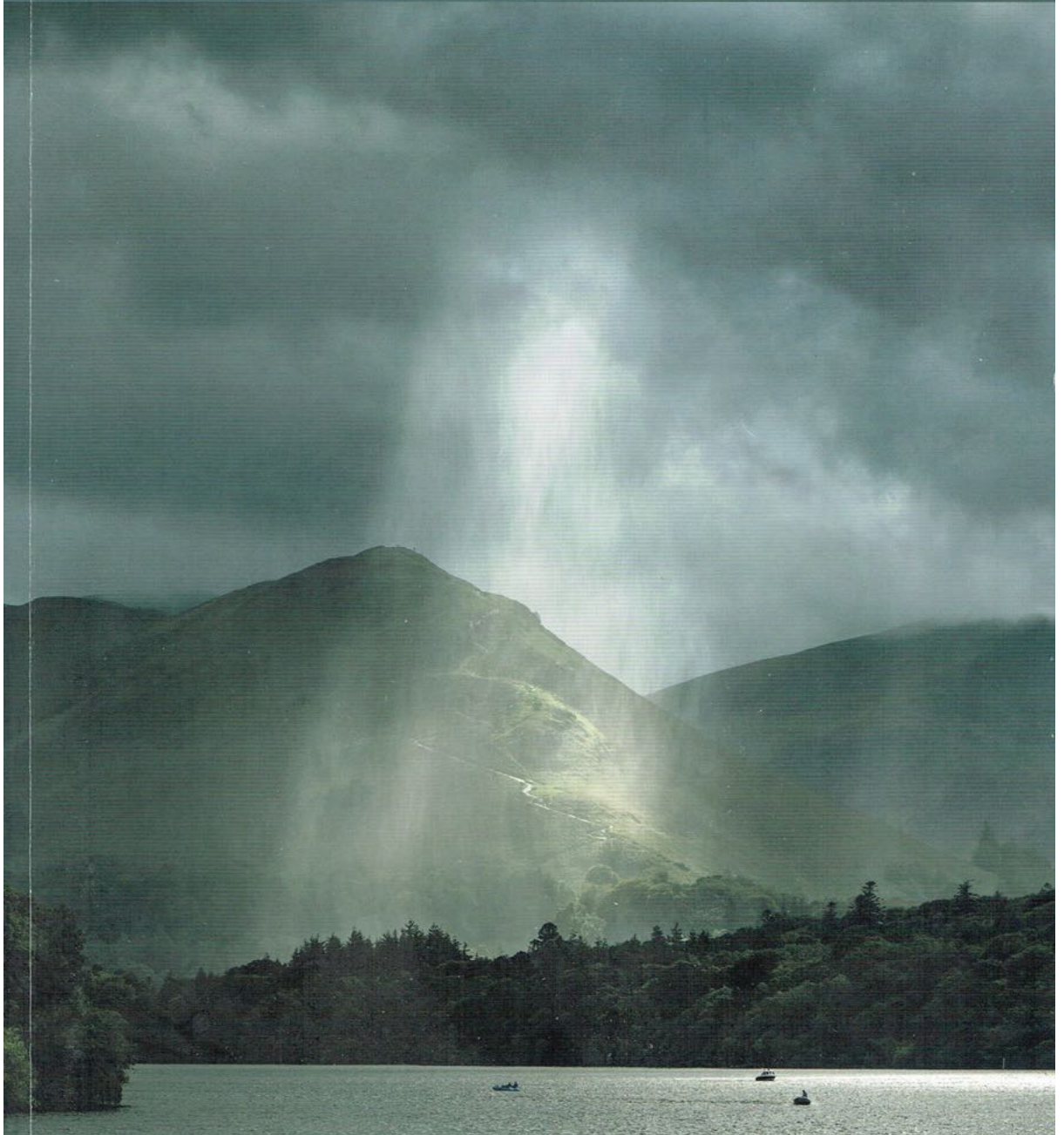


THE KENSINGTON
SOCIETY
2020–2021



KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea was created in 1965 with the merger of the two boroughs. 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.



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Steve Ullathorne © the artist
– for more about him
see page 13

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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY 2020–2021

95 Highlever Road, London W10 6PW
www.kensingtonsociety.org

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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Jennie Kettlewell: page 84. South Kensington Estates: page 48. Barry Minday: page 83. Heritage Alliance: page 51.

Andrea Level: page 82. Historic Royal Palaces : page 52. RBKC: page 57 (top). Punch: page 59 (bottom).

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President's Report

Nick Ross

FORGIVE ME FOR RETURNING to a theme of previous years about the risks of undermining valiant work in conservation by exaggerated claims and unreasonable objections. After a year marked by growing intolerance – with Trump fanatics storming the Capitol, antivaxxers insulting NHS staff, Twitter trolls sneering and threatening violence, narrow-mindedness at universities with would-be speakers no-platformed for not sharing consensual views – I hardly think the problems have gone away. We need to conserve not just the built environment but the civility of our shared experience.

After all, one of the great virtues of the Kensington Society is the way its committee seeks to engage with developers and the council and to negotiate rather than just negate. Newcombe House in Notting Hill is a good example.

Appalled by the scale of the proposal the KS nonetheless took a line that was realistic – the scheme was almost certain to win approval, and, finally, it did - and thereby achieved a whole range of concessions. What struck me was the vehemence of those who opposed the scheme, and the anger expressed by some of them at the Society for taking a more moderate approach.

That anger, or at least a dearth of graciousness, happens far too often in planning. A trawl through public responses to applications shows a dispiriting lack of empathy or desire to compromise and, worse, occasionally a lack of simple good manners. It is as though development prompts a sort of road rage, and indeed perhaps that is not a bad analogy. It is hard to imagine that those who hoot or make rude gestures when sitting in their vehicles would be so vulgar on a crowded pavement. Remoteness lends disenchantment. And so it is with letters or online comments of objection. The word ‘developers’ is often used pejoratively, sometimes even against the family next door, as though property-owners who want to make the most of their assets are invaders bent on vandalising our own homes and communities.

This is a theme that has struck me again and again since becoming president. As I have said before, it not unknown for people to oppose proposals which largely mirror features from which they benefit themselves; or, having fervently opposed a basement or extension, quietly follow suit. It is rare for opponents of a scheme to consider the financial constraints and other challenges faced by the applicants; nor how much pain, delay and financial burdens their opposition is inflicting on the other side.

Things are not helped by our quintessentially English adversarial approach to



planning consultations. The very terminology of ‘support’ or ‘oppose’, disparages nuance and perhaps should be dropped in favour of the neutral heading ‘comments’. And, as I have suggested before, applicants should always consult properly with neighbours before they submit their proposals to the council. If not, if we feel ambushed, we are much more likely to lash out. Sadly there are good reasons for them to keep their powder dry. They aren’t required to ask our opinions first, and since the planning process already causes many months and often thousands of pounds-worth of delay, they don’t want to prolong things further. Above all, they fear stoking the hornet’s nest and encouraging objections.

So instead of a virtuous circle we too often have a vicious and bad-tempered one.

But maybe I shouldn’t worry. Perhaps it was ever thus. Writing in the early 1900s in her *Highways and Byways in London*, Mrs E T Cook makes observations which for some will still resonate today.

It is a well-known fact that nothing new can be raised in the city without drawing upon itself the scathing remarks and innuendoes of a too-critical and generally ignorant public. Londoners are proverbially ungrateful; they also think it fine, and superior, to cavil at their works of art. Mr Gilbert designs a Florentine fountain in Piccadilly Circus; the very bus conductors fling their handful of mud at it as they pass; the new Gothic Law Courts arise in the Strand, to be freely criticised, and vituperated not only by every budding architect, but also by every ‘man in the street’; the City Powers erect a Temple Bar Memorial Griffin, and nothing less than their heads, it is felt, should with propriety go to adorn the monument of their crass Philistinism. A scheme is proposed for an addition to the cloisters of Westminster, and a public-spirited citizen offers to carry it out at his own expense: he is promptly fallen foul of, as a desecrator of the shade of Edward the Confessor, by the united forces of the press.

The reality is that anyone who has a passion for the city must surely enjoy it for what it is, not the grand pretensions of Napoleon or the inhumane fantasies of Ceausescu but a muddle, the jostling of different needs and styles and the layering of different textures and ideas one upon another. As Simon Thurley told us in his wonderful address to the AGM two years ago, many of the buildings we now seek to preserve were not masterpieces of their time but, ‘the product of the raw capitalism of the metropolis’. Age lends enchantment so that even deliberately intimidating citadels like the Tower of London are now revered. The London Eye which braved vocal opposition and was only permitted as a temporary eyesore is now regarded as iconic; even the hated Royal Festival Hall is now Grade I listed. And dare I say it? With only extremely rare exceptions, all the basements and double basements whose construction once provoked uproar now sit invisibly doing service and no one in their right minds would fill them in. Who knows, maybe one day even cycle lanes will be almost universally applauded.

They, incidentally, are another good example. I was appalled when suddenly chicanes appeared, corralling traffic, frustrating drivers, creating tailbacks and aggravating pollution. But when I talked to my children, who more often cycle, and looked up the data, there was – and is – plainly a lot of good evidence in their favour. The lesson is not to get angry after the event but to get upstream and get engaged.

Being less confrontational does not weaken the resolve of the Kensington Society to strive for better ideas and more elegant architecture or pitch in against the drabness and sometimes downright ugliness of so many proposals. Our members deserve to hear both sides of each story, and applicants deserve to know that we try to see things from their point of view – even if we finish up opposing them.

RBKC is strictly hemmed in by planning regulation, but if you can think of a way of making the process less adversarial and more constructive, do please make suggestions. We have all been through a difficult past twelve months, but one positive that has emerged is that taking a more collaborative approach with officials and with councillors has paid dividends. It yields more than defaulting to a state of opposition.

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY AND LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS NEED HELP.

We need people with an interest in the borough, plus knowledge of such subjects as architecture, accounting, conferences, social conditions, or environmental issues. Please participate: make suggestions, recruit people, join in the work of local associations and the society itself. We and the associations also need help with administration, so please come and help, and recruit more people to join.



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AGM

LAST YEAR WE were forced to cancel the planned AGM when the first lockdown hit us. We had hoped to have it in the autumn and even reserved the Great Hall. We did discuss with the Charity Commission the problems of not holding an AGM and formally approving the accounts. Even at that early time they realised we were all in a different and difficult position and allowed relaxation of procedures. Then, as we all know, the pandemic continued and finally at the end of the year wonderful news of the approval of vaccines. Many of us have had our first jab and await the second.

And now for the big news: we are holding our AGM this year on Monday 7th June. It will be a virtual one without the fun of drinks afterwards in the mayor's parlour, but it will allow us to tell you more about the pressures and accomplishments we have addressed at the Kensington Society, review, and, hopefully approve the accounts and answer any questions about this past year and our future plans.

Please see the enclosed invitation for your joining instructions.

Stay safe and we shall see you all soon.

Amanda Frame, Chairman





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Chairman's Report

Amanda Frame

“When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.”

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

THIS YEAR WAS, AND continues to be, the time to hang on. Kensington Society has done just that. This time last year we were finalising the annual and just about to send the copy to the printer. A bit of a panic as we adjusted a few of the announcements of upcoming events at the museums, and we even changed the cover from a lovely portrait of man holding a dog in black with a very black background. We selected a painting of a group gathering with glasses of wine. Little did we know how rare such events would become.



It took us a while to realise that life was changing and following the first lockdown all would not be better. Many of us, of the magic age, went inside, closed our doors and did not come out for quite some time. Here we sit still. As we all became accustomed to Teams, Zoom, masks and distancing, the government moved into high gear and not just on the nightly COVID-19 news. Michael Bach and the planning committee will go into the detail of the changes, mad proposals and how the Kensington Society responded. We have been highly active reviewing the consultation from the ridiculous changes both proposed and imposed by the government. I am talking about planning changes which will redefine this nation for ever. Within RBKC the number of major applications has been constant and unfortunately all genuinely concerning. The planning pages of this report will go into detail. We do feel a responsibility to record these developments as a record for the future.

The government's proposals presented this year could, and may still, destroy Kensington and what we love about our borough. The first shock was the White Paper that changed our possible attainable housing targets of 448 to a totally unattainable “housing requirement” of 3,285 annually. The exceptionally large and major development in Kensal will struggle to achieve even one year's worth of that amount of housing. We just do not have undeveloped land for such an increase in housing. The only way would be wholesale demolition of vast areas of Kensington & Chelsea. Reality hit slowly after substantial opposition and the number of housing requirements were adjusted back to 448 but a big warning, it is a temporary reduction. That massive number may come back again, please read Michael's article on new “housing requirements”.

Then there was the change in the use classes order. It may seem an acceptable change but to say a pharmacy or another much needed local shop is the same as a fast food take away, who can pay a higher rent, is wrong. We shall in a short time lose all our essential shops, particularly in our local neighbourhood centres. The result is

any premises, except a pub, can change use without planning permission. This follows having no planning controls over the buildings that change use. We have already seen problems when a retail unit becomes a restaurant. There are no requirements to have approval for the changes internally including the mechanical systems for the kitchen. It is a bit of the wild west. See further in the planning pages.

Along with the use class merger into Use Class E came a proposal to allow any Use Class E unit to change to housing without planning permission. Imagine no local shops, just odd houses along our local shopping streets. Again this change from a shop or a dentist or even a restaurant could become a house without any planning controls.

The government stands by Building Control, but having privatised it years ago there are really no policy controls without planning and no means for enforcement.

One last point about the government. MPs keep demanding “build, build, build” and unfortunately the effect on Kensington is dire. The Kensington Forum redevelopment is more than double the size of the monstrous existing building; the proposed Wellcome Trust building on Pelham Street is 116% larger; the first building proposed by the newly formed Earls Court Development Group is 2.5% larger than the permitted building from the master plan; the TfL/Native Land application for the redevelopment of the station is massive with the properly proportioned Bullnose building erupting into a gasometer. When the Wellcome Trust was challenged about why it was acceptable to change one of their properties which is an HMO into studio flats for market rental, aka Airbnb, we were told they had a fiduciary requirement to make money. Where money and profit have always been a key driver in London’s development, we fear where that drive is now taking us.

The planning department has produced several Supplemental Planning Documents last year and most recently the extensive paper on greening. The society has commented and we look forward to the result. The planners are also working on the new Local Plan.

This brings up an interesting point. Planning is more than just about planning permission to add an extension or change your windows from single to double glazing. It is about planning positively for the future that we want. Included in planning are controls of the environment, landscaping, drainage, noise, enforcement against improper building and so much more. If permitted development continues to be the direction of travel, we will be rudderless and we shall miss our planners who are our last line of defence against aggressive forces of development and sadly, in many cases, mere ignorance.

We have worked extremely hard to establish a relationship with the planners in a more positive way than in the past and it is not only producing results; it is very enjoyable. There is true dialogue, disagreements which are discussed and agreement or, at least, understanding found. This has been with both the planners and with councillors. Odd that Teams or Zoom have brought us together and allows us to have a productive meeting in one hour and not have to take the time to drive to the meeting.

Please do read the planning reports and our affiliates’ reports. There is so much going on in this borough and the Kensington Society is in the middle of it. Do ask your friends and neighbours to join.

Amanda Frame, Chairman, March 2021

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Local artist: Steve Ullathorne

by Michael Becket

IT ALWAYS PAYS TO have a second string to your bow. So when one career becomes tedious or unremunerative, you can switch to fun and profit. Steve Ullathorne did just that. During his 15-year acting career “I had always been taking photographs of the other actors”, and they liked the results. So much so that in 2003 Barry Cryer, planning to do a show at the Edinburgh Festival with Neil Innes, asked for photographs which could be turned to posters. By the following year he was producing 35 posters for various appearances.

A new career was born. “Much to the delight of my agent I stopped being an actor.” He already had a stock of existing pictures and now started taking serious portraits of comedians and actors. Actually not always all that serious. Steve knew what his subjects’ job was like and what it involved, which must be a great help in helping them occasionally to relax.

It needs all that experience and friendly charm because “performers hate having their picture taken”, Steve explains. When they are on stage they are performing, they have prepared and rehearsed. “Eddie Izzard looks as if he is making it up as he goes along, but every word, every pause has been prepared”. When Barry Cryer wrote scripts for Tommy Cooper, back came the question “Where are the mistakes?”.

When in front of a camera it is the real self on display, the one carefully overlaid with the persona created and burnished for public appearance. The great photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson said “I cannot take portraits of actors because they pose”. Being asked to stop posing and be themselves makes them ill at ease. It also causes some of them to specify precisely how they want to be portrayed for the public. Joan Rivers laid down “No profiles”. Steve waited until she was not aware and got her in profile, with the lighting carefully showing cheekbones and making her look glamorous. “Profiles” was the response on being shown the photograph.

It is an example of the many pictures being what might normally be the mistakes, the also-rans, the afterthoughts. One of his favourite pictures of Sue Perkins, for instance, is her glancing down and looking very cool. It was taken during a pause in the shooting when she was relaxed and adjusting her glasses and less aware of the camera.

The picture was produced by the twitchy shutter finger, he demonstrates, which is always hovering over the button. He chose to use for much of his work a Nikon Z6 camera because even in silent mode, when there is not so much as a whisper to show the shutter





Zoe Lyons, Paul Merton and Sue Perkins

has fired, it has no lag between the press and exposure, unlike most cameras. That means the twitch can capture that elusive moment, captured by the best photographers.

Having a camera with silent mode is vital because he also takes pictures for theatres during rehearsals and sometimes on film sets. Producing a recurrent click and crunch of a conventional camera shutter would be intolerably distracting or obtrusive. As a result they are banned.

Specialising in, and making his name by photographing comedians and actors – about eighty percent of his work – could be a bit limiting. Talking to the man who works on printing David Bailey’s pictures Steve explained he takes portraits. “That’s good” was the response. “Of comedians.” The man looked up “You will always be poor”, he forecast.

He does however take other pictures as well. Another aspect of Steve’s work is landscapes. He goes back to his childhood home in the Lake District where his father had a bookshop in Keswick. Clearly also an influence on his son as he had the serious, large Hasselblad camera and took pictures of visiting authors with the prints displayed around the premises.

There Steve photographs the stunning scenery. His landscapes are perverse. It is well known landscape pictures are wide, horizontal depictions of a scene – the orientation of the picture is even called landscape, as opposed to the vertical, called portrait. His pictures are all square. It is well known, and all the guidance emphasises, one uses a wide-angle lens to capture the spectacular vista. He uses a telephoto lens to depict a narrow, restricted aspect of the scene. As a result, “you look at the pictures produced by most photographers and they are all the same”, the familiar romantic cliché. Steve’s pictures of angry skies over a slice of the view are different – drawing attention to the dramatic impact.

The third major interest at the moment is manipulation of images of houses with a blue plaque. The photograph of the house is just the backdrop for overlaying it with carefully tailored additions to depict aspects of that inhabitant. Alfred Hitchcock’s former residence has flocks of restless birds imposed on it fluttering aggressively. T S



Michael Palin



Joan Rivers



Milton Jones

Eliot's former home seems to have herds of cats trying to climb through the windows. Agatha Christie's home has swathes of yellow "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS" ribbons in front.

Not everybody gets the jokes. George Grossmith's house appears to have a sign in the window "Nobody's home, please come in". Steve planted a lamp-post outside Samuel Becket's home with a sign on it saying "NO WAITING". Both seem to have eluded many people. Before the pandemic lockdown he had 28 examples of this offbeat humour. By the end of Covid he had 99. More to come. On Saturday mornings he has a barrow in Portobello Road – not far from his home in north Kensington – where he sells his prints

They clearly take time: working with Photoshop, finding the right add-in images, working on them to look right and match the initial photograph, and fitting them into the picture so well it looks as if it shows what really was there.

He has fun doing it, but then he is used to it. A normal portrait session takes about two hours of photography. That is followed by about the same time downloading the pictures and sorting through the hundreds of images, ignoring about a third of them from the start, to find the ones looking suitable for attention. Then it takes at least two full days to retouch, manipulate and enhance the best ones.

That is still his main job, whether commissioned by the people themselves, by magazines or by the producers of performances. The range of people is constantly being expanded by finding performers when they first set out on the intimidating career. He photographs when the budding performer appears at a comedy competition or a first performance. And they get the results for a much reduced fee because, as Steve knows, they certainly will not have much money.



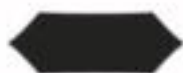
Tom Allen and Susan Calman are examples captured from the start, and still in front of Steve's lens from time to time. Performers "are very loyal" and return for later pictures as they grow and become famous. Perhaps he will not be as rich as advertising and clothing photographer Rankin but while new performers keep appearing, and magazines and newspapers use portraits of actors and comedians he has a steady trickle of income. And he really enjoys his second profession.



Terry Jones



Steve Ullathorne



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Local retailer: Steve Drewett

by Michael Becket

PERHAPS IT IS JUST as well Steve Drewett is thinking of retiring this year. The business he has been in for very nearly 51 years seems to be in serious decline. He has the newspaper kiosk outside Earls Court Underground station and, like the police callbox tardis next to his stand, he seems to be sliding into being superfluous.

He started work at 16 in his brother's grocery shop in nearby Kenway Road. Regular customers were a Canadian former ice hockey player and his wife whose father had a trestle table next to Underground station selling newspapers. Back then business was booming. So much so the owner offered the boy to come and join him at the stand for £14 a week. A big increase on the £10 a week Steve's brother was paying – wealth indeed.

So brisk was trade, the pile of papers every morning was higher than a man, it needed five people to keep up with the demand. Steve remembers that just the evening papers sold amounted to about 1,000 a day for the Evening Standard, plus another 400 for the Evening News. That was on top of a much larger range of morning newspapers than is currently available.

Steve joined the business just after Christmas 1970. “It was freezing cold and quite a blizzard. Blimey, I thought, what have I done?” The grocery suddenly seemed rather more inviting. But they were coining it.

The site had the double advantage of being next to the Tube entrance and being just outside a branch of Boots the Chemists. Unfortunately Boots decided not to renew its lease. The new owners of the premises thought a news vendor outside the door was not the image wanted and told them to move on. Fortunately the Evening Standard offered to put up a little shelter at the edge of the pavement. That was later replaced by an improved version provided by Newsweek.

For electricity to the shed one of the shops let them plug into its supply, not even charging for the electricity. Later a cable was installed out of the window of the Underground station dangling across the pavement.

In 2002 RBKC council commissioned Thomas Heatherwick to design a new kiosk, the rather grander premises now on the site dubbed the Paperhouse, and even provided an electricity supply with the kiosk's own meter. There were four such kiosks produced and offered to





other newsagents within the borough but surprisingly enough only one other was taken up, on Sloane Square. The others may still be in the council's storage.

It may look more welcoming but the market has been turning against it, just as it has against the blue police phone box alongside. The police all now have mobile phones, so they adapted by installing a kettle and occasionally stopped there for a brew-up. Even that has now stopped and it stands empty and neglected. Steve still has customers, most of them regulars who stop and have a chat. And that is what he enjoys about the job: being his own boss and the continuous meeting with people.

There are free papers, such the Standard and Metro, other shops are now selling papers, Steve points out, but in any case people are just reading less. The number of papers sold has probably halved in the past four years. That fall has been across the board, with every title.

Steve has supplemented newspapers with other goods "We do souvenirs, water, sweets." Also fizzy drinks, peaked caps, and mugs. Those do help to supplement income from newspapers, except of course when Covid kept tourists away.

So, reaching 68 this year, he has decided it is time to retire. It has been a tiring business – he used to start work at 6 am by which time customers were already queueing for their papers, and leave only at 9 pm, seven days a week. That is a 105 hour week and not many people would put up with it, unless they owned the business. It has however helped to raise three children, and he now has seven grandchildren and even one greatgrandchild.

He is not sure what will happen to his kiosk and the business it contains. After more than 100 years of continuous business on the site – the original trader had one of the first trading licences – the future looks precarious. Perhaps one of his children or nephew or niece will take it over. What they will sell seems uncertain.



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London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

by Peter Eversden

LONDON FORUM CAME INTO being in 1998, the main thrust for its creation being the abolition of the GLC, which had left London, alone among Europe's capital cities, without a democratically elected strategic planning authority. In addition, the Civic Trust was encouraging civic societies to form federations to represent their interests regionally.

That London Forum made its mark as swiftly as it did was, in large measure, due to its energetic founder chairman, Marion Harvey, and its founder president, the eminent architect and planner, Walter Bor, as well as a number of its vice-presidents, including Tony Aldous and Ted Hollamby.

One of London Forum's early successes was a conference, Tale of Two Cities, in which planners from Paris's regional planning authority explained how they worked, in contrast to the vacuum in strategic planning left by the abolition of the GLC. During this period, firm links and cordial relations were established with the advisory body that was meant to fill the gap, the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC).

London Forum campaigned with others for the creation of a strategic authority for London and wrote a manifesto for the incoming mayor. Following the setting up of the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2000, Marion Harvey was appointed to the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone's Policy Commission for the Environment.

London Forum's current chairman, Peter Eversden, notes that relations with the GLA were helped initially by the fact that some LPAC officers held key positions at the GLA.

Despite very much operating on a shoestring, London Forum was effective through its thoroughness and by having a number of professionals on board. These included several transport and town planners belonging to a ginger group called the London Amenity and Transport Association (LATA), – people such as architect, Harley Sherlock, and Judy Hillman, who knew and were known in the relevant corridors of power. LATA later merged with London Forum, bringing with it a useful dowry and changing the name to London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies.

It helped also to have Michael Bach, the civil servant who had written key planning policy guidance notes in government, hovering in the background until he retired: he is now the chairman of London Forum's Planning, Environment and Transport committee.

Peter Eversden took over from Marion Harvey as chairman in 2001, having been a trustee and secretary since 1996. He was awarded an MBE in 2016 for services to community engagement in planning in London, which was a recognition, he said, of the work of the London Forum team and its member societies. Boris Johnson, when Mayor, hosted 200 people from the Forum's civic societies at City Hall to celebrate London Forum's 25th anniversary.

Since becoming a charity in 2012, London Forum has developed its constitution and objects, activities being updated and explained in annual reports, and members kept up to date by news briefs, an Insights publication and events.

A team of trustees and other committee members, mostly nominated by its member



TfL's proposed development at Bollo Lane, Ealing

societies, ensures the Forum is able to cover its main activities.

Michael Bach and Peter Eversden attend and intervene at the public examinations of every GLA London Plan, at assembly committees and at key appeal inquiries. Although the Forum often seems to win the argument, too often it sees the changes it has urged slip from its grasp. There is frustration in seeing each Mayor of London call in planning applications for their own determination and, in all but one occasion, overturn the local authorities' intention to refuse permission.

The forum is also gravely concerned about tall buildings and housing densities: for example, Transport for London's proposals for building on its own land by rail lines on Bollo Lane in Acton, as in the illustration, are of considerable impact locally. Cramming people into sub-standard 'affordable' housing with small rooms, windowless corridors and inadequate play space, in pursuit of housing numbers, could simply be stoking up future social problems. We are in danger of creating the first slums of the 21st century. Yet truly affordable low-cost rent homes, which should comprise half of all new homes, are not being built.

In 2020, London opposed government methodology for the way housing targets should be set and arguing against several of their proposals in the White Paper, Planning for the Future, for infrastructure levy changes and reduction in community engagement in decision making.

Both government and mayoral policies are bringing pressure for densification of the suburbs. Peter Eversden was for seven years a member of Boris Johnson's Outer London Commission and hopes its recommendations will help to make that intensification of land use acceptable and sustainable. It will be guided by a new London Plan to be introduced in 2021, containing many improvements from its draft form, which the Forum had sought

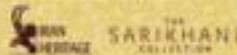
However, the key to good development, delivering what is needed and where, will always depend on the vigilance work and participation in Local Plan-making of London Forum's member societies, the heroes of the civic movement.

<https://www.londonforum.org.uk/aboutus.php>

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Blue Plaques

David Low

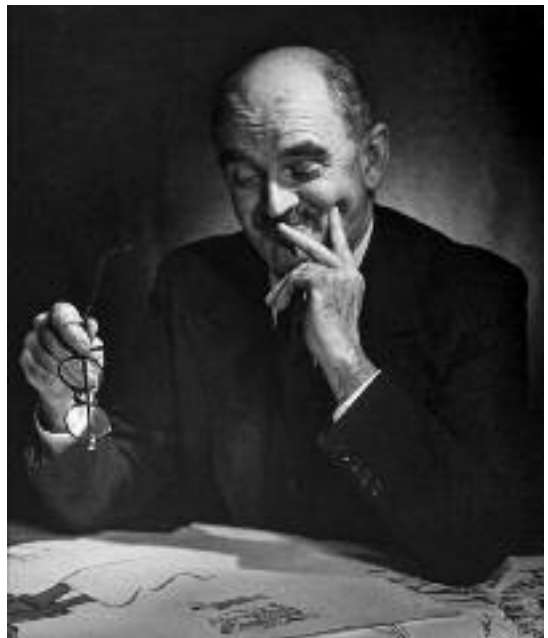
by Michael Becket

NOT MANY PEOPLE CAN claim to have deeply offended Winston Churchill, Hitler, Joseph McCarthy, Lloyd George, Neville Chamberlain and Lord Beaverbrook. Probably the most influential political cartoonist, Sir David Alexander Cecil Low managed that, plus irritating an Australian prime minister and Lord Rothermere.

He was a self-taught New Zealander whose first cartoon was published in 1902 when he was eleven years old. "It represented the local authorities as lunatics because of their reluctance to remove certain trees that obstructed traffic", he explained. "A pile of old copies of copies of Punch I found in the back room of a fatherly second-hand bookseller introduced me to the treasure of Charles Keene, Linley Sambourne, Randolph Caldecott and Dana Gibson. The more I poured over the intricate technical quality of these artists the more difficult did drawing appear. How impossible that one could ever become an artist! But then I came on Phil May, who combined quality with apparent facility. Once having discovered Phil May I never let him go."

Low started as cartoonist with the Canterbury Times. He also published anti-gambling cartoons for the War Cry of the Salvation Army, and illustrations for New Zealand Truth, a weekly newspaper specialising in sensational crime and sex. Still a teenager, Low was appointed regular political cartoonist of the New Zealand Spectator and contributed cartoons to a new socialist newspaper, the Weekly Herald. Then he moved to the Sydney Bulletin and became well known for a 1916 cartoon satirising Billy Hughes, then the prime minister of Australia. Hughes' response was to call Low a "bastard" to his face.

A collection of Low's cartoons of Hughes entitled *The Billy Book*, which he published in 1918, attracted the attention of Henry Cadbury, part-owner of the London Star newspaper. Low had also sent some of his cartoons to the Manchester Guardian. Arnold Bennett was so impressed with one that he wrote in *The New Statesman* that "if the Press-lords of this country had any genuine imagination they would immediately begin to compete for the services of that cartoonist and get him to London on the next steamer." Low was offered a job in England with *The Daily News* and the company's evening paper, *The Star*. Finding He found it difficult to adjust to life in London. "It will take you ten years



to learn the English,” said Will Dyson, the Australian cartoonist on the Daily Herald.

Low also produced cartoons for Punch, Illustrated London News and The Graphic. “I worked an eight-hour day - sometimes ten-hour day and with evenings spent moving around seeing people, it was a busy life. Making a cartoon occupied usually about three full days, two spent in labour and one in removing the appearance of labour.” But “I learned that the methods of Brueghel, Callot, Daumier, Gillray and the other old masters of caricature had been similarly thorough, that Tenniel took two or three days to make a Punch cartoon”.

Lord Beaverbrook first approached David Low to work for the Evening Standard in 1926 but he refused. Beaverbrook tried again with double his current salary and promising complete freedom to express his radical political views. “I wanted precise guarantees about presentation. ‘Dammit, Low’, said Beaverbrook. ‘Do you want to edit the paper, too?’” They differed widely in their politics but were both showmen and colonials made good. The agreement meant Low could not be required to draw to order, but Beaverbrook was not obliged to publish everything he drew. In subsequent years at least forty cartoons were omitted and others were modified.

Low’s cartoons were syndicated to 170 journals worldwide. Time magazine reported: “Cartoonist Low is a unique combination of a student of contemporary politics and a superb draughtsman. A passionately sincere democrat, he is also a hard worker. He begins the day at 8 o’clock, digesting thoroughly the daily papers. Breakfast is a political meeting, with the cartoonist, his wife, and his two young daughters threshing out the news. After breakfast he walks to his roomy, book-lined studio where with much pacing and squirming and pipe-smoking, he struggles to express a complex idea in a few vivid lines and a brief, usually wry, caption.”



Low was appalled when Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor and drew a cartoon of a bonfire outside the League of Nations building, with Hitler saying “It worked at the Reichstag – why not here?” Hitler was furious and Low’s cartoons were immediately banned from Nazi Germany. Mussolini took similar action in Italy. However, the cartoon, which was more attack on the cowardice of the League members, appeared in newspapers all over the world.

In the summer of 1934, Low was almost alone in the popular press in attacking Sir Oswald Moley and his National Union of Fascists. His target included Lord Rothermere owner of the Daily Mail which gave Mosley regular and favourable publicity. He drew a cartoon showing Rothermere as a nanny giving a Nazi salute and saying “we need men of action such as they have in Italy and Germany



Very well. Alone. Promised support from the United States, and planes and pilots from the Dominions, Britain in 1940 determined to fight on alone preparing to resist invasion.

who are leading their countries triumphantly out of the slump... blah... blah... blah... blah.” Hitler and Mussolini were shown hiding records of their government: “Hitler’s Germany: Estimated Unemployed: 6,000,000. Fall in trade under Hitler (9 months) £35,000,000. Burden of taxes up several times over. Wages down 20%.”

Lord Rothermere complained bitterly. Lord Beaverbrook, his friend and business partner, and owner of the *Evening Standard* (Rothermere controlled 49% of the shares), refused to allow the cartoon to be published. Low was forced to make the nanny unrecognisable as Rothermere and to change the name on her dress from the *Daily Mail* to the *Daily Shirt*.

In 1937, Percy Cudlipp, editor of *Evening Standard*, started refusing Low’s cartoons attacking Hitler: “I don’t want to publish anything in the *Evening Standard* which would add to the tension, or inflame tempers any more than they are already inflamed”. Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels told British foreign secretary Lord Halifax British political cartoons, particularly those of Low’s, were damaging Anglo-German relations. The Führer was deeply offended by Low’s cartoons. He asked the British government to have “discussions with the notorious Low” and “bring influence to bear on him” to stop attacking appeasement. Lord Halifax told Low and Lord Beaverbrook he believed European problems, especially eastern European, were nothing to do with Britain.

Low visited the United States to persuade American cartoonists to join his campaign, explaining Mussolini and Hitler present all the opportunities “for very destructive caricature”. He realised that to depict them as tyrants with blood dripping from their fingers only made them seem more important, so showed them as clowns. His principal



A 1939 non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia included partitioning Poland. When Germany invaded Britain and France declared war.

weapon was ridicule, not hate or horror. He believed there was “more stupidity than wickedness in the world”.

Low responded to the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 with “Rendezvous”, showing two unlikely allies congratulating each other over the body of Poland. The Spanish Government made a complaint to the Foreign Office about the cartoon.

Once World War 2 began, Low produced cartoons to inspire Britain at a time when many feared a German victory. During the Blitz Low worked from home, and managed to produce despite being unable to get brushes. He was one of the first cartoonists to publicise details of German extermination camps.

Low, a strong supporter of the Labour Party, had always admired Winston Churchill as a war leader but became more critical of him as the war neared its end and began to highlight divisions in the coalition government. Cartoons portrayed Churchill as “Micawber” who was not fully committed to the development of the Welfare State.

He was delighted when Attlee had a convincing victory and strongly supported the creation of the National Health Service. He therefore attacked the British Medical Association’s campaign against legislation. But he grew disillusioned by Attlee’s cautious leadership, and showed him holding back a march of Labour Party members.

Low’s support of the Labour government caused problems with Lord Beaverbrook and, after complaining about censorship, he left the Evening Standard in 1949. He joined the Daily Herald, a mass circulation working-class paper. One cartoon compared Joseph McCarthy with Stalin. But as Low pointed out, “at least the US conducted its witch hunts in public”.

In 1952 Low moved to the Manchester Guardian where he became the newspaper’s first staff cartoonist. He had refused a knighthood during the war to retain his independence, but finally accepted the honour in 1962. He died on 19 September 1963.

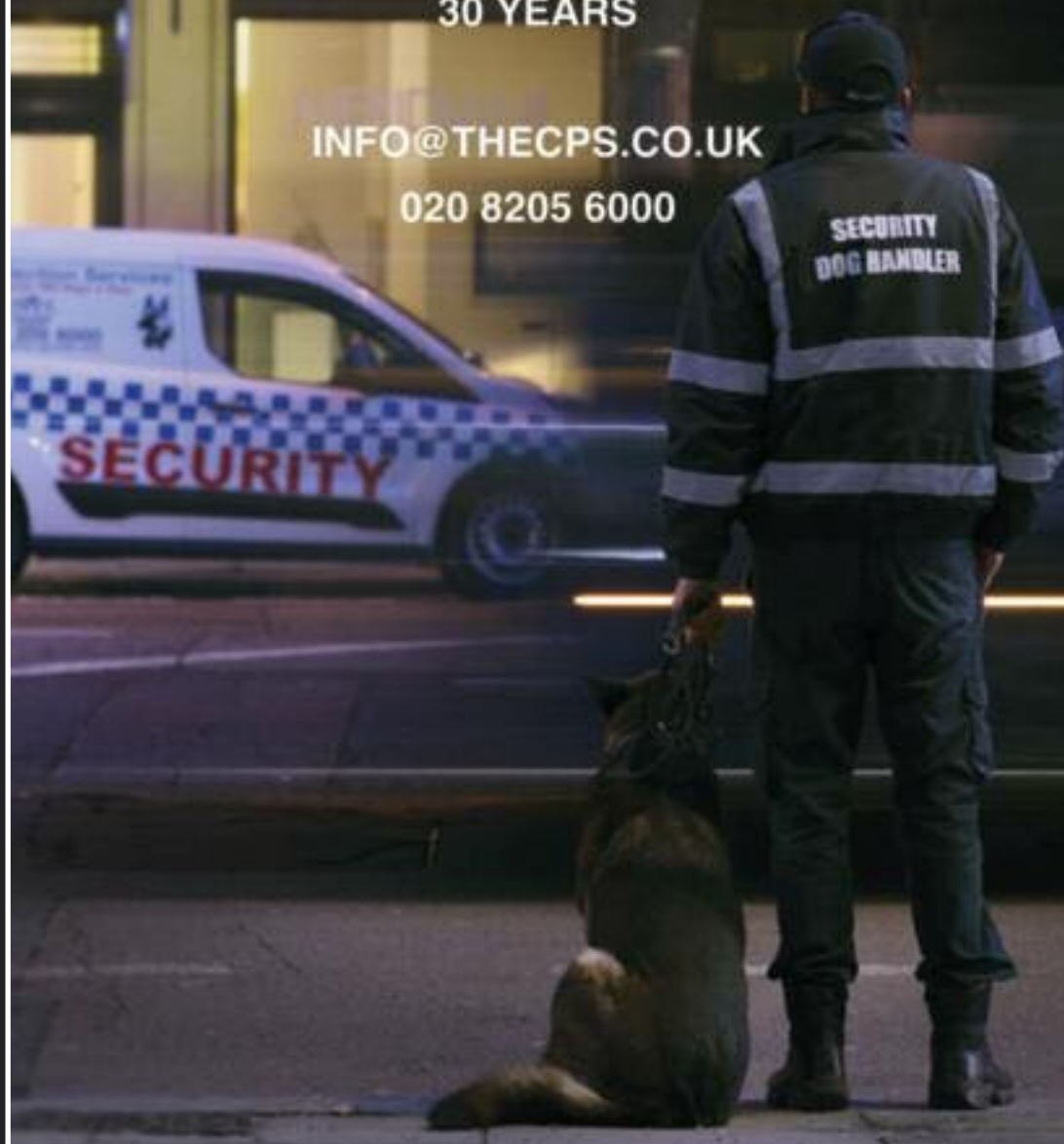
Images supplied by the British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent: David Low, Evening Standard, 8 June 1940; and Evening Standard, 20 September 1939



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HERITAGE
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FOLK BY THE OAK

Illustrations © Jackie Morris 2019



Octavia Hill 1838-1912

by Michael Becket

OCTAVIA HILL IS A classic example of Victorian application and determination to rise above circumstances to major achievement. From poverty she became one of the 19thC's foremost social reformers and organisers of philanthropy. Her father's bankruptcy and mental collapse when she was two left the family poor in their cottage in the village of Finchley and she did not even get a school education. Instead at the age of 13 she was apprenticed by a cooperative guild to a glass painter. A year later the guild expanded into toy-making by Ragged School children, and she was put in charge of the workroom. In her spare time she took work as a copyist for John Ruskin in Dulwich Art Gallery and the National Gallery.

She inherited her grandfather's commitment to alleviating poverty – he had campaigned on child labour in the mines and housing conditions of the urban poor. She was deeply moved by Henry Mayhew's pioneering investigations into conditions suffered by the poor in London, and by the insanitary 'rookeries' with families ten to a room where her child charges lived. Degrading surroundings led to indolence and lethargy and "paralysed individual effort", she said.

Parliament and reformers had passed legislation to improve housing but Octavia Hill could see that it had failed the poorest. Landlords ignored the requirements, and tenants were too ignorant and oppressed to better themselves. Hill opposed the utilitarian municipal tenement blocks, rejected working-class suburban cottage estates, and in the absence of alternatives decided to become a landlord herself.

John Ruskin in 1864 at her instigation provided £750 (equivalent to £66,000 now) out of an inheritance from his father to buy three cottages in Paradise Place (now Garbutt Place), Marylebone. Their landlords had packed several families into the tiny, insanitary dwellings "in a dreadful state of dirt and neglect". The aim was to make "lives noble, homes happy and family life good" in this, one of London's notorious slums, known as 'Little Hell'. Ruskin insisted on a 5% return, as incentive for others. Any cash available over the 5% went into improving the properties. Only eighteen months later, after taxes, ground rent and insurance, the interest was paid, and £48 of the capital repaid. The success encouraged her to continue.



Octavia Hill in her forties

In 1866 Ruskin acquired the freehold of five cottages and a larger house for Hill to manage in nearby Freshwater Place (now Homer Street). The Times recorded, “The houses faced a bit of desolate ground occupied by dilapidated cowsheds and manure heaps”. She said “the plaster was dropping from the walls, on one staircase a pail was placed to catch the rain that fell through the roof. All the staircases were perfectly dark; the banisters were gone, having been used as firewood by the tenants.” Water supply was a leaking dirty water butt, so there was often no water. She ensured the houses were cleaned and repaired, and the waste land became a playground with trees being planted.

The houses bought by Ruskin survive on the east side of this street and are marked by an English Heritage blue plaque. Recently, one of these three-bedroom houses was rented at about £3,012 a month.

In 1869 eleven more houses were bought. Her friends bought and placed under her care more houses, so by 1874 she had 15 housing schemes with around 3,000 tenants and by 1877 she announced “I have 3,500 tenants and £30,000 or £40,000 worth of money under my continuous charge”. That is nearly £3.3m in current money. In 1889 Hill commissioned a purpose-built block of homes, Gable Cottages in Sudrey Street, Southwark. This was in contradiction of model dwelling schemes by the London County Council – founded that year – being beyond the reach of many lowest paid workers. Now ‘affordable’ rents are defined as 80% of current inflated market rates.

In 1884 she got the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to hand over management of housing estates in several poor areas of south London. The Horace Street Trust, founded by Hill, became a model for housing associations and developed into the present Octavia Housing which owns several of the homes, including Gable Cottages.

Also in contrast with bureaucratic and impersonal council housing management, she and her exclusively female housing managers, while collecting the weekly rent, checked every detail of the premises and got to know the tenants, acting as early social workers.



57 Wornington Road, 28 extra-care flats

Hill expected rent collectors and administrative staff to improve tenants' lives. She was keen to educate tenants in budget management and provided laundries and meeting halls. Her justification for the bossiness was "You cannot deal with the people and their houses separately. The principle on which the whole work rests is that the inhabitants and their surroundings must be improved together." Tenants should aim for "dignified independence...in the sense that they are really paying for their own home". She ensured the properties were well-maintained and brought food when illness prevented work, but insisted on the respectability of net curtains. Rent arrears led to rapid eviction, and bad debts were minimal. An American admirer described her as ruling "with an iron sceptre twined with roses."

Holidays and festivals, such as May Day, were marked with child outings to the countryside, and housing included halls, decorated by artist friends, for concerts and theatre performances. Spaces were created for playgrounds. She believed they needed "Places to sit in, places to play in, places to stroll in, and places to spend a day in."

That led to campaigns for central London burial-grounds as public open space and for rights of access to common land. Hill fought against development on green land, failing to save Swiss Cottage Fields but winning her battle for Parliament Hill Fields and Hampstead Heath. She was the first to use the term Green Belt for protected rural areas surrounding London. Later she campaigned elsewhere in the country, including the Lake District. In 1893, Hill was one of the trio in the offices of the Commons Preservation Society who launched the National Trust.

By employing women, Hill had created



200 Kensal Road, 28 extra-care flats



120 Campden Hill Road, 11 affordable rented flats for families



**100 Princedale Road, three-bedroom house
Passivhaus refurbishment**

a profession, almost the only one open to capable middle- and upper-class women. Women who had trained under Hill formed the Association of Women Housing Workers in 1916, renamed the Society of Housing Managers in 1948. After merging with the Institute of Housing Managers in 1965, it became the Chartered Institute of Housing in 1994. Yet she opposed female suffrage on the grounds that women were unfit to determine matters of international policy, defence, and national budgets. She also believed that provision of social services and old-age pensions by the government did more harm than good, sapping people's self-reliance. "Where a man persistently refuses to exert himself, external help is worse than useless." She was an outspoken critic of old-age pensions and the principles of "outdoor relief" or poor relief as operated by various Poor Law Boards because it did not encourage recipients to work, and was therefore "a profligate use of public funds."

In 1877, she had collapsed from eleven years of unremitting work, death of a close friend, and the break-up of an engagement. In addition Ruskin in a bout of mental instability, launched a fierce attack on her in a *Fors Clavigera* pamphlet because Hill opposed his plans to sell his properties to the St George's Company, which she regarded as financially dubious. After some months abroad and a prolonged rest, she returned to work. Her family found a companion, Harriot Yorke, who remained at her side until her death, relieving her of much petty detail and stress.

Hill's name is perpetuated in the Octavia Hill Association in Philadelphia, a small property company founded in 1896 to provide affordable housing to low and middle-income city residents. Some early council housing in Kensington and Camberwell were run on her lines, buying and refurbishing working class houses without evictions or demolitions. Her ideas were also copied on the Continent and the United States of America. Her assistant, Maud Jeffery, went on to run London housing estates on Hill's principles for the Commissioners of Crown Lands.

The Charity Organisation Society (to help the 'deserving' poor) of which she was a founder member continued to develop social work as a profession during the 20thC and is now called Family Action.

When John Singer Sargent's portrait of her was presented by fellow-workers in 1898, Hill said, "When I am gone, I hope my friends will not try to carry out any special system, or to follow blindly in the track which I have trodden. New circumstances require various efforts, and it is the spirit, not the dead form, that should be perpetuated." Hill wished to bequeath "greater ideals, greater hope and patience to realise both".

She died from cancer on 13 August 1912 at her home in Marylebone, at the age of 73.

Octavia continues to provide refurbish and develop affordable housing. 100 Princedale Road is an award winning Passivhaus refurbishment, providing the tenants with a massive reduction on heating costs.





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Fight the Towers

by Sir Simon Jenkins

SHOULD NOTTING HILL BECOME London's Catalonia? Is it time to rouse rebellion from the Hillgate hussars and the Ladbroke lancers – as foretold by G K Chesterton in his *Napoleon of Notting Hill*. For Notting Hill has a real fight on its hands, as have a score of similar hubs across the capital.

Kensington deserves to be known as capital of the British conservation areas, a concept which has done more than anything to preserve London's liveability and thus prosperity over years of breakneck development. Their progenitor in the 1950s, Duncan Sandys, wanted planning to respect not just individual buildings but the visual character of areas, rich and poor. Thus there are 62 areas in Lambeth, 56 in Westminster and 58 in Tower Hamlets. Kensington has 38 conservation areas, covering 70 per cent of the borough.

These areas have protected the appearance of Chelsea, Notting Hill and Bayswater, as well as Brick Lane, Peckham and New Cross. They have renewed public and private housing without the disruption, clearances and ugly estates of cities elsewhere. They have guarded the city on countless occasions when threatened with destruction.

Not any more. London's conservation areas have collapsed into absurdity. Those who live in these areas are barely allowed to repaint a front door without pernicky permission. If they try to overlook their neighbours with a new bathroom window, forget it. But if they want to overlook them with a 20-storey tower for Hong Kong investors they will have no problem. Many London planners are eager for a job with the developer.

Notting Hill's 'downtown' has long been dominated by two squalid Sixties blocks that would discredit a Soviet suburb. The district's now ageing fashionistas have moved north to (conserved) Westbourne Grove, but Notting Hill's main road fronts a neighbourhood of cottagey streets and squares of great charm. A developer now wants to replace the southern block with an 18-storey luxury tower of egregious ugliness. It would loom over the entire area — a poke in the eye of residents from Bayswater to Holland Park and Ladbroke Grove. Its intrusion brazenly offends the very idea of a conservation area.

The worry is that Kensington and Chelsea council is still so broken-backed by the Grenfell tower disaster that it has given up on these fights. When a developer promises "more housing", what can it say, especially when a handful of "affordable units" are tossed in as a bribe? The term affordable means "20 per cent cheaper than astronomical" and has nothing to do with genuine social housing for the poor that Kensington badly needs. Housing to Kensington council means gated communities of empty luxury properties, such as the ghostly development now to be found off Campden Hill and Kensington Road. This is the only borough in south-east England that is actually losing population.

Planning conservation areas is not about uses or occupants, which change over time. It is about massing and intruding, and is for all time. That is why a Paddington developer should not be able to smash up the Praed Street conservation area, as it has done, demolishing the old baroque sorting office, so as to erect an obscene 19-storey glass cube – in return for a new entrance to the station. Conservation is not about these deals.

Westminster's decision to abandon its conservation areas says that, if the money is good, conservation does not matter. It is sad that this comes from a council whose wealth has, for half a century, been built on meticulous respect for its architectural environment, mostly under the leadership of the late Sir Simon Milton, much-missed.

The Paddington decision was inexplicably approved by the then “anti-communities” secretary Sajid Javid. Without so much as giving a reason, he signalled his de facto undermining of the 1957 conservation-area concept, which as minister he should have been upholding. But it is wrong that ministers should have to intervene to protect Londoners from their planners. The planners are supposed to be the protectors.

Cases such as Notting Hill and Paddington can be replicated across the capital. A “landmark 40-storey tower with grey, silver and bronze-coloured metal cladding” is being proposed to soar over the conservation area south of the Old Kent Road at Burgess Park. Another of 32 storeys is proposed as a “gateway” to Lewisham. Another is to loom over Acton. My beloved Camden is under siege on all sides.

I wonder why the Notting Hill developer stopped at 18 storeys — unless someone told him he could overlook anyone's bedroom window but not Prince William's in Kensington Palace. In every case I have come across, the developer promises “much-needed homes for Londoners”, and then flogs them in Malaysia.

London is the only city in Europe with no control over the appearance of its horizon. You can build any height you want. The mayoralties of Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson left a skyline that draws gasps of horror from every foreign visitor I show round. The visual rape of the Thames continues apace, with a monster south of Blackfriars Bridge, bulging in its middle like an anaconda swallowing a horse, to maximise lettable floor area. None of these towers adds to London's residential stock. Like the horror of modern Nine Elms they are financial laundromats in the sky.

There is no argument that London has exceptionally low housing densities, both in persons per room and in houses per acre. But that should mean incentives to downsizing, by slashing stamp duty and ramping up council tax. It should encourage renting. It should also mean extra space, without Londoners having to sprawl over the green belt and using time and energy getting to work. There is nothing wrong in replicating the high densities of the Victorian streets of Pimlico and Wapping, or in developing the myriad backlands and mews that occupy much of London's land area. Empty towers are nothing to do with the case.

If Londoners are not to be consulted on the overall appearance of their city, they can at least wax angry over local outrages. Notting Hill needs its Napoleons, and Paddington its bears.

An earlier version of this appeared in the Evening Standard



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managing director of South Kensington estates

FROM THE LATE 1600s the land around South Kensington was owned by two estates, Smith's Charity Trust, and the Thurloe Family. Smith's Charity owned 85 acres near the village of Brompton, land which we now know as the Egertons, the Pelhams, and Onslow Gardens. The Thurloe Family owned land which extended west past Brompton and included present day Thurloe and Alexander Squares. The end of the Napoleonic War in 1815 saw a period of unprecedented housing development. It was during this period that John Alexander, an indirect descendent of the Thurloe family, responded to the demand for housing by developing the uniform squares and terraces which characterise South Kensington today.

As one of the oldest and larger landlords in South Kensington, we see our role to preserve and improve the area for the long term. We want to balance the needs of residents, visitors, businesses and students; it is this variety that adds to the contextual



vibrancy. Our long-term presence and the extent of our ownership gives us an element of control which we can use to benefit the area as a whole. This is not necessarily altruistic – it is in our interest to take a long-term view in order to add value to our assets. For example, everyone wants a safe and clean and secure area with good amenities, and everyone wants to be associated with a place they can be proud of. In the majority of cases all the local stakeholders’ needs and objectives are aligned. The conflict comes when the balance moves too much towards any particular group.

The mix between retail and food use in our units can be contentious. The majority of Exhibition Road users are visitors looking for food and that is what creates value for us – this has driven a change from retail use in the last few years. However, we do not want an area that is just food based – when you are managing an estate you are trying to maintain a balance of uses. In Brompton, for example we have reduced restaurant use and moved towards retail and design. Over the last five years we have increased retail in the area and we will continue to manage that balance. With the change in planning use classes, which allows retail to become food outlets, we could turn everything into a restaurant – but that is not our intention.

We can learn from what other estates have achieved to create areas with an identity. For example, through our Cromwell Place development (an exhibition and office space for the arts) we want to attract more art and design related businesses to South Kensington. It is not something a conventional developer would have done but it brings something to the area that will increase value in the long term. It underscores our long-term commitment to South Kensington as a cultural centre as well as diversifying from office and residential space. We also sponsor the Brompton hub of the London Design Festival each year, with exhibitions and talks to create an environment where design-related retail will be successful. This is to make our section of Brompton Road a little different from other parts of London, to develop a brand for the area which is more enduring.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented major challenges for London landlords like SKE which have a significant number of retail and hospitality properties. The government-sanctioned closures of restaurants, non-essential businesses and the cultural institutions around South Kensington has resulted in many business owners being unable to meet their rental payments. This has been particularly difficult for SKE as many of our retail units are small independent businesses rather than large chains.

We have worked with our customers to devise individual solutions to their financial



Thurloe Street

challenges. Most of them faced a severe reduction in revenues. We have given deferred rents and rent concession, favouring small, independent businesses. We are pleased to say that none of our customers have gone into administration.

In the short term the pandemic will make us a little more cautious. We are going to have to protect our income. It is very difficult to rent units at the moment, so we may have to make decisions we would not have made before coronavirus hit us. As we come out of the pandemic we will be looking for businesses that are less vulnerable to online competition. We will continue to move towards showroom retail which will be less impacted by online shopping, and we will favour brands that offer a retail experience. For example, one of our recent lettings intends to exhibit art alongside more conventional household items. We will also change our model for letting traditional office space. We think that one of the effects of the pandemic may be a demand for smaller, high-tech, connected office space closer to people's homes. In addition, we will target more of our office space towards medical and wellbeing services – a sector of the economy insulated from this shift in consumer demand.

We see our biggest challenge for the future being climate change. All of us have a responsibility to address our environmental impact – as an Estate this means looking at how our operations and our developments can be made more efficient and less wasteful. We have a bold goal to be carbon neutral by 2030. This is going to be extremely challenging to achieve and will force us to look differently at most of our current practices and processes. But – it is essential that we do so if we intend to have an Estate here in 300 years time.



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Introducing The Heritage Alliance

by Lizzie Glithero-West, Chief Executive of The Heritage Alliance

AN AWARENESS AND ROOTEDNESS in our history gives our areas their unique character, connects us to our past and helps us to thrive.

The breadth of heritage makes it far reaching, but means that the organisations representing heritage interests are manifold and the sector can, without a unifying entity, struggle to speak with one voice.

Heritage is also ephemeral and can seamlessly integrate with other elements of life and society making it easy to overlook. The Heritage Alliance was created in 2002, originally named Heritage Link, to unify and strengthen the voice of the independent heritage sector. It now has over 150 members, across the spectrum of heritage, from custodians of traditional built heritage, like the *National Trust* and *Historic Houses*, to smaller charities, such as *Historic Pools of Britain*, *Razana Afrika* and *Aviation Heritage UK*. Our members represent visitors, owners, volunteers, professional practitioners, museums, funders and academics and between them over 7 million volunteers, trustees, members and staff. It's been a huge privilege to serve as CEO in this extraordinary organisation for the last four years.

The core work of the alliance is to be a vehicle for heritage advocacy. To us, advocacy means effectively communicating to government the value of heritage and its ability to solve a host of public policy problems, the need to protect, conserve and enhance heritage in all its forms, and the ability of our sector to make a contribution to contemporary society. We do this through regular lobbying, responding to government consultations, making parliamentary representations and frequently meeting key contacts in government. We also run several Advocacy Groups and Working Groups, to encourage conversation between our members, ensuring that the sector speaks strongly to the government on the topics that collectively matter to us most.

The alliance also helps connections and communications between organisations and supports them. We host two annual public events, Heritage Debate and Heritage Day, which bring the sector together to discuss and debate key issues; previous debates have explored Young People in Heritage, Reaching for Net Zero?, and Diversifying Heritage in the 21st Century. We have also, this year, supported two projects, *Heritage Digital* and *Rebuilding Heritage*, the former of which seeks to build the online confidence of the sector, while the second aims to support heritage in bouncing back from what was a difficult year with the disruption caused by Covid-19.

As well as reacting to government initiatives, and supporting the sector to grow, the alliance has also published a series of reports which demonstrate the benefits heritage can provide in areas where previously it might have been overlooked. Recognition of heritage as a positive economic and social driver has never been more important than now, in the face of globalisation, political turbulence and a global pandemic. Heritage supports social

cohesion, it gives us places to belong, learn and grow, it contributes significantly, directly and indirectly, to our economy and our tourism offering, and it is good for our health. Funding for heritage, rather than being a bail out or subsidy, is an investment.

In September 2019, in the upper warehouse rooms of the Ragged School Museum in Mile End, our *Inspiring Creativity, Heritage & The Creative Industries* report was launched to show the many ways in which heritage inspires the creative industries, to celebrate the breadth and further potential of partnerships between the heritage and creative industries, and to highlight the benefits these partnerships deliver. There would have been no Downton Abbey without Highclere; no Poldark without tin mines. German Rosamund Pilcher fans flock to Cornwall and Japanese tourists to the landscapes of Beatrix Potter, while Liverpool is a standard bearer for music heritage tourism. Kensington has had its fair share of film tourism, not least through *Notting Hill*. Many of the creative productions that we are so proud of as a nation are intrinsically bound up with our heritage, but often this element is taken for granted.

A sense of the breadth of these can be gained from two London examples:

In 2011 the remains of Shakespeare's Curtain Theatre were found by archaeologists in Shoreditch. The preserved remains of the theatre, as excavated and researched by the Museum of London Archaeology Service, will be the focal point of a major new development, called The Stage, which will include a performance area and a new urban



Excavating on the site of Shakespeare's Curtain Theatre



Remembrance day poppies at the Tower of London

park, as well as housing, dining, retail, and office spaces. The area will fuse archaeological research and findings with film making, projection mapping, performance and mixed reality to create a new type of visitor experience (a prime-time Archaeological Experience) and a new way to interpret London's Shakespearean heritage.

Location-based Augmented Reality was at the heart of the extraordinary partnership between the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre, and Arcade, an immersive technology company, to create connections between people and places. The stories of Roald Dahl were the inspiration for a digital version of a village trail through Great Missenden, available on a digital app. This Marvellous Missenden experience dramatises the inspiration that Roald Dahl took from his surroundings by magically revealing 3D content in AR space through the user's mobile device, displayed on relevant buildings and locations throughout the village.

"We are a nation of dream-weavers; we make music, art, architecture, poetry, pottery and plays. We have been at it for a very long time and the heritage of our creative work is all around us, helping to define who we are and how the rest of the world regards us." said Peter Ainsworth, Heritage Alliance Chair, 2019

In 2020, we launched our *Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Report*, which explored the impact heritage can have on individual and community wellbeing. The breadth and number of case studies (33 in total) speak to the multiple ways that heritage is already

making a difference to our health. The following two examples hint at this breadth:

The nineteenth century Alexandra Palace was transformed into a nightclub to rival the hottest Soho locations for their project ‘Rhythm Sticks’. The project is designed to combat loneliness and isolation for disabled adults, as well as providing opportunities for them to develop a greater sense of social independence by supporting the development of work-based skills and employment opportunities. Disabled participants were given the opportunity, over ten weeks, to design a club night for themselves and their community, whilst undertaking a complementary training programme. One participant said that the thing “that stuck out for me is the ways in which inclusive spaces are positive and rewarding experiences for everyone (disability or not).”

Another initiative, Historic Royal Palaces’ ‘Community Access Scheme’, launched at Kensington Palace, to help the participants, as group leaders or members. Group leaders attended a training session that includes overviews of the palace, hands-on activities, skill-building, and practical guidance for planning and leading a visit to the palace. The group leaders worked with the communities team to plan and deliver group visits to the palace. One group leader said “The training and group visits here at Kensington Palace and the people here made me feel so welcome. I felt that I could be part of society again.”

You can see more about our work and read the two reports referenced on our website – <https://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/>. or contact development@theheritagealliance.org.uk or 0207 2330 600.



Ragged School Museum exhibit

SCIENCE MUSEUM

A woman in a black t-shirt and blue jeans is walking away from the camera down a long, brightly lit museum corridor. The corridor is lined with white display cases containing various medical exhibits. On the left, there's a surgical light fixture and a piece of medical equipment. On the right, there's a hospital bed. The floor is made of light-colored wood. The background shows more exhibits and a bright light source at the end of the corridor.

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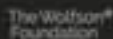
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Kensington Theatres

THE 1972–3 EDITION OF *The Kensington Society* annual carried an article about Kensington theatres. This an abridged version.

In the mid-19thC, amateur theatricals were put on at Campden House's private theatre with an annual performance for the benefit of the Royal Benevolent Society. It was here that Charles Dickens acted in a play called *The Lighthouse*. The house with the theatre was destroyed by fire in 1862.

The Royal Kent theatre was off Kensington High Street (near where the present fire station stands). It was opened under the patronage of the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria. There was a separate entrance down a mews for royalty. It had a short but popular existence but closed in 1840.

The Century Theatre in Westbourne Grove, first known as the Bijou and then the Victoria Hall, was built towards the end of the 18thC century. Many famous actors and actresses performed there including Sir Herbert Tree, Sir George Alexander, Henry Irving and Marie Lloyd. The Lena Ashwell Players made it their headquarters. It later became the Century Theatre, rivalling the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, in the production of new and interesting plays.

One hundred years ago Batty's Hippodrome was attracting large crowds between the present Palace Gate and De Vere Gardens. The *Lady's Newspaper* of 31 May 1851, had "We can safely say that the Hippodrome at Kensington is a complete novelty to the English, and, withal, one of the most attractive that it is possible to imagine. The displays of horsemanship and chariot racing – all partaking of the vivid character of the course – are about the most exciting subjects for contemplation in or near the metropolis. ...Our fair subscribers will take some interest in two young Arabs, whose horses are ostriches!" The Hippodrome was closed in 1852.

The Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill Gate was built in 1898 as part of a chain of theatres in suburbs around London. Performers included Sarah Bernhardt, Henry Irving, Martin Harvey, Frank Benson and Marie Lloyd. These theatrical companies recruited their juvenile crowd players from the surrounding streets for one shilling a night and a glass of milk to parade as pixies, fairies, urchins, pageboys etc. In the *Sins of Society* they built a ship on the stage and surrounded it with a green carpet and boys had to crawl about under the carpet to make 'waves'. In 1916 the Coronet became a cinema.

The Coronet Theatre

by Michael Becket

THE CORONET THEATRE WAS designed by the experienced theatre-designer W G R Sprague and opened in 1898 with a production of the popular Japanese opera *The Geisha* by the Morell and Mouillot's company. The journal *Era* described the new theatre on the corner of High Street (now Notting Hill Gate) and Johnson Street (now Hillgate Street) as a "theatre of which the whole country may be proud". It added "Of a truth the new Coronet Theatre well becomes Kensington, the suburb of all others in which art is really fostered: and of the newest addition to the dramatic houses that are springing up in all parts of this great metropolis of ours"

At the top of a domed tower was a cupola topped by a figure of Mercury. Fearing the notoriously corrosive erosion of the London atmosphere on stone, the building was covered with a sort of varnish, "two coats of fluet – a French composition that renders the stone impervious" Altogether it was a lavish construction, with painted ceiling depicting female forms of Spring, Autumn and Winter plus a representation of Mirth and the boat of Venus. It incorporated electric lighting and central-heating radiators.

Famous actors appearing in its early days included Ellen Terry and Sarah Bernhardt. It suffered, however, from being outside the West End, whilst being sufficiently close to be in competition with it.

In 1916, films were shown for the first time, as part of variety programmes mixing live and filmed performance. In 1923, it became a cinema full-time, and capacity was reduced from 1,143 to 1,010 seats, but it retained its original theatre interior of stalls, a dress circle and a gallery. The stage was blocked off, and the cinema screen placed within the proscenium arch. The projection equipment was in the former dress circle bar.

In 1931, the cinema became part of Gaumont British, and the boxes next to the stage, were removed. In 1950, it was renamed the Gaumont and the upper tier was closed for seating, and capacity was therefore reduced to 515. In 1972, the Rank Organisation, which had taken over Gaumont, wanted to demolish the building, and replace it with offices and shops. But a sustained campaign based on architectural merit and history persuaded the council to designate it a conservation area which secured its survival and refurbishment.

Rank sold it to an independent cinema operator, in 1977 and its name reverted to the Coronet. The new owners replaced a more spacious seating in the stalls reducing total cinema capacity to 399 seats.

In 1989, the building was again under threat, but it was protected by a Grade II listing. In 1996, a second screen with seating for 151 was opened in the stage area.

The Kensington Temple, a large Pentecostal church in Kensington Park Road bought it in 2004 and continued to show films, but without interfering in its policy or introducing a religious slant. It was the cinema at which David Cameron was reported in the press to have watched *Brokeback Mountain* on its opening night.

A fringe theatre in Westbourne Grove, The Print Room, bought the Coronet in June 2014, and operates a 195-seat main auditorium, and a smaller, 100-seat black box



theatre and studio space now called The Print Room. It stages lesser-known work by classic authors such as T.S Eliot, Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter, and new works by contemporary dramatists such as Brian Friel and Will Eno. The Coronet featured in the 1999 film *Notting Hill*, as the cinema where a sad Hugh Grant watches a film with his big love Anna Scott (Julia Roberts) after they have separated.

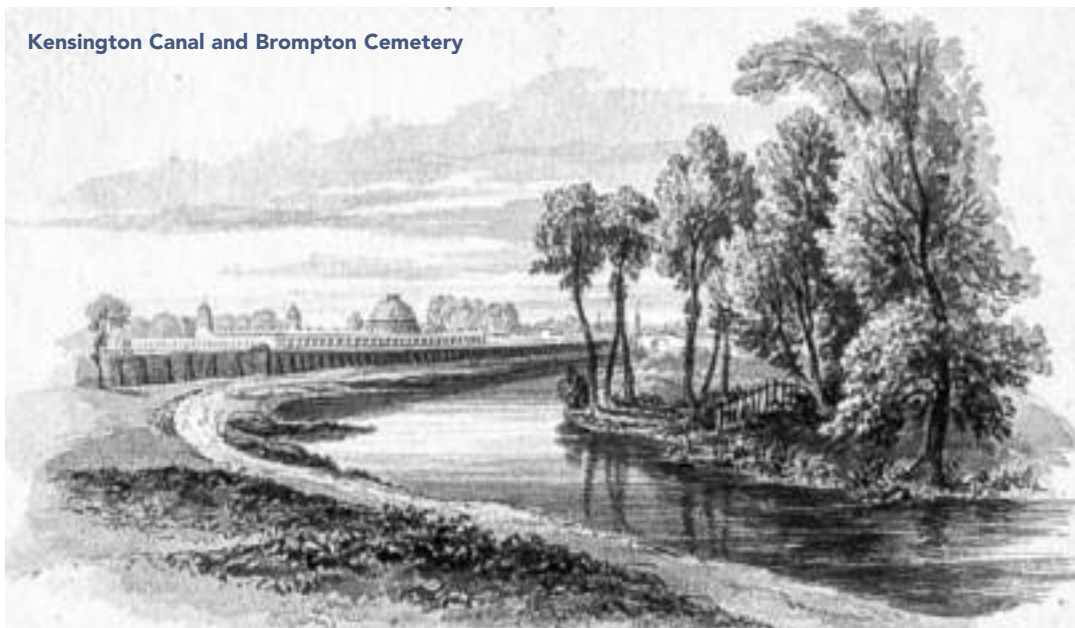
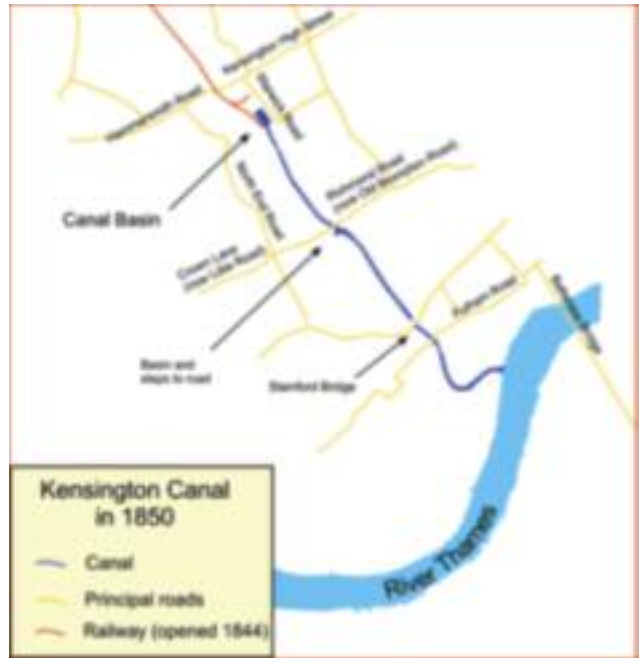
Its new owners have also tried to replace some of the lost decorative features. The dome was originally surrounded by ornamental urns, but only the stone bases survive. They are being replaced in cast stone, with Portland finish and painted to match the new colour scheme. Details of the original statue at the top are not clear so instead of Mercury there is a life-size bronze of Sir Joshua Reynolds based on the Alfred Drury sculpture in the Anneberg Courtyard of Burlington House by Gavin Turk.

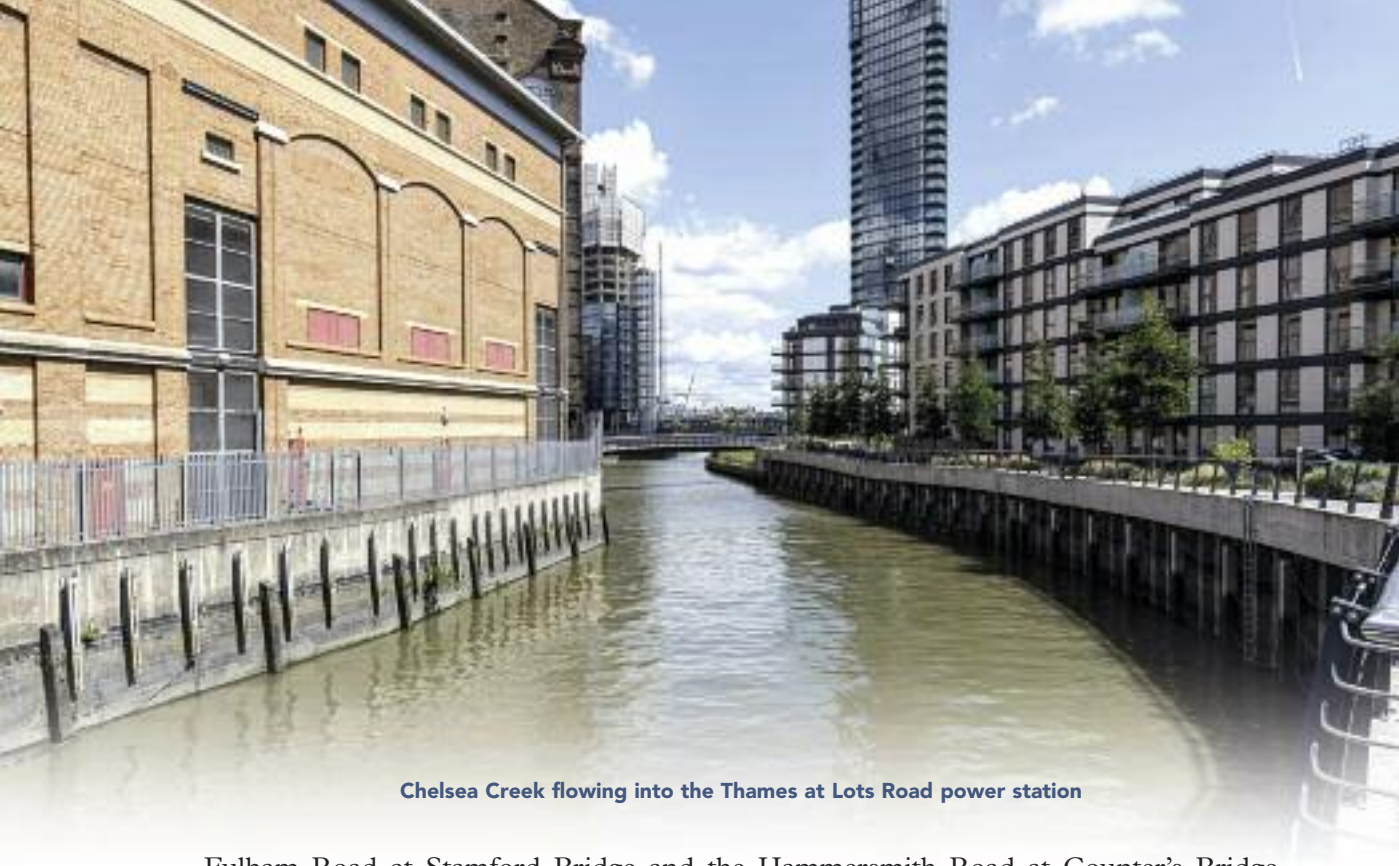
Kensington Canal

by Michael Becket

IN 1820 THE REGENT'S Canal opened running from near the Grand Junction Canal basin at Paddington to the Thames at Limehouse, and rapidly became a prosperous carrier of freight. It was a period of frantic canal building and William Edwardes, second Lord Kensington, hoped to get a share of the fast-growing transport business by bringing goods and minerals from the London docks to Kensington, then a rural district isolated from London.

The canal would be created by dredging Counter's Creek, a stream which had become a sewer running south from Kensal Green to join the Thames at Chelsea Creek, a little upstream from the present site of Battersea Bridge. It ran along the western boundary of the huge Edwardes estate and divided the parishes of Kensington and Fulham. In 1822 a plan was for work on the part of the creek which bordered Lord Kensington's lands, between





Chelsea Creek flowing into the Thames at Lots Road power station

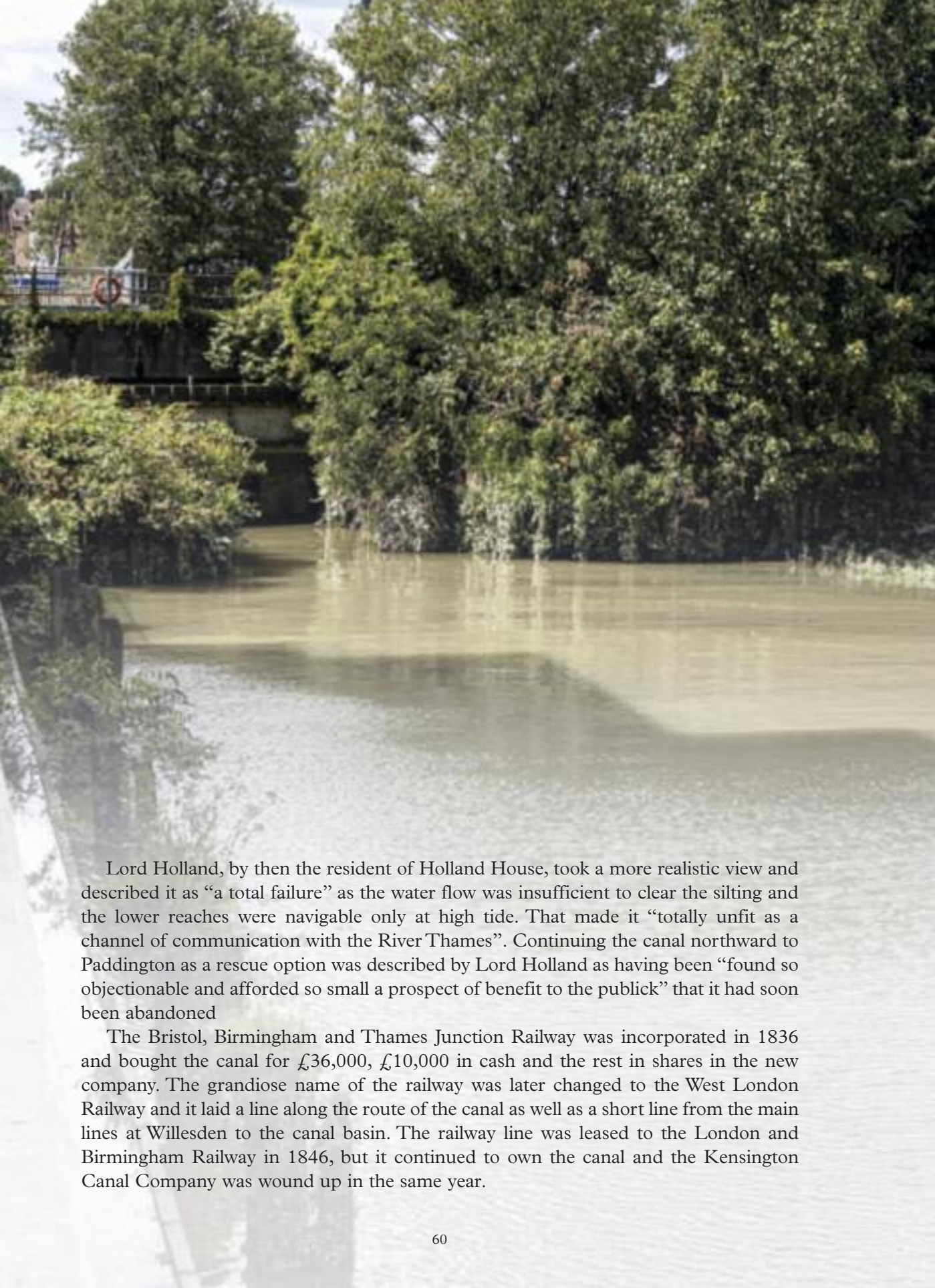
Fulham Road at Stamford Bridge and the Hammersmith Road at Counter's Bridge (currently over the railway). The part further downstream looked pretty good to start with, and there was a plan to link it eventually with the Paddington basin.

This was approved by parliament in 1824 which established the Kensington Canal Company with eighteen backers including Lord Kensington and Sir John Scott Lillie (an owner of land on the Fulham side of the creek), "to form or make a Canal for the Navigation of Boats, Barges and other Vessels". They were also authorised to raise £10,000 by the issue of a hundred shares of £100 each, and an additional £5,000 if necessary. The canal was to be completed within three years.

The Kensington Canal was opened in 1828 though by that time the total cost had risen to about £40,000. The income was reckoned to be about £2,500 a year – a pretty handsome return of 6.5%. But the timing was unfortunate, being at the start of the railways boom including the London and Birmingham Railway and the Great Western Railway, both of which passed a little to the north of Kensington. Proposals were developed for a railway branch to the canal; trans-shipping there to or from river lighters would give the desired connection.

But hopes for its success were wildly optimistic. As late as 1836 they still believed that "almost the whole of the merchandise and produce traffic" of the Great Western Railway and "a great proportion" of that of the London and Birmingham would use their railway and canal "as the easiest, the most direct, and by far the most economical means of conveyance to and from the Thames".





Lord Holland, by then the resident of Holland House, took a more realistic view and described it as “a total failure” as the water flow was insufficient to clear the silting and the lower reaches were navigable only at high tide. That made it “totally unfit as a channel of communication with the River Thames”. Continuing the canal northward to Paddington as a rescue option was described by Lord Holland as having been “found so objectionable and afforded so small a prospect of benefit to the publick” that it had soon been abandoned

The Bristol, Birmingham and Thames Junction Railway was incorporated in 1836 and bought the canal for £36,000, £10,000 in cash and the rest in shares in the new company. The grandiose name of the railway was later changed to the West London Railway and it laid a line along the route of the canal as well as a short line from the main lines at Willesden to the canal basin. The railway line was leased to the London and Birmingham Railway in 1846, but it continued to own the canal and the Kensington Canal Company was wound up in the same year.



A parliamentary Act of 1859 authorised a joint venture of several railway companies to extend the railway by filling in the Kensington Canal from its terminus at the Kensington basin to the King's Road bridge, Chelsea, and to use the site for a railway which would diverge a little to the west of the canal, and cross the Thames on a large bridge to join main lines near Clapham Junction. The West London and West London Extension line in 1903 was claimed to pay "a dividend of enormous proportions on the original stock". This left a short stub of the original waterway, from the Thames almost to Stamford Bridge, owned by the West London Extension Railway, which served flour mills and the Imperial Gas Works, until traffic stopped in 1967. Construction of the railway built over the remainder of the canal, and the later railway developments in Earls Court completely obliterated the canal. Its original course can be appreciated by the route of the present-day West London Line from the Thames to Kensington High Street.



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Planning Reports

National Policy Changes

The government is determined to change the way the planning system operates, from the form and content of local plans to changing the very nature of planning from a discretionary policy-based system with decisions made by local councillors to a rule-based system. The redesign seeks to reduce the involvement of both residents and councillors in the final decision-making on planning applications.

Another major change has been to collapse the Use Classes Order, combining uses into a single group, where they can change to any other use within that class without any need for planning consent. It is now proposed to introduce new permitted development rights, which would give owners the right to change the use of a wide range of uses to housing without the need for planning consent.

These changes include:

Planning White Paper (August)

The long-awaited Green Paper turned out to be a White Paper which the government issued in early August, along with a consultation paper on Housing Requirements

The main features the White Paper were:

- the creation of “growth areas” and “renewal areas” where the decisions on the use, scale and design of development are determined through design codes;
- the designation of limited protected areas, where decisions would be taken as now, with participation by residents and decisions by councillors; and
- almost all decisions would be made by planning officers with residents, and even councillors, having little or no say over the final development.

Residents would play an active role initially in identifying sites and participate in drawing up the design code specifying the use, scale of development and even the details, after which they would have no further role.

New housing requirements (August)

The government’s manifesto commitment to deliver 300,000 houses a year proposed, much influenced by a think tank called Policy Exchange, to use an algorithm to provide “housing requirement” figures for each local authority. This algorithm seeks to skew the distribution to those areas where house prices are least affordable, on the assumption that building more housing there will reduce house prices and make them more affordable.

This mechanistic, simplistic approach does not work in the London housing market, especially in central/inner London, which is completely built up, and where there are major constraints on redevelopment, or in our borough. There is little scope for providing large amounts of new housing and, in any case, what is developed is dependent on what developers come forward with, which often focuses on building at the upper end of the market.

The new ‘housing requirements’ proposed for London were 97,500 homes a year. This compares with the new London Plan target, reduced from 66,000 pa to 52,000 pa by the examination of the London Plan. This means that the “housing requirement” proposed for Kensington & Chelsea was 3,285 pa, compared with our London Plan target of 448 net additional homes a year, which directly reflects the lack of sites. The Kensington Society lobbied the government, through our MP, Felicity Buchan, and strongly supported the council’s efforts to get this changed. The government has now deferred applying its target to London, recognising that the new London Plan needed to be adopted, but has proposed that the next review of the London Plan should propose a 35% uplift on the London Plan figures, which, surprise, comes to 93,500 additional homes a year.

This may appear to have kicked this controversial issue into the long grass for a few years, but there will be a continuing debate as to whether the new ‘standard methodology’, based on the assumption that building more housing in areas with low affordability will help reduce the cost of homes, will need to be challenged. The only way larger numbers could be achieved would be large-scale redevelopment, which would not be acceptable, would be highly disruptive and take a long time.

Housing Delivery Test (August)

In the meantime, the government (MHCLG) has decided to trigger its test of whether local authorities are delivering enough housing, by looking at the number of homes completed in the previous three years, as compared with the Local Plan housing target. The target for Kensington & Chelsea given by the 2016 London Plan was 733 per year, even though the mayor had agreed to reduce it to 488 homes a year in late 2017 reflecting the challenges of finding housing sites post Grenfell. MHCLG’s calculation showed a large shortfall in the councils’ housing delivery, which could make it more difficult for the council to defend refusal of unacceptable schemes that contain housing.

Again, we need to get the government to understand that the council can respond only to what planning applications come forward from developers, and, having given consent, it is completely dependent on developers building out these schemes. Low delivery is not the fault of the council, but primarily that the rate of private development is slow. The government needs to understand that a combination of slow delivery and the wrong types of housing, is a sign that the housing market does not deliver what is needed.

Changes to Use Classes Order

The Use Classes Order categorises the use of buildings and land into different classes, so planning consent is required to change from one class to another, while changes within the same class do not need consent.

New E Use Class (August/September)

The government proposed and, in September, implemented a major change by amalgamating a whole range of retail, business and social uses into a single large use class (Class E), the effect of which is that all these uses have become interchangeable without needing any consents. These changes mainly affect town centres, but also apply to other areas which have, for example, retail, office or leisure uses. In our town centres and local

centres, this could produce quite a high degree of change, based on whatever the landowner considers most profitable. It will result in a change in the mix of uses in our town and local centres.

Changes to Permitted Development

Changing everything to housing (December)

Since 2013, when the government first introduced permitted development rights for offices to turn into housing without the need for planning permission (from which Kensington & Chelsea was thankfully exempted), the government has added a succession of uses to the list of those that be changed to housing without planning consent.

The latest proposal, issued on December with responses due by 27 March, is that all uses in the new E Use Class (see above) should be able to be converted into housing subject to very few conditions. Everything in our town and local centres could be turned into housing. Whilst not all ground floor uses in town centres may be attractive to change into housing, this could have a huge impact in neighbourhood centres and free-standing shops and offices. These losses, through cannibalising our local centres, could mean we are unable to find somewhere local to get a pint of milk.

These proposals could strip out all our local facilities and change the quality of life of local communities. The society has taken this up with our MP and will be supporting the council's response to this damaging proposal. To consolidate previous national changes – it is a one-size-fits-all approach – the government is proposing to remove our existing exemption from the offices to housing permitted development right, which means all our offices would be at risk.

First, they came for offices, but we resisted. Then they came for launderettes and long-established light industrial uses, so we managed to remove them from the firing line through an Article 4 direction, which removes those rights. Now they are coming for almost everything that is not already housing, instructing the council not to use Article 4 directions as protection. This could wipe out premises for small businesses and could destroy the character of the borough, reducing us to an almost solely residential, dormitory suburb. This is another Policy Exchange idea, whose only concern is to leave everything to the market. They have no concept about creating liveable places, let alone an understanding that the move to housing is usually a one-way trip.

Building upwards

Yet another permitted-development-rights initiative creates new rights to build additional storeys on top of existing buildings to create additional housing, albeit with quite tight requirements for not only extending blocks of flats but also terraced housing. In the event, however, the new rights do not apply in conservation areas or to pre-1948 blocks of flats.

Design Codes

As one of this stream of new initiatives, the government has published for consultation a National Model Design Code. This follows on from the work of the Building Better

Building Beautiful Commission. This document does not itself define a national plan for good design. It sets out principles and checklists that local planning authorities can use to prepare design codes for their own area.

The expectation is that individual authorities will prepare and apply such codes in improving the quality of design, not just of buildings but of the streets and surroundings in which development sits. Issues of capacity of planning departments and the availability of expertise for such work are already recognised. This will not be a process which happens overnight.

The council has been working with the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum (in North Kensington) in drawing up such a code for a series of light industrial units in Latimer Road W10. Both the council and the forum wish to encourage mixed use redevelopment with some new housing in the street. Neighbouring residents have strong views on building design, layout and heights. Building owners and potential developers argue for sufficient floorspace to make redevelopment viable.

All these parties have been brought together to work towards agreement on a design code. This is due to be consulted on shortly as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The discussions are proving a useful learning experience all round. It is already clear that the sort of joint working the government envisages for design codes, with local people involved from an early stage, is resource intensive. If such codes are to be prepared for small areas and individual streets, organisations such as neighbourhood forums, residents' associations and amenity societies will need to do much of the preparatory work.

London Plan: Adopted

The Mayor of London submitted his London Plan, as amended following the examination of plan, to the secretary of state for approval in December 2019. The secretary of state did not reply until mid-March 2020, by which time the mayoral election had been delayed by a year.

The secretary of state's response was combative, although the ten changes he directed be made were more reasonable. The secretary of state issued new directions for change, including a helpful one about tall buildings. This direction provides a definition and making clear that "tall buildings should only be developed in locations that are identified as suitable in Development Plans." This should prove helpful for assessing future proposals for tall buildings.

The London Plan was adopted by the Mayor of London on 2 March. Our London Plan housing target is now 448 net additional homes per year. It is the strategic element of the development plan for Kensington & Chelsea; the local policies are in our Local Plan. The London Plan policies are on the whole very useful in providing a lead, since it is more up to date than our Local Plan.

Local Plan

The Kensington & Chelsea Local Plan was adopted in September 2019, following agreement of the secretary of state that a new Local Plan would be produced by the end of 2022.

The council is currently updating the Local Plan – the voluminous document that sets out policies it will apply when deciding planning applications. In September 2020 it

issued a Borough Issues paper setting out what it thought might be the main issues and asked for comments. The Kensington Society sent in a full reply and attended a virtual meeting with the council to discuss the issues. We supported the ambition to go for 'greener' development (on which the council has issued a draft Supplementary Planning Document for comment). We also stressed the need to have new or better policies in a number of areas, including:

- focusing new housing on smaller, more affordable units, as there are already plenty of large houses and flats in the borough; and a stronger policy to control loss of HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) and student accommodation
- the promotion of more affordable sheltered and other housing for older people, rather than the luxury sheltered accommodation developers see as making the most profit
- designing new homes for home-working
- a strategy plan for the future of each larger town centre, to be developed in consultation with businesses and residents
- strengthened policies to ensure better conservation of heritage buildings
- management of air-conditioning units and outside heaters, which are highly energy-intensive
- light pollution
- more restrictions on impermeable surfaces in both front and back gardens to reduce run-off and flood-risk.

The next step is for the Council to consult on issues and options.

There are policy areas that need review as some of the chapters are unchanged from the 2010 plan. The major challenges include how the plan deals with the proposals in the Planning White Paper, such as identifying 'growth areas' and 'renewal areas' and developing strategies, plans and design codes for them. This aspect of the plan will require the council and the communities to work together to develop these proposals.

The government's proposals for additional permitted development rights would undermine many key policies, especially with regard to our town and local centres and the protection of shops and offices, which will mean that we can no longer plan positively for their future, let alone to maintain the supply of such uses in the face of the high residential values. Left to the market, this could spell the death knell for our local shops and services.

Housing

The council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Community Housing (previously known as affordable housing) is part of the policy review of the housing chapter, agreed as part of the post-Grenfell agreement with the secretary of state for the 2019 adoption of the Local Plan. Whilst the new London Plan housing target of 448 net additional homes a year, will take away some of the pressure, the council housing delivery remains in the hands of private developers. This relies on applications coming forward and, above





Kensal Road



Acklam Road

all, for the schemes to proceed. The council has won approval for three housing schemes containing proportionate as well as affordable accommodation.

The new Local Plan will need to identify potential sites for housing, but many developments come forward outside the plan and inevitably involve redevelopment of existing housing. To meet the housing target, let alone any larger targets that might be imposed, this could involve large-scale redevelopment, and at higher densities. This is likely to be controversial. (See item above on the government’s centrally-proposed housing requirements.) The implications of the council not delivering more housing, is that the government will seek to set higher targets.

Review of SPD on Building Heights (2010)

Following the Newcombe House and now the current Kensington Forum Hotel, the council is considering the need for reviewing this document. The constraints, the extent of conservation areas which is over 70% of the borough, have barely changed, but the areas which remain after removing conservation areas and their “buffer zones”, could be reassessed to indicate whether or not they are suitable. These areas, after removing those which do not have good public transport accessibility, may be “non-sensitive”, but that still may not be appropriate. With growing pressure for tall buildings, the council needs to strengthen its policy and its guidance.



**The proposed Newcombe House
at Notting Hill Gate**

Conservation Area Management Plans (CAMPs)

Having completed the conservation area appraisals (CAAs), for the borough’s conservation areas, analysing their main features is the next step to conservation area management plans (CAMPs). These interpret how the policies in the Local Plan should be interpreted in these areas and propose good practice.

The first CAMPs are being prepared, starting with the Thames Conservation Area in Chelsea, followed by Holland CA and the ESSA CA in Kensington. We are following these closely to see how the opportunities for conserving and enhancing the conservation areas can be developed and implemented. These will use some of the guidance in the previous conservation area proposals statements, such as rooflines, boundary treatments and opportunities for public realm improvements.

Opportunity Areas

Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area

This large expanse of 'brownfield land' at northern end of Ladbroke Grove has been the subject of protracted negotiations between landowners ever since a 2013 RBKC Issues and Options consultation. For several years this land with its redundant gasholder has been one of two major regeneration areas in the borough (along with Earls Court) where the council promises to deliver serious numbers of new homes.

A Supplementary Planning Document for the area is due to be published shortly for consultation. The mayoral housing target remains as 3,500 new housing units. This is likely to result in densities and building types (tall towers) which are a step further than what has been built to date in north Kensington, without addressing the transport issues.

Old Oak and Park Royal

This Mayoral Development Corporation has not had a happy year. In January 2021 the work of the corporation was severely criticised by the London Assembly. Its report pointed out that OPDC has spent £42.7 million, even though five years on, little has been done on the ground to bring any new jobs or homes to the area.

The plans of the OPDC impact on the north-west corner of the Royal Borough. Ambitious visions of a Canary Wharf of the West were promoted in 2015 by Boris Johnson when London mayor. In 2021 the reality looks more modest. The corporation's planning officers recently completed proposed 'modifications' to a fourth version of Draft Local Plan first submitted to the secretary of state in September 2018.

Local community groups and neighbourhood forums are not impressed with the proposed changes. Planned new overground stations no longer feature, the new 'major town centre' on land owned by Cargiant at Hythe Road was removed in late 2019, and new connections connecting Scrubs Lane and East Acton are not possible for 20 years.

Meanwhile, construction on the £107 bn new Old Oak Common Station is under way, north of Wormwood Scrubs. The station is 1 km long, but will no longer have road access at its eastern end. So the benefits for RBKC residents hoping to access Crossrail will be limited. Completion of the HS2 Phase 1 project is now forecast between 2029 and 2033. Major regeneration schemes in London are never easy (as demonstrated by the saga of Earls Court below). But this one is struggling more than most.



New carriages awaiting the opening of the Elizabeth Line, planned for 2108 and delayed until the first half of 2022

Earls Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area

As reported in last year's annual report, a joint venture between Transport for London and Delancey's investors was formed at Earls Court in November 2019 to purchase Capco's interests in the remaining 25 acres of the original Opportunity Area. This



Aerial view of the Earls Court opportunity area

followed the West Kensington housing estates reverting to Hammersmith & Fulham. The Opportunity Area has outline planning consents dating back to 2013.

The previous Capco masterplan proved extraordinarily expensive to build, based on upmarket housing. Delancey says it has been considering how to design a more resilient mixed-use scheme. It says it recognises the need for a new vision, better related to what residents and the council want. This will require a more flexible masterplan.

We are concerned that, although the removal of the housing estates from the Opportunity Area, the GLA, through the new London Plan, has not changed the indicative numbers of homes (6,500) and jobs (5,000). The last scheme manipulated the densities, which even then were above the former London Plan density standards. However the new scheme may try to accommodate the same amount of housing and jobs on its smaller site

We were asked for a meeting with Delancey in December 2020, but offered 18 January 2021. Several of us attended a Teams meeting, where we met the new CEO of the Earls Court Partnership Limited, Rob Heasman. Much talk about a ‘new approach’, but zero substance. We often had constructive meetings with Capco, but the ‘new approach’ is to say nothing: no plans; no discussion at all on how the master plan is to be revised following the loss of the partnership with Hammersmith and Fulham. The company recently applied for planning consent for the south of the site, 344–350 Old Brompton Road. Having had the opportunity to discuss/engage with us, it did not. (See report on 344–350 Old Brompton Road below)

The old Terry Farrell masterplan is dead. The new masterplan has yet to be designed, we hope with active input from residents.

Major Cases

Heythrop College

A ten-day public appeal inquiry was held at the end of January 2020. Local residents' associations, with support from the society, objected to the loss of this major education site, to luxury older people's housing with an element of care, with no affordable element, and the proposal to enlarge the scheme by rafting over the Circle and District Lines. The mayor had directed refusal because of insufficient affordable housing.

The decision, originally promised for mid-March, eventually came in August 2020. It was hugely disappointing in that the inspector, whilst recognising the conflict with policy and the extreme impact of the five-year construction, granted permission. As yet, there are no signs as to when the project will start, as there appear to be difficulties with the raft over the railway, and there are plenty of agreements to be finalised, not least a very demanding CTMP. The developer offered to set up a consultative group last summer, but there has been no further contact.



Heythrop College

Kensington Forum Hotel

This has been a marathon case, which has resulted, for now at least, in success! The developers, Queensgate Investments, withdrew their appeal to the Inspectorate on Friday 19 March. We still don't know why. Following refusal by the council in September 2018, the mayor attempted to call in the application in December 2018. This was successfully challenged through judicial review by the council following a consent order by the mayor in April 2019.

The mayor sought a redesign, increasing the number of flats to 62, all affordable. This led to a mayoral hearing in June 2019, where the mayor issued the decision the same day, resulting in yet another legal challenge by the council. Again the mayor consented to the judgement on the ground that "the decision to grant planning permission was made for an improper purpose and having regard to irrelevant considerations; namely that the secretary of state should not be given the opportunity to call in the application for his own determination". The decision was quashed on 21 June 2020 and the mayor was required to re-determine the application.

The mayoral hearing took place on 22 October 2020, with the same team of residents opposing the scheme. As expected, the decision of the deputy



Kensington Forum Hotel

mayor, like almost all mayoral call-in cases, was to grant consent, except this time he had to notify the secretary of state. The council, the society and local residents' associations jointly requested the secretary of state to call it in and on 14 January he did. The society worked closely with local residents' associations was been accepted as a Rule 6 Party – to play a full role in the public inquiry. There will be 12-day public inquiry starting on 11 May. The group will be seeking support from local residents and for help with its costs for the public inquiry.

Our case was that this is the wrong place both for tall buildings and for yet further intensification of hotels, that the impact of a scheme twice the size of the existing hotel building on local conservation areas and listed buildings, and on townscape and views, make this proposed development completely unacceptable. We supported the council in challenging these proposals.

Our main concern remains the use of mayoral call-in powers. The problem has existed since they were introduced in 2008 and applies to their use by both Boris Johnson and Sadiq Khan. Cases are called in by the mayor to override refusals of consent for large developments. All are recommended by GLA officers to be allowed, and, almost without exception, they have been allowed by the mayor. There are key tests for call-in, particularly that its refusal would undermine the strategy in the London Plan, but this has never been challenged. The Kensington Forum Hotel, a redevelopment of an existing large hotel is hardly a strategic matter. We are pleased that the council has supported residents in challenging the mayor and supported our request to the secretary of state. We were wholly prepared to support them at the public inquiry in May, against the applicant and the mayor. We are very pleased at this result. It may not be the final battle but it will be much more difficult next time for a new, or a revised, application.

South Kensington Station

The TfL and Native Land application for Around Station Development at South Kensington Tube station received an overwhelming number of objections from residents and local businesses: over 2,200 at last count. The need for development around the station is generally supported by residents. However, objectors feel strongly the bulk and height of the proposed development is excessive and inappropriate for the unique setting of this conservation area. Further, they object to the harm to highly significant heritage assets, blocking residents' sunlight and daylight, and blocking beloved and protected views towards the South Kensington museums. The proposal also deals inadequately with the problems of traffic, refuse and servicing that such a large development on such a constricted site would entail.



On 11 January, the developers submitted an amended plan, with minor changes such as introducing variations in colour, reduced glazing, added framing and planting. These amendments are cosmetic only, and have not addressed serious concerns about the development. Nor do they provide any guarantee of step-free access at South Kensington station – which should be provided unconditionally and not as part of the price of development.

Urged by the Kensington Society and local residents' associations, RBKC organised a briefing on the proposal and local councillors and resident associations asked questions. Following that, and again in conjunction with the Kensington Society, RBKC set up meetings between the residents' associations and the planning department and its experts. These meetings allowed experts hired by the residents' associations to present their findings on heritage, transport, waste, planning, noise, and socio-economic benefits. This unprecedented exercise by the planning department was much appreciated by residents. It also gave the associations the opportunity to explain the deception created by the visual difference between the photos of the station presented by the applicants taken with a 24mm lens, and photos of the same view of the station taken by the associations' expert with a 50mm lens, which shows the scene as human eyes see it.

The end of public consultation has been extended due to the continual problems with the council's website. No decision is anticipated until the summer.

Wellcome Trust Developments on Pelham Street

Wellcome Trust has submitted two major applications to redevelop buildings on Pelham Street which it has owned for the past 25 years. While 40 Pelham Street is being substantially refitted, Wellcome seeks to demolish 63-81 Pelham Street, replacing the current four-storey building with a seven-storey office building over twice as large in gross internal area.

The Kensington Society has supported local residents' groups in analysis and research on both applications. The overwhelming consensus is the applications represent inappropriate and unsustainable overdevelopment, overlooking and enclosing neighbours on all sides. Wellcome has set the benchmark for height and massing from the lift shaft overrun of Crompton Court, on the corner of Brompton Road and Pelham Street. But most of Pelham Street is low-built, with cottages creating a village streetscape. The vastly increased height on one section of Pelham Street will be visually intrusive and disproportionate, and would dwarf neighbouring homes, affecting residents' light, views and privacy.

The proposed buildings are intended to attract approximately 800 additional office workers and will further burden the narrow pavements. Roadside deliveries and rubbish collection to service the development will further congest a narrow side street. Adding to pressure on parking, and the free flow of traffic, three pay-and-display bays in front of 63-81 Pelham Street will be replaced with loading bays, notwithstanding the existing



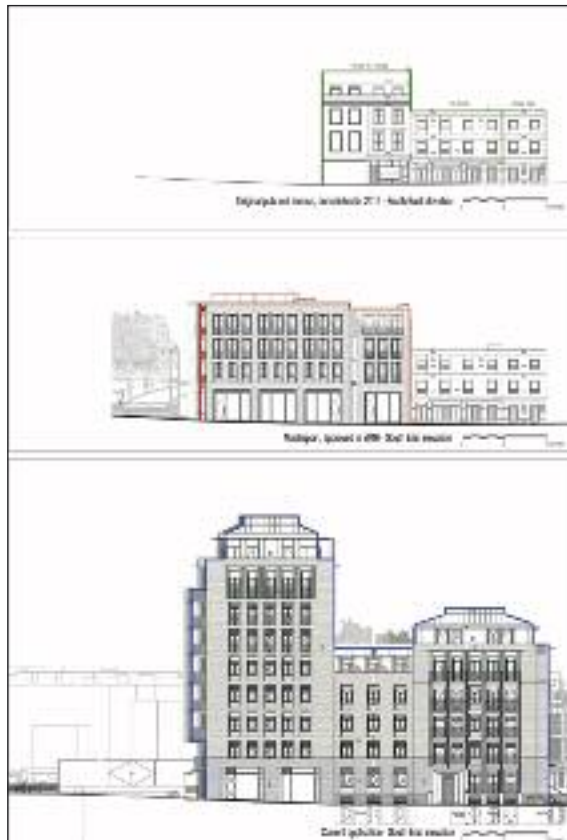
building has off-street loading and servicing.

The environmental concerns are serious. Reusing and renovating existing buildings is in line with the current prevailing government policy to renovate and refit where possible, reducing the carbon associated with creating a new building. Local residents' associations feel Wellcome would better serve our city and communities by retrofitting 63-81 Pelham Street, reinforcing the developer's stated mission of "improving health by helping great ideas to thrive", and commitment to "research partnerships...investigating what makes cities healthy and environmentally sustainable".

344-350 Old Brompton Road

The application is for an alternative development of 344-350 Old Brompton Road including the Tournament pub site. An application for a smaller site was approved in 2015 for housing in the first stage of development for the Capco's Earls Court master plan. The approved building was four storeys tall, aligned with the terrace houses of Eardley Crescent with 14 flats in two separate townhouses.

This application is totally different and totally unacceptable. The prevailing scale of the area is one of Victorian terraced houses of three storeys, a basement and rear gardens, with the enlarged site including the Tournament pub, directly across the road from the historic Brompton Cemetery. The approved masterplan building was approximately 2,800 m³, while the current proposal is 8,600 m³. It is over 34m tall, and would loom over the gardens of Eardley Crescent as well as



Brompton Cemetery, and be built property line to property line, it has only a few private balconies and the child's play area would be sandwiched between the two towers on the sixth floor. The space is a mere 8m x 9m and is to be shared with the tenants as the only amenity space. There are 51 units, 28 for market rented and 23 for intermediate, affordable housing. All units are to be managed by Delancey irrespective of tenure. No social housing landlord is to be involved in the management. The new landscaping is roof hedges and a few trees in pots.

We fear the council will be persuaded to approve on the basis of increased housing alone, regardless of the harm the over-development will cause and contrary to multiple planning policies. It will also be precedent for larger and taller buildings in the Earl's Court development.



Avon House, Allen Street

Avon House, Allen Street

After a powerful campaign by local residents, the Kensington Society and Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association, the application for redevelopment was refused in September 2020. Having initially shown willingness to listen to neighbours and local residents and to come up with a sensitive scheme for extra care housing on this important site, the developer had changed his architects and ramped up the scale of the development and dumbed down the design. Although the refusal was on the fairly narrow grounds of impact on the adjoining buildings, the scheme was fundamentally flawed and a far better and more modest design is needed on this sensitive site.

The developer has since expressed a desire to respond positively to these objections and come up with a completely new scheme. He has changed architects for the third time. An offer to meet the main objectors individually at this stage has been turned down. The feeling is that the key issues are well known and recorded, and it is for the developer to come forward with new design proposals which can be openly presented and commented upon.

Allen House, Allen Street

This revised application was approved by the planning committee on 1 December 2020, subject to a Section 106 agreement. Strong objections to the application were raised by representatives from the Kensington Society, Edwardes Square, Scarsdale & Abingdon Association and local residents. Objections included the potential increase in on-street parking, lack of sufficient open space or balconies, insufficient affordable housing and

the environmental damage caused by demolition.

Although the previous permission had expired, the planning committee chairman took the view that the previous consent was a material consideration in the decision on the new application. This application was similar to the previous consent except for the removal of on-site car parking and allows resident permit applications to 29 of the 45 homes.

Our objections were based on the fact that as the original scheme had expired, the design should be evaluated on current attitudes and policies relating to the environment, particularly as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. Sadly, the opportunity for RBKC to take a fresh stand on these important issues was missed.

In addition, there is a worrying acceptance that the developer can provide a viability report which presents the case that the cost of the demolition of 45 small units and the replacement with 45 larger units is a satisfactory get-out on the obligations to provide 35% affordable housing. In this case, the council accepted the developer's accounting and "without prejudice offer of £2.44m" on a £36,833,312 redevelopment.

The Academy

The Academy public house, which has been closed since August 2018, was successfully redesignated as an Asset of Community Value in January 2020 for a further five years; it applies to the entire building, including the upper floors.

The owner appealed an Enforcement Notice issued in December 2019, requiring the cessation of the unauthorised use of the upper floors as a separate residence and the reinstatement of the internal linking stair, but in August 2020 the planning inspectorate dismissed the appeal in an important ruling for the national pub industry, protecting a locally important social hub from unwanted residential property development.

At time of writing, a new planning application has been submitted, which we, together with the Norland Conservation Society (NCS) and Clarendon Cross Residents Association (CCRA), believe will severely undermine the future viability of the pub. The proposal, if implemented, would move the main trading area to the basement and the first and second floors would be converted to separate residential properties, in total disregard of the pub's ACV status.

The society, NCS and CCRA are committed to saving the pub from property development, reopened and returned to the local community. All that we have so far achieved has only been possible with the magnificent support of our members, for which we thank you.

Pembridge Gardens: hostel to single family home: No

In February planning and listed building applications were received for a property on Pembridge Gardens. The site had been marketed with clear reference to the need for change of use from a hostel to housing. The planning application was to convert the building from 25-room hostel into a single-family home. RBKC has a housing target set by the Mayor of London and the loss of any housing is added to the target. HMO and hostel rooms are calculated on the basis of a 2.5:1 ratio. That means the hostel provides 9 (10 rooms – one new home) "homes" towards the council's housing supply. The proposal was to restore the listed building and remove many unfortunate elements added over the years. Delegated decisions were made for both. The listed building application

was approved. The planning application was refused in November for loss of housing. Without planning permission no works could be done. We have not seen another application for this site but we are watching for it.

Harrington Gardens: office to single family home: No

In April a similar case on Harrington Gardens for listed II* permission, was for change of use from office to a single family was refused. The building was 1023m². The affordable housing threshold is 650m² and if developed into housing, it would have to provide an additional 574m² for affordable housing within reasonably close location to the site. Both applications were decided under delegated powers. Listed building permission was refused based on lack of detailed information. Planning permission was refused on the basis of lack of information, loss of office space, restriction on parking permits, no affordable contribution, and no contributions to the public art programme. As with Pembridge Gardens we have not seen any new applications for the site.



Changes at the Council

Planning Committees

During the pandemic, the council has been unable to hold planning committee meetings. It therefore decided to hold them online (the first council in London to do so), using Microsoft Teams video-conferencing. This enabled objectors to speak and any member of the public to tune into the meetings. Documents being discussed at the meeting can also be shown on screen. The arrangement is far from ideal. For instance, viewers cannot see the whole planning committee, but only the person speaking at the time. But the council is to be congratulated on doing its best to keep the planning system running.

Planning website

The same cannot be said of the planning part of the council website, which continues to be not only user-unfriendly in its presentation of planning documents but increasingly unreliable and likely to crash. We know that officers in the planning department (planning and place as they now call themselves) are as frustrated as we are. We continue to press the council to give priority to a major overhaul.

Pre-application engagement with local residents

Pretty well all applicants for major developments and many applicants for minor developments seek pre-application advice from the council (for which they pay). This advice is not made public until the actual planning application is submitted. The council's pre-application advice contains no input from local residents or residents' associations. Although the council encourages applicants to consult their neighbours before putting in an application, they cannot be forced to do so.

We think this is nonsensical, especially for major applications, as it is far better to ascertain the issues of importance to residents as early as possible. For major applications local residents should be consulted at the concept stage, rather than when plans have been fully developed and are hard to influence. We have for some time been urging the council to make it a condition of giving pre-application advice for major projects that there should be early engagement by both the developer and the council with the local community. The council seems to have accepted the principle, but progress is slow.

Strategies for High Street & Local Centres

Use Class Order changes and permitted development changes

These changes pose a major threat to our town centres, but even more so to focus points of local communities. The changes will remove any possibility of managing the mix of shops, services and employment uses which create their vitality and viability, and the proposal to enable them to change to housing could erode them to such an extent that they disappear. This would leave large areas of the borough as suburban dormitories with few services. We will make strong representations to the government on this, including through our MP.

Partnership working

The council is moving towards a shared vision for High Street recovery. In the last year the council has held a seminar on possible futures for our High Streets, such as assessing the potential for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for King's Road, Brompton Road and Kensington High Street. A new vision for Kensington High Street is being prepared as part of a council improvement plan following Covid and the new E Use Class (see above). In the meantime, Publica (local authority-owned urban design consultancy) has been preparing a vision for the public realm. So far public involvement has involved brainstorming sessions with Publica, but little else.

Removal of telephone kiosks

Unfortunately, the council has still not managed to reduce the number of telephone kiosks, many of which are effectively redundant, but we are pressing for further removals as a result of accepting the Inlink/BT telephone columns.

We are still fighting a continuing battle with companies trying to convert listed telephone kiosks to



coffee dispensing points, such as the kiosks in from of the V&A Museum. We are still winning.

As we go to press BT has put in applications for more of these telephone columns: on Fulham Road, on Holland Park Avenue, and at Palace Gate.

Looking back, looking forward

2020 has overwhelmed us, not just with a never-ending succession of virtual meetings, or the flow of change from the government and the mayor, but also with the amount of major planning casework and a collapsing planning website.

Michael Bach, with Henry Peterson, Sophia Lambert, Amanda Frame, Mary Sheehan, Barry Munday, assisted by Donna Lucia, Cynthia Oakes, Renata Cesar



photoBECKET

A wedding, social and portrait photographer in Kensington.

Contact Michael Becket, 9 Kensington Park Gardens, London W11 3HB,
telephone 020 7727 6941; email becket@photobecket.co.uk

Reports from AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2020

ALEXANDER SQUARE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

By far the most important issue facing the association has been the proposed redevelopment around South Kensington Underground Station, but as this is comprehensively covered elsewhere, I do not propose to spend any time on this issue. Brompton Road is undergoing significant change, as South Kensington Estates changes its tenant mix between Beauchamp Place and Thurloe Place, and this, with the impact of Covid, is causing greater retail vacancies than we have had for some time. The same effect is being seen further down Brompton Road towards Brompton Cross, as well as in Pelham Street, as The Welcome Foundation is also seeing greater tenant turnover and vacancies, and in addition is proposing significant commercial redevelopment. These changes will likely put further pressure on preserving the residential feel of the area.

One silver lining from the pandemic has been the significant, but regrettably not complete, reduction in the supercar problem that has cursed the area for the last five years and the ward councillors, working with the police and the residents, have been particularly helpful in seeing noise-activated cameras introduced into the area. Their effectiveness is yet to be seen given the effects of the pandemic.

William Fall, chairman

ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

As always, in the past year, too, our work has involved a multitude of projects large and small: seeking the removal of illegally installed inappropriate additions within our conservation area, keeping our neighbourhood nice and pleasant for everyone, examining planning applications and commenting on various local council consultations. Our most intense efforts have been directed towards defending our area against the two monstrous towers proposed for the site of the Holiday Inn Kensington Forum Hotel in Cromwell Road. After years of fighting that project with support from RBKC Council, our MPs (present and past), our AM, the 3 Ward Councillors, the Kensington Society and many neighbouring RAs, we finally reached the point, where the case was to be heard over 3 weeks in May by a Government Planning Inspector in a Public Inquiry. To everyone's amazement the developers WITHDREW their application at the proverbial 11th hour, no explanation given . . . While we are delighted, we are also puzzled as to what precisely went on. We are grateful for the



hiatus, but are also sure that in the future other schemes for that site will appear. We are ready for them!

At this point, may I extend a BIG THANK YOU to all of you who have brought us this far. Please continue your support! In return we are also lending our support to neighbouring associations with their projects, e.g. S Kensington Station and the Earl's Court development, both of which were recently revived. We strongly believe that the key to success lies in mutual cooperation.

Friederike Maeda, chairman

THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

Wherever practicable the association has continued consultation meetings involving planning applicants, plus affected neighbours. This has worked well for Construction and Traffic Management Plan proposals for basement digs. At times this meant site meetings having one or two live participants with others joining via video conference or even leaning out of windows. Where the association usually holds physical meetings – such as mid-summer garden party – we have deferred the events.

We have no let-up in planning applications for basement development nor the starting of construction work. The association has so much experience of reviewing plans for basement digs and subsequent building works that we have a standard approach on issues such as, skips on the highway, skinny gantries for over-pavement spoil removal, ingress and egress routes and video cameras by contractors. We can discuss with applicants and their advisers what we have seen on other sites in the conservation area.

At the time of writing another issue is the application of the new 'Class E' exemptions from planning approval being required where a Change of Use is proposed. We are obviously sympathetic to initiatives regarding keeping high streets in business; we are concerned about planning no longer being involved in planning application for Change of Use. There is a real danger that the new 'Class E' provisions could permit high street premises to be used by businesses that should be operating from industrial outlets. This could impact on the quiet enjoyment of late evening and early morning hours by residents.

Calvin Jackson, chairman

BROMPTON ASSOCIATION

The past year has been dominated by concern about the planning application to redevelop South Kensington Station. Developers, Native Land, submitted their application designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour in May. However, in July co-partner TfL



announced that due to severe budgetary constraints, all the promised station improvements to the Booking Hall and D&C line platforms were being shelved. Yet false claims this development will deliver total step free access continue to be made.

RBKC received over 1,700 objections to the planning application. All local groups and our valiant ward councillors consider the scheme utterly out of keeping with the existing low scale character of the station and highly destructive of historic fabric.

Supported by SAVE Britain's Heritage, the association published a campaign booklet illustrating the damage this development will do – right in the heart of the Conservation Area.

In 2016 – and after over two years of detailed consultation with local groups – TfL published a Development Brief outlining what a conservation-led development should comprise. Based on this, the association commissioned the architect Craig Hamilton to illustrate the concepts in the brief showing how a sensitive scheme could fit comfortably within the Conservation Area.

Native Land and TfL have shown no interest in local people's views. Having "paused" their application in the autumn in the light of massive objection, in January they resubmitted drawings showing just minor modifications to the original Rogers Stirk Harbour scheme.

Sophie Andreae, chairman

EARL'S COURT GARDENS & MORTON MEWS RA

In the early weeks of lockdown, on Thursday evenings doorsteps along Earl's Court Gardens were full of families showing support for NHS workers and enjoying a rare bit of social contact. Those on the south side of the road were fortunate to have their back gardens and the sounds of eating al fresco, pique balls clinking and bird song replaced traditional city noises.

Planters at the western end of the road were installed as a pilot "design out crime" initiative. In January we received a Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy grant application for more robust gabion cage planters, extremely uncomfortable to sit or lie on.

A new NHS GP provider will apply for planning permission to relocate rear exit doors to eliminate ASB problems. This resulted from efforts by residents and our ward councillors.



We have yet to notice improvement in speeding following



the introduction of the 20 mph speed limit in the borough.

On the Earl's Court Road many shopfronts are being updated, and residents are working with local businesses, planning officers, ward councilors to emphasise the best features of Victorian architecture, creating a sense of place. If you have old photos of Earl's Court Road for our archive, we would be most grateful for them.

The Earl's Court Exhibition site lies dormant, although there is an unwelcome proposal for a nine-story block of flats on the site of the Tournament pub at the bottom of Eardley Crescent. Scrutiny of the proposals will be critical.

AC Level and JN Green

EDWARDES SQUARE, SCARSDALE & ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

This year, like no other, coincided with our chairman of almost 20 years deciding to stand down in June. Anthony Walker has been a pillar of ESSA and an extremely hard act to follow. As a mark of our appreciation, he was nominated for and received a well-deserved Mayor's Award for Services to the community.

Several major applications came to important stages this year. The Odeon site finally reached a conclusion with developers Lodha receiving an amended planning approval and starting work on site. Avon House on Allen Street was refused permission after a strong local campaign against the size and bulk of the proposals. On the other hand, despite our objections, Allen House received approval to a revised design which removed all onsite parking, putting extra pressure on resident parking.

The various lockdowns and restrictions have placed enormous stress on our local traders. They have done a wonderful job in serving us and we will continue to support them wherever we can.

We have used the crisis to update our communications with a brand-new website at www.essaw8.com and held our first "virtual" AGM in November. Our guest speaker, Andy von Bradsky, head of architecture at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, gave us an insight into the thinking behind the government's proposed planning reforms. These continue to multiply, the latest being an expansion of Permitted Development Rights which could further erode local democracy and sound planning.



Finally, our much-delayed Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan finally reached the top of the pile and we are working closely with RBKC to bring this to a conclusion including, we hope, an extension of our boundaries.

Barry Munday, chairman

THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

Holland Park stayed open throughout the pandemic and was a solace to many who craved fresh air, exercise, or just a quiet space to enjoy the tranquility of the woodlands.

It was a challenging year for Park Management and the idverde team, who were kept busy with Covid safety measures, on top of their usual work. The Parks Police did a fantastic job in helping keep everyone safe.



Florentine tiles on upper walkway above the café. Conserved in 2020]

In spite of the challenges, we were delighted to see so many projects completed last year. Green Drive and the path up from the Sun Trap entrance were resurfaced on sound foundations and look so much better. Restoration work was started on the long wall in the Dutch Garden and much-needed conservation work began on Holland House. The Friends funded conservation of the historic Florentine tiles on the upper walkway above the café



and also funded 'health treatment' of some 70 trees, with aeration and mulching. It was also the year that RBKC was required to put the parks management contract out to tender, with idv re-contracted after a rigorous procurement process that invited and assessed competitive tenders.

Sadly, all The Friends events from March onwards had to be cancelled, but the Ecology Service managed to switch their programme of talks on-line and covered many interesting subjects, all funded by The Friends.

It is gratifying that it was a successful and active year in the park. So many of our members got in touch to say how much the park was appreciated.

Jennie Kettlewell, chairman

KENSINGTON COURT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Good news - in collaboration with the Victoria Road Area Residents Association we won our Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy bid to enforce our Low Traffic Neighbourhood. CCTV cameras have been installed on the corner of Launceston Place to catch violators of the one-way system. Similar enforcement cameras are yet to be introduced at the end of Thackeray Street adjoining Kensington Square.

Of course, this will not prevent Heythrop development lorries trundling through the area to their site via Victoria Road and St Albans Grove. On the other hand, should the cycle lanes on High Street Kensington be re-introduced, a steady stream of lorries might prevent further traffic from establishing a rat run – or will it? – a double edged sword.

We are thankful that many businesses in Thackeray Street have managed to stay at least partially open as well as nearby Wholefoods and M&S. Many more of us relying on food and other deliveries thank all the couriers.

Our postie, Tash, has a cheery word for everyone and always goes the extra mile to ensure deliveries. Brian keeps our pavements clean and our bin collectors bundle up our trash twice a week. We give thanks to them all.

Nearby Kensington Gardens is a precious haven and we appreciate the efforts of gardeners and maintenance workers who provide us with this space.

We look forward to more public art brightening up our empty shop fronts and are grateful that more vaccine hubs are opening up in the borough.

Linda Hamilton, chairman



KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

In spite of the appalling toll taken by the pandemic, many things have gone on much as before.

Committees have continued to meet and work, but virtually, thanks to Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Our AGM went ahead on Zoom, with limited guest list. With the invaluable help of facilitator, Ian Crossley, our chairman, Melville, welcomed 90+ members and a handful of guests and guided us through the AGM, reports from committee chairmen and a lively Q&A session.

The government's new Use Class E is worrying as it is likely to have unintended consequences, particularly in Knightsbridge, as empty retail premises can be changed to a raft of other uses, such as restaurants without the need for planning permission.

A major cause of concern is the purchase of the premises of a favourite local restaurant, Montpeliano's in Montpelier Street, by a high-end dining company, specialising, according to its website, in Shisha and dancing. It would be completely inappropriate for the residential area, and the association has retained the services of a planning consultant to see this through.

We are also involved with other associations in the battle over the proposed plans for South Kensington Station.

Meanwhile, the major developments in and around Knightsbridge (55–91 Knightsbridge, The Knightsbridge Estate, The Peninsula Hotel) have been progressing almost non-stop, after being paused briefly at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020.

The Mandarin has allowed us to roll forward our cancelled booking for the AGM to Monday 13 September for our 60th anniversary party.

Carol Seymour-Newton, vice chairman

LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Our chief task as a committee is to look at planning applications in our area and to decide whether to object or to support them. We were somewhat surprised that the pandemic did not reduce the flow of planning applications as much as we thought it would. Most architects seem to have kept going despite all the difficulties. There has also of course been a steady flow of consultation papers from the council – and indeed central government – so we have been kept busy.

We have not been holding committee meetings as such during the pandemic; instead we have been dealing with each other by telephone and email. We scratched our heads over how to hold our 2020 annual general meeting, originally due to be held in July. We

considered and decided against Zoom, as we know quite a few of our members are not keen on it and unless the participants are practised Zoomers (which more and more of us are), there is



too often an awkward ten minutes at the beginning while connection problems are sorted out. We ended by notifying our members of the AGM through our newsletter and then putting all the papers (chairman's report, accounts etc.) for the meeting on our website, so that everybody could see them and send in comments and questions. Our AGMs never attract an awful lot of members, and this format evoked no response at all, so we are very much hoping that we can organise something more attractive this year.

Sophia Lambert, chairman

NEVERN SQUARE

The initial calm of the first couple of weeks of lockdown rapidly evaporated with a trail of complaints about the installation of TfL's temporary pavement widening along Earl's Court Road to promote social distancing. While the idea might have been good in concept it failed to take into consideration bikes, and the growing menace of the electric scooter. Now the temporary pavement and bollards have been replaced with more "fixed" looking pavement in parts of the road.

Graffiti has exploded and there is a real need to have a joined-up response to how graffiti is tackled, part of which should be the corporate responsibility of businesses for the maintenance and the fabric of their frontages and a pro-active approach by the Council to stem this tide of ASB: it disfigures, it damages and becomes harder to remove the longer it remains.

The first of the planning applications has come forward from the Earl's Court Development Company, which has taken over from Capco. The site area has changed from the original 77-acres, with the sell-back of the West Kensington and Gibbs Green Estates to LBHF, to approximately 40-acres of which approximately 15 acres are in RBKC. The first site to come forward is the wrap around building at 344-350 Old Brompton Road. This is made up of the old Tournament pub site and two Victorian terraced buildings. This will be the portal building to the development and an indication of what is to come in the future.

Linda Wade, chairman

NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

NCS has been liaising with societies and residents' associations whose retailers and residents would be affected by the proposed TfL cycle route (CS10) through Holland Park Avenue and Notting Hill Gate. At the same time we have been working with the council on an alternative network of cycle Quietways as the best way to encourage safer cycling.



A meeting with TfL at the environment centre in Holland Park had to be cancelled because of lock down.

There has been a six-year campaign to win back the Academy pub at 57 Princedale Road for local residents. Over 100 residents objected to plans that would have converted the first and second floors into private residential use contravening the Asset of Community Value. To support our objections and to repudiate Savills's viability assessment, the Kensington Society with NCS and Clarendon Cross RA, commissioned a viability assessment report from Morgan & Clarke chartered surveyors.

NCS will we hope be giving its annual lecture, Stained Glass the Magical Art of Architectural Illumination, as soon as we can get together again. The talk will raise funds for the restoration of the circular west window of St James' Church. This tondo is a hidden gem blocked from the congregation's view by the organ. Once repaired it is intended to backlight the window so it can be admired from afar.

In October NCS celebrated – in a group of six – the society's 50th anniversary by digging in a plaque under a fine Pin Oak in St James's Garden.

Libby Kinmonth, chairman

ONSLow NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

In 2020, ONA engaged with numerous issues affecting our area, most notably in responding to the Native Land/TfL planning application for development around South Kensington Station. Working with other Residents Associations, our ward councillors and our MP, we have devoted considerable time and resources to the effort to scale back these proposals, which sadly do not even guarantee the long awaited step-free access to the platforms. Other issues where our committee and/or membership have weighed in included: participating in discussions with Wellcome Trust on its proposals for the major redevelopment of parts of Pelham Street, objecting to the plans to replace the Kensington Forum Hotel with an even more massive building, preserving some residents' parking bays in and around Onslow Square/Gardens after the council's decision to extend parking controls, supporting the council in extending the ban against estate agents' boards, and lobbying to keep our streets quieter at night and less cluttered during the day. Despite the cancellation of our annual garden party due to the pandemic, we were still able to organise an outdoor concert in Onslow Square in July. Our postponed AGM took place in November via Zoom.

We also bade farewell to ONA'S founder Bill Taylor, who died age 103. His contributions over the decades did much to help our area retain its historic character and appeal. We continue to welcome new members and volunteers. Please contact us if you have any time to spare to help continue what Bill started, on onslowna@gmail.com

Laura Mosedale, Secretary



ST HELENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION AND ST QUINTIN AND WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan is part of the borough's Development Plan for deciding planning applications in our area. Over the past year we have been working with the RBKC Planning Department on a new 'design code' for part of the Latimer Road Employment Zone.

When it comes to achieving consensus on what height and design of new building should be allowed, a range of issues emerges between local residents and planning officers. The government's Planning for the Future White Paper promotes the use of such design codes as a good form of 'citizen engagement'.

Our other pre-occupation in the past year has been tracking the proposals and activities of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation. This mayoral body took over planning powers in 2015 from Hammersmith, Ealing and Brent. The corporation has recently been heavily criticised by the London Assembly. The OPDC Draft Local Plan is running four and a half years behind schedule, and its latest proposed 'modifications' are being challenged locally.

The Old Oak Common Station, where HS2 will meet Crossrail will not be one of the 'best connected' locations in the UK. As a result of Cargiant/London & Regional Properties withdrawing support in late 2019, the new station (costing £1.3bn of HS2's total £106bn) will have no vehicle access from Kensington or central London. Rail travellers will be able to reach the station only by bus, car or taxi from a single western access on Old Oak Common Lane in East Acton.

Henry Peterson, chairman

THE SOUTH KENSINGTON & QUEEN'S GATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

The association will be celebrating its 50th birthday this June and we hope our regular garden party on the patio of our home in Clareville Grove, will go ahead with a glass (or several) of our very potent Pimms and smoked salmon sandwiches. Our committee continued to meet every month via Zoom and MS Teams, and we missed only two months out of the ten.

Planning problems, parking problems, noisy neighbours, noisy cars, noisy motor bikes, massive lorries, and then 'soundless' motorised bikes and scooters on pavements. Gloucester Road pre-Covid, seventeen out of twenty-three shops were devoted to food. Now these premises are boarded up and our streets deserted.

Where are the small vegetable shops, grocers, fish mongers, small dress shops, locksmiths? Perhaps the planners will reconsider putting a cap on the numbers of cafes and eateries within a small run of shops or within a given radius.

The current planning application for the South Kensington Station development is as controversial as the previous seven.





The Forum Hotel is another, and there are two developments at the lower end of Pelham Street that Wellcome is consulting us on.

Boundary lines do not always restrict us in helping if needed. We ensure our voice is registered with the museums, the university campus, Albert Hall and all the embassies and consulates down and around Queen's Gate, which can and do cause disruptions and problems for our neighbours with demonstrations and protesting factions and even socially distanced visa queues.

Caryll Harris, chairman

VICTORIA ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2020 has been a strange year, but for us it has been an extremely busy one.

Heythrop College: VRARA, with support of the Kensington Society, appeared at a nine-day public inquiry in January. The inspector's decision, announced in August, allowed the appeal for a 142-unit luxury retirement housing scheme, with no affordable housing directly associated with it. All traffic over the five-year build period would be through our narrow side streets.

Kensington Forum Hotel: VRARA and the Kensington Society, as part of a team of local residents' associations, presented our case at a second mayoral hearing in October. This massive scheme – two tall towers – would dominate all south-facing views in our area. We have just heard that the secretary of state has decided to take over jurisdiction for this scheme, which means there will be a public inquiry over 12 days in May this year.

Low Traffic Neighbourhood/ 20 mph zone: Through traffic has been excluded from our area since 1971. Now, after 20 years of asking, our whole area has become a 20mph zone. In addition, we have bid successfully for NCIL funds to have CCTV and minor changes to the two no-entry points – Thackeray Street and Victoria Grove – to reinforce the ban on through traffic driving through our area.

Kensington High Street Cycle Lanes: This experimental project with segregated cycle lanes in each direction, was installed in early October. However, the cycle lanes caused congestion, especially in the eastern end. After two months, and large-scale objections, the council decided to remove the lanes. VRARA has supported this decision.

Michael Bach, chairman



Tapas, cheese & charcuterie
Wine, sherry, beer & cocktails
Groups, private hire & events
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Open 7 days a week 12pm – 11pm Find us just along from the
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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY – CHARITY NO. 267778
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2020

Income	2020	2019
Donations and legacies	£	£
Membership subscriptions	9,757.00	10,302.00
Donations and legacies	2,076.71	2,741.69
Gift Aid	2,202.08	2,405.26
Total donations and legacies	14,035.79	15,448.95
Charitable activities		
Events	0.00	2,993.31
Annual report advertising	7,925.00	8,650.00
Total charitable activities	7,925.00	11,643.31
Investment income		
Bank interest	189.39	450.00
Total income	22,144.18	27,542.26
Expenditure		
Charitable activities		
Newsletter	3,968.76	2,293.34
Events	2,390.00	8,043.29
Annual report	12,869.24	11,402.49
Planning	7,244.00	4,340.00
Membership	1,355.19	2,500.06
Charitable	195.00	150.00
Total charitable activities expense	28,022.19	28,729.18
Other		
Insurance	350.33	350.33
Examiner	0.00	660.00
Total other expense	350.33	1,010.33
Total expenditure	28,372.52	29,739.51
Net income/(expenditure)	(6,228.34)	(2,197.25)
Total unrestricted funds brought forward	82,927.11	85,124.36
Total unrestricted funds carried forward	76,698.77	82,927.11

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Current assets		
Debtors		
Accrued income and prepayments		
Insurance	227.72	227.72
Total accrued income and prepayments	227.72	227.72
Cash at bank and in hand		
Nationwide Building Society	75,000.00	75,000.00
Barclays Bank	3,185.66	9,384.23
PayPal	20.01	100.00
Total cash at bank and in hand	78,205.67	84,484.23
Total current assets	78,433.39	84,711.95
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Deferred income		
Subscriptions and donations	0.00	110.00
Creditors		
City Living	1,014.84	1,014.84
Accruals	719.78	660.00
Total deferred income and creditors	1,734.62	1,784.84
Total net assets	76,698.77	82,927.11
Funds of the charity		
Unrestricted funds	76,698.77	82,927.11

Approved by the Trustees 28 January 2021

Signed: Martin Frame

Date: 28 January 2021

Martin Frame, Chartered Accountant

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

The Kensington Society

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Society wishes to thank all the members who have generously subscribed £9,757.00, donations and legacies of £2,076.71 which qualified for Gift Aid of £2,202.08.

The total income for the year was £22,144.18, a decrease of £6,228.34. There was no income from events as a consequence of COVID-19.

The cost of administrative help is allocated on a time basis to the various charitable activities.

The total expenditure was £28,372.52, a reduction of £1,366.99.

The balance sheet has unrestricted funds of the Society of £76,698.77 a reduction of £6,213.34. These funds are necessary to secure the future of the Society. However, it is important that new friends and neighbours are invited to join and legacies are received to rebuild funds.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS For the year ended 31 December 2020

- **Charity registered address and number**

The Kensington Society's registered charity number is 267778.

- **Accounting policies**

These accounts have been prepared based under the historical cost convention in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities – Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS 102).

Income

- **Recognition of incoming income**

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

- The charity becomes entitled to the income;
- The trustees are virtually certain they will receive the income; 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 income.

- **Tax reclaims on gifts and donations**

Incoming income 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 expenditure.

Financial instruments

- **Debtors**

Debtors do not carry any interest and are stated at their nominal value. Appropriate allowances for estimated irrecoverable amounts are recognised in the SoFA when there is objective evidence that the asset is impaired.

- **Cash in bank and on hand**

These comprise cash at bank and other short-term highly liquid bank deposits with an original maturity of three months or less.

Membership

Charity No. 267778

The objects of The Kensington 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 future development and by protecting, preserving and improving its buildings, open spaces and other features of beauty or historic or public interest.

The membership subscription of £15 is payable by bank standing order only and is renewable annually on 1 January. This entitles one person to be a member. Please complete further forms for additional memberships.

Individual subscription £ 15 Renewable annually on 1 January.

Donation £ _____

Total £ _____ Please pay by bank standing order only; no cheques.

Title: Full Name: Date of Birth:

Address:

City and Postcode:

Email:

Mobile: Home telephone:

How did you hear of us? Renewal ☐, Friend ☐, Planning issue ☐, Other ☐

giftaid it ☐ Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money to
The Kensington Society made today or in the past four years or in the future.

I confirm that I have paid or shall pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the Charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give after 6 April 2008. You can cancel your Gift Aid declaration at any time. Please let us know if you change your name or address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

X Signature: Date:

Bank Standing Order

****** The reference number ****** below will be allocated when we receive your membership form. Please check that your bank address and post code are given below as this form will be posted to your bank for processing. The bank will need your original signature. Please post to the COVID-19 address; The Kensington Society, Westwoods, Clatford Bottom, MARLBOROUGH SN8 4DY. For further information email kensingtonsociety@outlook.com or call 020 7193 5243. Thank you.

Bank Name and Branch:

Bank Address:

City and Postcode:

Sort Code: Account: A/c Name:

Please pay Barclays Bank Notting Hill Gate sort code **20-47-34** for the credit of **The Kensington Society**

account **70519138**, reference ****** ****** a first payment of £: immediately and an annual payment of £: on 1 January until further notice.

X Signature: Date:



ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT KENSINGTON?

Do you cherish where you live and want to ensure that what is wonderful about the Royal Borough is both loved and protected?

Then join us.

Your membership of the Kensington Society is most appreciated. We do need more members to give greater weight to our negotiations with the council, developers and others. And there are more opportunities to support us.

If you have the time and the interest, why not join us on one of the committees or on a specific project:

- Membership and events
- Accounting and finance
- Special projects such as Save the Police Station and other Assets of Community Value
- Website and blogging
- Newsletter and annual report writing and research

We need more people to participate in the work of the society. We would like to broaden the range of experience and expertise and to widen and deepen the subjects we consider. That might mean setting up sub-committees to look at subjects such as air pollution, crime, transport, schooling, and sponsorship such as competitions and awards.

It is not a full-time commitment that is needed. What **is** needed are individuals with a specific interest and some time to meet and take forward that enthusiasm for the betterment of Kensington.

Email us and let's talk: kensingtonsociety@outlook.com



A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

Chelsfield has over 30 years' experience in revitalising notable addresses. One of its latest projects is The Knightsbridge Estate, for which Chelsfield is asset and development manager for owner The Olayan Group.

The Estate has undergone major renovation and improvements over the last decade. The most significant is the development at the northern end.

This ambitious project sees the arrival of seven flagship retail stores across 80,000 sq ft – including One Sloane Street, where Burberry will open the doors on a new store in June

2021; 67,000 sq ft of prime office accommodation; 33 luxury rental apartments; and a destination roof-top restaurant with a ground floor café.

Major improvements to the public realm are also underway including the creation of two new tube entrances, which includes one with step-free access; a public pocket garden on Hooper's Court; and a widened pavement on Brompton Road to improve pedestrian flow.

Watch this space.

£5 for non-members

