

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

2014–2015





The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea was created in 1965. Kensington the area we watch over on your behalf, is north of Fulham Road and Walton Street, the frontier with Chelsea being marked with a red line on the map

Front cover: painting by Ken Howard RA, copyright the artist – for more about him see page 14

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Front cover: painting by  
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23 St James's Gardens, London W11 4RE  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)  
2014–2015

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The objects of the society are to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its development, and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic interest.

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His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO

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Henry Peterson, OBE  
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Michael Bach: *chairman of the planning committee*

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# President's note

Is democracy failing?

Why we need the Kensington Society.

It's odd.

Given that we vote for local councillors, why should we need the Kensington Society to keep an eye on them?

Perhaps the answer is a rather large one: it may be a symptom that democracy needs a reboot.

This year is the eight hundredth anniversary of Magna Carta. The Great Charter of the Liberties was all very well in 1215 but it offered liberties only to a few, and the tide of history has progressively eroded privileges of the elite and distributed power more widely. While this is admirable of course, it has come at a cost. Voters have progressively lost touch with those who represent them.

Even after the Great Reform Act of 1832, when one man in five was enfranchised, democracy was fairly direct. With fewer than 830,000 people electing 658 MPs, representation meant something personal.



We now have 650 MPs and 46 million voters, a ratio of 1:70,000.

This means that if you know our MP, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, personally you are in a small minority. In any case, let's face it, your vote doesn't really matter. Since only 80 seats in parliament can normally be considered marginal – and ours isn't one of them – it's hardly surprising that three-quarters of people can't name their MP

and a third of all adults don't bother to vote.

Even at local level we have lost intimacy with those who represent us. In Kensington and Chelsea we have 50 councillors and 70,000 registered voters, a ratio of 1:1,400. This makes our ward representatives as remote from us as members of parliament would have been until late in the nineteenth century. (Today's figure doesn't count roughly half



as many again in this constituency who, according to a parliamentary report, are entitled to vote but aren't on the electoral role. If you consider all 159,000 full-time residents the ratio rises to 1:3,200.)

This is not the fault of councillors, of course, who have to work that much harder; but it's little wonder we need intermediaries like the Kensington Society to help us make ourselves heard.

But even the Kensington Society hasn't been able so far to do much about something that matters to us all. It's an issue that blights the lives of most of us at some time or another: the noise, vibration and disruption of urban developments. This is not just large-scale engineering projects but even relatively minor building works, as I can testify having lived right opposite a construction site for over two years. On the other hand, *mea culpa*: I've been responsible for some of it myself. The strange thing about planning law is that, however badly you or I are affected, we cannot cite disturbance as grounds for an objection. Surely this is crazy.

Of course petulance and NIMBYism can't stand in the way of progress. Developers complain, not unreasonably, that it's hard enough as it is to get planning consent. Imagine the opposition there would have been to Christopher Wren under today's rules at his plans for St Paul's Cathedral: hideous modernism, blocking the view, wholly out of scale... But even in 2015 it would not be a 'material planning consideration' that the works were likely to go on for over forty years (which they did).

That is surely wrong. Disruption is inevitable in a crowded city and we all have to be tolerant when others seek to renew the urban fabric; but on the other hand the planning authorities ought to be able to *take account* of the impact of construction work, and they ought to be *required* to balance the rights of some against potential harm to others. For example, there may be occasions where even a triple or quadruple basement can be excavated quietly with the spoil removed through a wide adjacent highway without causing grief to wealthy neighbours who are away for much of the time, as happened in Kensington Palace Gardens; while a relatively small extension in a girdled mews can block the road, create noise that echoes widely and impose misery on an elderly and disabled couple next door, as happens too frequently all across the borough.

Developers might say this is unfair: that it is not their fault if this site or this neighbour is more vulnerable to disruption than others. But it is just as equitable to consider the effects of building works as it is to consider the effects of the finished building.

Maybe the Kensington Society needs to help kick-start a national campaign to get Sir Malcom Rifkind first, and then the other 649 MPs, to listen.



# Chairman's Report

Amanda Frame

The first thing I always do before I write the chairman's report is to review the previous year's report. I was delighted by how far we have come in some ways but disappointed by our lack of progress in other aspects. There are signs of an emerging, more resident-friendly approach by the council leadership. We often meet the cabinet member for Planning Policy, Transport and Arts, Councillor Tim Coleridge. We frequently ask to meet Tim at short notice and he is always readily available. We also meet the Leader of the Council, Councillor Nicholas Paget-Brown, who is supportive, listens and responds. We meet quarterly the Executive Director for Planning and Borough Development, Mr Bore and his senior management team. We continue to meet regularly with other amenity and conservation societies in the Sounding Board and we have found that through such interaction, we reach common ground and have a productive dialogue.



Internally we have moved mountains – or so it seems.

## New website

It may appear that designing a website is stress free – it is not. Our website format had not changed for many years and we desperately needed a website that both presented to the world who and what we are, and provide a tool to inform our members of issues and developments within the borough. We now have a wonderful and workable new website [www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org). However, there are challenges to keep the site up-to-date with so much happening. We encourage all of you to look at it, see how informative it is and to use it often.

Last year we said we were going to place all the old annual reports on the website. That process has now started but will take time.



### **Lecture series**

The lecture series is up and running and extremely successful. The society began the year by celebrating its 60th anniversary in January with our royal patron, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester and more than 70 members. It was a convivial fun evening which set the tone for the rest of the year. An open workshop on party wall issues followed with David Reynolds – Deloitte Real Estate, addressing a packed Small Hall. March brought the lecture by Robert Golden who opened the doors of the past with his ‘Aunt Heap’ delightful and informative talk on Kensington Palace’s former residences. The royal theme continued with a sell-out special tour of the exhibition ‘The Glorious Georges’ in Kensington Palace. Summer saw the annual, ever-popular pub walk with Dale Ingram – to be repeated this year. Christine St John, a local resident, portrayed ‘Bette Davis on the Edge’ at a cabaret evening performance. Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, the designer of the new entrance garden at Kensington Palace, spoke about Kensington’s garden squares in temperate September. Open workshops have been amazing successful. Over 100 people packed the Small Hall to hear the limitations on permitted development, building work that does not require planning permission. The noise workshop generated some interesting discussions.

The events team is planning an exciting programme for 2015, including open workshops. Members and non-members alike can reserve a place using the society’s website which has an on-line payment via Paypal.

### **Alerts**

The members’ email alert system is working well, but we wish more of you would give us your email address. The alert system is used to tell members about issues that require their urgent action and provide information such as road closures and political rallies. More than 370 members receive the notifications and it is proving to be a very effective and fast means communication. If you are not receiving alerts, please send your email address to [kensingtonsociety@outlook.com](mailto:kensingtonsociety@outlook.com).

## **The team**

The trustees have worked very hard in multiple directions. Michael Becket has taken on the editing task against the uphill battle with me and late reports. Holly Smith is my rod and staff. The force of the planning committee has been increased with the addition of trustees Sophia Lambert and Thomas Blomberg. We need all the help we can muster with the onslaught of both residential applications, many still with basements, as well as many major applications. Every time we think we can draw breath there is another contentious application to examine. Henry Peterson continues with the planning issues in the north of the borough as well as battling with the planning department over the Neighbourhood Planning process. Anthony Walker and Sophia Lambert are deep into the Conservation Area Appraisal process. Michael Bach leads from the front on all things planning.

## **Planning**

The planning committee report will comment on the successes of the new basement policy. The new framework is a big step forward while there remains work to be done to ensure that the construction process is controlled. We are disappointed with the lack of understanding and support from the planning department over the incorporation of the Saved conservation and design policies from the Unitary Development Plan into the revised Core Strategy. The department has begun the process of producing the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for basements to guide the interpretation of the new planning policy. We, along with other residents and conservation societies, will be pressing for construction traffic controls, noise and vibration restrictions and acceptable working hours. There is an active residents' force in the borough. At last voices of objection are being heard – and not dismissed as so often in the past.

We reported last year our concerns over the pre-application advice system in which developers pay for guidance from council planning officers before they submit a formal planning application. We have not been successful in reaching any acceptable means of involvement at this early stage. Both Candy & Candy, developers of Dukes Lodge, and Minerva, new developer of the Odeon site, obtained pre-application advice from the planning department which recommended approving both applications. The officers seem to have been so captivated by the developers that their reports read more like a marketing brochure for the developers than an objective review of the applications. When the applications came before the planning committee the Small Hall was



packed. The presentations by the objectors were so professional that the chairman of the committee complimented the relevant organisations. It was high theatre. The councillors listened, questioned both the planners and the applicants, and then voted to refuse both. The same rejection of the planning department's advice happened earlier with a major application on King's Road for the redevelopment of the Curzon cinema. We view these refusals by the planning committee with such high level of objection as a failure – the applications should never have been recommended for approval and should not have reached the planning committee. We have made this point to Councillor Coleridge, cabinet member responsible for planning. We will continue to press for early involvement both with the developers and the planning department.

The current battles include the redevelopment of Allen House, a proposed redevelopment of a mansion block just off Kensington High Street, the threat of a large casino on the open grounds of the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road, and an encroachment of commercial elements into Kensington Square. We have grave fears over the future of Chesterton Square and Broadwood Terrace, as the council pushes for redevelopment of both sites.

An interesting trend we welcome is the increase number of builders approaching the Kensington Society for a review of their building plans, before an application is made to the planning department. The disappointing thing however is that in most cases we oppose the proposal, such as change of a hotel to a large single residence or the loss of an on-site garage and garden.

### **The future**

So as we enter our 62nd year we continue to promote the values and aspirations that our founder, Mrs Gay Christiansen, established:

**To preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington for the public benefit by stimulating interest in its history and records, promoting good architecture and planning in its future development, and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest.**

## The 61st annual general meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 28 April 2014

Amanda Frame, chairman of the trustees, welcomed distinguished guests and members, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, MP; Nick Paget-Brown, leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; General The Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington, Kensington Society vice-president; and Sir Angus Stirling, Kensington Society council member. Apologies from Nick Ross, president and Charles Lutyens, trustee.

The minutes of the 2013 AGM and the financial statements for the year to 31 December 2013, both set out in the annual report, were confirmed and approved nem con. General The Lord Ramsbotham of Kensington conducted the election of officers. Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Hilary Bell, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Charles Lutyens, Henry Peterson, Holly Smith, Anthony Walker and Traci Weaver put their names forward to serve as trustees in 2014/15 and were proposed and approved nem con. New trustee Sophia Lambert was proposed and approved nem

con. The trustees proposed the election of Martin Frame as treasurer and Traci Weaver as secretary. The proposal was seconded from the floor and approved nem con.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP expressed his delight that the society is a healthy organisation with an engaged membership which the numbers in attendance reflect. He spoke on the government's proposal regarding the short-term renting of private homes in London. He explained that, for a good number of years, homeowners could let out their homes for less than 90 days without obtaining planning permission, but when this was introduced in 1973, exception was made for greater London due to the demand for rental property. During the Olympics, London homeowners felt it would be rather nice to let out their homes if they were going to be away. Problems arise, however, when companies let homes for short periods with no one rental being more than 90 days. This, in effect, turns the house into a business. Sir Malcolm's own





view is to keep the status quo for residential rentals in London as advocated by the Kensington Society and Knightsbridge Association. The legislation is still under discussion. Sir Malcolm has sent a letter to Mr Pickles and is confident it will bring the appropriate result. Amanda Frame thanked Sir Malcolm for his remarks.

Holly Smith, Kensington Society trustee, introduced the guest speaker Dr Richard Fortey, a former senior palaeontologist at the Natural History Museum for nearly 40 years, award-winning author, television presenter and producer.

Richard Fortey gave a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of life at the Natural History Museum which visitors never see, including amusing anecdotes about the people who work there – much of which can be found in his delightful book, *Dry Store Room No 1*. His talk began with how new species are named and moved on to a mysterious cursed amethyst as well as the famous scandal of the Piltdown skull. The humour and fund of stories demonstrated why he has been so successful in making science not just accessible but fun.

Amanda Frame began by drawing attention to the society's achievements this year, much of which have been focused on

communities and members. She talked of involvement in local conservation efforts has deepened through Sounding Board meetings with affiliate societies, communication with members has increased due to the alert system and fantastic new website designed by Richard Wilding and the success of the new events programme.

Challenges in preserving the unique heritage of Kensington, however, come from every direction. The largest is presented by the government using planning as a tool for its policies while paying lip service to localism. Luckily three-quarters of the borough is in conservation areas which have given us some protection. We are also thankful to have an MP who understands our position on these issues.

Michael Bach recounted the issues that have occupied the Planning Committee's attention – see his report on page 38. Buy-to-leave has always been a high proportion of empty properties or second homes, but is increasing in Kensington. The most obvious areas affected are the new super-luxury blocks – De Vere Gardens, south site of Holland Park School and the sites along

**There was a good turn-out of society members for the AGM in the great hall of the town hall in Kensington**





**Sir Malcolm Rifkind**



**Richard Fortey, telling the very funny anecdotes about staff and visitors to the Natural History Museum**



**Michael Bach explains the planning problems dealt with over the past year**

Warwick Road between Kensington High Street and West Cromwell Road. These developments also edge out ‘affordable’ homes on site as developers argue that including them would make the sites uneconomic propositions.

Our proposals are beginning to have an impact on the Notting Hill Gate planning and the next draft of the SPD will be the test of whether our investment paid off.

Construction Traffic Management Plans in basement constructions are also an issue as that affects residents in neighbouring areas. The principal concerns are about the scale and impact of the demolition, excavation and building operation on traffic and parking. The society is pressing for a tougher line with Construction Traffic Management Plans – with no skips, materials or equipment left on the highway wherever this can be achieved. This keeps both the road and the pavement clear and

parking suspensions to a minimum.

Michael Bach emphasised that, with new challenges coming along all the time, it is increasingly important the community is part of the process early enough to be able to make positive input to help shape our environment.

Questions were on development under gardens, and on whether the change in the name of planning to include development represented a change in emphasis. Nick Paget-Brown, leader of the council, said the council is intent on protecting the unique character of Kensington.

Members joined the committee for a drink in the mayor’s parlour.

All photographs: **photoBECKET**





**Sophia Lambert, Kensington Society trustee, Neil Osborn, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and Charles Williams, the mayor of Kensington**



**Amanda Frame, chairman of the Kensington Society; Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP for Kensington and Richard Fortey, speaker at the meeting.**

# Feature

## Ken Howard RA

“Painting is about revelation: teaching people to see the world” says Ken Howard RA. It works. A classic example was when he was painting at the Neasden sidings. It is not at the top of most people’s list of the most gorgeous exotic views but the workman who stopped to watch him paint said he had been crossing those sidings for over thirty years, but it was only now he realised they were beautiful.

This bears out another of Ken Howard’s dictums about his art – “I paint only things I love so there is a chance somebody else will love it”. And his pictures are so readily approachable and obviously attractive it is hardly surprising he has never had much trouble selling them. He calls himself the last of the impressionists, justified by his vivid evocation of the quality of light. He has been defying trendy approaches to painting all his life.



Ken Howard with the mirror he uses for self-portraits and a pile of his work destined for a show



Night studio

It started early. Even when he was young he wanted to paint “though I had no ambition to be particularly innovative”. David Brown – owner among other things of Aston Martin, which is why the car models are still named DB and a number – saw a painting by him of a shipyard in Aberdeen and bought the picture for £2 from the 14 year old Howard. He puts down his freedom to pursue his inclinations from an early age to his father who “totally lacked ambition” and so felt his son should do what he enjoyed and never said “you can’t do that for a living”. On the contrary, he encouraged the young Ken.

His working class mother was a touch more concerned about her son’s future so she insisted he get his school certificate before embarking on such a hazardous occupation, so he would have something to fall back on. Not that the school helped much: for instance, his French master loftily declared “There are more things in life than art, Howard”.

His dedication nevertheless managed to survive even his National Service. Having in 1953 gone into the Royal Marine Commandos by mistake – he actually wanted to join the navy – he managed to find time to keep a detailed sketchbook of daily life in the military.

And that was noticed. The forces wanted to present a retiring general with a surprise present and, having noted Ken Howard’s skilful sketches, they had him paint a portrait of his wife. Very soon word spread around, so he was painting portraits of all the officers’ wives and then their children and he became “a dab hand” at swift portraiture. Although he was paid only £10 a time for them, that was probably equivalent to about £130 now, and the income enabled him to save up quite a lot money.





Artist and model, plus artist's photographer wife Dora keeping a record of his work

Then the surprise present became news and the newspapers took it up. As a result, he became in one headline a “Barrack room Rembrandt” while another paper told of “the corporal who meets the general’s wife in secret”. It was a helpful lift in getting his name known, but inevitably provoked some to pull him down a peg or two.

When he was at the Royal College, where he went after demob, abstract impressionism was all the rage, with people such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko being fashionable. But Ken Howard much preferred the approach of painters such as Cezanne and Velazquez. There is still a reproduction of *Las Meninas* on his studio mirror.

Such an untrendy attitude plus precocious fame may have goaded Rodrigo Moynihan, one of his tutors, to slaughter a painting by Howard, saying “this man should become an illustrator for *Woman’s Own*”. Probably the most vicious dismissal in his catalogue of condemnation. It clearly still rankles, though it says more about Moynihan and the fashions of the time than about Ken Howard’s work. All the same, it almost put him off from carrying on with painting.

But he probably recalled times at his previous art school, the Hornsey College of Art which were “some of the happiest days of my life. It was a time when you felt you were beginning to do something right.” It was in truth “a school of craft – you can’t teach art” and he loved it. So he persisted.

Which is just as well as his army sketchbook suddenly generated work and money – invaluable luck for an unknown young artist. But as he says, success requires “a bit of talent and bit of luck”. Having one without the other will get you nowhere.

The Imperial War Museum was looking for a young artist in 1973 to send to Northern



**Self-portrait with Fantin Latour**



**Three Ken Howards: in life, in mirror and in self-portrait**

Ireland and approached the Slade, the Royal College and the Royal Academy schools to nominate a current or recent student. Howard was one of those nominated and his sketchbooks got him the job. He could not be called a war artist, we were not at war in Ulster, so his official title, to which he had to adhere religiously, was ‘official artist of the Imperial War Museum in Northern Ireland’.

That led to great popularity with the army, because his work was so approachable – “it was not high art and they could understand it” and his depiction was dispassionately accurate. He was invited to paint in Nepal, Canada, Belize, India, Cyprus and so on, just about anywhere the British army had an outpost at the time. However he gave it up because he was being diverted down a cul de sac.

In a strange echo of his 14-year old success, he was painting the view across the river from Cheyne Walk in 1959 when Carel Weight, one of his tutors at college, walked past. That is the Morgan Crucible factory on the other side that you are painting, and I know one of the directors, he said. Ken Howard thought that just a polite way of passing the time, but the company did get in touch and did buy the picture for £25.

Another useful contract came with the opportunity to illustrate telephone directories with line drawings – good money at the time at £350 for 12 pictures and he could do three sets in about three weeks to earn enough to keep him for the rest of the year. But this was the time of the trade unions’ iron hand on printing and at one point they refused to include his drawings unless he joined. He refused in disgust and some directories went out with blank spaces.

Although Ken Howard says his pictures have always sold, that does not mean he always earned a living wage from them. So until he became established he did all sort of work, including as a navvy building the Hammersmith flyover, and teaching at art schools in Harrow, Ealing and Walthamstow for about 15 years.



**Artist and model**

He still wanders round the world painting in the street. When painting the Brooklyn Bridge in New York he attracted the normal passers-by looking over his shoulder, and when he picked up his kit at the end of the day there were dimes and nickels kindly people had left him. He looks so scruffy in his painting clothes that while painting on the Continent recently a man handed over €2, saying “go and get yourself a cup of coffee, old man”.

Painting in a Verona street, he did even better. A man stopped and watched for a bit and then asked if Ken Howard would teach him to paint. Howard said he did not teach any more but could advise him, so he got invited to dinner with the man and his wife. What do you need to



become a painter, was the question. “Well, do it for 30 years and if you have something to say you may discover it, and if you do not you will still have enriched your life.” But then Howard asked the man what he did for a living “I am about to sing *Sparafucile* in the Arena”. And John Tomlinson got him just about the best seat in the house for that evening’s performance of *Rigoletto*. That was a wonderful gift as Howard loves opera.

He now has a rather splendid place in South Kensington of two purpose-built studios knocked into one. He quotes Sickert as saying “an artist should work in a studio more expensive than he can properly afford”. It impresses clients. So does being a Royal Academician. “If people like your work, they may still question whether the price is worth it, but if you are an RA...”

Although he is 82, he is still pretty hale and paints six days a week, and his output is prodigious. He is sometimes mildly embarrassed his pictures are so expensive (he gets only half the gallery’s selling price) when he paints them so swiftly. When asked how long a picture took, he takes refuge in a version of the formula used by Whistler who was suing Ruskin for calling his *Nocturne in Black and Gold* “flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face”. In court Whistler was asked “For two days’ labour you ask two hundred guineas?”, and replied “No, I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime.” So how long did that picture take Ken Howard? “A lifetime.”

Ken Howard demonstrates that happiness comes from being lucky and, what is even better, feeling that you are lucky. He is convinced he has been lucky all his life. Most especially the luck has been “earning a living from doing what I really enjoy doing”. But perhaps modesty prevents him acknowledging his warning of the dual requirement, so talent may have had more than a little part in his considerable success. His pictures are at the Richard Green Gallery in New Bond Street.



At a recent exhibition of Howard’s work at the Richard Green Gallery

# Feature

By  
Simon Thurley

## Conservation

The great buildings and structures of this city are, of course, important architectural monuments, but they are far more than that. Many, if not most of them, embody ideas about ourselves, our city, our past and our sense of place. Many hundreds of humbler buildings stand for the image of an area, a borough or even the whole city. Our quality of life is defined more than anything else by the quality of the built environment. Where people live and what it looks like, is the single most important factor in creating and sustaining successful villages, towns and cities. Employers know the cut-throat international competition to attract the very best staff. We know these people are motivated to come to London because of the quality of the environment. Many of them live in Kensington, one of the most desirable residential five square miles on the planet. And I would suggest that much of the desirability of living here is the quality of the historic environment. Houses, shops and public buildings, which are both bricks and mortar, but also embody the history, the calm sophistication and elegance that people crave.

So these are some of the reasons why we at English Heritage exist. We exist to champion our sense of history, our pride in place, to help people put a value on the places in which they live, to help ensure that future generations can enjoy what we enjoy today. We want to see a continual enhancement of the places in which we live, to make sure that change improves and strengthens the unique character of this city and doesn't merely homogenise it. London must look like London, not just like anywhere else in the world.

We have always been concerned with

making sure that new buildings fit in with the existing.

An excellent example from this borough is the Duke of York Square on the King's Road, Chelsea: the conversion of the former military asylum of 1803 to a mixed-use development of shops, offices and residential. We worked together with the borough planners right from the start and the result, the first great new square in London for more than a century is modern and at the same time respects its historic surroundings.

Not far away is the Royal Hospital. At this quintessentially English site, full of heritage and history, some very significant interventions have been made in the last few years. First was the erection of the new infirmary, named after Margaret Thatcher. It is easy to forget now how horrible the buildings that it replaced were. But here was a brave and very successful decision by the borough, supported by us and by CABE to build a new building in the style of the old. I know it raised the wrath of a number of architects who tried to have it stopped. And who presumably thought a glass and steel building more of its age. However Quinlan Terry's new structure already looks as if it has been there for several centuries and preserves the unique ambience of the hospital while giving its inhabitants a modern infirmary.

Building a new infirmary was one thing – adapting the ancient hospital for modern conditions was another. This obviously has entailed radical intervention to Wren's structure but it has enabled the retention and re-use of the majority of the oak panelling. The gain has been the restoration of the surviving corridor to Wren's original dimensions. Thus it was possible to balance the continued use of

the buildings by retired soldiers with the need to protect and conserve as much of the historic fabric as possible.

The Royal Hospital is instantly recognisable as a major heritage structure. The Commonwealth Institute was, for some people, just a horrible blot. We believed, however, that it was, in fact, one of the three most important public buildings of its age, with the Festival Hall and Coventry Cathedral. However there were severe problems finding a new use for it initially. Luckily we were all saved by the Design Museum which is relocating from Butler's Wharf to the borough.

Too many museums strain to build self-conscious architectural icons. In the amazing hyperbolic parabola roof, the design museum has one already. So much so that the building itself will be one of the museum's key exhibits. The key to the transformation from the institute to a museum meant not just curing the leaks, dealing with terrible insulation standards and concrete floor slabs at the limit of their load bearing capacity. The exhibition building had been designed for a fixed permanent display and the Design Museum wanted to show temporary exhibitions and be able to work on installations without shutting the whole building down.

The design team, led by John Pawson and working with the borough and English Heritage, has devised a gentle upgrading of the building that retains its essential qualities, the spectacular spatial experience and leaves the raw concrete and wood of the roof as it is,

contrasting it with oak and white plaster.

It was so important to do something about Exhibition Road. I think everyone agreed that it was not working well before Dixon Jones architects scheme was implemented. Not everyone likes the design, but there is no doubt that the road is now a far better setting for the great museums that line it.

And this brings me onto the V&A's brilliant FuturePlan, its ten-year plan to bring much greater clarity to the galleries; display the collection more effectively; re-emphasise the quality of the historic buildings they occupy and make it more flexible to use. Sir Aston Webb's screen on Exhibition Road will undergo a radical transformation opening the interior of the museum and linking it with the newly improved streetscape on Exhibition Road.

But don't think it is just public money that respects the heritage. There are the brilliant new escalators at Harrods. Utterly respectful of the buildings while at the same time being new and exciting.

Let us not forget that this careful re-use of our best old buildings is no new invention and goes right back to the roots of this city. London was invented to make money. There were probably Iron Age settlements here but they were overwhelmed by the Romans, who set up a colony as a base from which to exploit the island of Britain. It is as simple as that, Londinium was a money making machine, one of the richest and most successful cities in the northern Roman empire. To demonstrate the commercial virility of their city the inhabitants of Londinium built



Royal Hospital, Chelsea – the infirmary, added in 2008, blends in perfectly with existing building



the largest basilica north of the Alps.

London was the first city in the world since Rome in the 2ndC AD to have a million inhabitants. Sometime soon after 1800 London was without doubt the largest and fastest growing place on the planet. As it grew it faced a previously unprecedented series of problems. In London the police, the postal service and the water supply, sewers, public health measures, Underground railways, all these required buildings and each reflected the pride felt in the metropolis by the people and politicians.

Another old myth is that planning started with the Town and County Planning Acts of 1932, or even with the metropolitan board of works in 1855. Medieval London, by the late middle ages was one of the densest cities on earth. It was clear to everyone that for it to work there had to be some control over what people built, and where. The city imposed regulations on house builders from the late 13thC, regulating the height of buildings, the thickness of party walls, issues of drainage, encroachments and the like. Many of these were more like building regulations than planning law, but the proclamation of 1580 enacted into law in 1592 forbade any new building within three miles of the city and forbade the subdivision of houses. This was the birth of planning control as we know it. Controls that were reinforced just under a century later in the aftermath of the Great Fire of London and have been refined and developed ever since.

London has always faced threats, plague, fire, bombs, the machinations of the post war planners. And it faces threats today. Conservation was born in the late 19thC as a direct reaction to two powerful forces: first the cataclysmic destruction of the industrial revolution, changes that were altering the face of our cities and countryside faster than any other time before or since; then there were the works of architects like Gilbert Scott, Anthony Salvin and Viollet le Duc who were finishing and improving medieval monuments and sites such as the Tower of London. Their work was improving, changing and demolishing important medieval fabric at an astonishing rate.

William Morris, John Ruskin and the other early thinkers developed the idea of an approach that concentrates on the building's original fabric being the most important.

Stimulated by the egalitarianism of the post war period these ideas moved from the sanctification of medieval fabric to a view that saw all parts of a building as equally important and worthy of preservation. This is the philosophy that recently prevented my next door neighbour removing the disfiguring Victorian windows from his Georgian house and replacing them with 18thC style sashes.

But not everything has equal value. In recent years, many in the conservation world have come to realise that places are significant for many different reasons. Some values will conflict: my next-door neighbour, for example, cannot enjoy authenticity of design while retaining authenticity of fabric.

Keeping everything is not an option. Our job is to sustain for the future those parts of a building, those aspects of a place, that people in the future will most want to see preserved. Identifying what those elements, those aspects, are calls for knowledge, judgement and, yes, imagination. Imparting that knowledge, fostering that judgement and encouraging that imagination is the greatest challenge facing the conservation movement today.

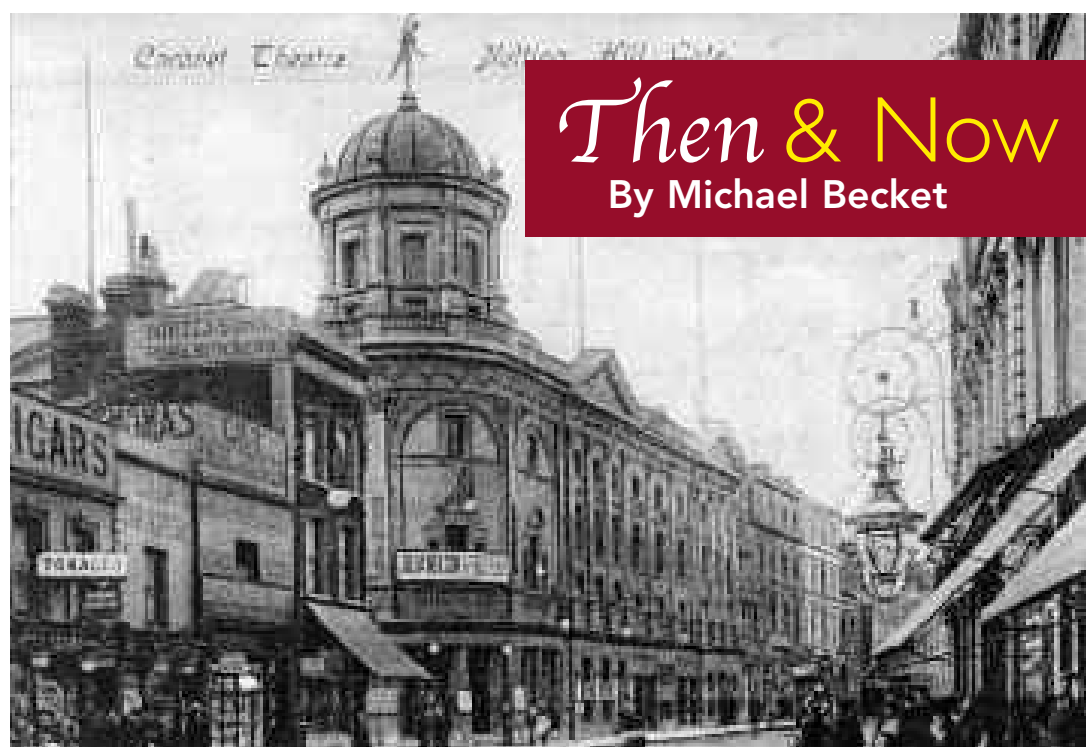
Conservation officers, architects, elected members in local authority planning committees, planners all need to start looking at conservation in a different way. It is not about stopping change, it is about managing it. It is about identifying what is significant and finding ways to harness it for our pleasure and enjoyment. We need to find long-term viable economic uses for historic buildings and where these do not exist a properly funded system of state support needs to be in place to meet the heritage deficit.

My message is essentially an optimistic one. We live in boom times but in our rush to the future we must not forget the past. It is what gives this city its character, its credibility and defines its image.

**Simon Thurley, former head of English Heritage, before it was split into two organisations by the government in 2014**

*A shortened version of the talk given at a reception at the invitation of the Mayor, Councillor Charles Williams, on 10 February 2014*

Kensington has been lucky or careful, and has managed to retain a surprisingly large portion of its traditional housing – an aspect that has continued to make it one of the most desirable places to live. As the pictures from over a century ago show, some streets have remained almost identical. Even Notting Hill Gate, where a couple of hundred yards of the north side were demolished to widen the road and a major portion of the south side was redeveloped, has retained recognisable segments. Similarly, the South Kensington end of Brompton Road has survived on one side and erupted into blocks of flats on the other. Still, there are some streets that have changed so drastically since the early photographs it would be almost pointless to show before and after, as there would be no point of reference to indicate they were the same place. So this just a very small sample of views to indicate both change and stability.



# Then & Now

By Michael Becket

The Coronet Theatre has lost the shining figure at the top of the dome, which looks remarkably similar to the one currently on top of the Kensington central library. The splendid lights at the right of the early picture on the fine Victorian buildings were swept away with the demolition of the north side to widen the street leaving room to erect the unimaginative excrescences along that side of the road. But the south side of the street has remained relatively intact. White and Sons pork butchers site is now selling sushi and the draper and chemist are now a pet parlour and news agent, confident enough of payment at the time of purchase not to emphasise cash.





Thomas Allom drew on his experience as a stage designer to give drama to his designs for Stanley Gardens, Stanley Crescent and Kensington Park Gardens. This drawing, thought to be by him, emphasises the stately panoramas though he was equally proud of the perspectives leading to the churches and the garden entrances. The vistas look as good as when he created them in the middle of the 19thC.







The Castle pub, on the corner of Portobello Road and Westbourne Park Road, was originally called the Warwick Castle and the building just down the road was recently advertising Arcade Fire rather than the shoe shop chain Freeman Hardy & Willis which is visible in the 1906 picture – dateable from the bus advertisement for the Brass Bottle which opened at the Vaudeville Theatre on 16 October 1906. There seem to be no street traders at all which shows how quickly ‘traditions’ can be created.





Kensington High Street at the Kensington Church Street corner, is more changed in the past century than one would have expected. There is still a sign for the Civet Cat hanging at the second floor level on the corner building but it is on a Tudorbethan structure which replaced the Victorian building. The pub gave way to Barclays Bank and then to a pizzeria and then an estate agent. Similarly, the other buildings have been replaced by more stately alternatives and the gabled hotel at the end is now a steel and glass Royal Garden Hotel.





The building at the corner of Pembridge Villas and Westbourne Grove (or Archer Street as it was then called) housed a bank but that went long ago. At one stage it was the London offices of the Van Heusen shirt company and then it gradually crumbled. The art gallery, now in the building, has improved things a bit. On the right, at the junction with Chepstow Road, there used to be a Gaumont cinema but after the site was rebuilt, it is now a coffee shop and estate agency with flats above. Not visible in the early 20thC view, at the far left, on the junction of Westbourne Grove and Chepstow Place, was a rather grand shop, Bradleys, and the junction was called Bradley's Corner. After the war it became government offices and the building has survived with the ornate B is still visible in some of the decorative iron work.





When the early photograph was taken in 1906 it was looking up Onslow Place and the houses on the left behind the omnibus were in Onslow Crescent. The modern picture looks down what is now called Old Brompton Road and the crescent was replaced in 1937 by the huge Melton Court, a block of flats with a parade of shops facing South Kensington Station.







The Windsor Castle pub is still there on Campden Hill and only slightly trendier than shown at delivery time early in the 20thC. The tree at the back has matured nicely, the corner signage has been removed, and it was quite hard to get a snap of the building without the normal swarm of traffic in both directions.





This part of Kensington Road, now Kensington High Street, was called Leonard Place. Henry Whitlock & Co, formed in 1778, sold horse-drawn carriages well into the 20thC but then became Henry Whitlock's Automobile Co and then Century Motor Co. Its forecourt sported some pretty fancy cars – £330 was well over what most people would have earned in a year. The site was demolished in 1926 to be replaced by the Kensington cinema, subsequently the Odeon, and currently proposed to be redeveloped as luxury flats. The terrace at the left was replaced by a block of flats, Leonard Court.





BY MICHAEL BACH

In 1852 Kensington Vestry Hall was built on part of the St Mary Abbots burial ground in Kensington High Street. By 1880 a 'new' town hall was built next door, and these two generations of town halls sat next to each other for over 100 years.

The amalgamation of Kensington and Chelsea in 1965 led to demand for a new town hall in Hornton Street, which was completed in 1977. When drawing up Kensington Conservation Area the council excluded the old town hall, not because it lacked character or architectural interest but to avoid constraints on redevelopment of the site. That was partly because the council had decided to sell the site to help pay for the new town hall. The leader, Councillor Nicholas Freeman, strongly favoured redevelopment, despite strong public support for the building's refurbishment.

To preserve the elegant building the Greater London Council, which also had powers to designate conservation areas, was approached to get it to include the old town hall in the Kensington Conservation Area. The GLC agreed and proposed to affirm its decision on 14 June 1982. Councillor Freeman called an emergency meeting of his inner circle – councillors Arbuthnot, Bendixson, McLaren and Wheeler – and persuaded them to take the devious and drastic step of smashing in the front of the old town hall before the conservation area designation could be confirmed. In the middle of Friday night (11/12 June) demolition contractors, acting on his instruction, smashed a huge hole in the front of the building.

Local residents were enraged and the Royal Fine Art Commission condemned the action as "official vandalism ... decided upon covertly, implemented without warning and timed deliberately to thwart known opposition". The action generated a major distrust in local politicians for a long time – indeed some have not forgiven them or trusted councillors since even though the perpetrators have all long gone.



# Feature

By  
Gillian Reynolds

## Ghosts of Shops

ON THE BRICK FLANK of one of three Victorian houses on Notting Hill Gate there is half of a sign. It says Marmal and above it is a faint capital D. It has been there as long as I have lived on Notting Hill Gate (and I do mean the Gate, I don't mean the Notting Hill of Michael Gove and David Cameron, which is practically Wormwood Scrubs) so that's about thirty five years. In my time it has always just said Marmal but, because I remember when the shop below was a proper, old fashioned grocer's with a bacon slicer and a coffee roaster, I know what's missing from the Marmal is ade and the D is for Dundee, I also know that soon it may be missing altogether.

There is a plan to replace those three Victorian houses along with the adjoining 1930s shop on the corner of Pembridge Gardens with a new development. The model was put up for public inspection and comment last spring. I went to have a look, wondering whether the empty shop it was in used to be the optician's or the stationer's, both of which have moved eastwards along the Gate. On the corner where The Book Warehouse has been for ages, (though I remember it as a men's outfitters in the 1980s) the model showed an eight storey building of flats with a café bar at street level.

The nice young man patiently listening to me looked blank when I added, sadly, that it also means saying goodbye to Marmal. I told him about the faded old sign. I didn't add that maybe the novelist Ivy Compton-Burnett (1844-1969) might have seen it when she lived in Linden Gardens. It could even have been there, but complete, in Emmeline Pankhurst's time. It was certainly just Marmal by the

Linden Gardens era of Ossie Clark and Celia Birtwell. The nice young man had never noticed it. Fortunately the application was refused under delegated decision powers by the planning department.

Months later I asked someone whether he had heard anything about Newcombe House. He said it was to be demolition and replacement. Come on, I said, there have been rumours for years of that whole block going, all the way from what is now Waterstones right down Kensington Church Street to what is now the fish shop. And what's happened? Nothing.

It's different now, he said. What's suggested is shops and cafes below, offices in the middle and luxury flats above. Imagine the view from a penthouse at the top of Newcombe House, he said. So I did. I bet you could see all the way to the luxury flats towering above Paddington Basin. Ah well, he said, the merchant bankers have to live somewhere.

I thought of all the shops that used to be on that Church Street block. The butcher. The florist. Were there two butchers? At least the curtain shop is still there. Remember the greengrocer's on south side of the Gate? Was that replaced by the shop that sold everything, where I bought the bread board? What about the furrier, in the storey above? All gone but ghosts of them hover. It was ever thus. Shops come and go, reflecting life nearby. As it changes, so do they. Pubs vanish. Betting shops spring up. Estate agents flourish. Sandwich shops jostle. The banks will go next, now life has gone online. There was a time when shops turned into offices. Now the offices are turning into flats. Not necessarily to live in, but better investments than annuities.



Crossing the road by Pain Quotidien Campagne (wasn't that once a pub?) cursing cyclists who go through red lights, I tried to remember what used to be opposite the Coronet before Polpo, Itsu and such. Was there a Co-op or was it an Iceland before Nisa came, then Tesco?

I definitely remember what was there before the Marks & Spencer's food shop. In the 1970s it was a Greek restaurant, Cleopatra, with dancers and plate smashing (an expensive addition to any bill.) After Cleopatra came a posh pizza place with a specially imported oven. And after that an even posher place with Damien Hirst décor which, when it opened, had queues stretching down Holland Park Avenue. As time passed it got less posh. By the time I could afford to eat there the chef was volatile, sending out desserts sprinkled with salt instead of sugar. Hurrah for M&S! And now hurrah for little Waitrose arriving just lately, or it would be hurrah if it weren't so little, the aisles so narrow, the checkouts so chaotic.

On the pavement by the Tube there used to be Margaret who sold flowers and a man who sold papers. I went to his funeral. It was packed. The priest was famous and did Radio 4's Thought For The Day. When the 60s boutiques started closing one turned into a sports shop, owned by Asian refugees from Uganda. I bought a tennis racquet there. Record and Tape Exchange took it over, as they did many more shops on that block. Now they're closing too, replaced by souvenir shops. The building society where I got a mortgage is long gone, ditto the jeweller, the umbrella shop and the last chemist to have big glass pharmaceutical bottles in his window. Does Marie Lloyd haunt the Coronet, newly restored to the theatre she once played?

Remember The Ark, the restaurant by the bus stop on Palace Gardens Terrace? In the 1980s its chicken Kiev was exotic. Then it was taken over by a celebrity chef, his era marked by a constant street scent of caramelizing sugar.

Cuisines there come and go but I still miss The Ark and the bookshop in the adjoining shed and Sheila, who used to save me remainder copies of authors she knew I liked. And wasn't the Mandarin, back up on the Gate, a wonderful bookshop? Every writer in Notting Hill was a customer. I remember John Cleese gazing into its windows. I still have the

dictionary I bought in their closing sale.

Small bookshops were killed off by the big chains, just as W H Smith and Waterstones are now threatened by Amazon. I'll miss the Notting Hill Waterstones when the tide of change sweeps it away as it did Mac Fisheries before it. I shall still see their ghosts just as I see that of Steam Boat Charlie's, the restaurant that was there before the Rowley Leigh Kensington Place, whose phantom hovers over the Kensington Place of now.

Peter Ackroyd used to eat in Rowley Leigh's Kensington Place. In Ackroyd's *London, The Biography*, he quotes G K Chesterton, (born in Sheffield Terrace, married in St. Mary Abbot's) "There never has been anything in the world absolutely like Notting Hill. There never will be anything quite like it to the crack of doom" then adds "In this, at least, he will be proved correct". Notting Hill, continues Ackroyd, has always been "a place that has come to terms with its destiny". If the destiny of the Gate is to be developed as an arts and culture centre, with cafes instead of shops, office blocks transformed into ritzy apartments, the ghosts of places and people that used to be there are bound to linger. You'll know them when you see them.



# Feature

## Lord Justice Carnwath

Infrastructure planning seems to have been a backdrop to much of my life. I was brought up in the 1950s and 1960s in a small village in Essex, not far from Stansted. I have vague early memories of my father going off to protest meetings about plans to turn Stansted airport from a military base, as it had been during the war, into London's third airport.

The civil airport at Stansted developed because it was the easiest place for it to happen. It was not until the Roskill Commission in the late 1960s that anyone attempted to carry out a methodical study of the various options – as it turned out too methodical. Roskill's brave attempt to put a monetary figure on everything, tangible or intangible, was strongly criticised by many, including one of his more prominent members, Professor Colin Buchanan. Roskill's final recommendation of a site in Bedfordshire (Cublington) was largely ignored. Buchanan's proposal for a site at Maplin Sands in the Thames Estuary had more support. But inertia and bureaucracy favoured Stansted, and as so often inertia and bureaucracy won. Maybe Buchanan's idea will yet have a renaissance as 'Boris Island'.

I worked with George Dobry on his report into the Planning System, which has not been bettered, and could be studied with advantage by policy-makers today. Geoffrey Rippon, who not only negotiated our entry into the Common Market, but was also the first ever Secretary of State for the Environment, went back into practice as a

planning silk in 1974, and gave me a very useful piece of practical advice – which is that the higher up the system the decision is made, the less material will be in front of the decision-maker, and the less time he will have in which to make it.

That reductionist approach could also be applied to some of the most successful infrastructure projects. Sometimes, it seems, the bigger the project, the simpler the decision-making process. When I was instructed for the Department of Transport on one of the first inquiries into a section of the proposed M25 I asked to see what I assumed would have been the many detailed reports which lay behind the strategic decision to build the orbital route in that location. The rather apologetic officials showed me a single sentence in a White Paper: "there shall be an orbital road round London", or words to that effect. That being government policy, any attempts to question its merits at the inquiry were doomed to failure.

The Channel Tunnel was in some ways similar. Mrs Thatcher, after much hesitation, eventually decided in a historic agreement with President Mitterand to give her support to the concept of cross-channel link. That provided the policy basis on which the necessary Orders could be sped through parliament. Unfortunately she did not think it so important that there should be a high speed way of getting to the Tunnel. For that we had to wait much longer, and content ourselves with admiring how much better the French

seem to do these things.

Anecdotal accounts suggest that many of problems with the marathon Heathrow Fifth Terminal inquiry were due to changes in government policy on critical issues during the course of the inquiry, as well as the long periods devoted to discussion of need, which could better have been settled as a matter of policy before they began. It is a pity that it has tended to give all inquiries a bad name.

Another high-profile victim of changing policies was Cross-rail which endured many starts and stops. As I recall, the parliamentary committee got so fed up with the changes in the government's approach to funding that they threw it out, thus setting it back for more than a decade.

The redevelopment of St Pancras as the terminal to the Channel Tunnel link was a triumph both of engineering and aesthetics. But it may be forgotten that the original idea was to have it at Kings Cross. While I was still at the Bar much time and money was spent pursuing that project with the active support of the Department of Transport, before the government announced one day out of the

blue that the terminal was to be at St Pancras.

Recent projects like HS1 and the Olympic Park were models of successful and efficient delivery, because we are told, of the New Engineering Contract (Series 3) Design and Build, or to its friends NEC3. Apparently it has been the key to building successful teamwork between the many parties involved in such ventures.

Its definition left me none the wiser. "NEC is a modern day family of contracts that facilitates the implementation of sound project management principles and practices as well as defining legal relationships. Key to the successful use of NEC is users adopting the desired cultural transition. The main aspect of this transition is moving away from a reactive and hindsight-based decision-making and management approach to one that is foresight based, encouraging a creative environment with pro-active and collaborative relationships."

But the point is we as lawyers and professionals spend too much of our time trying to sort out the results of unresolved conflicts. Good law makes things easy. It



cannot prevent conflict, but it can prevent conflict causing unnecessary disruption. It does so by providing effective mechanisms for balancing the conflicting interests which inevitably arise. It is the duty of us as lawyers to make sure that the mechanisms are fit for that purpose.

Perhaps the Planning Act 2008 could do for planning procedures what NEC3 has done for implementation. The Act seemed to have tackled in a principled way the fundamental problem of ensuring a firm policy base for any public consultation process into infrastructure projects of national significance.

Making the Act work as intended is in all our interests. It is no use thinking that one can plan major infrastructure projects without conflict between the pros and the antis. For national infrastructure projects, the Act provides a mechanism for listening to and examining those competing interests against the background of a firm policy direction.

The necessary counterpart to the widening of standing rules are responsive and speedy procedures, and the discretion of the court to balance the competing interests in deciding whether to grant a remedy. The mere fact that, in the context of environmental assessments, the rules are derived from European Directives does not change the nature of the court's role.

One of the possible worries about the Planning Act procedure is the scope for judicial review at so many points in the process. One can see how such applications multiplied over the course of a major project could cause serious disruption to any timetable. The answer is not of course to exclude such challenges, but to ensure that the system for dealing with them is as expert, responsive, and speedy as is possible consistent with the objects of justice.

The Administrative Court cannot develop a specialised jurisdiction, to develop consistent practices over time to deal with the substantive and procedural issues which arise in this type of case, or to manage challenges to a particular project on a continuing basis.

New South Wales has had a Land and Environment Court for two decades. Under a succession of distinguished presidents it has become a world-leader. The 2007 Tribunals Act allows us at least to make a start here. There is already a limited environmental jurisdiction in the First-tier, but this would not be suitable for judicial review. The Act allows for the transfer of judicial review powers from the Administrative Court to the Upper Tribunal. That is already happening in other fields, notably immigration. There seems no obvious reason why the same should not happen for judicial reviews arising out of the Planning Act, and perhaps other planning or environmental cases. One of the strengths of the Act is that it enables a body of specialist judges to be built up, drawing when necessary on senior judges from the courts. It also enables non-lawyers (for example, perhaps, planning inspectors) to be brought in as assessors.

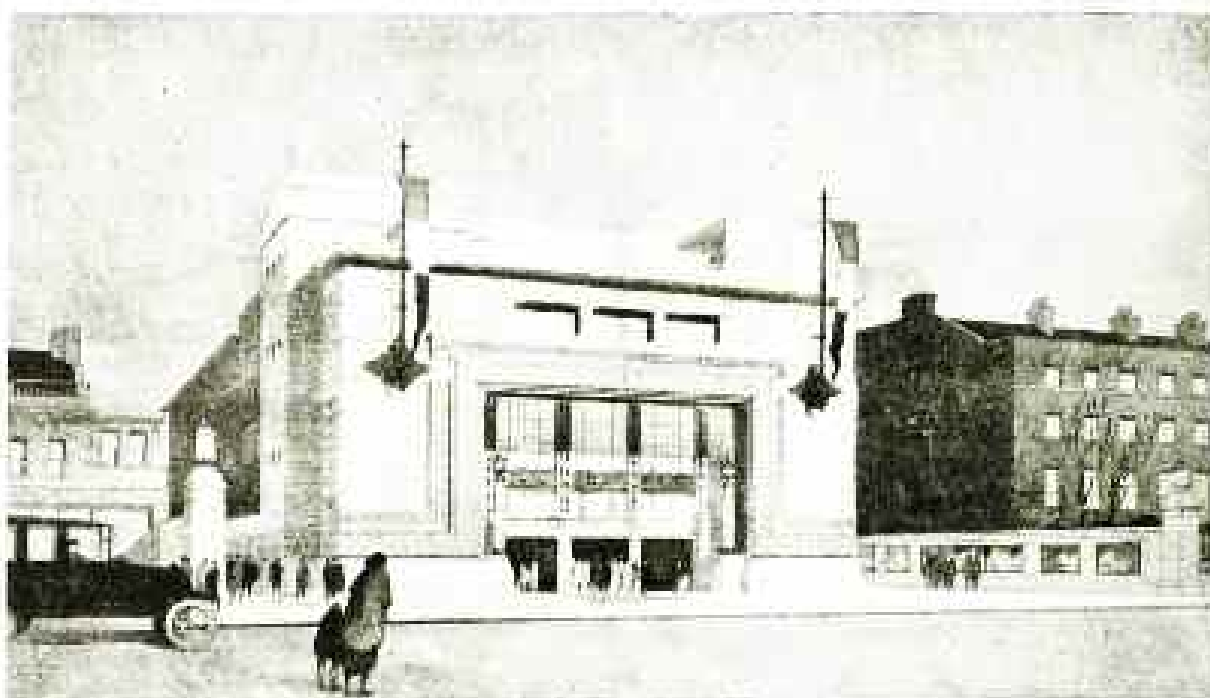
This an abridged version of a speech Lord Justice Carnwath made to the National Infrastructure Planning Association Inaugural Dinner.

Robert John Anderson Carnwath, Lord Justice Carnwath of Notting Hill CVO (born 1945) was called to the Bar was Junior Counsel to the Inland Revenue (Common Law) from 1980 to 1985, became a Queen's Counsel in 1985, and was appointed a High Court judge in 1994. He was chairman of the Law Commission from 1999 to 2002, was promoted to the Court of Appeal in 2002 and first Senior President of Tribunals in 2007. In 2011, he was appointed to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, and he is the chairman of the Advisory Council for the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. In his free time, he enjoys playing the piano and viola, as well as singing in the Bach Choir.

Lord Justice Carnwath, a resident of Kensington, is the speaker at the 2015 annual general meeting on Tuesday, April 28th.



# *The* KENSINGTON MARCH



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A society member recently came across this score in Portobello Market. It was written for the opening of the cinema on Kensington High Street, then called the Kensington, subsequently rechristened the Odeon, and currently a target for redevelopment. A recording of the tune is on the website.

# Planning Reports

It was yet another challenging year, but it was a successful one. Sometimes your success is someone else's failure. Our successes have often been to bring about a different, better outcome – and to avoid bad outcomes and ensure that the worst things don't happen.

This year's highlights have been the adoption of the new basement policy, influencing the direction of the proposed plans for the Royal Brompton Hospital and for Notting Hill Gate, and the refusal by the Planning Committee of applications for Dukes Lodge in Holland Park and for the redevelopment of the Odeon cinema and associated sites.

## **Basements**

The biggest success, of course, was the adoption of the council's new basement policy. The society has been pressing the council for a much tougher policy for basements for the last five years. We are pleased the council got the message, adopted a tough stance to reduce the scale of basement developments and, despite determined opposition from the basement contractors, saw this through the Examination-in-Public. The society and our affiliates strongly supported the council, as far as the inspector would let us. We are now working closely with the council to produce a new, improved guidance for basement development in the Supplementary Planning Document, a much tougher code of practice for construction sites covering hours of work, noise and vibration and an improved set of requirements for construction traffic management plans. This will need to be reflected in the necessary conditions and informatives on planning consents to provide more integrated decisions rather than have to rely on enforcement. It should mean fewer and small basement projects that can be much better managed.

## **Conservation and design policies**

The other major change to the council's Local Plan (aka the Core Strategy) was to consolidate the saved policies from the former Unitary Development Plan with those of the 2010 plan. Whilst much of this was uncontentious, the society was concerned about the loss of certain policies, which could quite easily have been incorporated. We were very disappointed by the council's resistance to our proposals – they stonewalled through the examination arguing that the plan should be as brief as possible and in effect we were damaging rather than improving the plan. Now, with the abolition of Conservation Area Proposals Statements and replacement by Conservation Area Appraisals (see below), important policies have been lost. This will need revisiting.

## **Further reviews: enterprise and housing**

Following the changes to conservation and design and basement policies, the council's next priorities are those for enterprise and housing. The enterprise policies will cover employment – how to plan for and maintain our employment users, such as offices and other business premises, in the face of the government's proposals and pressures from housing.

The policies for housing need to be overhauled as the policies written into the 2010 Local

Plan were strongly biased to creating a high proportion of market housing, 80% of which would be in units with three or more bedrooms. We predicted this would feed directly into the international investment and second home market. This is exactly what has happened, even if 'large' is now defined in terms of floor-space rather than bedrooms. Almost all the main sites have been developed for this market, otherwise known as 'buy-to-leave', with a high proportion perhaps never being occupied or will be empty for most of the year. In terms of meeting the need for housing for people who want to live in London, these sites are wasted, as they add nothing to number of new homes, and result in increased property prices. The new policy will need to add to the available stock of housing, rather than the stock of investments.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

To provide guidance on specific issues (eg basements) or for particular areas, the council produced Supplementary Planning Documents. During 2014 the Council produced draft documents for the Royal Brompton Hospital and for Notting Hill Gate.

The society objected strongly and on principle to the Brompton Hospital draft SPD as it seemed to be designed to deal only with the hospital's estate and would have encouraged the conversion of the Brompton's Fulham Wing to luxury housing rather than remain in hospital use. The society strongly supports both the mayor of London's policy of promoting London's world-class medical facilities and the borough's policy of retaining social and community uses, such as hospitals, if there is a continuing need for such facilities. Since a number of hospitals, and in particular the Royal Marsden, need space to expand, the society considered the SPD should be about promoting this complex as a whole. We are pleased that NHS England and the borough now favour a more strategic approach and have promised to produce guidance for a Chelsea Medical Quarter.



**Fulham Wing, Royal Brompton Hospital, to be part of Chelsea Medical Quarter**



**The Book Warehouse, Notting Hill Gate, its sentence of death in a redeveloped site temporarily delayed**

The society was also very critical of the first draft SPD for Notting Hill Gate so commissioned our own proposals. Our proposals, which included a new public space and a GP surgery behind a redeveloped Newcombe House and a major overhaul of the public realm, were well received by both the council and the developer for Newcombe House. Unfortunately, the second draft SPD was no better than the first. We hope that our efforts have pushed both parties in the right direction and that we have persuaded the council to proceed with the public realm improvements within the next few years rather than wait for the redevelopment of major sites. We will be pursuing this in 2015. Something has got to start happening as Notting Hill Gate has waited long enough for much-needed public realm improvements.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

The coalition government invented the term “localism” and introduced the power for local communities to set up a neighbourhood forum and to produce a neighbourhood plan for their area. Provided it was in general conformity with the strategic policies and proposals of the borough’s Local Plan, the forum could produce policies for their area which would supersede the Local Plan when considering applications in that area.

The first neighbourhood plan in London – the Norland Neighbourhood Plan – was approved last year. The second one in Kensington for St Quentin and Woodlands neighbourhood, covering part of the Oxford Gardens Conservation Area, in North Kensington, is currently under way.

The Draft Plan that has been developed over the past 18 months proposes some variation to the RBKC 2010 Core Strategy. The council has proved resistant to any changes in its policies for the Latimer Road part of the Freston Road/Latimer Road Employment Zone. Local residents and businesses point out that this street has been in steady decline since the



1990s. A further source of contention is over one of the three remaining ‘backland’ green spaces in the neighbourhood – the site used since the 1960s by Clifton Nurseries as overflow from its main garden centre in Little Venice. Local neighbours have been campaigning vigorously to keep this land as open green space.

The Oxford Gardens CAPS statement is very clear that the land should not be developed for housing. RBKC planners now seem to be wavering and giving encouragement to a housing developer. The end result on the Draft StQW neighbourhood plan could prove a test case on whether this new part of the planning system means anything in London. The strong views of local residents and businesses are pitted against developers and RBKC planners.

The outcome will be decided by an ‘independent examiner’ of the StQW Draft Plan. Very few neighbourhood plans in London are making it to the end of the process, whereas outside London there are now over 40 where a successful local referendum has ensured that the neighbourhood plan has prevailed, and has been adopted by the local authority (as the Localism Act requires).

### **Conservation Area Appraisals**

Conservation Area Proposals Statements (CAPS) are disappearing and CAAs are taking their place. RBKC has 35 conservation areas covering 70% of the borough. The planners have been working on these replacements since the middle of 2014, when the first of the new documents on Lots Village emerged for consultation. There is now a handful of these in existence and the planners are working to complete them for the whole borough within a three-year programme.

We have commented on most of these, not necessarily in detail but focusing on the format and nature of the content. We felt the first one or two lacked essential information, but are pleased to see a steady improvement in the documents and they do now provide much of useful information needed for conservation.

We remain very concerned, however, that these documents lack the vision required for improvement of areas, which actually inspired the original designation of conservation areas. We continue to urge the planners to provide more guidance to the average resident on what conservation areas are all about, what is likely to be detrimental and what is positive and what can be improved. With several areas already completed this may need to be produced in a generic document which can supplement the detailed CAA for each area.

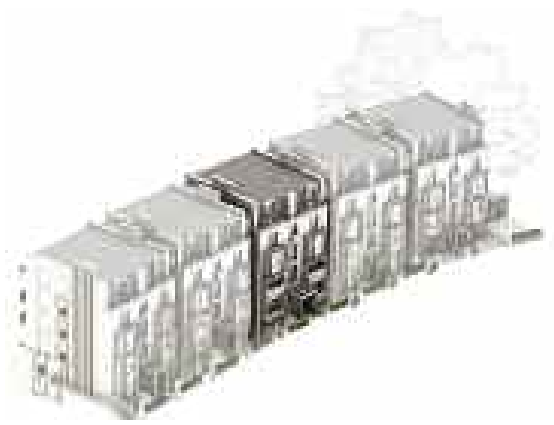
We strongly believe these documents are not just for council officers, but for everyone, especially local residents, and therefore need to be designed to meet their needs. To do this and to achieve residents’ ‘buy in’ there needs to be greater public engagement, especially at the start of the process.

## **Major cases**

### **Dukes Lodge and the Odeon**

Though it happened in 2015, we cannot miss the opportunity to report the Planning Committee on 13 January heard two major applications – Dukes Lodge and Odeon. It was a very important event for the society as we were making presentations on both cases as part of a team of local residents to a full committee of 12 councillors.

Dukes Lodge at 80 Holland Park was a redevelopment of 1930s block of 27 flats on the northern edge of Holland Park in an area distinctive for its characteristic large villas. The proposals were for a long block of 24 much larger flats, designed to appear as five large “villas” in a style supposedly created to reflect the historic environment, but in fact forming a continuous building. The scheme included a very deep basement built into the undeveloped hillside reaching to four storeys in parts. The application included a S106 agreement for a £12 million contribution for affordable housing somewhere else in the borough.



The planning officers recommended approval and had praised the design. The team of objectors, led by the society and local residents, criticised the architectural quality, the loss of open space, the overall loss of housing units, the harm to the living conditions to neighbours and, critically, the very deep four-level basement which would have been contrary to the hard-fought basement policy that was about to be adopted within a week.

The officer's recommendation was overturned, with eight councillors voting for refusal and only four against. The objectors had criticised the lack of meaningful engagement by the developer, with little or no notice being taken of residents strong concerns.

The proposed redevelopment of the Odeon and former Post Office sites on Kensington High Street and a site in Earl's Court Road was for an even larger scheme than one previously approved. The eight objectors, led by Councillor Joanna Gardner, included the society, Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association (ESSA), local residents and the Save the Odeon campaign. They were given 20 minutes to present, with the applicants given an equal amount of time to respond.

The main objections were to the height of the main building, and the relocation of the main cinema entrance to Earl's Court Road, which would have resulted in the removal of almost all activity from the Kensington High Street frontage, the main Odeon entrance becoming the private entrance for just 35 luxury flats which would be part of a gated community. The objectors convinced the planning committee that there was a large number of unresolved issues, which were certainly not outweighed by any significant benefits. After three hours of discussion the matter was put to the vote and the application was refused by 11 votes to one, the chairman being the only one in favour of the scheme.

Whilst we welcomed a comprehensive development of this site that would produce buildings and activity worthy of this location, we considered that this application had too many unresolved issues and, if approved, would damage the high street. The society, ESSA and local residents are keen to encourage a scheme that is worthy of this location.

We consider that there are major lessons to learn from these two “failures”. This is a major improvement in the time restrictions imposed on objectors at the meetings. Last year we were given 2.5 minutes for Lancer Square. In both cases there were still too many unresolved problems. If both developers had engaged earlier with the surrounding communities and attempted to address their concerns, and if the planning department had also engaged at the pre-application stage with the locals, improvements could perhaps have been made to overcome these problems. We are concerned

that neither the developers nor the council officers realised the extent of the unresolved issues and the strength of objection.

### **South Kensington Station**

Past efforts by London Transport/Transport for London have approached the redevelopment of South Kensington station as a major money-making opportunity, with proposals to raft over the station and to build a large amount of offices and housing, all without solving the access problems for people with mobility problems getting to the underground platforms. Several schemes have hit the dust due the determination of local residents to get a scheme worthy of the location and the listed buildings, whilst achieving step-free access.

It would appear that there has been major change in approach in Transport for London. No longer is the site seen as major source of profit, but one of the highest priorities for improvement in TfL's massive property portfolio. The priority now is to produce a high-quality scheme that respects its heritage, whilst meeting the major challenges of the rising quantity of passengers as well as providing access to the platforms and to the pedestrian tunnel to the South Kensington museums.

This conversion to a 'great estate' view of their property portfolio – seeing themselves as long-term investors rather than as property developers, marks a major turning point, which if realised could at last produce an acceptable solution to this long-running saga.



**Two examples of BT's advertising hoardings, one at Notting Hill Gate and one on High Street Kensington, contracted to J C Decaux, which obstruct the pavement, make streets ugly with lurid advertising, and distract drivers.**

## **Government interference**

### **Offices to housing**

Last year we highlighted some the government's crude nationwide proposals to allow offices and shops to turn into housing without planning consent being required, presented as a way to get vacant offices and shops back into use, and the council's major success in getting an exemption from the offices to housing change. This latter success has saved us from the wholesale loss of offices, often occupied rather than vacant, being experienced in many London boroughs due to the differential in value between offices and housing.

Over the summer the government produced fresh proposals not only to rescind our exemption, which would result in the loss of all the borough's medium-sized and smaller offices within a few years, but also enable even more uses to turn into housing, for shops and a range of other uses to turn into cafes and restaurants, gyms and other uses. These proposals were billed as helping produce housing and strengthening the high street. In practice it would wipe out quite a few uses, encourage the expansion of banks and estate agents and cause a major change in the balance of uses in our shopping streets. The society has again engaged

Sir Malcolm Rifkind's help to lobby for a continuing exemption for the borough's offices. The government appears to be having some difficulty making up its mind about whether its proposals are sensible in a London, let alone Kensington, context.

### **Short lets**

A further government proposal is to deregulate legislation controlling short lets – London-wide legislation introduced in the 1970s to control housing being turned in to short let tourist accommodation. The circumstances of the 1970s – rising housing prices, a shortage of housing and rising pressures from tourism – which were the reasons for introducing controls over lets under 90 days, are just as relevant today. It was never meant to stop people having lodgers or to let their home while on holiday, but to stop the effective change of use by serial short lets which converted housing to tourist accommodation. The society's concern is that the government could change the rules, not merely clarify current practice on lodgers and lets during holidays, but to allow properties to change from homes to tourist accommodation.

We hope that for all of these issues the government listens to our concerns.

### **Involving people in planning – making planning more resident friendly**

Last year we commented on the new statement of community involvement entitled Involving People in Planning. Its first year of use has illustrated its deficiencies. It is merely a description of the planning process which notes “opportunities” for residents to contribute, not a commitment to residents to involve them actively both in the development of new policy and guidance and in securing early engagement with major planning applications. To be fair, having with luck learnt from the mistakes of the Brompton Hospital and Notting Hill Gate SPDs, it would appear that the planning department has understood the value of engagement at the scoping stage – to make sure they know what the issues are. This is now being done for the proposed new basement SPD and the proposed code of practice.

However, it has not been the case with pre-application advice which still excludes any resident consultation. The refusal of the Dukes Lodge and Odeon applications also demonstrates the need for earlier community engagement to identify and respond to these issues. This is a major challenge for the council and is an integral part of making the planning process more resident friendly – if only to take the temperature and resolve the issues and avoid “failures”. The society considers that the Statement of Community Involvement needs to reflect a change of approach to involving communities in the borough.

### **Pubs**

The council's 2010 Local Plan recognised pubs as “social and community uses”, but decided, unfortunately, they did not need protection from change of use, especially to housing. A year later the council decided to change policy and in 2013 adopted a policy that would protect pubs from change of use to housing. Since then the council has turned down most, but not all applications, for change of use.

The council's position has been strengthened by the government's concern about the future of pubs, reflected in their recognition as vital to local communities both in the Localism Act 2011 giving communities a Right to Bid and in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) as community facilities, charging local planning authorities with planning positively for provision and guarding against the unnecessary loss of such valued community facilities.



Pubs are far more than meeting places for the community, they are also major landmarks in our townscape – they are an integral part of the character of the borough.

However, with the government's proposals for increased freedom to change uses (see above) our pubs are again under pressure for change of use to shops, offices and other such uses, possibly as part of a two-stage shift into housing. To avoid this process we have successfully persuaded the council to serve an Article 4 Direction to remove these freedoms to change use and the local communities are seeking to register pubs as Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act. The Academy in Princedale Road and The Kensington Park Hotel in Ladbroke Grove are the first cases. There may need to be more. If you have any pubs in your area whose future needs safeguarding, please contact us.

### **Social and community uses**

In addition to hospitals and pubs, there are other social and community uses under threat – petrol stations, care homes and premises for the voluntary sector. For the latter, voluntary organisations are often competing in the open market for offices which are under threat from government changes (see above), as well as attempts to refurbish and change the use of existing space, such as the Westway Information Centre in Ladbroke Grove and the Lighthouse in Lancaster Road. At some stage the council will need to address the same government advice as for pubs – to plan positively for the provision of such space and to safeguard against the unnecessary loss of such valued facilities. This is a challenge for the council and Westway Development Trust as major landowners, but also for the council as the planning authority in dealing with privately-owned premises.

### **Elephants in the room?**

Finally there are the elephants in the room – big things happening that we have not been able to impact, though we have tried – the demolition of Earl's Court Exhibition Centre; the options for airport expansion where two out of the three options are to expand Heathrow; the Counters Creek Sewer which should greatly reduce the risk of flooding north of Holland Park Avenue; and Crossrail 2 that would run through Chelsea.

### **Looking ahead**

2015 – apart from the general election – will be very important for planning in the borough. Will we be able to maintain our offices, pubs, hospitals and premises for voluntary organisations? Will we find a way forward with the Chelsea Hospitals Quarter and Notting Hill Gate, new planning policies for enterprise and housing, and new Conservation Area Appraisals which reflect what communities value and wish to preserve or enhance? Will we at last find a worthy development for South Kensington Station? And who will be the new executive director of planning when Jonathan Bore leaves in a few months' time? We will know by the AGM.

Our job is to help shape the future of Kensington, not just to react to planning applications. The society welcomes more engagement with residents – participation is about sharing the burden of choice.

**CHAIRMAN: MICHAEL BACH**  
**COMMITTEE: AMANDA FRAME, ANTHONY WALKER, HENRY PETERSON,**  
**SOPHIA LAMBERT, HILARY BELL**

# Feature

## Charles House

### Give them an inch . . .

The former coal yards running between Cromwell Road and Kensington High Street were, apart from Charles House, relatively underdeveloped sites until 2000. North to south the sites consisted of Charles House (an office building), a vacant site formerly used by the Territorial Army, the Empress Telephone Exchange site and Homebase with its accompanying car park. Lack of developer interest until then was largely due to the Council's restrictive density policy.



The East façade from Kensington High Street.

## The Planning Brief

The Mayor of London's 2004 London Plan, however, changed all this by promoting higher densities to maximise the housing potential of sites. The society foresaw that this would create considerable development pressure and in 2006/7, with the strong support of Abingdon ward councillors, pressed the council to produce a planning brief for all the main Warwick Road sites. This was agreed in spring 2007 and consultation on the draft document took place later that year. Throughout the consultation the Kensington Society expressed concerns about the proposed density, the height of the buildings, the lack of green space, the location of the proposed school and the massing of the master plan.

In January 2008, the council adopted the Warwick Road Planning Brief Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However, what was not known at the time was who had created the masterplan. Michael Squire confirmed later that it was his architectural firm, the firm acting for several of the developers, which produced the masterplan within the SPD. The plan increased the density to the maximum of the highest density range in the London Plan and the height of buildings.



## **The Application**

The scheme proposed for the Charles House site as outlined within the 2008 SPD has undergone significant changes since originally approved. Many of these changes will have direct effects on residents of Kensington, both current and future. The height of the blocks was increased further and the affordable housing was reduced and then removed from the Charles House entirely. The key points for concern can be summed up in relation to the following aspects:

## **Affordable Homes**

Within the SPD – and in line with the requirements at the time of the Mayor’s London Plan – the council called for 50% affordable housing target across the development. With an eye to promoting “mixed and balanced communities”, it also explicitly stated that “given the size of the sites and the lack of constraining factors compared with some other parts of the borough, off-site partial or full provision of affordable housing will not be allowed”.

Contrary to the London Plan requirements, the applicants’ first proposals for all four sites submitted in April 2008, made provision for:

- Charles House: 467 market residential units and 63 affordable housing units;
- Telephone Exchange: 99 market residential units and 59 affordable housing units;
- TA site: 174 market residential units and 81 affordable housing units;
- Homebase site: 186 market residential and 66 affordable housing units.

With a total of 926 market, 269 affordable/social units, the affordable housing provision in these applications was only 29%, significantly below the 50% planning target. By November 2013, applications for variations resulted in net changes to residential mix:

- Charles House – gaining 55 market units whilst losing 63 affordable/social units and 31 affordable/social housing units;
- Telephone Exchange – losing 12 market units, and gaining 1 affordable/social unit;
- TA site unchanged;
- Homebase – losing 19 market units and gaining 27 affordable/social units.

Perhaps the planners were as confused as you may be, but the result was in total: a gain of 24 market units (950), at the loss of 37 affordable/social units. The affordable/social percentage was therefore reduced further to a mere 22% provision across all sites in comparison to the SPD target of 50%. However, for Charles House all affordable/social housing provision was removed resulting in an increase of 55 market units and a total loss of all 63 affordable/social housing units. One-bedroom flats are selling for £925,000 and two-bedroom flats for £2,025,000 in the block that was to have contained affordable housing. Most of the development has been bought off-plan in the Far East.

## **So how is this possible?**

The original SPD and the approved planning application for Charles House had the





**The inner court yard.**

affordable housing in a separate building along the railway to the west of the site. The school was to be at the corner of Kensington High Street and Warwick Road and was to be paid for by the developers. The developer proposed moving Warwick Road to the east to increase the size of the school building and separate it from the busy street, instead of reducing the size of the housing block.

The developer of Charles House was successful in arguing with the council that the numerical provision on site for affordable housing along with the cost of the school rendered the development financially unviable. It was maintained that the on-site provision of the school should be traded off against the requirement for social housing, even though the school was part of the original planning requirements. Amazingly the planning officer's report stated contrary to the SPD that "officers did not consider that on-site provision of affordable housing would be appropriate", as there was no provision for separate access to the "very small number" of social housing units within the building originally designated as totally affordable housing.

It appears no one questioned at this point why the school provision had not been included within the viability assessment from the outset as a standard requirement. The result is the developer of Charles House was released from the financial burden of delivering affordable housing altogether. Additionally, the proposal to increase the school site by moving the road was abandoned.

## Height

In addition to the exclusion of the affordable housing, two additional storeys were approved for 15 market units on top of the former affordable housing building, taking the overall height to 11 storeys – much taller than the height limit within the SPD.

Previous design iterations had taken into account the impression this building would make upon the surrounding area, creating a series of setbacks and “rooftop pavilions” over the top two storeys. Along with the increase in the height of the building, the upper floors were brought forward to the line of the street and had an increase floor to ceiling height. It appears that the buildings were constructed with this height increase before any application to allow for this change.

## Density

The SPD accepted a density in the highest range in the London Plan – between 650 and 1,100 habitable rooms/hectare. The Mayor has since clarified that there would need to be strong reasons for exceeding the upper limit. However, the original application exceeded that maximum level.



The corner of Kensington High Street and the rail line.

When the affordable housing was removed, the developer reconfigured the building with larger rooms with higher ceilings and added an additional storey. As a result, the density finally built is over 1,300 habitable rooms/hectare, significantly above the maximum acceptable density.

As foreseen in the early consultation meetings between the society and the council, the inclusion in the SPD of maximum height and density figures has encouraged the developers to seek to fill the three-dimensional envelope, producing very high densities and unattractive, box-like blocks. The consequence is the floor space has been increased by over 30% from 48,729 sqm in the original Charles House to 63,689 sqm, and the density in real terms has risen from a plot ratio of 3.5:1 to 4.6:1, one of the highest densities in the borough.

Overall, the number of rooms increased, the size of the rooms increased, the height of the buildings increased and total floor space has increased in the course of the project and the density has increased above the GLA maximum appropriate density for this location with no justification for exceeding this maximum density. We must remember that RBKC is the most densely developed area in the country and what is approved goes beyond this level.

### **School**

The SPD anticipated an increase in residents and the council identified a need for new educational facilities. The SPD stated that “a new two-form primary school for up to 500 pupils from ages 3–11 is proposed (minimum floor space 2,600sq m) which will not only cater for the needs of future residents, but those of the surrounding area”. The concerns in this regard are threefold:

Firstly, as outlined above, the council agreed a trade-off for school premises in lieu of the required level of affordable housing provision – in their own words, the council believe that “the developers’ offer to provide a school on the Charles House site is therefore the only practicable way of ensuring that there are sufficient school places for the children living in the new Warwick Road developments at the time they are needed”.

Secondly, the officer’s report stated, contrary to the SPD projections, that there could be 96 children under the age of 16 associated with the new developments of the 926 market and 269 affordable properties across the sites.

Thirdly, the SPD required outdoor play space. The approved application was for this outdoor play space to be located on the roof of the school. This play space has since been moved to the basement “as a result of feedback from the local area”. There is no evidence provided as to who the “local area” people were and why they have objected to a rooftop play space. The newly opened Kensington Aldridge Academy has its play space on the roof. The adjoining neighbours are social housing tenants and we understand have not complained. One of the driving rationale for reducing the affordable housing was the additional cost of fitting out the basement for the play space.

### **Social Infrastructure**

It was a requirement as part of the SPD and later supported by the Core Strategy that the developments must provide high standards of amenity space. The courtyards at the heart of the proposed blocks were intended to provide external amenity space for residents and the

public. However, concerns are raised over both the quantity and the quality of this provision. The open areas of Charles House are fenced off and inaccessible to the public and are ringed by a road.

There appears to be an under-provision of play space and amenity space, with that which is provided being disjointed and inappropriately located, with poor quality sunlight penetration, and no facilities for children older than 11 and a school with the only play space in a deep basement. We have been unable to find within the project the proposed play space.

## **Conclusion**

Whilst the society accepts that there is a need to increase the number of homes in the borough, this should not be at the cost of the quality of the living environment and the social provision for the community. This process has been one of steady and gradual erosion. What was envisioned in the SPD is not what has been built. It appears the developer has been able to alter the scheme to his will through the planning process with five applications for substantial variation and six non-material amendment applications, many without public consultation. Affordable housing has been relocated and reduced, green spaces have been marginalised, heights and densities have been increased, the children's outdoor space eliminated and relegated to a deep basement, and unfortunately – though not a planning issue – the development will not meet the housing needs of Londoners.

There has been a disappointing lack of input from the Mayor's office in protecting the welfare of Londoners, and in discouraging the potential for buy-to-leave homes in place where affordability has been deliberately moved out – or eliminated, leaving the potential for community segregation and potentially vacant, unsustainable communities.

It is the role of the planners to define, promote and defend the communities' needs. Planning guidelines should raise, not limit aspiration for the area in this respect, and protect the interests and concerns of the real residents rather than those who see the area as an investment opportunity rather than a living community. What is needed is true efforts to provide an impetus for integration of not only housing but also the supporting infrastructure (such as shops, schools and leisure facilities and open, green spaces). Planning should not be a game of approval then amendment and amendment and variation to the point that in the end what is built is not what would have been allowed in the beginning.

# Feature

By  
**Andreas Whittam Smith**

## Bombs over Kensington

The commemorations of the two world wars have prompted me to consider to what extent Kensington, where I have lived for the past 34 years, was touched by the blitz in 1940–41 and, three to four years later, by flying bombs and by V2 rockets, which were the first ballistic missiles ever used in war. It wasn't just Whitehall, the City and the East End that bore the brunt. In fact Kensington had its full ration.

During the Blitz, a total of 467 high explosive bombs were dropped on Kensington and Chelsea. That was a rate of six to seven bombs each night given that the Blitz began on 7 September 1940 and ended on the following 15 November some 69 days later.

This is how one local diarist recorded the first night's events. "1.25am, one awful bomb; 1.35am, another terrible bomb; 1.40am three screamers – and things that drop like torn materials, most extraordinary; 1.45am, awful bombs Fulham way; 2.00am, awful bombs again, heavy anti-aircraft gunfire." There is no emotion, however, in the laconic records so meticulously kept by Kensington Council. On 10 September, 1940, when bombs rained down on 17/18 Vicarage Gate (a nursing home was built on the site after the war) the Council recorded:

'Vicarage Gate blocked by glass, gas pipe in Winchester Court fractured and gas escaping'. Later on the same day, rescue workers found the body of Mrs. Wilkinson 'trapped near the fireplace in the lounge of No 18, crushed to death, probably instantaneously'. Kensington was well and truly at war.

Again, looking at the maps of Kensington where each explosion is marked, you quickly see that once the blitz had commenced, the damage was soon everywhere. North of Kensington High Street, for instance, bombs landed at three separate addresses in Palace Gardens Terrace and at one in Brunswick Gardens. In Kensington Church Street itself, just where you cross to the other side from Berkeley Gardens, bombs had destroyed the building at 175 Uxbridge Street and Hillgate Place was struck; Kensington Place was caught twice towards the upper end as it reaches Campden Hill Road; Aubrey Walk across this road took a number of hits. South of Kensington High Street, to take another snapshot, De Vere Gardens, Victoria Road and Douro Place found themselves in the firing line. But essentially, every house in every street in Kensington was as likely to be bombed as not.



By far the most dramatic casualty of the blitz was Holland House. During the night of 27 September 1940, twenty-two incendiary bombs hit the old Jacobean mansion during a ten-hour raid. The house was largely destroyed, with only the east wing, and, miraculously, almost the entire library remaining undamaged. It is hard to think of Holland House today as a tidy, beautiful bombsite, which in some sense it is, where operas are performed in the ruins on summer evenings.

Another spectacular casualty was St Mary Abbots. It was a late victim of the blitz. After 1941, there were only sporadic German raids until flying bombs began to arrive in June 1944. Firebombs, however, were responsible for serious damage to the fabric of St Mary Abbots in the previous March. The nave and chancel roofs were destroyed

and damage was done to the stained glass and the organ. But fortunately the main structure was not seriously harmed. It is said that while the fire fighters fought the blaze, an air raid warden played the organ to keep the water out of the pipes to prevent more serious damage – Handel's *Water Music* presumably. What is less well known is that a daughter church of St Mary Abbots, St Paul's Church in Vicarage Gate, was also gutted in the war and never rebuilt.

Indeed Kensington's churches suffered badly. Four incendiary bombs landed on the roof of Our Lady of Victories in Kensington High Street on 13 September 1940. In two and a half hours, it was completely devastated and burnt to the ground. The congregation moved to the Odeon cinema nearby for its services. Then the Carmelite Priory in



The Holland House library contents survived the bomb better than other parts of the house

Kensington Church Street, which had been designed by Pugin and opened in 1866, was completely destroyed by incendiary bombs on Sunday, 20 February 1944. And it was struck again on 11 March.

The worst flying bomb attack took place on 28 July 1944 at the junction of Earl's Court Road and Kensington High Street. It was lunchtime. Some 45 people were killed with a further 170 injured. Six houses were so badly damaged that they had to be demolished, some 90 were seriously damaged but still standing and 696 houses were affected in some way.

You need a keen eye these days to detect the former bombsites in central London. When I first started to explore the capital more than fifty years ago, you couldn't miss them. They were strange empty spaces covered with unruly bushes and brambles. The rubble from the collapsed buildings had long since been removed.

These empty sites were often two or three houses wide. But no rebuilding could begin until the war was finished. Then in Kensington one of two courses of action was followed. The former eighteenth or nineteenth century structures were replaced with either what were, strictly speaking, replicas, that is white-stuccoed dwellings in the old style, or by blocks of flats. Once you train your eye, you can quickly recognise the replica replacements today. Superficially they resemble their neighbours in the street but the details and surrounds of doors and windows have a perfunctory feel. There was a shortage of materials after 1945, so the buildings still look as if they had been done a little bit on the cheap. Likewise the replacement blocks of flats nowadays have a rather dowdy appearance.

But you cannot explore the extent of the war damage without wondering how our predecessors managed to keep going through such a terrifying experience. The other evening, walking back home from a local restaurant with my wife, I realised that in ten minutes I had passed sites, now rebuilt, where half a dozen bombing raids had caused considerable damage and killed and injured many people. What would I have felt about my own chances of survival if I had made the same brief journey during the war, I asked myself?

Perhaps I would also have had in mind the heroic deeds of my fellow residents. In April 1941 the George Cross was awarded to two Kensington men for their bravery in rescuing people. Alfred Hollingdale commanded a post of the local ARP (Air Raid Precautions), or Civil Defence as it was later re-named. His 'mate', Ernest Price, was a garage fitter with London Transport. The citation states that they entered a building and "although there was a strong escape of coal gas, they succeeded in rescuing two women. By that time, they themselves were almost overcome by the gas. They were warned not to go in again, but despite this they re-entered the building and brought out another woman. The two men then made a third attempt but they were both on the verge of collapse and had to be removed to the open air. They showed utter disregard of the danger to themselves both from the gas and the falling debris."

As one senior ARP officer summed it up during the war in a report to Kensington Council: "In May 1941 the first part of the battle of London was over – the battle which was not won by the RAF nor by civil defence, but by the people of the capital themselves."

# Reports

From  
**LOCAL SOCIETIES, 2014**

## **ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

The association is in Courtfield Ward, just to the south of Cromwell Road and the West of Gloucester Road Station. Although the area we cover is small, there never seems to be a shortage of issues requiring our attention. During the past year these have included: deep basement excavations (we were represented at the EiP hearings on RBKC Basement Policy), planning enforcement and its problems, and since May 2014 the impending threat of having a 30,000 sq.ft. 24-hour casino, expecting around 1,500 guests a day, foisted on our largely residential neighbourhood. The application for the casino project was cynically lodged with RBKC on 24 December 2014 (Merry Christmas, and goodwill to all men...). Since then our residents association has been raising awareness of this outrageous project, and we are happy to report that we have received a great response from the whole neighbourhood. We are optimistic, but realise that the casino project will demand our full attention for some time to come. Thank you to everyone who has given their support, for all the letters of objection.

**Friederike Maeda**

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## **BOLTONS ASSOCIATION**

There has been a triple focus this year for The Boltons Association's executive committee; namely, participating in the council's update of the conservation area document, joining in with representations in respect of revisions to the council's respective basements and design policies, and paying closer attention to bar/cafe developments on The Beach area of the Fulham Road.

The area around Harley Gardens/back gardens to the east side of Gilston Road continues to be a particular hotspot of basement development – with six large 'digs' planned/in process/just finishing within a fifty yard area. This is likely to continue as applications approved before the start of the Council's revised basements policy are built over the next three years (Cathcart Road, Tregunter Road and Seymour Walk are in a somewhat similar situation). Also of interest in the Harley Gardens area is the new, replacement 'garage block' at the rear of 22 Gilston Road.



The new structure is way taller/bigger than the 'substitutional garage' granted planning permission. There is now an application in progress to reduce the excess height somewhat; however, the view of the association is that the new structure should be reduced right the way down to that originally approved. This would result in appreciable demolition works being required.

The association has noticed considerably more bar/club/cafe activity on The Beach recently. We have re-doubled our efforts regarding operating conditions attached to new premises licences, together with whether shops with A1 (Retail) use are possibly operating as A3 (cafe/restaurant). An example of the former is Fulham Tarts, whereas Bacchus Lounge is an example of the latter.

**Calvin Jackson**

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## **BROMPTON ASSOCIATION**

The Natural History Museum held an architectural competition during the year to select an architect to devise a plan for its grounds. A small exhibition was held and comments invited on the submissions. The winning entry was submitted by Niall McLaughlin Architects working with landscape architect, Kim Wilkie. Their scheme essentially comprised an outline masterplan illustrating how access to the museum – particularly for disabled people and people with pushchairs – could be improved by opening up access from the Exhibition Road tunnel. Not only did the proposal keep an east lawn (as opposed to removing all grass and concreting it over) but it made circulation around the museum simpler by accessing the building at ground level below the Paleontology Building as well as through the original but congested main entrance. The winning McLaughlin scheme was an innovative solution to a complex problem and we look forward to seeing how it develops. We have argued for many years that the museum needs to develop a new vision that addresses queues and circulation. We are hopeful that progress is at last being made whilst at the same time protecting the green spaces that surround the museum.

Another competition involved the Exhibition Road Cultural Group working with the Royal College of Art to get students to come up with ideas for improving the Exhibition Road Tunnel and tube station which could then be put to Transport for London for possible



**View of Natural History Museum from  
SE corner**



further development as part of plans for the station. Ideas ranged from innovative improvements to lighting and flooring to much more complex interventions. All were interesting, if not always entirely practical or realistic. However, as the Amanda Levet scheme emerges on the Boiler House site at the V&A and as the Natural History Museum develops its masterplan, there is a clear need to ensure that the tunnel is integrated and improved whilst respecting its historic significance as a listed building.

Amongst other local issues, there is concern that Holy Trinity Brompton has installed a sign for a café, a neon sign in the grounds as well as replacing a section of grass in the churchyard with astroturf without consultation or prior planning permission. We have objected to a neon sign on the front of the V&A, albeit part of an exhibition, and continue to oppose advertising projected at night onto the façade of the Natural History Museum in association with events.

**Sophie Andreae, chairman**

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## **CAMPDEN HILL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

2014 has, at one level, been routine with there being no specific major development in the area covered by the association. However issues common to many other associations have loomed large not least basements. So the recently introduced planning limitations are very welcomed indeed. The re-development of Notting Hill Gate will obviously impact on Campden Hill and its environs. In this, as in many other major issues, we liaise with the Kensington Society which deserves our sincere thanks for all the sterling work it performs for the wider community.

Holland Park School is now educationally fully operational. However the use by the community of its facilities is still to be satisfactorily resolved. The association has been carefully monitoring the planning issues and in this regard the words in our Christmas newsletter are worth quoting "I would have liked to have started my message this year along the following lines... Holland Park School has become a real asset to the whole community with, as originally envisaged, and residents able to use and enjoy the school's magnificent facilities".

Sadly this is not the case! The school is currently working on a revised Community Use Plan which should come before the appropriate Planning Committee early in 2015.

"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety" – Benjamin Franklin

**David White**

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## EARL'S COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2014 saw the 40th anniversary of the setting up of the Earl's Court Square Residents' Association. It was formed following a development company acquiring a block of houses with the intention of demolishing them and building high-density flats, regardless of the effect this would have on the appearance of the properties. Full conservation area status was granted in 1975.

A reception was held in November for members and their guests at the Poets' House in the Square. The guest speakers were Caroline Welby, who had grown up in the square, and Evan Davis, a local resident and BBC presenter.

On another positive note, ECSRA welcomed the ruling about basement developments. A site within the square had already been granted permission to build a property with a basement and subsequently applied for a secondary basement.

**Christine Powell, chairman**

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## THE EARL'S COURT VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The association was very relieved that an application for a double-basement in the very narrow confines of Child's Street was turned down by the council, recently.

Currently we are protesting against a whole extra floor to be built on the roof of the Park Grand Hotel In Hogarth Road, which will affect residents not only in Hogarth Road, but also Kenway Road, Redfield Lane and Wallgrave Road. Depending on this result, we are grateful for support in the case of future applications.

**Philippa Seebohm, chairman**

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## EDWARDES SQUARE, SCARSDALE & ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

Basements have been at the forefront of our work during the year. Our annual address at the AGM in 2014 concentrated on the theme of 'Neighbourly Basements' recognising that, even at that early stage, no matter what the effect of the emerging basement policies it would be essential to find better ways to work together. In the autumn there was a hearing in public with all the preparation and input required and now the basement policies have been found to be sound and adopted. We now need to make sure that the new Supplementary Planning Document and other environmental controls do actually provide good working tools.

We have also been working hard on information which has been submitted with regard to the change from CAPS to CAA within the ESSA area. We have employed an architectural historian to assist us and have put in a lot of time in identifying the particular issues which we want the planners to address.

There have been, and continue to be, several major developments which are yet to be resolved. These range from



the development of the Odeon and post office sites which have been held in abeyance for too long and, on the edge of our area, the proposed demolition of the residential community in Broadwood Terrace and Chesterton Square at the end of Pemberton Road. Both of these will continue to occupy our time in the coming year.

Our Mansion Block Group continues to grow and provides very valuable feedback on the needs and concerns of the residents living in these and who make up a large proportion of our area.

**Anthony Walker, chairman**

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## **FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK**

Holland Park faced some thought-provoking challenges during 2014 and it is likely 2015 will be an equally busy year as we help protect the park's natural and historical assets. The Friends' work generally falls into three categories; monitoring building developments that affect the park, funding activities or enhancements to the park and staging events that generate funds while offering enjoyment to participants.

We continue to work with RBKC to explore an acceptable form of ancillary building for Opera Holland Park (OHP). The aim is to increase the time the Holland House terrace is open to the public each year and to find a style of building less intrusive than the white tents. There is a one-off opportunity to find an elegant solution that will benefit park users as well as OHP, but time is essential to get it right. The Design Museum will take over the old Commonwealth Institute building during 2015 and our concern is to retain the character of the adjoining part of the park and prevent it being subsumed into the entrance to the museum.

Once again we have sponsored the ecology programme of educational walks and talks. During 2014 The Friends commissioned 'Tonda', a sculpture for the Sun Trap Garden. We also produced a new guide to Holland Park and are now well under way with a Kyoto Garden guide. We have agreed with park management a long list of potential improvements we can fund in the park and look forward to realising the most important of these in 2015.

**Jennie Kettlewell, chairman**

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## **KENSINGTON SQUARE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

During 2014, the Kensington Square Residents Association focused its efforts on addressing residents' issues on proposed developments on sites adjacent to the square, as well as building stronger relationship with the council, namely Bi-borough Director for Transport and Highways,

given the new proposed development on Young Street. As the year drew to a close, we have been alerted to a new potential development at 99 Kensington High Street and 1 Derry Street,



which would be detrimental to the residential character of Kensington Square, which forms a conservation area on its own and is one of the oldest squares in London. We are focusing thus our efforts looking to 2015 to protect the character of the square from commercial encroachment.

**Mariela Pissioti, secretary**

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## **KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

I wasn't going to write a report this year, realising it would be just another rant against rapacious developers and their threat to our community. But then something happened that lifted my spirits. Keen-eyed Andreas Liesche was browsing in a scrap metal merchant's, when he came across a bronze plaque, commemorating the first supply of electricity in Kensington in 1887. The plaque had once been on a building in Kensington Court, but now languished forgotten in a pile of junk. Andreas had read on our website the story of how Kensington Court was created and wondered if we would be interested in acquiring this memento of a local pioneer. Of course we were. The site now houses the offices of Warner Chappell. We approached them and they readily agreed to buy the plaque and re-install it. We hope to have a little ceremony when the weather's better. So thanks to a public spirited individual and a community-minded company, we have preserved a link to our past. In the current feverish market-driven atmosphere, when most of our time is spent trying to resist this neighbourhood becoming a residential ghetto, their actions shine like a good deed in a naughty world.



**The rescued and replaced bronze plaque**



**Maria Assumpta choir in Thackeray Street**

**John Gau, CBE, chairman**

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## **THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION**

This last year has been as busy as ever with a great deal of attention focusing on basement excavation and the emerging policies of both Kensington & Chelsea, and Westminster City councils in attempting to mitigate the worst aspects of this comparatively recent phenomenon. We,



like other amenity societies, have worked with the Kensington Society to support, and in some cases, amend RBKC's policy, which finally passed its Examination in Public in December and has now been adopted. Westminster City Council (a major part of Knightsbridge falls within its borough) is somewhat behind RBKC, but broadly similar in its proposed policy.

A major concern which is rumbling along in the background, but likely to come to the fore in 2015, is the future of Hyde Park Barracks. In 2012 The Ministry of Defence commissioned a 'market testing exercise' inviting expressions of interest. The strict requirement for any developer of the site to provide alternative central London accommodation for the 300 men and 250 horses of the Household Cavalry proved somewhat of a deterrent. Rumours abound as to where the cavalry might be relocated, and even that they might stay on site in the middle of a multi-billion pound development. There has been a barracks here since the late 18th century and it would be a sad day for Knightsbridge if it were to go. Whatever the future, Knightsbridge does not want another billionaires' glass and steel monstrosity.

The association supported the RBKC's Licensing Committee's decision to defend its decision to refuse permission for an extension of hours to 2 am for McDonalds in Brompton Road at a three-day appeal hearing held at the City of London Magistrates' Court. Many members of the association turned up at the appeal, several as witnesses; and we were delighted to learn that the inspector dismissed the appeal.

Our 2014 AGM in December was held by kind permission of the Science Museum in The Making of the Modern World Gallery, surrounded by iconic examples of 19th and 20th century marvels of engineering.

**Carol Seymour-Newton**

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## **LADBROKE ASSOCIATION**

The new RBKC basements policy is particularly gratifying to the Ladbroke Association, as we have been in the forefront of those working to achieve greater control over these developments since 2009, when we carried out a survey of residents affected by basement development and wrote a report with recommendations to the council. There are still a number of our recommendations that remain unimplemented and we shall be continuing to press the council on several fronts.

The Ladbroke Conservation Area was one of the first for which the council prepared a draft Conservation Area Appraisal, to replace the existing CAPS which was issued many years ago. The association contributed wherever it could to the preparation of the draft. While the draft does ample justice to the special features of our area, we are concerned that it is insufficiently clear both on what is likely to harm the area and what is likely to enhance it. We fear that it will not serve its intended purpose if it does not provide more guidance both to residents and to council officers.

Meanwhile the association has continued its street by street survey of the area, the results of which can be seen on our new



website: [www.ladbrokeassociation.info](http://www.ladbrokeassociation.info).

Readers are encouraged to visit the website.

The association will in due course be putting forward suggestions to RBKC for the making of Article 4 Directions to give more protection to some of the buildings in the area, and we have also urged the council to make Article 4 Directions to require planning permission for any change of use in respect of the historic public houses in our area.

**Graham Child, chairman**

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## NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

This is the first year that Norland Conservation Society has worked with its Neighbourhood Plan. Though it is early days, there is no doubt the planning policies and guidelines are being followed to a considerable extent by development management: we understand that our (sometimes very detailed) comments and objections on applications are proving very useful to case officers. However, there are some applications where, in our view, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not being followed. Our Article 4 Directions are proving very valuable. Most importantly, we have gained



**The Academy, Princedale Road (Photo by Clive Wilson)**

in respect and influence. This is also helping in relation to traffic management: we have secured agreement to a valuable zebra crossing on St Ann's Villas, and we are now working with traffic management on plans for a 20mph zone covering the whole CA.

2014 ended with good news for residents. The society successfully petitioned the council to apply an emergency Article 4 Direction on the Academy pub to halt change of use without planning consent. We then campaigned to have the Academy recognised as an Asset of Community Value, only the fourth in RBKC and the first pub in the borough to be given this status.

2014 also hopefully will see a reduction in basement development. Norland Conservation Society and others worked with the Kensington Society to help frame the council's new policies to limit the scale of basement developments.

NCS would like to thank the Kensington Society for its unflagging work and support in matters both large and small.

**Libby Kinmonth, chairman**





## ONslow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

During the past year the association has been involved with the public hearing concerning basements, which has resulted in a welcome improvement for residents. We have also done our best to restrict the opening hours of the increasingly numerous restaurants, shops, cafes and night clubs to avoid late night disturbance to neighbours, and to prevent the spread of tables and chairs over the pavements.

We are still aware that the matter of the redevelopment of South Kensington Station is, as yet, unresolved; thus various meetings with Transport for London are attended in an attempt to persuade TfL that we do not want a large overpowering structure in exchange for step free access. The tunnel connecting the underground with the Museums is also now a matter for consideration by the association.

The Royal Brompton Hospital has announced plans for a consolidated site on Sydney Street, which would involve the change of use of some of their existing sites to residential use, and then their conversion into high quality housing; this proposal for the Fulham Road Wing has produced a public outcry with the Royal Marsden particularly alarmed at the possible loss of such a valuable nearby site to residential use.

Finally, our only Grade II\* listed building St Luke's Chapel, sited at the southern end of Onslow Square West Gardens, has come under threat; in an attempt to rectify the damage caused by neglect, there has been a proposal for a change of use to residential, involving a dreadful kitchen extension along the length of the northern facade. This association has opposed such an application, and now await the result of a last minute intervention by Holy Trinity Brompton.

**Richard Skinner**

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## ST HELEN'S RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The main activity over the past year has been the preparation of the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Plan. The StQW Neighbourhood Forum is the legal entity set up by the association and 'designated' by the council in July 2013. It shares the same membership as the association (now 360 residents and some local businesses). The forum has legal powers under the 2011 Localism Act to prepare a neighbourhood plan for a defined area. In our case, this 'neighbourhood' includes parts of the new Dalgarno and St Helen's wards, in North Kensington.

This is the second neighbourhood plan within RBKC. The first (prepared by the Norland Conservation Society) was formally adopted by the council in 2013. That plan concentrated on conservation issues, whereas the StQW Plan has a wider scope.

Our experience in preparing a neighbourhood plan has proved much as expected, albeit with some surprises. It is heartening that local residents have been willing to attend a series of public meetings to shape and agree the policy proposals to be included in the draft plan. Discussions with RBKC planning officers have proved unexpectedly difficult, with a seeming reluctance to



accept that the process of neighbourhood planning can lead to some variation in council policies – provided that such changes achieve ‘general conformity’ with the borough’s Local Plan and the London Plan.

In our neighbourhood area, we have a part of an Employment Zone (Latimer Road) which has not flourished and where local people see scope for more housing above commercial floorspace. We also have a number of surviving ‘backland’ green spaces which are a feature of this part of the Oxford Gardens Conservation Area, and which local people definitely do not see as suitable for residential development. One of these (the land used by Clifton Nurseries) is now threatened by proposals for an upmarket housing development, with the loss of a number of magnificent willow trees.

The StQW Draft plan has yet to go through the process of independent ‘examination’ prior to a local referendum. We believe that an examiner will accept the policy proposals put forward in the plan, which will then be voted on at a referendum. The outcome will be something of a test case in London, where very few neighbourhood plans have reached these final stages. Neighbourhood planning in a London context has proved more complex than elsewhere. There are now 1,200 such plans in preparation across England.

If any amenity society or residents association are interested in knowing more about our experience of preparing a neighbourhood plan in Kensington & Chelsea, you are very welcome to email to [info@stqw.org](mailto:info@stqw.org) or to ring me on 0207 460 1743.

**Henry Peterson, chairman**

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## **THURLOE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

The association focused its attention this year on bringing the community together to address extreme anti-social behaviour on a scale never seen in our neighbourhood. After another successful community street party in the summer, community spirit was high and there was little tolerance for letting a persistent and well-organised group of street professional vagrants cause havoc. TRA was able to facilitate the coming together of the council, police, local businesses, cultural institutions and South Kensington Estates and local residents to reclaim our neighbourhood. Assuming a positive and proactive approach has had some great outcomes notably in fostering a greater sense of community among all participants.

Over the summer, a group of people took up residence in the Yalta Memorial Gardens near the Ismaili Centre. Unfortunately, they did not keep to themselves, but instead engaged in all manner of anti-social behaviour.

Against a backdrop of the neighbourhood being a dumping ground for all sorts of rubbish, residents were cautious on the street and afraid to go into Thurloe Square Gardens at night, employees at local businesses felt threatened, and restaurant patrons were intimidated and hassled. TRA approached both the council and police to see what action could be taken and organised a meeting for residents and local business owners to determine



the appropriate course of action including getting the rough sleepers the help that they needed to get off the streets. The problem has not gone away, but has lessened and TRA continues to work the council, police and members of our community to make sure that we keep on top of it.

This approach has worked in other areas as well including licensing, planning and noise and nuisance. TRA looks forward to strengthening those relationships over the coming year with a positive programme of outreach and activities designed to bring people together for the common good.

**Jan Langmuir**

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## **VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

The end of the tunnel is in sight – the De Vere Gardens project will be complete and Kensington Road gantry will be down by Easter. After four and a half years of demolition (noise and dust), excavation of three basement levels (hundreds of lorries to remove the waste), construction (large cranes dominating the skyline), the long completion period and extensive parking suspensions – we are at last coming out the other side. We will soon get our lives back.



**One Kensington Gate, alias De Vere Gardens, Victoria Road frontage**





**One Kensington Gate, alias De Vere Gardens development**

The upside is that we will get four entry treatments which will signal to those entering our area that they should slow down. We are now considering what kind of public art we should commission with the funds provided by the developer.

Basements are the bane of our lives, not helped by Cranbrook Basements campaign to drum up the business before the shutters come down. They have targeted the listed terrace in Canning Place. Albert Place has been non-stop basement building for the last four years and will be for the next few years.

We gave this as a case study to the inspector who examined the council's basement policy. We are extremely pleased that the council's basement policy has been found sound – now we need to make it stick.

Next year we will be engaged in reviewing our area to produce a Conservation Area Appraisal to capture the essence of the character of the area and what needs to be preserved and enhanced.

Our aspirations for next year include getting superfast broadband, more dog poo bins and to slow down the traffic.

**Michael Bach, chairman**



**The project under construction**



# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2014

<b>Incoming resources</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Voluntary income</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Subscriptions	9,347.00	9,005.00
Donations and legacies	3,972.40	1,462.00
Gift Aid	2,361.20	2,211.69
<b>Total voluntary income</b>	<b>15,680.60</b>	<b>12,678.69</b>
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Events	6,930.00	1,825.00
Annual report advertising	5,770.00	4,140.00
<b>Total charitable activities</b>	<b>12,700.00</b>	<b>5,965.00</b>
<b>Investment income</b>		
Bank interest	247.65	525.21
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>28,628.25</b>	<b>19,168.90</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>		
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Newsletter	1,729.97	1,127.75
Events	10,414.40	1,887.83
Annual report	7,168.20	5,187.00
Professional fees	11,723.69	1,980.00
Subscriptions paid	80.00	80.00
<b>Total charitable activities costs</b>	<b>31,116.26</b>	<b>10,262.58</b>
<b>Governance costs</b>		
Insurance	333.38	346.81
Professional fees	500.00	1,647.00
Office expenses	169.86	355.41
<b>Total governance costs</b>	<b>1,003.24</b>	<b>2,349.22</b>
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>32,119.50</b>	<b>12,611.80</b>
<b>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources</b>	<b>(3,491.25)</b>	<b>6,557.10</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds brought forward</b>	<b>74,386.38</b>	<b>67,829.28</b>
<b>Total unrestricted funds carried forward</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>	<b>74,386.38</b>



## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

	2014	2013
	£	£
<b>Current assets</b>		
<b>Debtors</b>		
<b>Prepayments</b>		
Interest	62.42	62.42
Events	0.00	4,595.18
Insurance	203.60	216.81
<b>Total prepayments and accrued income</b>	<b>266.02</b>	<b>4,874.41</b>
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>		
Scottish Widows Bank	62,000.00	62,000.00
Barclays Bank	10,402.39	9,102.97
PayPal	161.72	0.00
<b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>72,564.11</b>	<b>71,102.97</b>
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>72,830.13</b>	<b>75,977.38</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>		
<b>Deferred income</b>		
Subscriptions and donations	390.00	31.00
Events	1,045.00	160.00
<b>Accruals</b>		
Professional fees	500.00	1,400.00
<b>Total deferred income and accruals</b>	<b>1,935.00</b>	<b>1,591.00</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>	<b>74,386.38</b>
<b>Funds of the charity</b>		
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>70,895.13</b>	<b>74,386.38</b>

Approved by the Trustees on 8 January 2015.

Examined by Kim D. Hooper Chartered Accountant on 18 February 2015.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW

The net incoming resources for the year were £28,628.25 which is an increase of £9,459.35 from last year. Subscriptions increased by £342.00. The donations and legacies of £3,972.40 increased by £2,510.40. The Gift Aid received is £2,361.20.

The Annual Report cost (net of advertising income) is £1,398.20.

Charitable activities professional fees were incurred for advice on planning issues and fees for creating the new web site. In total this amounted to £11,723.69.

The balance sheet remains strong with reserves of the Society of £70,895.13. £62,000.00 is on deposit with the Scottish Widows Bank. These reserves give a strong financial base and it is expected that they will be maintained at this amount.

The Society wishes to thank all the members who have generously subscribed £9,347.00 and donated £3,972.40 and participated in the Society events during the year.

### Notes to the accounts

- **Accounting policies**

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historic cost in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities – Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005); and with Accounting Standards.

- **Accruals basis**

The financial statements are prepared on accruals basis to match incoming resources and expended resources within the same activity within the same year.

### Incoming resources

- **Recognition of incoming resources**

These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when:

The charity becomes entitled to the resources;

The trustees are virtually certain they will receive the resources; and

The monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

- **Donations**

Donations are only included in the SoFA when the charity has unconditional entitlement to the resources.

- **Tax reclaims on gifts and donations**

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the SoFA to the extent that claims have been made.

- **Volunteer help**

The value of any voluntary help received is not included in the financial activities.

- **Investment income**

This is included in the financial activities when receivable.

### Expenditure and liabilities

- **Liability recognition**

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources.

- **Governance costs**

Include costs of the preparation and examination of financial statements, the costs of trustee meetings and cost of any legal advice to trustees on governance or constitutional matters.

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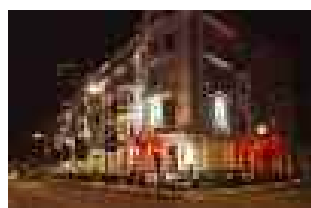
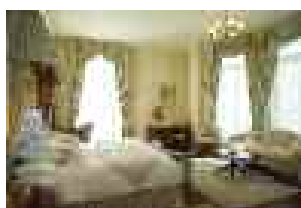


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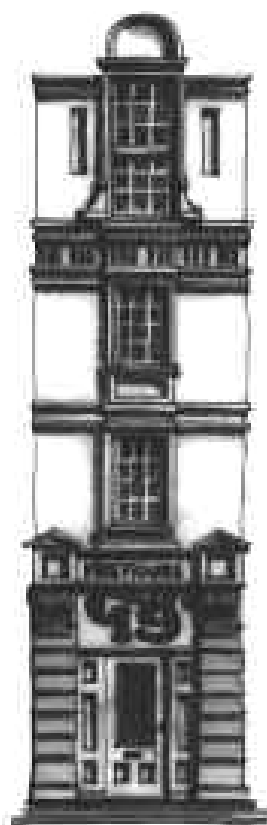
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*The Kensington Society would like to express our gratitude and thanks to:*

- Ruth Lang for her research assistance in writing the Charles House article;
- Gordon French, Gallery 19, for the use of his view of Kensington Palace in our publications;
- The Mayor, Charles Williams, for the use of the Mayor's Parlour for the AGM.
- All our advertisers and supporters.

*For the wonderful and informative people who helped with the events series of 2014:*

- Dale Ingram, Planning for Pubs, for the enjoyable tour of Kensington's historic pubs in July;
- Robin Golden for his talk on the 'Aunt Heap' of Kensington Palace;
- Keith Mehaffy and Tim Clark of RBKC for their help and presentation with the noise workshop;
- Todd Longstaffe-Gowan for enlightening talk on the garden squares of Kensington;
- Natasha Woollard of the Historic Royal Palaces for her support of the society and the reception in the Sunken Garden of Kensington Palace;
- Christine St John for her entertaining evening with Bette Davis.

*And to everyone who has assisted, encouraged and backed the Society throughout the year!*



