group



# Short-term lets in London

MICHAEL BACH

House prices and rents have been rising rapidly and there has been a huge growth in tourism. The existing housing stock, especially in central London, is under huge pressure. Sounds familiar – yes, it could be a current assessment of the Kensington housing market, but in fact this was the justification for the Greater London (General Powers) Act 1973 – over 40 years ago.

This Act defines the use of housing as temporary sleeping accommodation of any residential premises as a material change of use which requires planning consent. Use as “temporary sleeping accommodation” means using these premises for 90 consecutive nights or less.

The effect of the Act is that property owners seeking to change housing over to short-term sleeping accommodation need planning consent. Concerns about this change of use, to what is effectively quasi-tourist accommodation on a continuing basis, the reason for seeking powers designed to protect much-needed housing for permanent residents, and to maintain the stability of local communities. This is still the situation today.

## THE OLYMPICS FACTOR

In the run-up to the Olympics many landlords and homeowners were keen to take advantage of the need for additional accommodation during the Games. There was a rumour that London Boroughs would use the 1973 to prevent people renting out their own home. However, a survey of London Boroughs in 2011 showed that 27 London Boroughs took a relaxed view of such short-term lets during the Olympics, and only five London Boroughs – Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster – proposed to take enforcement action. This response reflected the temporary nature of the problem in most boroughs, whereas in the central boroughs it could have been the final straw by displacing long-term residents for short-term gain.

In the end, this was largely a storm in a teacup – the take-up of short lets was much less than expected and many landlords and homeowners who had hoped for large short-term rentals were disappointed.

## SO WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSING LEGISLATIVE CHANGE?

Now, two years after the Olympics, the Government has suddenly decided to take action to change the controls in the Act. Somebody in the Government has suggested that, although there is still a need to control housing turning into quasi-tourist accommodation on a year-round basis, they consider that there should be no planning control on taking tenants or on individuals letting out their home while they go on holiday. A great deal of fuss has been made about these “restrictions”, when it is likely that neither of these come within planning control. If the proposals are to accommodate these practices, then no legislative action is needed.

## SO WHAT IS PROPOSED?

The proposal is to use the Deregulation Bill (new Clause 21) to introduce a power to allow the Government to make regulations to identify “particular premises or premises in a particular area” which would be exempted from the 1973 Act.

The DCLG press release suggests that legislative changes are needed to give Londoners “the freedom to rent out their homes on a temporary basis, such as when they are on holiday”, whilst changing homes into hotels or hostels would still require planning consent. However, this statement is contradicted by saying “such reforms will not just benefit London’s strong tourism industry by expanding the pool competitively priced accommodation, but allow families to earn some extra cash when they themselves go away.” Letting your flat while you are on holiday is quite different to a series of short-term lets throughout the year.

## SO SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?

If these activities – renting out a room and letting your home during your holiday – do not need planning consent, then what is this really about? We have become increasingly suspicious by the disingenuous justification given for planning changes recently. How can we believe the reasoning given? Is it as misleading as previous statements or is it just about allowing people to take in tenants or let their home while on holiday?

As written, the new clause 21 gives the Government powers to make as yet unspecified changes. Is this additional power really needed or should we be suspicious of the real motive? If it were to result in the loss of housing which meets the needs of permanent residents it would counterproductive.

Should a hard-won and still much-needed local power be subject to Central Government tinkering to allow as yet unspecified changes? The Act meets a local need, a central London need, and as we are all too aware when contemplating a ‘mansion’ tax– the needs of Central London are not the same as Nottingham.



View the homes we manage in your neighbourhood:  
[www.homefromhome.co.uk](http://www.homefromhome.co.uk)  
HOME FROM HOME  
Home From Home 75 Wilton Road London SW1V 1DE  
W: [www.homefromhome.co.uk](http://www.homefromhome.co.uk) T: 020 7233 8111

## Construction traffic: what can you do?

Seldom can one venture out in Kensington without confronting a large delivery or construction lorry going to or coming from a construction site. It is not exaggerating to say that our streets are awash with hoardings, suspended residents' parking spaces and skips, all to enable ever larger developments. There was once a time when 'development' meant a new building. Now it means a deep basement next door to you and perhaps if you are unlucky, several more down the street, with hoardings taking up your precious parking spaces and lorries blocking your road.

The planning process requires a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) within any basement application. The rationale is to "mitigate the impact of significant construction works upon neighbours' living conditions, helping to minimise disruption and on-street obstruction". However, all too frequently the planning department accepts applications without a CTMP. The reasoning the planning department gives is that the applicant should not be required to provide such detailed information prior to approval, as such plans require time and money when the applicant may never either receive planning permission or in many cases, build the scheme. Many approved basements are not constructed, but used as a means to increase the property value before selling. We often object to the lack of a CTMP on the basis that if it is required for validation then it should be provided. Our objection is ignored and planning permission is often granted with a condition that a CTMP is submitted before construction starts.

The list of requirements for a CTMP is very precise and sensible, but what happens when a CTMP is not submitted prior to approval as is all too often the accepted practice? What controls does the planning department have and what involvement/rights do the neighbours have?

### PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIONS:

Any decision on the CTMP must be based, of course, on its merits and refer to Subterranean Development SPD, the Transport SPD and policies CT1 and CL5 of the Core Strategy. The highways department is consulted but we have seldom seen any meaningful objection. The department seems to 'balance' the needs of the construction company and the fact that planning has been granted against the needs of the residents.

In the case of a construction site on the narrow, one-way



Holland Street off Kensington Church Street, the highways department actually allowed the construction lorries "to mount a footway that in practice is little used given that it is only 0.8m wide". In another case, the planning department approved in April 2013 an application for 59 South Edwardes Square (see Kensington Society annual report 2013, page 25) without implementing any of the policies for construction methods, sustainability and construction traffic. This very narrow one-way road now has a very large gantry over the road and remains closed to traffic weekdays. When I pointed this out to a councillor on the planning applications committee recently he said he thought it was Thames Water's project and had no idea it was for one resident's desire for a larger home at the inconvenience of all who live on the square.

### RESIDENTS' RIGHTS AND ACTIONS

Prior to an approval of an application the neighbours or amenity societies can make their concerns known, including traffic management concerns, through objection letters. However, once an application is approved and if a CTMP has not been part of the approval but conditioned, it becomes more difficult to secure improvements to the CTMP.

A planning condition does not require public consultation. Though we have been successful in persuading the planning department to include conditions in the weekly planning list, there are no site notices and no 21-day public consultation period.

### CURRENT SITUATION

There has been progress. The new basement policies, if accepted, give more teeth to the controls of the construction process and, by limiting basements to one level, may also reduce the amount of excavation and, therefore, traffic. That will come if the Inspector agrees with the proposed policy changes and the policies are approved.

In addition, there has been some progress in controlling existing CTMPs. The Council refused an application by Savills to change an approved CTMP on Markham Square, Savills then appealed against the refusal. The appeal was dismissed. Markham Square is a one-way, narrow street with residents' parking on both sides. The original approved CTMP restricted the size of the vehicle entering the square – Savills wanted the size restriction lifted on delivery lorries. There are

several important points on which the Inspector based his dismissal:

- he said "all activities arising from that development are addressed by the CTMP" (you cannot separate construction vehicles from deliveries);
- he could not "be satisfied that the use of larger vehicles, even if only up to 10% larger, would not be detrimental to highway safety or cause material harm to the living conditions of nearby residents";
- he noted that 'the approved CTMP provides for the delivery of abnormal loads to be agreed with the Council following consultation with residents and, from the evidence before me, I see no reason why the requirement for consultation should be removed"; and
- he added "although the suspension of an additional two parking bays for no more than 10 days over the course of the project may not appear overly excessive in relation to the size of the development, it would nevertheless be likely to exacerbate existing levels of parking stress within the vicinity and thereby cause material harm to the living conditions of nearby residents in relation to car parking".

Just this month there was another major breakthrough when the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) which prior to granting approval for an application, required the insertion of the informative relating to consultation by the developer as well as the assurance that the planning department officers will consult with the local residents before deciding on the merits of the CTMP. This may seem sensible but it is truly ground breaking.

Slowly we are making progress in controlling the construction vehicles on our streets. You may ask, though, what can you do? When you see an application notice for a basement development on a lamp post on your street, please look up the application on the website – see if there is a CTMP. If there is one, read it and see if it addresses the problems which you know can arise and, if not, write to the planning department about your concerns. If construction is already begun and you are having problems, look up the CTMP on



the RBKC planning website and note the restrictions. Take a photograph of what the problem is noting the date and send it to both the planning department and copy the enforcement team ([planning@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@rbkc.gov.uk)). We have been greatly impressed with how quickly the enforcement team acts. There are currently has over 15 enforcement actions against non-compliance with the CTMP which is a major step to solving some of our worst problems.

If you need help, email us. [kensingtonsociety@outlook.com](mailto:kensingtonsociety@outlook.com)

*All of the photographs in this article were taken on the same day in Albert Place, W8 by Michael Bach*

## Changing the Core Strategy

The Council's proposals to change the Local Plan (aka Core Strategy) were tested at the two Examinations in Public that were held between 9 and 24 September.

There are two main issues with two separate Inspectors:

- the Council's proposals to strengthen their policy on basements, which was challenged by the basement builders. As well as supporting the Council, the Society was seeking further improvements to the proposed policies; and
- the Council's proposals to consolidate the Core Strategy and former UDP policies for conservation and design. Our concerns were to make sure that certain omissions of the former policies were reinstated.

### MICHAEL BACH

Our goal was to make sure that the Local Plan is as clear as possible and written to meet the needs of residents, developers and the Council's own planners. Our concerns were that as written the proposed policies are too vague and open to misinterpretation. We have worked alongside many of the local amenity and conservation societies to ensure all issues are addressed.

In the case of the conservation policies, where we were attempting to ensure that we not lose vital policies from the UDP, the Council stonewalled and resisted nearly every change proposed however small. We did achieve the retention of the policy of no worsening on sunlight and daylight where conditions are already sub-standard, but otherwise just the insertion of the odd grammatical and spelling correction – but little more. We sometimes wonder whether we share the same agenda as the officers. This was extremely disappointing and there is a general

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feeling that the policy changes may place us in a situation with less protection than if there are no changes at all.

The basements hearing was even worse – and it took 36 hours over four and half days stretching over 2 weeks! The Inspector would not allow anybody who supported the proposed policy to speak – in other words anyone who had stated the policy was sound. The Society had received legal advice backed up by the Inspectorate that we must state that the policy was unsound in our



representation and only by saying so were we given the freedom to speak. However, even so the Inspector would only allow us to speak if it was specifically against the Council's policy and only if we proposed the exact rewording. We were not allowed to speak in support of the Council nor to disagree with the basement builders. When we attempted to support the Council and to object to assertions by the basement builders, such as building basements under the gardens of listed buildings, the Inspector cut us short. In contrast, he gave the basement builders as much time as they wanted – and they took it in spades!

The results of these Examinations will not conclude until mid December and cannot be formally adopted before the full Council meets on 21 January. We might even have to wait until 4 March or even 15 April. We hope that the Inspector supports the basement policy and the conservation and design Inspector agrees with us on the omissions and content of the conservation and design chapters. There is a possibility that the Inspectors in one or both cases may not agree with the policy changes and the process would have to start again. If approved and adopted the Council will, hopefully, be better equipped to deal with basement proposals.

## Queensberry Way Environmental Improvement Scheme: a very private project

In July Councillor Coleridge, the Cabinet Member of Planning, Transport and Arts Policy, signed a key decision to spend £100,000 on upgrading the streetscape in Queensberry Way, South Kensington.

The Kensington Society, along with other neighbouring societies, questioned the expenditure. We were informed that the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle's (aka the Lycée) staff and parents association had approached the Council in July 2011 with "concerns about the safety of pupils accessing their school" and requested permission to pay for improvements to the road and entrance to the school. The Lycée's only entrance to the school is from Queensberry Way, a small side cul-de-sac off Harrington Road some distance from South Kensington station. The students sit outside the school entrance on the low walls surrounding cul-de-sac circle and though the Council has tried to stop the students congregating outside the school gates, they have failed. In addition, according to the report there have also been incidences of anti-social behaviour at night.

A proposal was developed by Project Centre and directed by RBKC's own transport and highways department in May 2014. The proposal includes restricting any traffic onto the road from Harrington Road, except for servicing one hotel and the emergency services – in fact, removing the street from local use. Three of the residents' parking bays and five pay-and-display parking bays are to be removed. The pavement is to be widened "to accommodate the high footfall during school hours" with new lighting and benches, telescoping lockable bollards to restrict access to both the road and into the school yard, road surfaces replaced with Cromwell Yorkstone and the kerbs in silver grey granite. There are to be 12 cycle stands. The consultees were limited to the emergency services, the Ampersand Hotel, Safer Neighbourhood Team of RBKC and the Lycée. There was no other public notification or consultation.

When finally presented with the cost the Lycée said that they had reallocated the funds and now could not pay for the improvements.

Councillor Coleridge has justified the £100,000 expenditure: "Queensberry Way is one of the busiest areas of the Borough, over 3000 people use this tiny area each working day. We have permanently restricted vehicle access which creates a safer environment and a more peaceful one. This is NOT just for the school, it is used at lunch, by visitors, and very likely will play host to farmers' markets in the future. It will when finished become an attractive additional open space for residents".

We question the expenditure which basically is for improvements which are only for the benefit the school and not the local community. The area is not known locally and rarely if at all used by the locals – most of whom have the impression that the road belongs to the Lycée and is not open to the public. In fact, the 3,000 people referred to by Councillor Coleridge are the Lycée students. These "improvements" will further promote the exclusive impression.

