

# THE KENSINGTON

## SOCIETY

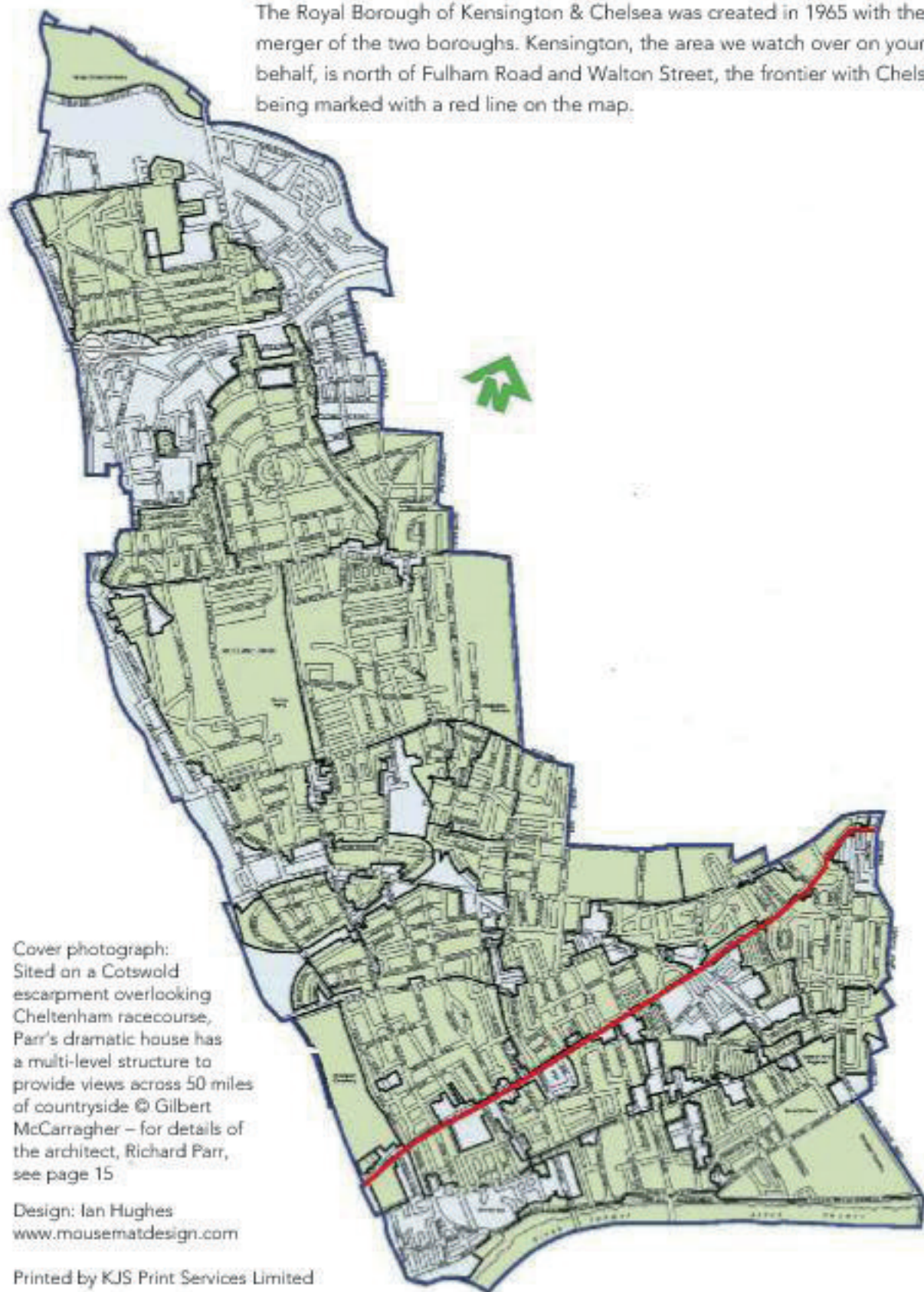
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2022–2023



## 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.



Cover photograph:  
Sited on a Cotswold  
escarpment overlooking  
Cheltenham racecourse,  
Parr's dramatic house has  
a multi-level structure to  
provide views across 50 miles  
of countryside © Gilbert  
McCarraher – for details of  
the architect, Richard Parr,  
see page 15

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# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY 2022–2023

95 Highlever Road, London W10 6PW  
[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

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

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---

Alison Sutherland, *administrator and annual report co-editor*

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[www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)  
95 Highlever Road, London W10 6PW  
[kensingtonsociety@outlook.com](mailto:kensingtonsociety@outlook.com)  
Registered charity 267778

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## WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF OUR COMMUNITY

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# President's Report

Nick Ross

**D**EMOCRACY HAS LOST ITS WAY.

Let's face it, it was never a brilliant approach to social management. On the contrary, as Churchill and others have often pointed out, it is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. It is also surprisingly elastic. Russia has an elected government and all around the world leaders, like those in Israel or in Turkey, seek to curb the opposition. The last global survey by *The Economist* concluded only 8.4% of the world's population lives in a full democracy.

Let's count our blessings. We in Britain are in that 8.4%. Here democracy as such is not the problem. But maybe we don't think enough about how poorly our democracy serves us.

In fact its failings are so manifest and extensive that it's surprising how little we discuss them. There is the voting system itself which developed haphazardly over eight centuries and migrated from an intimate electorate of forty to eighty people to one more than a million times as large. That has reduced us to buying brands which in turn hands power to corporates, principally the Conservative and Labour parties in England and Wales which in many constituencies have such strangleholds that it's only just a joke when people say a donkey with the right rosette could get elected. Occasionally a by-election makes a few ripples, and Scotland bucked the trend only to lapse into a one-party state. It's true that every now then the corporates lose their grip, as with the Brexit referendum. But essentially this is a system designed for and jealously defended by the big parties which control it. Those of us who don't have tribal loyalties often swap from one party to another rather as we might change soap powders. We are consulted every few years, then given the power to place an X on polling card on the basis of personalities we have never actually met or manifestos few of us have read or believed. In any case our efforts to vote will usually be irrelevant in all but 10 per cent of constituencies which can truly be classed as marginal. Even in local government, where the LibDems have a better chance, the two big brands always dominate the scene.

Thus we are encouraged to be reflexive rather than truly analytical. Little wonder so many people flushed with discontent in the summer of 2016 plumped for Brexit – and little wonder so many of them, and even more abstainers – now wish they'd voted Remain. Little wonder we have government by amateurs with busloads of MPs rolling in and out of ministerial jobs through revolving doors, sometimes lasting only months or even weeks and rarely having the time to understand the brief let alone acquire





departmental experience or expertise. Even their advisers are frequently politicised, with an army of SPADs neutering professionals in the civil service and technical consultants appointed because they follow the accepted agenda (this, incidentally, is what led to Grenfell).

Just as disconcerting as the DIY approach to government is the shroud placed by democracy over even the wisest of our politicians. Our adversarial approach to representative government means debates are often reduced to slogans. That encourages political sectarianism and makes it hard for even open-minded policymakers to think outside the box. Our crime policy has been anti-intellectual and ill-informed for years, and plainly we can't go on paying for healthcare almost exclusively through taxes without one day bankrupting the State, but hardly anyone dares challenge such shibboleths. And once politicians have given us a benefit – old people's travel passes (a conspiracy against the impoverished young) or 100% capital gains tax relief on our principal residence (making housing an inflationary investment as much as a home and distorting investment away from wealth creation) or any of the other accumulated goodies we take for granted, there is no going back and, more worryingly, no grown-up debate.

But what has troubled me most immediately in the time I have been President of the Kensington Society is how the very process of democracy has encouraged us as individual citizens to be antisocial. You might think that an amenity group like ours is the epitome of social responsibility – and indeed, much of what we do is plainly important in preserving and enhancing the built environment. But I vividly recall a member writing in angrily after I had suggested some of our members might be being nimbyish. Nimbyism, he maintained, is the very essence of democracy and citizens have every right to defend what's good for them and to maintain the status quo. I wrote back soothingly – after all, members are the lifeblood, the *raison d'être*, of the Society. But actually, no. I think I can say that now that I am retiring as President. No, Nimbyism is not the essence of democracy; it is undermining it.

If it's not in my back yard it generally means it must go in someone else's. I might agree we need new hospitals, and GP surgeries better roads and railways, decent prisons, improved 5G reception, much more and better housing; I might want to fly abroad on business or to go on holiday. But unless I class myself as an antisocial hypocrite I can only legitimately hope for those improvements if I share in some of the pain. Nimbyism is the Americanism for what we Brits once derided as 'I'm all right Jack': those of us who act in our own best interests at the expense of others. And we're easily encouraged to be Nimbys. Almost every planning proposal is met with outrage even though, as I have pointed out previously in this column, the next generation so often seeks to preserve what caused uproar in the past. Where I live now, just over the border into Westminster, the immediate community has got together and, without exception, has supported every planning application in recent years. That encourages consultation, candour and, dare I say it, empathy towards the applicants and understanding by the applicants about their neighbours.

But it's hard to have open thinking and reasoned discussion so long as we fail to accept that every right we demand must be matched at least equally by our obligations to others in our shared society. Mrs Thatcher could not have meant it literally when she said so famously there is no such thing as society. Otherwise she would not have been such a champion of duty and responsibility.





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# The 68th Annual General Meeting of The Kensington Society was held on 13 June 2022

AGM

**A**MANDA FRAME, CHAIRMAN OF the Kensington Society, welcomed members and guests to the Great Hall, Hornton Street, for the first AGM since 2019, and asked for 72 seconds silence in memory of those who lost their lives on 14 June 2017 in the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Nick Ross, president of the society, reflecting on the five years since the fire, noted that some 500 tower blocks still have no sprinklers and the £150million enquiry has yet to produce a report, while senior ministers do their best to avoid mentioning the subject at all. And at 2 o'clock that afternoon Elizabeth Campbell, leader of the council, had advised all Conservative councillors not to attend the society's agm out of respect for the anniversary. Why? Respect or fear? We hope it does not represent a widening gap between the society and the council.

Proceeding to the order of business, he started with the approval of the minutes of the 2021 AGM as set out in the annual report pages 9–10, and the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts as set out in the annual report pages 92–93. Moving on to the election of trustees, he made a plea for volunteers, remarking that it is not a formality as several will be retiring shortly having served longer than most, notably the editor of the annual report, Michael Becket (83), the treasurer Martin Frame and Amanda the chairman. Michael Bach, Michael Becket, Thomas Blomberg, Amanda Frame, Martin Frame, Sophia Lambert, Henry Peterson, Vanessa Bartulovic, Steve Mertz and Barry Munday were duly re-elected nem con. Finally, the trustees proposed Martin Frame as treasurer and secretary and his election was seconded from the floor and approved nem con.

He next introduced the speaker, Sir Peter Bazalgette ('Baz' as he called him) who, starting as a BBC trainee, was taken up by Esther Rantzen on *That's Life*, before leaving to found one of the very first independent television production companies – which are now the backbone of the tv industry. Describing him as a champion of culture in the widest sense, from engineering to the arts, he said his great-great grandfather Sir Joseph Bazalgette would be proud of him.

Sir Peter, who among other things is chair of the Creative Industries Council, has been criticised for pumping back into homes, via Big Brother, the ordure that his great ancestor pumped out, remarked that he was 'born with sewage in the blood'. Sir Joseph, he claimed, was part of the story of how this great city was built on health and wealth, as he helped to cure cholera so enabling the growth of the economy. Traditionally 'night soil men' had removed the contents of basement cesspits but the Victorian invention of water closets changed all that, flushing their contents into local rivers and so into the Thames where it simply swilled back and forth on the tide.

In 1854 Dr John Snow, examining outbreaks of cholera in Soho, concluded that the water pumps, were responsible. His theory was not generally accepted but Sir Joseph, then chief engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works, noted it, and drew up a scheme



for a system of sewers. It took three more years, until the Great Stink of 1858 caused the closure of the Houses of Parliament, before the initial £3million was granted by chancellor of the exchequer, Disraeli. Even though it was, for the time, a huge sum it proved not to be enough and in 1862 a further £1.6million was granted by then chancellor Gladstone. And it was an enormous undertaking. It included the digging (using the cut and cover system) of 111 miles of local sewers and 82 miles of main sewers which would, using a gravity system, carry the waste to two pumping stations: at Abbey Mills and Crossness. There, massive steam engines would lift the waste and discharge it into the lower reaches of the Thames and the North Sea. Crossness was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1865 and Prince Charles opened the newly restored, Grade 1 listed building in 2003. And along with the sewers, Bazalgette's workforce also constructed the Albert, Victoria and Chelsea embankments, narrowing the river and improving the tidal flow. Although at the time London's population was only 2.3 million, Bazalgette built for a population of up to 4 million. It is only now, with a population of over 8 million, that London's Thames Tideway Tunnel is being constructed, adding to Bazalgette's original system rather than replacing it.

After this comprehensive history of an essential part of London's infrastructure Nick Ross took questions from the floor before Amanda Frame delivered her chairman's report.

Noting that much of the work of the society relates to planning she ranged through the vagaries of the various Plans. The London Plan, produced in 2004 and revised in 2008, 2011, 2016 and 2021, the National Framework first published in 2012 and since revised three times with another revision imminent, and the Local Plan, which directs RBKC's planning decisions, first issued in 2010 and partly revised since. A new draft is currently being consulted on – the society responded with 91 pages of comments. We might, she said, have a new plan by 2023 – if we're lucky! Part of the problem is down to changing government policies. In 2019 Robert Jenrick, then housing secretary, promised 300,000 new homes a year, of which London was to produce 97,500 and RBKC 3,285 per year. Since 2010 only 3,347 new homes have been built in the borough, just 267 in 2020/21. The London Plan gave us some grace allotting 448 new homes a year for the next five years. However, developers have jumped on the numbers and are producing plans for ever denser and taller constructions. The Kensal/Salisbury site with 3,500 to 5,000 homes in towers ranging from 12 to 35 storeys, each with one stair only, is planned just off the busy Ladbroke Road where the only public transport is by bus. Then in 2020 the Use Classes Order was changed and this was followed by new permitted development rights under which all these properties could be turned into housing, and additional storeys added to certain buildings, again with no need for planning permission. Already we are seeing vital services being lost to housing. Most recently Michael Gove, announced that 'unrealistic' housing targets should not be imposed on us and that environmental and community needs must be addressed. How can anyone, Amanda Frame asked, produce a Local Plan against a constantly moving target?

A different target is the pre-application process which seems, she said, to have turned into a development support system quoting particularly plans for South Kensington Station. Good news is several key sites which are no longer to be demolished but refurbished, and the establishment of a Business Improvement District for Kensington High Street. The fate of Notting Hill police station has still to be determined. Finally, she



thanked the trustees for their commitment, particularly Anthony Walker who has stepped down after 11 years, and Michael Becket who has edited the annual report for 10 years.

Nick Ross, winding up, noted how these continual U-turns distract only raising problems not solving them. What do we want? Are we being realistic? It all adds up, he said, to a challenging environment for the society.

AVS, June 2022



# Chairman's Report

Amanda Frame

IT IS STRANGE WHAT A YEAR can do with your memories. Last year as I wrote this report we were still in the shadow of a pandemic. It seems a horrible memory but oddly one which many remember as terribly unproductive while others have wisely used the time to develop new hobbies or even new professions.

For the Kensington Society the pandemic had little effect. Life did not slow down. For 2022 and now that we are already in the middle of 2023, it is busier than ever. No complaints except the usual plea for volunteer help with multiple tasks and for renewal of membership.

On reflection, it seems odd to me that while Kensington and Chelsea is the smallest borough in the nation by area and one of the most densely populated, development can still be forced on us. The housing numbers required from both the government as well as the mayor of London are huge. Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court are the obvious remaining sites for development but even they will be crowded with tall buildings to make the target. There are two ways to reach the numbers required: accept major changes to our historic fabric or build higher and higher.

The government announced proposals at the end of last year for a ban on single staircases in residential buildings taller than ten storeys. The mayor of London followed with his own announcement that the rule would come into force in London with immediate effect and will apply to all planning applications not approved before 23 December 2022. We welcome this, but there are signs that developers will be less interested in tall buildings as a result.

While we welcome them, we are concerned that the much touted sustainable and greening proposals within the London Plan can too often be side-stepped by developers, who claim they cannot meet the required standards for reducing carbon emissions and seek instead to make a cash in lieu 'contribution' to the council's own carbon reducing projects. We question who within the council has the professional experience to assess whether a developer genuinely cannot meet the standard. On-site reductions in carbon emissions can be achieved in a number of ways, including maximising energy efficiency, using decentralised energy networks or through the use of on-site renewable energy technologies. It should therefore be possible for almost any development to be designed to achieve the required reduction. We are also not persuaded that the council is setting their carbon offset price high enough.

New Building Regulations were announced in June 2022 which included





amendments to require better ventilation and conservation of fuel and power and new requirements to prevent overheating without energy-guzzling air-conditioning. The new standards are aimed at reducing energy use and carbon emissions in new developments as well as renovation/refurbishment. The new regulations came into effect immediately. However, existing approved developments which had made a 'material start' will not be required to meet these regulations, which we regret.

We remain concerned that too many planning applications are approved contrary to the policies within the Local Plan 2019, particularly with regard to the housing target, changes of use which result in the loss of community facilities (including schools) and conservation requirements. Our ability to be involved in the pre-application process remains hit and miss. Sadly often the pre-application advice for smaller projects is given contrary to policy which results in problems when an application comes forward with the advice and then is refused by the planners or the committees. There has also been a lack of consistency in pre-application advice, with different advice given for almost identical proposals.

When you have situations such as the current appeal by the developer Native Land and TfL against the council's refusal of the South Kensington Station development proposal, one does despair. We welcomed the refusal of this application by the planning committee. But we must note that the borough's own planning department recommended approval. It is always difficult to fight an appeal when the appellant can so easily quote the council's own document as support. There were over 1,939 letters of objection. There were 689 support letters; the majority of these, however, were solicited by Native Land's PR firm. They were worded exactly the same and all stated they wanted step-free access to the Underground – one of the benefits claimed by the developers for their scheme. However, after we had forensically reviewed the plans and proposals, what was obvious was that the step-free was not to be done until, and only then if, Native Land obtained consent to build the second phase, which could be in the far distant future. We were also concerned that the proposed new fire exit was not included in the proposal, so the fire safety issues and limited capacity in the station remained. Though lift shafts were to be constructed, the lifts themselves were not included. It was a bit of a sham therefore to say, as they did, that it would be step-free. Oddly, the council planners seemed to not have comprehended the subtlety of these omissions and continued to support the application. The appellant was represented by the highest level of legal, planning, architectural, structural, environmental, and transport consultants. They packed the hearing chamber. The council was gallantly represented by one barrister and the planning team who had recommended approval.

A consortium of residents' associations and the Kensington Society applied for and were accepted as "Rule 6 parties", which allowed us to take an active part in the appeal hearing. This meant we could fill in where the council lacked the will. Please read the section in the planning chapter of this report on the South Kensington Station. As Rule 6 we needed expert advice to counter that of the appellants, the whole exercise cost us over £20,000 in legal and professional fees. Luckily, we have been very prudent in our expenditure and we had the funds; we also think this money was well spent, given the importance of the project.

However, it does cause us to reflect on how we arrived there in the first place.

How were the planners so convinced by the proposal? How did they actually believe that the proposal would provide step-free access in our lifetime? Why wasn't the station capacity an issue from the very beginning of the planning process? Why, following the application, was there zero dialogue with the residents? Time will tell whether the 20 or so expensive professionals employed by Native Land and TfL will persuade the planning inspector. If she allows the appeal, we will have an extremely damaging development which will obliterate the wonderful character of South Kensington. We are not opposed to development of the South Kensington site, but this was a damaging gross over-development. Development must happen. However, if there had been a dialogue with the developers or even a dialogue with our own planners, we would not have been where we are now...in peril.

Currently there are three other major projects in development: Earl's Court, Kensal Canalside and Newcombe House. Again, please read the planning report on these sites. As to whether lessons will be learned from the South Kensington proposals and appeal, time will tell. Last year I reported that we 'worked hard to build good and constructive partnership with the planners'. In some cases we have managed to do so, in particular with the multiple appeals for the overdevelopment of the Academy pub and there has been much consultation on Newcombe House. But in other cases we have been stonewalled. One of the big problems is the ever revolving door of planning officers leading to considerable inconsistency in decision-making and sometimes the ignoring of the council's own policies. Our task is therefore greater than ever.

#### **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.

# Local architect: Richard Parr

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by Michael Becket

HAVING ACQUIRED A GRADE 2 star house the new owner wanted a comprehensive restructure. Look at the how the kitchen is placed, and you cannot live in rooms as small as that, and the layout and appearance need radical redoing. “You shouldn’t have bought it.” responded Richard Parr. It was not courage or crusading for the architect to admonish a potential customer, it was simple recognition this was a client he could not get along with. “It was pretty obvious it was not going to work.”

He prides himself on sensitivity with the buildings he adapts, on using locally used materials. “We are modern traditionalists, harnessing craft traditions and technology with contemporary design intelligence.” In a current Suffolk project, for instance, he is restoring a thatched roof. When “repurposing a building, no matter how radically, we use as much of the existing fabric as we can”. The principle he says is to respect the origins – both in the form and the surrounding area – while still managing to add another layer of modernity. “Using bits of existing structure and design with a sense of place. It is not a conservation but patient and respectful architecture working with old structures.” It is tricky balance, deciding what is worth preserving yet inserting the necessary comforts for contemporary living. That sort of work represents over half his company’s work., with new buildings accounting for the rest.

Most of the projects he now undertakes range from upwards of a £3 million budget, rising to £25 million or even more. On of his more recent contracts was reconstructing



The renovated farm at The Newt © Gilbert McCarragher



the hospitality venue Farmyard at The Newt. The Newt is a vast Somerset country estate owned by South African entrepreneurs, with restored orchards, ranges of gardens, a variety of buildings including a Georgian house turned into an upmarket hotel. Richard emphasises fidelity to the original there too, using the local honey-coloured stone and Cornish slate. Work at The Newt is continuing for Richard's practice.

The idea with ancient buildings is not just to tart them up but to produce a "blend of preserved existing structure but adapted to project into the future" making them workable for the next fifty years at least, he says. Such contracts, including hotels and restaurants, are the reason he needs the staff of 16 at his People's Hall studio in the middle of Frestonia in north Kensington which he comprehensively renovated, in the middle of the Covid pandemic. In addition, he has another seven people at the Cotswold countryside studio next to his Easter Park Farm home which he has been adapting for nearly 20 years including a reworked grain loft.

That is at the group of properties and small farm he has accumulated there. But he likes Kensington and has fond memories of living just off Portobello Road when he was a student at the Architectural Association. What he studied was never in question. From early childhood he was fascinated by buildings and never wanted to be anything but an architect.

In those days, when more holidays were taken in Britain, he would persuade his parents to take him to see buildings – churches, stately homes, bridges. A visit to Coventry Cathedral aged about nine was so moving he clearly remembers the emotional impression it made on him. "The devastation, yet the recreation of something new, the collaboration of architect and artist." That was produced in a period when there was much more interaction between the various artistic disciplines; when people like Piper



London office of the Parr architectural practice





(Richard collects his pictures) and Epstein were parts of the interaction. He regrets that seems to have passed.

So there was no question he would study architecture when he went to Newcastle university. After graduation he came to London to acquire a diploma from the Architectural Association. One of his tutors introduced him an architectural practice in Seville and off he went in 1989, first to collaborate on a competition, after which he stayed on. Spain, because it had only relatively recently thrown off its fascist rule and was in such creative ferment, Richard felt was the place to be.

He moved on from there to the Madrid office of the Fitch international architectural practice. That however was badly hit in the recession of the early 1990s and among the staff it shed was the recently-joined Richard Parr. As a result he set up his own business there and “managed to find small retail projects”. Returning to Britain he set up business on his own with few contracts. “I was probably mad – I should have first joined an established firm.”

All the same, he certainly seems to have thrived. He suggests “people can see what we are doing”. That is not surprising, as most professionals are unsure where their business come from – whether it is a solicitor or portrait painter, dentist or architect – the source of clients is strange and erratic. By publicity or recommendation clients arrive.

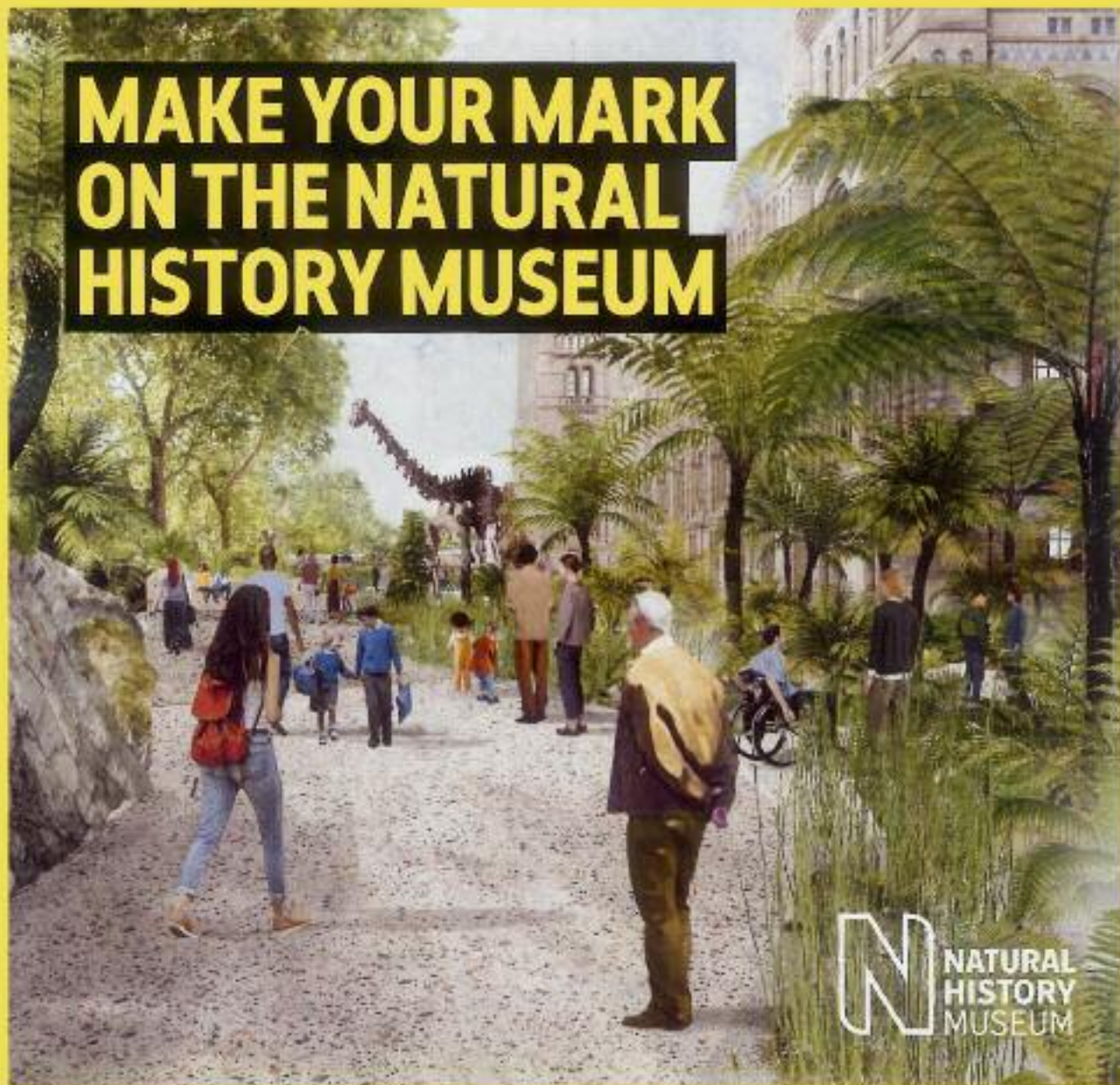
At one point, he was living in the rather fashionable area of Shepherds Market where he had the use of a flat on condition he renovated it. “It was pretty derelict” when he first moved in. Nowadays, especially with fast broadband, professional practices like his no longer need such swanky expensive addresses and can work anywhere convenient. In fact, he soon became prosperous enough to buy that small house in the Cotswolds in 1995. He sold his original office in Westbourne Grove when he decided his young children should grow up in the country. He recently added four desks on what looks like a minstrel’s gallery at the People’s Hall.



London office of the Parr architectural practice



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# Local retailer: Henry Hallpike

by Michael Becket

**P**ROBLEMS FOR IMMIGRANTS ARE nothing new. David Kuss arrived from Germany in 1845 to sell his cuckoo clocks made in Germany's Black Forest. Yet, after 70 years residence his descendants still had to change their name in 1915 to Cuss to prevent anti-German violence in London during World War I. As it happened, a member of the family who had gone back to Germany before the war to learn clockmaking, was imprisoned, when hostilities broke out, as a British spy. So they were alien in both countries. As Dominic Cuss, currently running the business, ruefully concedes. He notes the royal family and Mountbattens, faced with the same hostility, also changed their names.

The original business was a partnership with Andrew Kammerer, who had arrived in 1788 also to sell cuckoo clocks, and had premises in Holborn with the main site in Shepherd's Bush. After anglicisation, it became Camerer Cuss and not only made clocks and watches but had lucrative contracts winding, regulating and servicing clocks at hospitals, shops, churches and pubs all over London. The man doing the rounds, quite often the boss, made sure he travelled with a good selection of jewellery to tempt customers.

During World War II its premises were damaged – by German bombs. It did however fare better than a competitor just down the road called Henry Hallpike, which received



This is the workroom of the shop when it had its own workmen.  
Now it is subcontracted to tested workshops.



a direct hit, killing two of the directors. In one of those ironies of fate, the third director, fighting as a soldier on the western front, survived the war. The two widows and he had no stomach for keeping the business going and offered to sell it to Camerer Cuss on condition its name survived.

The block of flats built in 1939 just west of what is now the Design Museum on Kensington High Street still had one shop unlet. So, rather bravely in 1942, in the middle of the war, the combined businesses abandoned their piles of rubble and moved there. And true to their word, it is still called Henry Hallpike, though if you look carefully there is still a quiet little footnote mentioning Camerer Cuss.

Dominic himself never planned to take on the business to succeed his father and uncle. He had been a City banker. But “it was a shame to see this all fold up after so many years” so before his father retired he came back as his assistant for five years learning the business before he could buy his way in – “you never get this sort of family business as a present”. His three sons however seem not too keen on taking over from him – one is a musician, one is in the army and the third is a policeman. Whether the children of his brother and sister might be interested is still not established. As Dominic says, there is some time to go yet – he is in his fifties – and a lot can happen in that time.

After all, even in his time, the business environment has changed enormously. Prince Charles apparently had one of his cuckoo clocks in his nursery but they are no longer part of the range – Dominic is not even sure anybody in the Black Forest is still making them. And the more standard clocks and watches they used to make have gone as well. “The industry was turned on its head in 1973 with the arrival of quartz mechanisms.”



The trade has polarised with markets selling some at £5 a time, while some people pay tens of thousands at the top end.

The two clock makers working in the basement – who had served their seven year apprenticeship – have long since left. So have the craftsmen who made and repaired watches and did jewellery repairs as well. What diminishing business threatened, the health and safety inspectors killed. The ventilation in the basement is apparently not up to workshop requirements. So repair work now goes to three full-time workshops ranging in location from Hatton Garden to Hayes, with which he has built up a 30-year relationship of trust.

Dominic gets a touch nostalgic. His father, though no pawnbroker, lent money to Shepherds Bush costermongers against their wedding rings to stock their barrows with fruit and vegetables at the start of the week. On Friday evenings they would come to buy the rings back before their wives noticed at the weekends. Nothing like that happens now. He also misses the edgy vibrancy of Kensington and its market before it became so humdrum prosperous

Reluctance by the next generation to get involved may also be financial. “I make a profit if I don’t pay myself.” In 2021 he made a loss even after the government grant. He has an enormously wide range, much of it second-hand, though as member of the Company of Master Jewellers, the shop also supports current jewellery designers. There are, in addition, watches, cufflinks, and silver bowls and a tiny set of doll’s furniture, also in silver. Prices range widely. “It is a day to day business and I’m surprised at what people buy”, ranging from opulent £10,000 Georgian silver candlesticks to Casio watches. About a quarter of the business comes from repair work.

Overheads take their toll. Kensington High Street is classed as a premier high street, which puts it in the top bracket for council tax. Normally premier class requires a department store, but the departure of Pontings, Derry & Toms and Barkers seems to have been overlooked. In addition, the bit of the high street west of Earls Court Road (“even the Christmas decorations used not to reach past there”) does not seem have to same cachet or passing trade, as even rents indicate. However, the rest of the high street is classified, his bit is a bit down market from it. As it happens, for a destination shop such as this, such a location is not that much of a handicap, but that does not change the principle. The council is adamant. As a result Dominic pays £17,000 a year council tax. He is however optimistic. Covid and the subsequent collapse of retail and hence loss of all council tax “has made them think again”.



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# Blue Plaques

## Ezra Pound 1885-1972

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by Michael Becket

**I**T WAS NOT BECAUSE HE WAS a Nazi that Ezra Pound was confined to a lunatic asylum. But his American trial for treason conducted in absentia during World War II was short-circuited by the decision he was insane.

It was a fall comparable with Greek tragedy, from worldwide acclaim, friendship with the major talents of his time, praise from Hemingway and T S Eliot, to contempt, ignominy and incarceration.

Ezra Loomis Pound was born in the small mining town of Hailey, Idaho, in 1885. At the age of 15, he told his parents he was going to be a poet. In 1908, with \$80 in his pocket, he arrived in Italy where he paid \$8 to have 100 copies of his first book of poems, *A Lume Spento*, printed. It opened doors. When he moved to London, he became friendly with W B Yeats and moved into rooms at 10 Kensington Church Walk, not far from his new friend Ford Madox Ford, who lived at 80 Campden Hill Road. He became Yeats's secretary, and was later best man at his wedding. He was introduced to Dorothy Shakespeare in February 1909, and they married in April 1914.

Success, fame and respect came early. Three books, *Personae*, *Exultations* and *The Spirit of Romance*, received enthusiastic reviews. Wrote one reviewer: Pound "is that rare thing among modern poets, a scholar". In addition, Pound wrote numerous reviews and

critiques for a variety of publications, such as *New Age*, *the Egoist*, and

*Poetry*. T S Eliot later noted, "During a crucial decade in the

history of modern literature, approximately 1912-1922,

Pound was the most influential and in some ways the best critic in England or America".

One afternoon in 1912, in the British Museum tearoom Pound, Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle (the poet HD) created a 'movement' in poetry, calling it Imagism. The aim was modernity: clarity, economy and precision, and against abstraction, romanticism, rhetoric, inversion of word order, and over-use of adjectives. Pound's maxims included, "Do not retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose", a reaction against the sentimentality that flooded Victorian and Romantic poetry. After a few frustrating years, he resigned unable to secure control of the movement.

He turned instead to promoting writers he felt deserved attention. He backed Robert Frost, Ernest Hemingway and DH Lawrence, and was responsible for the publication of TS Eliot's *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*.



Pound's friends included James Joyce, whom he introduced to publishers, and found spots in magazines for several of the stories in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. During Joyce's leanest years, Pound helped him with money and even, it is said, helped secure for him an old pair of shoes. Hemingway in 1925 noted of friendship: "He defends when they are attacked, he gets them into magazines and out of jail. ... He introduces them to wealthy women. He gets publishers to take their books. He sits up all night with them when they claim to be dying ... He advances them hospital expenses and dissuades them from suicide".

The years immediately following World War I saw the production of two of his most admired works, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, and the 18-part *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, the latter tackling a wide range of subjects, from the artist and society to the horrors of mass production and world war.

The Pounds settled in Paris in 1921 where he became friendly with Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Fernand Léger and others of the Dada and Surrealist movements, as well as Basil Bunting, and renewed his friendship with Ernest Hemingway. In 1922 Eliot sent him the manuscript of *The Waste Land*, then arrived in Paris to edit it with Pound, who blue-inked the manuscript with comments like "make up yr. mind ..." and "georgian". Eliot wrote: "I should like to think that the manuscript, with the suppressed passages, had disappeared irrecoverably; yet, on the other hand, I should wish the blue pencilling on it to be preserved as irrefutable evidence of Pound's critical genius". The same year Pound met the 26-year-old American violinist Olga Rudge, beginning a love affair that lasted 50 years.

Pound then "indulged in a small nervous breakdown", leading to two days in an American hospital. The Pounds moved to peaceful Rapallo, where they would remain for the next two decades. The following year he had a daughter, Maria, with Olga Rudge, and a son, Omar, with his wife, Dorothy – both swiftly disposed of: Maria was placed with a peasant woman who agreed to raise her for 200 lire a month, while Dorothy gave her baby to her mother, who raised him in London until he was old enough to go to boarding school.

Pound turned his full attention to *The Cantos*, an ambitious long-form poem. He described it as his "poem including history". The first section was published in 1925, with additions appearing over the next fifteen years. In June 1939 he began writing antisemitic material for Italian newspapers, and one owned by the British fascist Sir Oswald Mosley, arguing that the Third Reich was the "natural civiliser of Russia".

Expressing enthusiasm for Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, when war broke out, he began a letter-writing campaign arguing it was the result of an international banking conspiracy, and the United States should keep out of it. He wrote in *The Japan Times* that "Democracy is now currently defined in Europe as a 'country run by Jews', and





elsewhere that the English were a slave race governed since Waterloo by the Rothschilds.

During the war, including during the holocaust in Italy, Pound was paid by the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture for hundreds of broadcasts on Italian radio. He criticised the United States, and rambled about his poetry, economics, and Chinese philosophy. He continued to broadcast and write under pseudonyms until April 1945, shortly before his arrest. Americans took him back to the USA in 1945 to be tried for treason. An officer escorting him back to the United States thought him “an intellectual crackpot who imagined that he could correct all the economic ills of the world”.

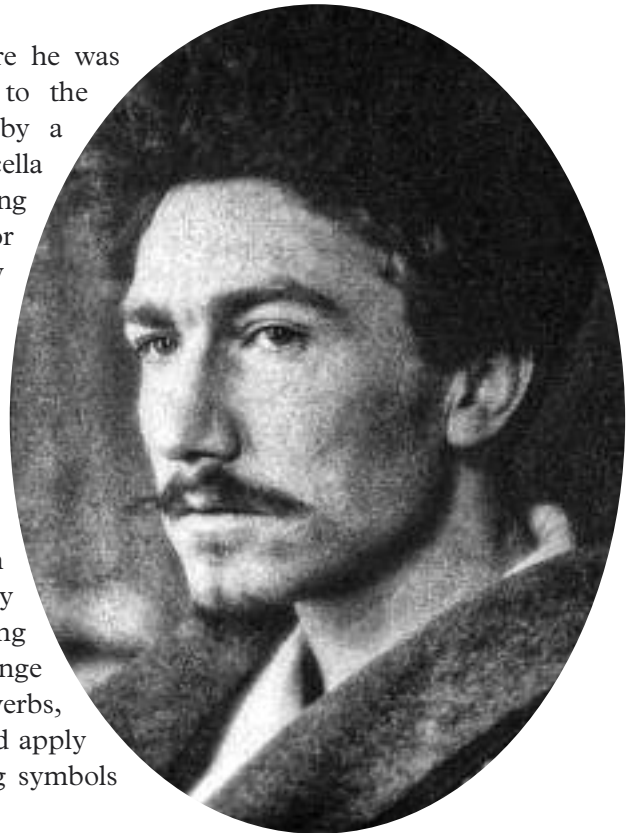
Some psychiatrists believed Pound was a narcissist but sane; the court decided he was mad and Pound was confined in St Elizabeths psychiatric hospital in Washington DC with Dorothy as his legal guardian. After a visit, Olga Rudge wrote to a friend: “EP has – as he had before – bats in the belfry but it strikes me that he has fewer not more than before his incarceration.” He was sane enough to finish the Pisan Cantos, which The New York Times praised as “among the masterpieces of the century”. He was awarded the Bollingen Prize by the Library of Congress, triggering enormous controversy, and completed additional sections of his long poem.

Pound repudiated antisemitism in public, but maintained his views in private.

In 1957 *Le Figaro* published an appeal entitled *The Lunatic at St Elizabeths*. The *New Republic* and *Esquire* followed suit, and *The Nation* argued Pound while a sick and vicious old man, still had rights. Growing pressure from writers such as Hemingway and Frost intensified when Archibald MacLeish hired a lawyer to dismiss the 1945 indictment. The hospital’s superintendent, said Pound was permanently and incurably insane but confinement served no therapeutic purpose. In 1958 he was freed.

He promptly returned to Italy, where he was photographed giving a fascist salute to the waiting press. He was accompanied by a teacher he had met in hospital, Marcella Spann, 40 years his junior, ostensibly acting as his secretary, and collecting poems for an anthology. Dorothy had usually ignored his affairs, but she used her legal power over his royalties to make sure Marcella was sent back to America.

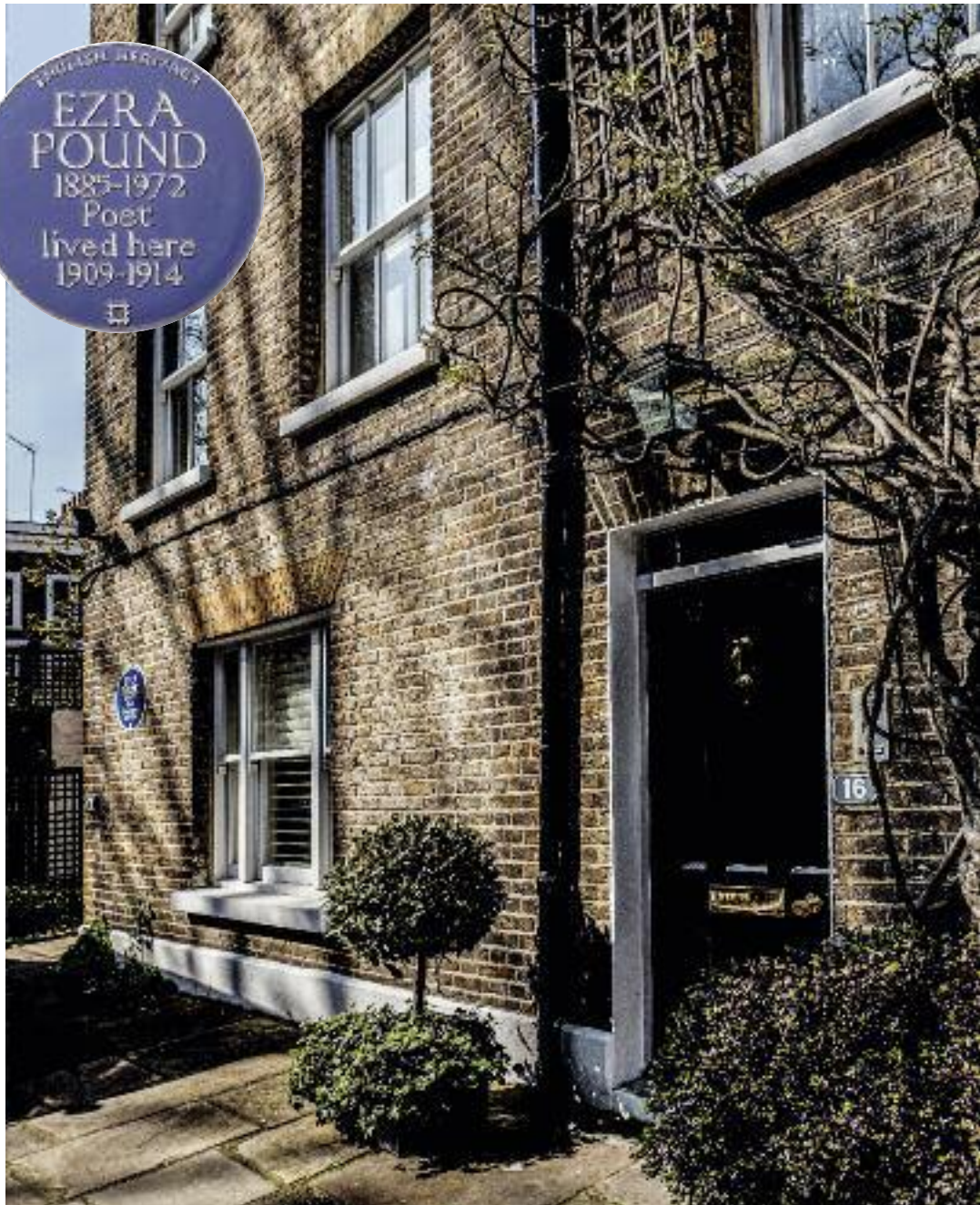
In 1933 *Time* magazine had called him “a cat that walks by himself, tenaciously unhousebroken and very unsafe for children”. Hemingway wrote: “The best of Pound’s writing – and it is in the Cantos – will last as long as there is any literature.” He layered confusing juxtapositions, employed odd and strange words, jargon and parataxis, avoided verbs, and believed the “thoughtful man” would apply organisation and uncover the underlying symbols and structure.



Pound described *The Cantos* as a failed work. “I spoil everything I touch. I have always blundered ... All my life I believed I knew nothing, yes, knew nothing. And so words became devoid of meaning.”

Pound died in Venice in 1972 and was buried on the cemetery island Isole di San Michele near Diaghilev and Stravinsky. Dorothy, having moved back to England in 1961, died the following year. Olga died in 1996 and was buried next to Pound.

Over the course of his lifetime, Pound published 70 books of his own writing, had a hand in some 70 others, and wrote more than 1,500 articles.







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A photograph of the interior of Leighton House, showing a grand staircase with a dark metal railing, a large blue and white tiled wall, and a red sofa with yellow cushions. Several framed paintings are visible on the walls.

Leighton  
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# Leighton House

by Michael Becket

**A**FTER FIVE YEARS AND at the cost of £8 million Leighton House has emerged from its cocoon of renovation rather nearer the way its artist owner Lord Leighton wanted it to look, but with all sorts of modern additions edged into it, including a lift.

Leighton had long planned his ideal studio house and bought the land at the edge of Holland Park at the age of 34 in 1864. From then until almost to his death he went on developing, altering, improving and enlarging it at the cost of huge amounts of time and money. For prosperous Victorians, homes were crowded with elaborate decorative features, artistic decoration, ornate fittings: Leighton's conception went beyond that to an extension of his feeling for beauty. He saw it as a showcase for taste, art and gracious living, as well as a venue for entertaining distinguished artists, collectors and celebrities. His sisters in a letter to *The Times* of 26 January 1899 (three years after his death) said "He built the house as it now stands for his own artistic delight. Every stone of it had been the object of his loving care. It was a joy to him until the moment when he lay down to die." The house increasingly demonstrated his notion of how an artist ought to live and was frequently featured in the press.

Born in 1830 in Yorkshire, with artistic training in Europe – Germany, Italy and France in the course of which he met Arthur Schopenhauer, Ingres, Delacroix, Corot

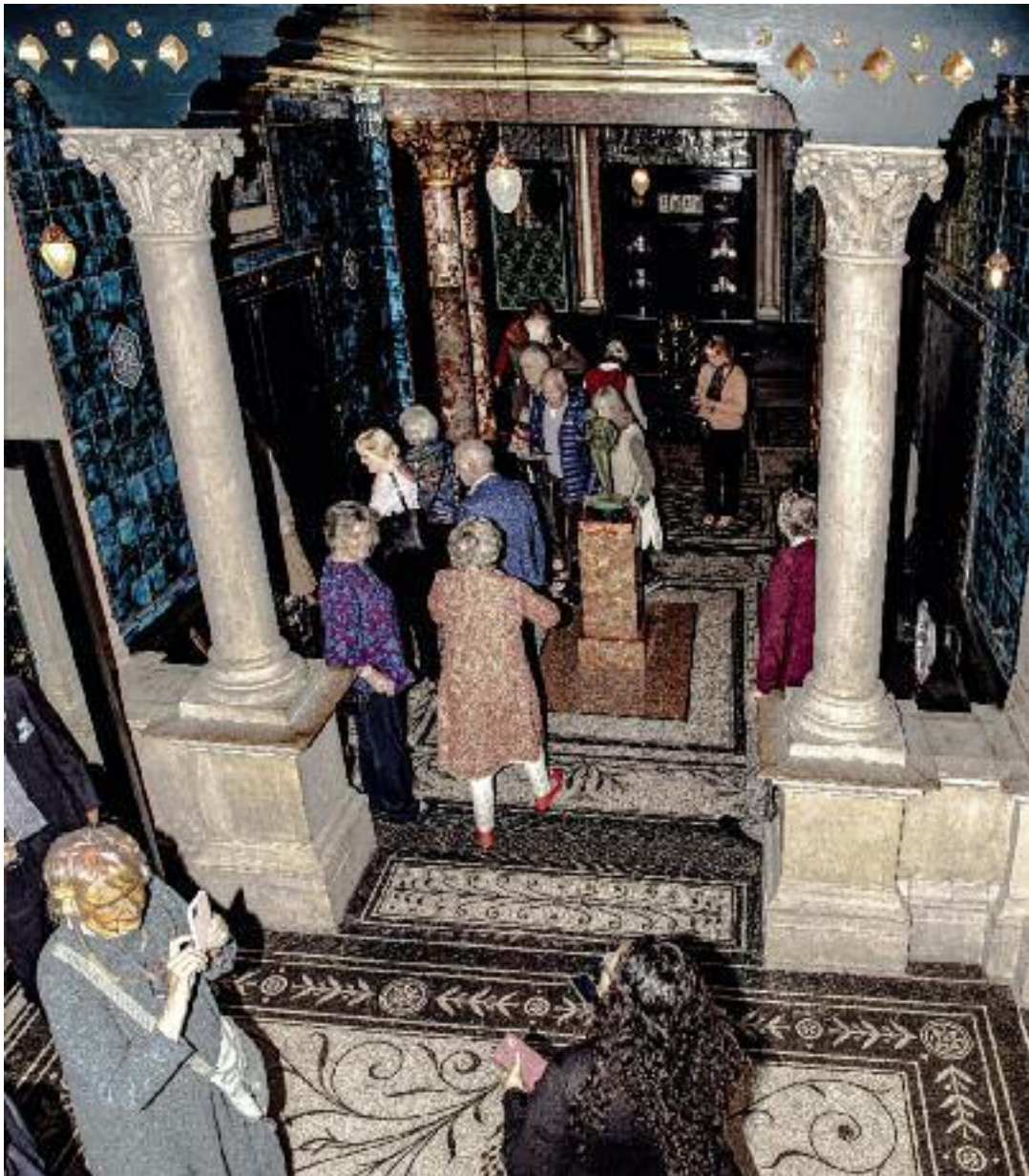




and – at the age of 26 he arrived on the London art scene with a flamboyant impact. A painting of Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna Carried in Procession Through the Streets of Florence, exhibited at the Royal Academy, made him suddenly famous. Prince Albert was so enthusiastic he immediately persuaded Queen Victoria to buy it.

He designed Elizabeth Barrett Browning's tomb for Robert Browning in the English Cemetery, Florence in 1861. In 1864 he became an associate of the Royal Academy and in 1878 he became its president a post he retained for 18 years. The same year he was created a baronet, the first painter to be made a peer in the 1896 New Year Honours, one day before he died of a heart attack.

Leighton met George Aitchison in the 1850s during his stay in Rome. Aitchison, the son of an architect with a family practice designing wharves, warehouses, docks and





railway architecture, had not previously designed any houses. Nevertheless, he was involved in Leighton's house for over 30 years, including interior and furniture design. It led to further work for wealthy aesthete clients, remodelling and decorating the interiors of their London homes. Little of this work has survived.

The original structure was plain and restrained externally, a modest brick house, consisting of just a dining room, drawing room, breakfast room with two rooms upstairs, the studio and a spartan bedroom. Only three years later Leighton started a programme of change, extensions and alterations. The east wall was taken down and the house extended by some five metres to enlarge the studio. A trip to Damascus in 1873 started the collection of tiles mostly dating from the end of the 16th and early 17thC. Trips to Egypt and Turkey produced more and the collection was supplemented by presents from





**The Kensington Society organised a visit to Leighton House as soon as it was available after the refurbishment, and it proved such a popular event it took two parties of the visitors to be conducted around. All photos © photoBECKET**

others, including the explorer and diplomat, Sir Richard Burton. In stylish self-mocking bravura Leighton said he needed something to do with all the tiles he had collected, so in 1877, the construction of the Arab Hall started, inspired by a 12thC Sicilio-Norman palace La Zisa at Palermo. He had talented help including the potter William De Morgan, the artworker Walter Crane, the sculptor Edgar Boehm and the artist and illustrator Randolph Caldecott. Crane's design for the gold mosaic frieze was made up in Venice and shipped in sections.

A salon with paintings by him and by friends provided a place to welcome guests and, on his popular Show Sundays, the curious public.

The last addition on the first floor, on what had been a roof terrace, the Silk Room was designed as a picture gallery to house Leighton's expanding collection of paintings by contemporaries. The walls were lined with a green silk and the artists included Albert Moore, John Everett Millais, George Frederic Watts, John Singer Sargent and Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

After his death in 1896, the furnishings were sold in a Christie's auction lasting eight days. His house became the property of the council, and, after the World War II, it hosted a library in a cheap 1950s retrofitting of Leighton's adored building.

Part of the restoration plan was to return the building to something Leighton might have recognised, which entailed returning lost furnishings and decoration. The team tracked down some items, and commissioned replicas of others, drawing on images and descriptions in press reports from the time. Two new wooden cabinets, by Luke Hughes, with thin inlay patterns, flank the entrance to his conservatory-like studio and match the originals.





Leighton's winter studio, an extension on cast iron columns built at the end of the 1880s to allow work through the winter months, has been restored, including the recreation of aspects lost in 20thC changes. The entrance hall has reacquired a large painting from the workshop of Tintoretto, and a separate entrance, originally for use by Leighton's models – a usual feature at the time to keep them separate from respectable visitors – has also reappeared. A 20thC addition in a new wing at the east end has been refurbished with a small cafe which opens onto the redesigned garden, adding a gallery in a dug-out basement. *Oneness*, a mural by the Iranian artist Shahrzad Ghaffari, connects the new staircase from basement to first floor providing a physical connection between the new visitor facilities and the exhibition rooms.

The redevelopment of Leighton House has been supported, among others, by Kensington & Chelsea Council and the Friends of Leighton House alongside a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

For details of Leighton House opening times (currently Wednesdays to Mondays) contact: <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/museums/leighton-house> or telephone: 020 7361 3783





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# Notting Dale Police Station

by Michael Becket

ASK ABOUT NOTTING DALE POLICE STATION and the response tends to be a sucking of teeth and a change of subject. Searching the internet with any browser yields no information. The National Archives at Kew has a document MEPO 14/38 which is “historical note only” and has not been digitised and therefore not easily accessible. It would not matter if it were, being, according to more search of the website, a list of “Police stations in alphabetical order”. The only other archives document MEPO 2/10357 is about reopening the police station on 1 January 1999 which has not been digitised either. Pity, as that did not happen.

All this is rather mysterious and perhaps the silence and evasion have been the causes of rumours. It is said, for instance, the police station was so deeply and fundamentally racist it actually caused quite a lot of the rioting in the area during the 1950s and 1960s. The police authorities are said to have been so dispirited by the evidence that the only solution was to close the station altogether. If any of that were true, one would expect widespread commentary on the implications, so it is surprising there is no detectable record.

What is unquestionably true is the apparent closing of the station. That was more than 36 years ago and it is still there in all its ugliness. Some north Kensington residents say it is sometimes used during carnival as a waiting post and store of material. Others



Protection for the police stations from one of the 1970s demonstrations.

hint at more devious and secret goings on at the site. It is very well protected, with CCTV cameras and fearsome ironmongery on top of fences and gates to deter anyone trying to climb in.

The rumours seem amply justified. A Freedom of Information request disclosed it has been a site of “Specialist operational units” which are so hush-hush and important that “releasing the information would make the UK or its citizens more vulnerable to a national security threat”. According to the Metropolitan Police disclosing what had been done there would

“render our response capabilities useless, and in the case of a terror incident, for example, could have a significant impact upon wider public safety” and would “hinder our ability to protect the community”.

Little wonder then that over eight months of emails and phone calls to the London mayor’s office and the Metropolitan Police yielded evasion, lack of information, passing the buck or just absence of response. There is no record of when conventional policing was finally stopped, only that it was before 1986.

Refusal to disclose subsequent use shows only the police want to hide the fact they continue to take precautions against terrorism, though that would surely be praiseworthy. That it happened at the disused police station is irrelevant now that it is being sold. So perhaps it is just the normal public sector instinct for everything being kept secret.

The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (Mopac), originally said “no decision has yet been made on the sale”, but it “has commissioned legal advice” about its duties on selling the site “and this process is being finalised”. That was odd because there seemed no serious hindrance seen by the mayor in rapidly selling the prime site of Notting Hill police station to a developer for a block of luxury flats. (That decision is still being fought by the Kensington Society and others.) It was also untrue, as persistence disclosed.

A fortnight later Mopac admitted “The site has been declared as surplus by the Metropolitan Police Service”. As a result, it was “approved for marketing and disposal in June 2021”. Unhappy timing in view of the Covid pandemic, but it seems Mopac was lucky.

“A marketing exercise was undertaken and bids received, however no sale was completed and the sale of the site has been paused.” No indication there of how high the bids were or for what form of development, whether they were considered inadequate, if haggling had been part of the process, and in fact no explanation of why the sale had been called off. There was no mention the price might be lowered in further attempts. It is said in the property world that the police wanted a huge price but developers realised





it was unsuitable for offices and unwanted for a school, and the council would require some affordable or social homes. As a result they were not prepared even to approach that price.

Mopac said merely “the site is vacant”, and continued insistence triggered buck passing back to the Metropolitan Police, as it decided Mopac was not “operationally responsible for this site” and passed it on as the “responsibility of the Metropolitan Police Service Estate Services”. Another surprise at the difference from the treatment of the Notting Hill police station.

The Met said it was busy. In fact, so busy it had not acknowledged receipt of that notification. Further enquiry prompted the Met to pass the buck further, to its Heritage Centre. That, it turned out, was the police museum which, surprisingly enough, has little information about the future of a surplus Kensington site.

Mopac had said the police intend “to engage with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to clarify potential use”. That may reflect the Kensington Society insistence that the Notting Hill police station has prime public use preference, including a doctor’s surgery, rather than merely adding to the stock of hugely expensive flats bought by overseas investors and seldom if ever inhabited. That intention seems to have been sporadic and casual. Derek Taylor, then team leader at RBKC planning department, had, at the time of writing, heard nothing from the police since a “flurry of discussion” in 2021.

The council wants the site for community use and if the police dispose of it “the requirements of our Local Policy CK1 would kick in, which requires a sequential approach to the loss of the ‘social and community’ use”. The planners believe “some enabling development (resulting in the loss of some social and community floorspace) may be appropriate, but only if it is demonstrated that the property is no longer suitable for a similar, or an alternative, social and community use. Subject to that, residential would be the preferred use”. It would be extremely useful in fact, as Kensington is notoriously short of suitable places for building further homes in line with government

requirements. Another catch may be that central planning policy requires housing on public land to be at least 50% affordable.

It is however significant that 58 Sirdar Road, the station’s official address (not now called Notting Dale police station), is scarcely in the same category as the prime site of the Notting Hill station on the corner Ladbroke Road and Ladbroke Grove. Sirdar Road and Mary Place have more quietly domestic homes of smaller size, and the police station could prove a useful site for more of those.



The Knight Frank brochure prepared for the original sale said the 789 sq m “accommodation” is in a residential part of Notting Hill. That is “a vibrant area renowned for its eclectic array of colourful shops, restaurants, bars, pubs and amenities, as well as its mews streets and grand Victorian townhouses”. It has a “village-like feel” and “Avondale Park, Holland Park, Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park are also a short walk away”. That picture is an interesting contrast to the frequent description of Grenfell Tower, a few hundred yards up the road, being set in one of the most deprived areas of London.

The building was “used for office service” and never as a “public-facing police station”. That at least resonates with its local reputation of facing away from its surrounding population in its racist attitudes.

### Planning

The property is not listed. The site lies within the Avondale Conservation Area.

The property was previously used for office purposes and was not used as a public-facing police station. On this basis, we understand that the lawful use of the building falls under Use Class E (g).

### Massing study

A massing study has been prepared by HWD Architects indicating that there is potential for a residential development of approximately 13 apartments on the site, subject to the necessary planning consents.

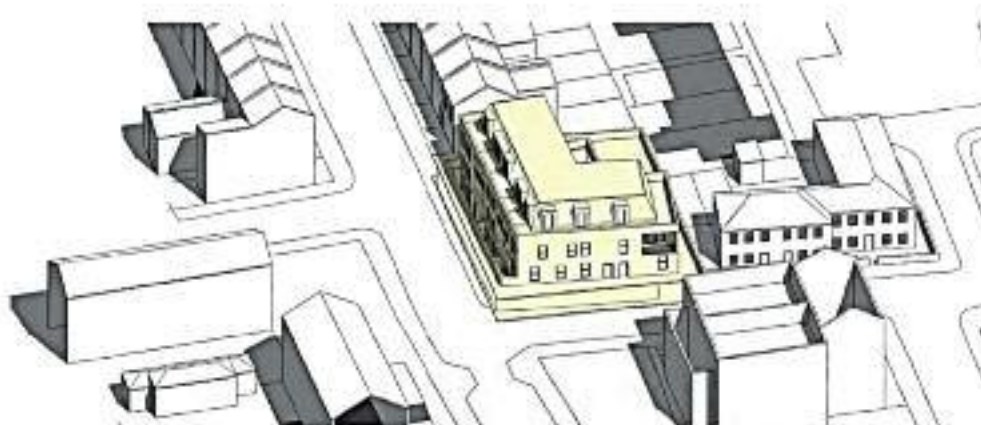
The scheme assumes demolition of the existing police station building and a new three storey build in its place. The assumed building extends to 8,429 sq ft (876.0 sq m) GIA and incorporates 7 x 1 bed, 2 x 2 bed and 4 x 3 bed units.

Full details are available on the datasheet.

### Proposed areas

| Floor        | Unit Type | NSA   |       |
|--------------|-----------|-------|-------|
|              |           | sq m  | sq ft |
| Lower Ground | 3b5p      | 100.6 | 1,083 |
|              | 1b2p      | 50.9  | 548   |
|              | 1b2p      | 60.3  | 649   |
| Ground Floor | 1b2p      | 50.0  | 538   |
|              | 1b2p      | 50.0  | 538   |
|              | 1b2p      | 50.0  | 539   |
|              | 3b5p      | 86.0  | 926   |
|              | 2b4p      | 70.0  | 754   |
| First Floor  | 1b2p      | 50.1  | 539   |
|              | 1b2p      | 50.0  | 539   |
|              | 3b5p      | 86.0  | 926   |
|              | 2b4p      | 82.2  | 886   |
| Second Floor | 3b5p      | 80.8  | 867   |
| Total        |           | 876.0 | 9,429 |

NB: sq m rounded to one decimal place and sq ft rounded to the nearest ft.





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# Obituary

## David John Ramsbotham

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by Michael Becket

6 November 1934 to 13 December 2022

**G**ENERAL THE LORD RAMSBOTHAM OF KENSINGTON GCB CBE, vice-president of The Kensington Society, died on 13 December 2022, aged eighty-eight. An outstanding soldier who became general and adjutant general, before becoming a fierce reformer of prisons and a doughty supporter of the aims of the Kensington Society.

Our 2002 annual report noted:

*“General Sir David Ramsbotham GCB CBE, Chief Inspector of Prisons from 1995 to 2001, has joined the Earl of Snowdon as a Vice-President of the Society. Sir David, a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and an Honorary Fellow of the college, joined the Army as a National Serviceman in 1952. He subsequently took a regular commission in the Rifle Brigade and served in a variety of posts in England, Germany, Kenya, Borneo and Northern Ireland until retirement in 1993. He commanded 2 Royal Green Jackets and later 39 Infantry Brigade in Belfast, 3 Armoured Division in Germany from 1984–87 and the UK Field Army from 1987 to 1990. His final appointment was as Adjutant General from 1990–93 during which period he was also an ADC [General] to the Queen. After retirement he wrote papers for the UK government and the UN Security Council on the management of UN peacekeeping operations. He also chaired Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust. His recreations include shooting, sailing, gardening, history and art history. He and his wife have lived in Kelso Place since 1977.”*



Amanda Frame writes: In 2002 he gave the keynote speech at our AGM. His talk posed the question What price imprisonment? Perhaps the summary of his speech that night can say it best:

“The prison system, over-bureaucratic and lacking firm leadership, had been the subject of several inquiries in recent years .... Despite the prime minister’s promise to get tough on crime, the political will to make fundamental changes, in particular, to reduce the rate of re-offending, was still lacking.”

He quoted the prison budget, then £2.8 billion per year, claimed by some to be inadequate, but which, given more efficient practices could well prove to be sufficient. With 65 per cent of prisoners having a reading age of less than eight, and 80 per cent possessing no employment skills of any kind, education ought to have been a major concern. But this was often not the case.

Neither, in many cases, were prisoners adequately prepared for release, with after-care support minimal.

When I became chairman in 2008 there were several issues with the society that came to his attention, and I was summoned to the House of Lords for tea and a chat. We were joined by the tearoom mouse who slowly made its way across the room. “Of course we have mice”, he said, “this is the House of Lords”. I knew I could always call on David for advice and help. He never failed me. I could email him in the middle of the day, and back would come a reply. He and Sue were wonderful supporters of the society and both are missed – by me and all of us.

David John Ramsbotham was one of three sons and two daughters of the Right Reverend John Ramsbotham, a much-loved bishop of Wakefield. After Haileybury, Imperial Service College, and National Service in the Royal Artillery he obtained a history degree at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He returned to a regular commission with the Rifle Brigade (later the Royal Green Jackets) and a four-year secondment to Kenya.

He became well-known in the army as the military assistant to the chief of the general staff (CGS), General Sir Michael Carver, from 1970 to 1973. In the Northern Ireland Troubles Ramsbotham served on the staff, crucially giving warning of new requirements and fanciful suggestions pressed on the defence secretary (Lord Carrington) or the CGS.

After commanding 2nd Royal Green Jackets in Gibraltar and Northern Ireland, and as deputy chief of staff of the 4th Division in BAOR, he returned to Northern Ireland in 1978 as the commander of 39th Infantry Brigade. At the Ministry of Defence he opposed William Whitelaw’s policy of making the army withdraw after Bloody Sunday which resulted in “no-go areas” of Republican strongholds. Subsequently, after attending the Royal College of Defence Studies, he became the army’s director of public relations. As the Troubles remained a frontline military topic, his dealings with the press were aided by both his experience and his wit.

In command in Germany in 1984 he pointed out tanks might have to travel up to 100km and then deploy straight into attack, and would therefore need sufficient fuel. On being told it would be at least a year before anything could be done, he went to divisional REME to find a solution. Three months later, all his Challenger tanks were adapted to carry auxiliary fuel tanks.

Promoted to lieutenant-general, commander of the UK Field Army, and then adjutant-general in the Ministry of Defence, he was responsible for recruitment, training, terms of service and welfare. By persistence and force of personality, ‘the Ram’ ensured those made redundant under John Major’s Options for Change, did so on unprecedentedly generous terms.

On leaving the army in 1993 Michael Howard, Home Secretary, appointed him inspector of prisons for England and Wales. Rather to the surprise of everyone, the former soldier cared more about the welfare of prisoners than the punishment expected. He wrote “during my first week in office, I discovered that expectant mothers were routinely chained while in labour, hardly something about which an allegedly civilised country should feel proud. The practice was immediately stopped.

“The aim is not simply to lock ’em up in their cells .... No, the aim is to protect the public by preventing re-offending which it is clearly not doing very well. The Prison



Service is required to keep securely those committed by the courts, to treat them with humanity and to help them to live useful and law-abiding lives in prison and on release.” He became outspoken in his criticism of bias and slackness in the prison service, insisting on caring for the health and welfare of inmates. In the army, his nickname the Ram (inevitably later becoming Rambo) came from making up his mind and not always being ready to receive alternative views. He certainly got things done, but not always in an atmosphere of calm.

He published reviews on Women in Prison and Young Prisoners in 1997 and, in 1999, on conditions in close supervision centres, treatment of the unsentenced, suicide in prison and the situation of life sentence prisoners. Early in 2000, he attracted sharp comment for his suggestion there were “ten drug barons in every jail” and his criticism of the prison service for failing to tackle drug abuse behind bars. He produced a damning report on Wandsworth jail and renewed his criticism of the bleak conditions in the close supervision centre at Woodhill Prison in Milton Keynes, which held some of the country’s most dangerous inmates.

Also after leaving the army he was made an honorary Doctor of Civil Law by seven universities, and in 2005 became Baron Ramsbotham of Kensington, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and was chairman or president of a number of charitable organisations. Elected an honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 2001, he also served on the advisory board of the International Centre for Prison Studies at King’s College London.

In 1958 he married Caroline (Sue) Dickinson. She died last year. They had two sons, Richard, and James, a former Green Jacket officer who is the chairman of the Newcastle Building Society.



Gen Sir David Ramsbotham, KCB, CBE, ADC Gen, MA  
© Royal Green Jackets (Rifles) Museum, Winchester. 1991

# Philip Mould OBE

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by Michael Becket

**B**Y THE AGE OF 11 PHILIP MOULD had mastered the hallmarks on English silver thanks to a kindly dealer who spotted the boy's enthusiasm for antiques. The precocious interest and expertise had been ignited by years accompanying his mother in her tours of antiques shops in north-west England.

She loved those collectibles and their tactile qualities and her son absorbed the feeling. At the age of 15 he appeared on an ITV children's television programme called *Magpie* to display his collection of shoe buckles. By then he had moved on from just collecting to dealing and even developing a network of likely dealers.

Dyslexic, and poor exam taker, he nonetheless got to a leading university on the basis of his aptitude for antiques, and increasingly art. While at university he got on his scooter to motor round provincial galleries to spot a promising prospects.

He has a salutary memory at university spotting in a Norwich shop 12 paintings and drawings by Sir Alfred Munnings. Proudly Philip brought them to London for his brother, an art dealer himself, and who had rounded up a Munnings expert. "I had hardly opened the car door" when the expert took one look and summed up his reaction: fakes. Fortunately Philip had not bought them, merely taken them temporarily for expert examination, so he promptly drove back to Norwich, wiser and no poorer. "This taught me to forever question the offering" he reflects.

Afterwards he joined his elder brother who had the use of an art gallery owned by an absentee proprietor who rarely even bothered to visit it. It provided him and his brother with the start they needed.

Setting out on his own, he teamed up with a genealogist to find and reunite living individuals with portraits to which they were related. One such portrait, early on in this venture, was of one Thadeus Jones that dated from the 1730's. Thadeus was an unusual name, and he must have been fairly rich to have his portrait painted, Philip reckoned, so even his surname might not be a hindrance. Sure enough the genealogist discovered a Philadelphia resident James Jones III who was his direct descendant. The portrait had cost £500 and was sold for about \$8,000, paying half his first year's rent in an upstairs office in Bond street.

At the age of 28 "I moved into historical portraits of famous people." That produced a very lucky break when the House of Commons decided to fill its miles of corridors with past members and other political portraits. Then the House of Lords joined the trend. The profits were non-existent but "it looked glorious on my business card – *Honorary Adviser to the Palace of Westminster*". By the age of 30 he was well enough established in his sector for dealers to begin contacting him with promising offers.

He realised the potential of television early, and persuaded Channel 4 to a commission a series on the history of portraiture which he presented, called *Changing Faces*.





The discovery that really set him up was the only extant portrait of Prince Arthur, Henry VIII's elder brother and husband of Catherine of Aragon which he bought at Sothebys, its full significance overlooked. "It transformed my life." The National Portrait Gallery was not interested, so it was bought by Californian who subsequently lent it to the institution. "My bank manager started being polite to me thereafter," he recalls. The profit after he had proved the portrait's uniqueness provided him with the down-payment for his house in Kensington.

Presumably his bank manager was also impressed by regular appearances on television. Having written a book called *Sleuth: the amazing quest for lost art treasures*, about art discoveries, he became one of the experts on the Antique Roadshow and then wrote his second book – *Sleepers: in Search of lost Masters*. So when Philip and the producers the Antique Roadshow came up with a variant called *Fake or Fortune?*, it felt obvious that he should team up with Fiona Bruce. Forty-two programmes later it has become the most popular returning art show on television, achieving very substantial audiences on BBC1 and worldwide.

He feels as if moving across a Monopoly board for his premises, from Princes Arcade off Piccadilly to Dover Street in Mayfair and, perhaps finally, to Pall Mall eight years ago. Now his gallery occupying three floors in Pall Mall provides ample display space. So ample in fact that he organises it to be used for charitable events, book launches and the like.

In addition he has become president of a conservation organisation Plantlife which looks after the preservation of native plants and has 23 sites across Britain. He has also broadened the focus of his range of painting range to 500 years of British art. Clearly he has established a highly reputed niche and exhibits widely, as well as having a rolling programme of high profile exhibitions.

Authenticating works of art has greatly evolved in the last twenty years, and his TV programmes and working methodology in the gallery have kept pace with these changes. "A new dimension has opened with technology in the last twenty years, which has now added a new dimension to old time connoisseurship. A great increase in available technical data on artists' materials, and more sophisticated means of non-invasive investigation of the chemical compounds of paint are becoming widespread" he notes. As example, Philip cites a Chagall that an art historian had assigned to his Belarus period in the early years of the 20thC. Raman spectroscopy – although around for many decades – was applied to the artwork and proved the presence of a blue pigment not available until 1963. "This type of empirical technical insight can save months of art historical hypothesis. Over the next decades we are going to witness a huge increase in the alternative of means of discovering the truth behind many 20thC century attributions".





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# Kensington Palace visit

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THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY'S CONDUCTED tour round Kensington Palace was just one of the range of events regularly organised by the society. It proved so popular that several non-members took part and the trip was split into two major groups taken round by different guides.











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# 20th Century Theatre

by Michael Becket

**K**NOCKED TOGETHER FROM DIFFERENT buildings and reconstructed over the last 150 years, the 20th Century Theatre had two large spaces, the main theatre auditorium, small but charming, a flight of steep stairs up from ground level, and below it a smaller room about four feet above the street. But the restructures, and repeatedly changing use, have left a rabbit warren of passages, staircases, rooms off to one side a few steps down, then corridors and a few steps up, with peeling walls cardboard repairing holes in floor and a feeling of sad dereliction.

Now neglected and crumbling it has had an occasionally glittering but highly chequered past. Most people never realised they have often been walking past a theatre in Westbourne Grove, or even knew such a thing existed. But there it is in what was once 21 Archer Street and is now 291 Westbourne Grove – the theatre has not moved but street names have. So has the name of the premises.

This area north of Notting Hill was largely flourishing farmland until the middle of the 19thC, owned by the Ladbroke family of wealthy bankers. From about the late 1840s the area had become irresistible to property developers catering to the fast-growing London population spreading westward to avoid the smoke. The theatre was created to cater to these prosperous property owners.







When it was originally constructed in 1863 for John Robert Burgoyne, it was part of a small complex of buildings called The Victoria Hall. Three years later it became the Bijou Theatre (fair, it is quite small – seating for 300 people), after which it was the Century Theatre, and then the Twentieth Century Theatre. Unlike the film maker which under Rupert Murdoch has become 21st Century Fox, the theatre has stopped producing aliases and stuck with that, despite being no longer in the 20thC or indeed a theatre.

Although its stage had provided a setting for Sir Henry Irving and high-octane readings by Charles Dickens, its licence lapsed just ten years after opening and there was a fear it might close. But in 1893 the whole complex, including the theatre, was comprehensively refurbished. That seems to have done the trick because there are photographs of crowds going to Aladdin “Comic Christmas Pantomime Extravaganza” later that year. So great was the demand for seats that people were turned away at the doors, which did not happen often for this venture. That prompted the management to extend the run to 6 January plus Saturday matinees.

In 1905 the first performance of Oscar Wilde’s scandalous *Salome* was moved here, having failed to open in the West End. It had been refused a licence by the Lord Chancellor for not only depicting Biblical characters but even more for Wilde’s changes to the story, adding incest and necrophilia.

By 1911 the theatre was being used as a cinema with the price of admission for children being one penny (1d). For that they not only got to see a film, but they were each given a bag of sweets or an orange on their way out. After World War I the cinema moved out, and nobody seems to know what the building did for the period after that.

What is known is that in 1925 the Lena Ashwell Players moved in and for them it was renamed the Century Theatre. Sir Laurence Olivier started his career there aged 17 but he lasted only a month, being prone to practical jokes such as pulling aside the back-cloth to expose actresses changing behind it. When in *Julius Caesar* the underpants of an actor fell down beneath his toga Olivier laughed so hard he had to leave the stage and was instantly sacked. The stage also hosted, at various times, Margaret Rutherford, Rex



**A grand space beneath the auditorium for receptions, restaurant etc**

Harrison, Sir Herbert Tree and Marie Lloyd and provided a wide range with authors including Shakespeare and Noel Coward, Ibsen and Somerset Maugham.

From 1929, the theatre was taken over mainly for amateur dramatics. The Dramatic Societies of Harrods, DH Evans, the BBC, and others performed on a regular basis. Another name-change in 1936, perhaps to ginger up interest, rechristened it the Twentieth Century Theatre. It was at this time that Rudolf Steiner Associates Ltd took over the place to make it the British headquarters of Eurythmy for twenty years. The aim was to provide a venue for lecturers from Steiner's main headquarters in Switzerland. That organisation was one of the eccentric mental and physical health movements of the early 20thC, in this case responding to music with a repertoire of expressive movements. As Rudolf Steiner, creator of the concept in 1911 put it "It is the task of anthroposophy to bring a greater depth, a wider vision and a more living spirit into the other forms of art. But the art of eurythmy could only grow up out of the soul of anthroposophy; could only receive its inspiration through a purely anthroposophical conception."

The theatre was still available for hire, but with "due discrimination as to the class of entertainment". When the Rudolf Steiner Hall opened at Baker Street, the Twentieth Century Theatre lost its lodger and the premises became the London Opera School and a venue for professional and amateur theatre repertory groups. And there were some. The trend continued after World War II with productions of such popular plays as Emlyn Williams's *Night Must Fall*.

In the 1960s, the theatre became an antiques warehouse and part of it provided a home for overflow antiques stalls from Portobello Road. But thanks to a successful application to have the building listed it has survived. Only not as a theatre. Another function it has provided was as a venue for conferences and events and among its customers have been fashion shows, with Mario Testino, Vivienne Westwood, and Christian Dior; charities such as Human Rights Watch, Breast Cancer Research, Great Ormond Street; corporate events for Amazon, National Geographic, Coca-Cola, Moët & Chandon and Virgin. In addition, Jamie Oliver, Jo Brand, John Malkovich, Lynda La Plante and Thomas Keneally have performed there. During the filming of *Notting Hill*

with Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant, the theatre was used for rehearsals, and the roof garden in the film was created on its roof.

It is going to be a formidable task, needing deep pockets, to make this space usable and restore it to community use. Just working out what was original, what is worth rescuing and what can be redeemed is itself elusive as the architectural advisers ruefully admit. Which period and what structural functions are to be preserved are almost arbitrary. But work, funded by a New York musical charity, is in progress to make it a venue for chamber music with smaller spaces for musical practice and rehearsals.



Part of the web of accumulated corridors and stairs





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# Planning Reports

**T**HIS HAS BEEN A very busy year as well as one with continuing uncertainty about evolving government planning policy. The London Plan has been in operation for two years, with considerable implications for the borough for housing numbers, tall buildings and Opportunity Areas. Its policies are now being incorporated in our proposed new Local Plan which has been through a final consultation and will be the focus of a public examination in June 2023.

## General:

### 1. Changing Context: National and London-wide picture

#### National: The Impact of Government Policy changes

It is nearly three years since the government's Planning White Paper. It has been a roller-coaster ride, following the government's response, infighting within government and a rapidly changing cast of ministers, further consultation on major changes to the planning system and, after all this uncertainty, a new act later this year.

It did not help with the constant revolving door for secretary of state for the newly-titled Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Following the disastrous white paper Michael Gove replaced Robert Jenrick in September 2022. He held the position until July 2022. He was then replaced with Greg Clark and Simon Clarke each for there for a few months in 2022. Michael Gove returned in October 2022. Stability in the department is welcomed, but there is still a lot to sort out as was revealed by the recent consultation to which the society recently responded.

The original proposals in the 2020 Planning White Paper were roundly criticised, although many of the objectionable elements have now disappeared without trace. The delay in publishing the government's response and bringing forward legislation suggested they were having second, or maybe third, thoughts. Over the last year there have been signs of more rational proposals with the unrealistic ones being deleted, though everyone is still confused with who or what is 'beautiful'. The new secretary of state for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, has, during the run-up to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, and in response to a revolt by 50 Conservative MPs mainly in the shire counties, already indicated there will be changes to the housing numbers. This may be all smoke and mirrors. What we and developers and local authorities need is planning certainty.

**Housing figures:** As reported in our 2020–2021 annual report, the government deferred applying the manifesto commitment to deliver 300,000 houses per year nationally, which would have meant a 'housing requirement' of 93,579 a year for London with 3,247 a year for RBKC. By December 2020, following a revolt by MPs, the numbers were reduced in those areas and reallocated a 35% uplift to the largest cities,

including London. After this adjustment London's overall figure stayed the same, however RBKC's figure was reduced to 1,347 additional homes per year. Given our lack of sites and 75% of the borough being in conservation areas, this figure, recently reaffirmed – hence the reference to smoke and mirrors – even as a 'starting point', is outside the realm of possibility.

This new number of 1,347 compares with the mayor's London Plan 2021 target for RBKC of 448 net additional homes a year. To achieve this the council will be forced to rely heavily on two Opportunity Areas – Earl's Court and Kensal Canalside – with delivery to be spread over the next ten to fifteen years.

We are very concerned that the borough's poor performance on housing completions is putting the council, especially the planning committee, under pressure to grant almost every housing application.

However, the prospect of the government pressing for a higher target has influenced the council's approach in considering the new Local Plan Review and its initial approach to the number of homes to be accommodated at Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court. (See more below.)

***Our Local Plan Policies:*** Other changes proposed by the government include 'nationalising' many of our Local Plan policies. The proposal is that the government will produce National Development Management Policies which would replace many of our local plan policies by introducing a set of 'standard' policies. Top-down imposed 'national' policies are inappropriate in highly urbanised areas like ours. The London Plan provides us with more appropriate policies, but even the London Plan could be under threat from the new Bill.

Also under threat from the government's proposals are our Supplementary Planning Documents, such as the guidance to interpreting our Local Plan policies, e.g. for basements and Conservation Area Appraisals, unless they have been subject to an examination. This could mean that many of the SPDs, which are specifically tailored to RBKC, could be lost. As with the Local Plan, the society has put a lot of effort into the development of these vital documents. The government does not seem to understand what happens at the local level.

Many of these issues were the subject of a major consultation in December, to which we made a robust response indicating strongly that the proposed changes were inappropriate in this borough.

### **Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Rights**

The changes in the Use Classes Order introduced in 2021 have resulted in many retail units in the main retail frontage changing into restaurants, cafes and even gyms, especially along Kensington High Street.

The borough-wide protection of offices, first introduced in 2013, was due to expire at the end of July 2022. The council's application for an Article 4 Direction to extend this protection, covering not only offices but also other business and commercial uses, was reduced by the government from being borough-wide to protecting only particular concentrations. The revised Direction issued in February 2022 now gives 'protection' in that instead of change of use being subject to very limited control, applications to change these uses to housing will still be subject to the current Local Plan policies. Not



surprisingly with the 35% requirement for affordable housing in schemes with over 650m<sup>2</sup> of housing, we are seeing more office development proposals than housing. The latest proposal for Newcombe House is a prime example – unlike the previous consent, no market housing is proposed.

### **Housing Delivery**

The government, to secure the delivery of housing, monitors how many new housing units were completed over the last three years compared with the borough's housing target. Completions, which are dependent on the speed with which developers build out their planning consents, have been low over the last three years. As a result, we are not making our required target and it is possible for the government to penalise the council by demanding it identifies 20% more housing sites. The council, through the new Local Plan Review, is seeking to justify its future delivery rate by identifying a higher proportion to be delivered in the second half of the next ten years from the two Opportunity Areas. This does mean higher densities and taller buildings. If that approach were accepted by the Local Plan inspector, we might just manage to hit our 448 net additional units a year London Plan target. If the government imposes a much higher target, we will be unable to comply.

### **London Plan 2021**

The London Plan was adopted by the mayor of London in March 2021, but since then new issues have arisen, including fire safety, sustainability and climate change. More issues are expected to appear in the next draft London Plan which is at least three years away. In the meantime, the government needs to provide leadership in the next review of the National Planning Policy Framework. Sadly, there are few signs that the next version will catch up, let alone show the policy leadership needed. RBKC's new Local Plan will still need to tackle these issues and, unless the government reduces the scope of the London Plan, we will be required to look to the next London Plan to keep up with the pace of change with sustainability and climate change.

### **Tall Buildings**

In last year's Annual Report we referred to the 2021 London Plan Policy D9 on Tall Buildings as a 'major breakthrough'. Legal opinion at the time was that there would be a big impact from the intervention by Secretary of State Robert Jenrick, directing the Mayor of London to use wording "*Tall buildings should only be developed in locations that are identified as suitable in Development Plans*". This wording seemed very clear and concise, by the standards of





most planning policies, namely that “*tall buildings should only be developed in locations that are identified as suitable in Development Plans*”. Sadly at the end of December 2021, in the only court case to date on the interpretation of the new policy, Mrs Justice Lang concluded that this is not a ‘gateway’ policy. Hence not a basic pre-condition to be met before other aspects of London Plan policy D9 on impact on views and site context are taken into account. It is only a matter of time before this judgment is challenged. We will be pressing the council to restrict tall buildings to those sites specified in the new Local Plan.

Meanwhile the pipeline of tall building developments across London barely paused, with GLA and borough planning officers using the ‘not a gateway’ argument to overcome an absence of identified ‘suitable locations’ in many a borough level local plan.

The biggest change has been the mayor’s decision to cease issuing Stage 2 approvals to any building above 30m in height without a second staircase. Just this month, however, the RIBA and seven other environment bodies, including the Chartered Institute of Building, the Housing Learning and Improvement Network, Disability Rights UK, Inclusion London and Cladding (Leaseholder Disability Action Group), have called on Gove to lower the second staircase threshold to 18m. RIBA has also called for existing residential buildings over 18m with single staircases to be refurbished with evacuation lifts, sprinklers and centrally addressable fire alarm systems, and for sprinklers to be standard in all settings where vulnerable people live.

This is resulting in delays and redesigns for many tall building proposals across the city, including those in Kensington and Chelsea’s two Opportunity Area. As for the delays, it is five years since the Grenfell Tower fire.

## Opportunity Areas

Opportunity areas are parts of London identified in the London Plan for ‘intensified’ development on large tracts of land. The two in RBKC are at Kensal Canalside, at the northern end of Ladbroke Grove, and at Earls Court, on the site of the former exhibition hall and adjoining railway land. The western part of the Earl’s Court Opportunity Area lies in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Over the past year, developers have been progressing plans for major regeneration projects (see below), but, apart from the demolition of the Exhibition Centre and the removal of the gasholders from Kensal Gasworks site, little has happened on the ground.

## 2. Local plan update

Our current Local Plan was drafted in 2016 and went to an examination by a planning inspector in Autumn 2017. Its adoption was deferred following the Grenfell tragedy until September 2019. The current Local Plan Review has its origins in 2017 – it is now nearly six years old. And much has changed in that time.

In preparing for the new Local Plan Review, the council has used various Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), on housing and green issues (June 2021) to scope the policy areas that need revision and expansion. The council also adopted an SPD for Kensal Canalside in July 2021, with which the society strongly disagrees with regard to the height of buildings and the density proposed and particularly with a PTAL of 1, the lack of public transport.

Following consultation on the draft New Local Plan early in 2022, the council consulted on the final draft in December. The Society registered its formal objections, which may be chosen by the inspector for debate at the examination in public this summer.

Key issues for the Local Plan Examination may include:

- Whether the Local Plan can enable the council to meet a housing target of 448 net additional homes per year on average over the next 10 years;
- How to secure a better mix of housing types, tenures and sizes to meet the needs of residents;
- Whether the indicative targets in the London Plan for housing and jobs for the two Opportunity Areas are appropriate considering future public transport accessibility;
- Whether there are suitable locations where tall buildings might be appropriate and how high;
- What sort of development opportunities we should expect, given that there are likely to be limited opportunities for developments in conservation areas;
- How best to manage the future of our town and neighbourhood centres;
- Whether a better balance can be struck between the needs of residents and those of visitors in the South Kensington station area; and
- How to achieve greater sustainability in new developments.

## Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area

Proposals for this largely undeveloped 15.3 hectares of North Kensington have been in gestation for over a decade. It was expected that planning applications would come forward in the first half of 2022, after a Developer Forum convened by RBKC in November 2021. At this session developers Sainsburys/Ballymore and St William (part



of the Berkeley Group) presented proposals which were at an advanced stage. These presentations met with highly critical comments and concerns from a well-informed audience of local residents. Proposals for high-density, high-rise residential towers were questioned and challenged, given that the Opportunity Area only has a single vehicular access onto the site, and that from Ladbroke Grove. Levels of access to public transport, especially at the western end of the site are very poor. Reliance on a 'bus strategy' with extra frequencies is compromised by existing traffic congestion levels on Ladbroke Grove. The developers were not able to present any viable proposals for transport management.



The new Draft RBKC Local Plan includes an updated site allocation for Kensal Canalside. This assumes the development of a minimum of 3,500 new homes and 10,000 sqm m of commercial floorspace over the next 15 years. The Draft Local Plan also sets a maximum height parameter of 31 storeys and identifies those parts of the Opportunity Area deemed most 'suitable' for tall buildings.

The Kensington Society has consistently argued that a 3,500 new homes target will lead to excessive densities and building heights, and overdevelopment of the site. In responses to the Regulation 18 and 19 Draft Local Plans, and the RBKC Supplementary Planning Document for the Opportunity Area, we pointed out that this was the highest of three options in the council's 2013 study and should have been dropped as soon as it became clear that there would be no extra Elizabeth Line station located on the site (the 'Portobello North' station proposal). But, stubbornly, the 3,500 figure remains in the new Draft Local Plan. The society will seek to have this issue aired at the public hearings during the current Examination.

Sainsburys/Ballymore have been undertaking a further round of public consultation in recent months, badged as *Project Flourish*. The proposed first phase involves replacing the existing Sainsburys superstore at a location nearer the Grand Union Canal, but still central to the site and requiring access for both developers and customers from the already heavily burdened Ladbroke Grove. The tallest of the proposed residential towers have been reduced to two at 29 storeys and two at 24, all designed to include two staircases as part of the fire strategy. The buildings are squatter and fatter as compared with the 2021 plans. The area nearest Ladbroke Grove (including Canalside House) has been incorporated into the scheme.

St William have yet to publish any further proposals but may be continuing to hold pre-application discussions with RBKC.

Public concerns remain, about over-development across the Opportunity Area, its poor public transport access, and building heights that return to the 1960s/early 70s 'first wave' of tall buildings in London and similar to Trellick Tower, and the negative impact on the Kensal Cemetery. The council is likely to argue that 'needs must' when London Plan housing targets have to be met.

### **Earl's Court/West Kensington Opportunity Area**

This Opportunity Area was designated in the 2008 London Plan, followed by a masterplan, an SPD and planning consent was granted to CapCo for both the RBKC and LBH&F sites in 2012. The site allocation is in the current (2019) RBKC Local Plan.

Development of the site of the former Earl's Court Exhibition Centre has been stalled for several years but is about to come alive. What are the plans and how might they impact on local residents and nearby conservation areas?

Delancey and APG bought the sites in 2019. The first action from the newly-formed ECDC was to agree to terminate the sale agreement for the West Kensington and Gibbs Green housing estates between the former owner and Hammersmith and Fulham. It was obvious that though planning permission had been granted and a material start had been made, that the new entity would have to revise the plan to reflect the site changes. At the end of 2022 the Earl's Court Partnership Limited purchased the Lillie Bridge Depot and associated land from TfL. The land is obviously a key part in joining the site together in the master plan.

Over the past year ECDC have hosted many meetings, presentations and consultations with local residents and businesses, but no firm plans were visible.



© The Earls Court Development Company

Recently all this has changed with the release of a new draft masterplan prepared by architects Hawkins Brown Studio Egret West. A larger team of award-winning architects has been appointed to deliver various phases of the project. The landscape designers are SLA who are designing the public realm. These are all eminent practices with a good track record for high quality design.

An exhibition of the plans and model was opened at Conversation Corner, Lillie Road and ran until Saturday 1 April.

The proposals cover 40 acres of land, with 4,500 new homes, a huge amount of office and workspace plus retail, cultural and community space. All adding up to £6.5 billion of private sector investment.

The developers' strap line is to 'bring back the wonder', a tough ask and one which immediately invites a fair degree of cynicism. However, they have undoubtedly thought ambitiously and employed high-quality talents to help deliver their vision. When challenged about how wonderful this will be, the eager team at the exhibition suggested that the 'wonder' will be to do with the scale of the project, quality of architecture and its extensive landscaping and public realm with the promise of a new public park at its heart the size of Trafalgar Square. The proposal is that at ground level the buildings will be given over to a mix of retail, leisure and cultural uses. As required by RBKC planning policy, the site will be almost completely car free. Unlike Kensal Canalside there is excellent connectivity, with three underground and one overground station on its boundaries. We will, of course, look for station improvements and step-free access as part of the planning permission. It is promised to be clean and green with carbon-free district heating and 1,000 new trees. However, the amount of impermeable paving in the visuals is concerning. Trees can be planted in pits, but there is no substitution for some grass too.

However, one does begin to wonder. The proposed office buildings are very tall (up to 38 storeys) and clustered around the Empress State Building. Do they need to be this tall? The developers say, yes because we need that amount of floor area to make the scheme work financially. They say you could have lower towers but there would need to be more of them, thus taking up more of the ground area and less open space. Perhaps they overpaid for the site and what we will finally have is a financially viable scheme but a massive overdevelopment.

As for the proposed housing, this is generally much taller than the surrounding area, including the crescents of the Philbeach Gardens Conservation Area and the wonderful Grade II listed St Cuthbert's Church. The plans show a degree of stepping back as a transition from the Victorian terraces, but the transition is pretty steep from three-floor terraces houses with an eight-storey building as the rear neighbour. How does all this equate with RBKC's new tall buildings policy?

The housing mix indicates 35% of the homes being affordable, but affordable to whom? There is no clear commitment to providing a particular proportion of genuinely affordable homes. As we all know, affordable housing targets can become squeezed and eventually allowed to be abandoned as developers claim a viability crisis. Will the cultural offering be delivered? Sadly, it seems to be scattered around, like pebbles, and not the formerly promised cultural centre. A substantial amount of space is given over to this, but will it be delivered as the programme develops and market forces take hold?

The developers set out an impressive set of figures for job creation including 15,000 jobs across a range of sectors and skills, 2,000 construction jobs during the build and



affordable and low-cost workspace for start-ups and SME's. Again, are there any guarantees that these will be delivered? This can be tied to a legally binding S.106 Agreement but hard to administrate. We doubt that these benefits will spill over into the Earl's Court area where environmental and community improvements are badly needed. The loss of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre has been felt by all – the hotels and the shops – as has the increase in betting shops, casino/arcades and takeaways that are making Earl's Court Road increasingly seedy.

All of this is on a very long timeline and there are many questions to be answered. The developer is not expecting to gain Planning Permission until 2025 and the build-out programme will stretch to 2045. That means 20 years of construction within an area which is already clogged with traffic. How will this be managed? There is already a firm plan to take some of the site traffic via the basement of the Tesco site in West Cromwell Road through a tunnel below the A4. One wonders how the Tesco tower will be built while the traffic continues below.

There are still many questions to be asked and answered about what is undoubtedly a very complex and, in many ways, exciting project. The consultation will be ongoing over the next year, so residents should monitor developments on the Earls Court Development website and feed their views through. The Kensington Society will be liaising with the Earl's Court Society and local resident organisations as the planning application draws closer.

### 3. Conservation Issues

#### **Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) and Conservation Area Management Plans (CAMPs)**

The major programme of completing a set of some 40 conservation area appraisals (CAAs), which replace the conservation area proposals statements (CAPS) is all but complete, with the Edwardes Square Scarsdale and Abingdon CAA adopted in March 2022, after more than 5 years' work – just in time for the government to abolish them!

As part of the legal duty for conservation areas, the council is required to identify opportunities for enhancement, through conservation area management plans (CAMPs), both to identify these opportunities and help develop an action plan for implementing them. This will help case officers, developers and local communities to identify enhancements to be sought as opportunities arise. The council began a new programme of CAMPs, but the programme seems to have come to halt, in part due to a shortage of staff and departmental funding. There has been little progress in the last year. No further progress has been made on the CAMP for the Edwardes Square Scarsdale and Abingdon Conservation Area and no further candidates have been identified.

CAMPs are essential to identify opportunities for enhancement and how development management policies should relate to the particular issues in each conservation area.

We, and the council, are very concerned that the government is proposing to abolish SPDs, unless they have been through an examination, which could put both CAAs and perhaps CAMPs in jeopardy. After a massive work programme to complete about 40 CAAs, these proposals could put them at risk. The government does not seem to understand this.

## **Conservation and the green agenda**

Making our houses more energy efficient continues as a major objective. The ambition of achieving zero carbon in the borough by 2040 seems ever more difficult with our existing buildings, most of which date from the 19th century. The council's supplementary planning document on Greening, together with a guide to householders back in 2021. It is now working on planning changes to help move us closer to the target.

RBKC has promised, with great fanfare, that the borough's own properties will be carbon neutral by 2030. So where is the money coming from? The answer may be the monies received from developers who are granted the right to build totally new buildings without meeting the carbon restrictions...if they pay a penalty.

The approval for 344–350 Old Brompton Road was granted with a payment of £76,661 as a carbon offset contribution. The yet to be determined South Kensington Station development was proposed to be £52,896. Wellcome Trust, the owners of the 63–81 Pelham Street project, which will entail the demolition of an existing building and the build of a five-storey plus basement approximately 2.5 larger than the existing building, has agreed a S106 Agreement to pay £25,450.50. Oddly Avon House is much higher at £167,295. All these fees go to the council. We presume that it is ringfenced for them to pay for their own properties to be made carbon neutral.

Some may accept that at least the council has the funds to meet its promises. Others may oppose the acceptance of any building not meeting the carbon reduction requirements.

The council has implemented a consent order on solar panels for listed buildings. These can now be used without the need for Planning Permission or Listed Buildings Consent, subject to conditions regarding their position or location.

Until recently, the planners have resisted double-glazing on listed buildings. Attitudes are beginning to change and consultation on double glazing in listed buildings was launched in 2022. The draft order is awaiting adoption, but it is likely that most listed buildings will be able to include double or secondary glazing subject to conditions set out in the order.

More work is needed to define how existing buildings can be brought up to Enerphit standard, the Passive House Institute's gold standard for existing buildings.

## **4. RBKC Practice**

### **Pre-application engagement with the community**

As noted, before in our annual, we expressed our concerns to the planners and councillors that the pre-application process is flawed. All too often major developments are not discussed or reviewed with the local community and only come forth when an application is made, when it is too late.

The council has set up Development Forums for big development projects, involving the developer, the council and the community. The forums however only happen if the developer agrees. Not all do so. The first one was held in December 2021 to look at the Kensal Canalside development – rather late in the day as the developer's plans were far advanced. Since then there have been development forums for other schemes, such as the Hilton Olympia Hotel, Newcombe House and the future one scheduled for 16 March for the site of the former Earl's Court exhibition centre. Following the uproar expressed at the Kensal Canalside forum meeting and the negative opinions expressed at the Newcombe House forum, the council has agreed that in future it will hold such meetings earlier in the process.

Forums will be organised only for really large projects. But there are many smaller ones where we think it would be useful for the council to organise more informal meetings with attendance by the developer, council officers and local community representatives. Thomas's School proposal is a case in point.

We successfully urged them to hold several meetings with residents and their professional advisers for the South Kensington Station application and to discuss the proposed development of the former Christies South Kensington site in Old Brompton Road. Having seen positive results, the council agreed to offer more such meetings.

#### **Planning Committee size**

We continue to express our opposition to the limited size of the planning committee (the committee that determines the major/large applications). A review by the national Planning Advisory Service recommended increasing this to six or even eight plus a chairman, to bring together more experience and knowledge of the borough. This issue has become even more acute as several members of the planning committee and the planning applications committee have still not yet had much, if any, training.

## **5. Issues and updates**

### **Notting Hill Police Station**

The Kensington Society along with the Ladbroke Association and a group of local residents have continued to fight against the loss of the community use of the Notting Hill police station.

We had already obtained Asset of Community Value status for the site from RBKC,





which restricted the sale for a six-month moratorium to allow the community to put together a bid. The society's application for renewal of the ACV was granted in March 2023.

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) owns the buildings and the site of the former Notting Hill police station and had formally placed the whole site on the market via Knight Frank.

Kensington Society and the group formed to fight the sale worked with the council to develop a plan for the continued community use of the site. Plans were developed to accommodate *inter alia* a badly-needed new GP surgery, a police base for North Kensington to replace the temporary one due to close at the end of 2022 and specialist accommodation for young adults with severe learning difficulties currently housed outside the borough, away from their families. The council was persuaded by the extensive interest expressed by the community and successful proposal for its use, to bid for the building. The strict deadlines for bidding set out in the ACV process, all were ignored by MOPAC.

Then suddenly without any warning it was announced in the press that former police stations will be able to be saved for community use rather than sold off to developers at the highest price as a result of an imminent change in the law which would allow disposal at a price reflecting its status as a community use. The government looks set to back an amendment to its Levelling Up Bill that would make this change happen. However, a note of caution in the announcement that "Government looks set to back..." From our dealings or the lack of dealings with MOPAC, we will not breathe easily until we see it passed as an amendment.

### **South Kensington Station**

The application registered in July 2020 by Transport for London and Native Land for an extensive development around the station took up much of our time last year, following the council's refusal of the scheme on 18 December 2021.

The reasons stated in the decision for refusal were that:

- the height, massing and architectural design would harm the conservation area;
- development would fail to preserve the context, character and appearance of the conservation area and the architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings. The identified harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.
- the applicant had failed to agree to enter into a legal agreement to secure necessary associated infrastructure improvements generated by the development.

Along with the local residents' associations, the society strongly supports these grounds for refusal. Sadly and despite our protest, the reasons did not include the station upgrade required to address the capacity and safety issues nor the step free access.

The developers appealed against the council's decision in June 2022. Although that started the appeal process, a hearing date was delayed until an Inspector was assigned in October 2022.

In order to play a role at the public inquiry we had to seek agreement from the Planning Inspectorate to become a Rule 6 Party – formally recognised as having rights to make an opening statement, give evidence, cross-examine the appellants' witnesses



and make a closing statement. Three other associations applied for and were granted Rule 6 status: TOLA, the Brompton Association and a consortium of associations including The Onslow Neighbourhood Association, Pelham Street Residents' Association, and Pelham Residents' Association. In order to control our costs for a long inquiry and to avoid duplicating the efforts of the RAs, who were concentrating mainly on the reasons for refusal, we decided to focus almost entirely on securing the capacity upgrade to the dangerously overcrowded station and the delivery of step-free (lift) access from Thurloe Street to the ticket hall and then to the District and Circle Lines.

The station currently handles over 34 million passengers a year, up from 31 million in 2022, and is, on TfL's own admission, operating at a capacity that is unsafe. This need for a major improvement in capacity was recognised 15 years ago, in 2008. The application was carefully worded to avoid committing to the delivery of any capacity upgrade let alone step-free access to the underground platforms.

The Inquiry began on 18 January 2023 and after twelve sitting days 9.00 to 5.00, the inquiry was adjourned until mid-April.

As it was obvious both that the council and the developers represented by a legal team and consultants numbering over 15 professionals were not minded to adjust any of the proposal plans, and that the other Rule 6 parties were tackling other shortcomings of the scheme, we realised that our only means of forcing the early phase of the development to include the station capacity upgrade and step-free access was via a much strengthened S.106 legal agreement.

It has been a hard slog, forensically checking what the appellants – Native Land and TfL – would undertake to deliver and ensuring that this would be delivered in the first stage of the project and before the buildings in Thurloe Street and Pelham Street could be occupied. We have been successful in forcing S.106 legal agreements which ensure that the first stage of the project will include the station upgrade, a new platform, a new exit for both the existing island platform and the new platform, an interchange between

these platforms, a new ticket hall and four new lifts from the Thurloe Street new entrance to the ticket hall and museum tunnel and then onto the District and Circle line platforms. We were not successful with step free access to the Piccadilly Line.

In our closing statement we will reiterate our opposition to the development on the same grounds as the council's refusal, especially the harm which the development would do to the splendid and historic area. The Rule 6 parties have done an admirable job...a David versus Goliath...the public versus the massive wall of money of a private listed company, Native Land and their 51% controlling share in the development.

We have no indication of the inspector's position. She could dismiss the appeal on the grounds put forward by the council or she could allow the appeal, subject to the delivery of the station works required by the legal agreement. If dismissed, the legal representative for the appellants has repeatedly stated that no improvements will be made to the station. Our next step may be to force action.

### **Thomas's Schools, St Alban's Grove**

Thomas's School Kensington currently have three buildings in the Victoria Road area in the heart of a very residential area. They have recently bought the former Richmond University building in St Alban's Grove, which has been in education use since the 1880s, although most recently used as student accommodation. They proposed to move pupils from the two main school sites to St Alban's Grove and to convert the two existing schools at 39–41 Victoria Road to multiple luxury flats and 17–19 Cottesmore Gardens to two single houses.

The schools currently have a 2008 legal agreement, dating from the last expansion in 2006, which limits pupil numbers to 400. The other aspect of the legal agreement is to have a School Travel Plan which aims to reduce the number of children arriving by car.





The application was made on 15 March. The planning committee date kept being deferred as the planners asked for further clarification, including the use of the former carpark on the site for a playground. Finally the case was going to go to the 15 December meeting, but following a challenge to the report, the case was further deferred and finally heard on 12 January.

The society objected to the Thomas's Day Schools' application based on planning policies and the housing target requirements. The scheme would involve a major loss of housing as Atlantic House's accommodation for over 60 students is the equivalent of a loss of 36 housing units. This loss will be deducted from RBKC's housing completion numbers. Even with the conversion of the two school buildings to housing this would still leave a major loss, contrary to the council's policy. In addition, the applicant argued that the cost of renovating the buildings on the two school sites to the luxury level required would be so vast that it would not be viable and therefore no contribution to affordable housing.

The proposal would also have included an increase in pupils from 400 to 500. The relocation would result in considerable traffic problems, because of the location of the school, which makes it reliant on access by car for almost all pupils living further than a 10-minute walk away and because of the local traffic congestion which the relocation would produce.

Another major cause of concern was the proposal to convert the small former car park adjoining the rear gardens of Douro Place into a playground, which would be in use for most of the school day with as many as 200 pupils at a time. The proposals were opposed by the council's own environmental health officer as it would be impossible to control or mitigate the noise generated, which would be very intrusive for neighbours. Even with some yet to be devised 'management plan' there are severe doubts about the approach taken in making the decision on this matter.

The society objected to the change of use from schools to housing as well as to the loss of housing from the Atlantic House site. The current Local Plan requires the council to 'ensure that social and community uses are protected', policy CK1. The proposal involves the loss of two buildings currently in educational use, 39–41 Victoria Road and 17–19 Cottesmore Gardens, to what will be luxury housing without any affordable housing proposed. In addition, the fact that the Richmond University site is student accommodation means this would result in loss of housing on a 2.5 to 1 basis.

Despite a highly favourable officer's report, the planning committee voted to retain the limit of 400 pupils and to make the consent subject to a number of management plans which would include residents in their design and a 'school street' (St Albans Grove) which would exclude traffic during the morning drop-off and afternoon collection times.

The overall decision on the school, retaining the 400-pupil cap and the need for various management plans with the full participation of the local community will be essential. The committee was keen that these management plans be brought back to the committee.

The meeting took 5 hours. This was far too long, which meant that the committee lacked energy and incisiveness in dealing the change of use of the schools to housing so the impact of the overbearing mansard storeys was given no scrutiny.

## 6. Updates

### Newcombe House development: latest news

The secretary of state granted consent to Brockton Everlast's scheme for this site in June 2020. Over the period of three public inquiries that preceded this permission, the market valuation of their development appraisal moved against their consented mix of uses and Brockton sold the site to a commercial developer, Beltane.



The permission that Beltane purchased included the demolition of the existing buildings, total redevelopment of the site to provide 55 residential units (including 23 affordable flats), office and retail uses, a flexible NHS surgery, landscaping to provide a new public square, and step-free access to Notting Hill Gate ticket hall and to one platform of the Circle and District line.

RBKC's New Local Plan Review submitted to the secretary of state as recently as February 2022 identifies sites across the borough '*...which will allow us to deliver our vision for good growth and provide for the new homes, businesses and social and community uses needed by our residents*'. The section dealing with 'large sites' includes Newcombe House and sets out its preferred brief for the site. These include all of the public benefits included in the Brockton scheme that the Kensington Society fought for and supported – notably:

- A minimum of 55 (C3) gross residential units
  - High quality office employment space, including large, flexible office floor plates that will *be unique to Notting Hill Gate and meet diverse local occupier requirements* (our emphasis)
  - Retail and leisure uses bringing active frontages to the ground floor
  - A new medical centre / GP surgery
  - A new accessible, permeable and inclusive public square with level access through the site
  - The delivery of step free access from street level to the southbound platform of the Circle and District Line through two new lifts and walkways partially within the site.
- (extract from RBKC NLPR, Policy SA9)

At a presentation to the Kensington Society and other local residents' associations, on 20 March 2023, the only housing proposed by Beltane remained the replacement of the rough sleeper's accommodation on the corner of Kensington Church Street and Kensington Place (Royston Court) by an eight-storey building containing social housing on the upper five floors. The lower three floors of this building above ground level will house a new NHS medical centre, whilst the remainder of the site will be entirely covered in six storeys of office use, with the ground floor facing onto Kensington Church Street containing retail units behind a pedestrian colonnade.

The proposal also includes the retention of the existing tower in office use, with an additional three floors to take it from 12 to 15 storeys and increased in volume by 50 per cent by increasing its width towards the east and north.

Despite incremental improvements in the scheme following input from the local community over the consultation process (notably, the retention of the mature tree outside Waterstones and the increase in size of the medical centre), we continue to voice our reservations in these important areas:

- The lack of any net gain in housing provision on the site – effectively, the loss of 35 units.
- The inadequacy of the ‘public open space’, which is situated on a north-facing, noisy, pedestrian-trafficked corner right outside the main entrance to the office tower. Its size and location also make it highly unlikely that the Notting Hill Farmer’s Market, temporarily at Fox School, will be able to return to this site.
- Whilst we are told that the developers are examining with TfL the possibility of introducing partial step-free access to Notting Hill Gate Underground station, we are concerned that the new proposal’s disposition of buildings on the site might make this impossible.
- From the very first open meeting with the developers we have expressed concern about the lack of levity, wit, and artistic flair in their architectural contribution to our central district and asked that the elevational treatment of each of the commercial elements is redesigned to be less corporate in style. We still take the view that this aspect of the architectural and townscape contribution has a way to go.



Newcombe House, viewed from Notting Hill Gate (draft – subject to change); © Squire & Partners.



Of significant importance to the mix of uses to be provided in any scheme for this site must be the inspector's conclusions, as endorsed by the secretary of state, in his approval of the existing Brockton permission. Here are relevant extracts:

*'There is no dispute that the council has a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites as endorsed in its recently adopted Local Plan. However, in common with all London boroughs, the housing requirement is based on capacity and is expressed as a minimum. If it were to be based on need the requirement would be much higher. The evidence suggests that the rate of housing delivery has not been very good over the last few years....*

*Indeed, in view of the considerable level of unmet need within the borough it does not seem to me that the council's strategy for delivering housing is working terribly well.... I consider that the 55 homes to be provided in this scheme would be a matter of very significant weight' (Inspector's report paragraphs 442 and 443)*

The secretary of state concluded that the provision of market housing attracted *very significant weight*; that the provision of affordable housing overall carried *very substantial weight*; the provision of office accommodation and new retail units both attracted *very significant weight*; improvements to the public realm, the improved Farmer's Market and improvement to the underground station access each also carried *significant weight*, and the provision of the new Medical Centre carried *substantial weight*. (Note the Inspector's grades of 'weight': *significant, very significant, substantial and very substantial*).

We are not suggesting that the former scheme be built, but that the significant and substantial aspects and public benefits of that scheme must not be lost.

### **Heythrop College**

Following the appeal being allowed in August 2020, very little has happened, apart from marketing of town houses on Kensington Square, soft stripping of some of the buildings and the unauthorised felling of trees along the railway. However, Savills and Knight Frank have produced a prospectus in November for the site as part of a new marketing exercise, seeking bids by 23 February. At the publication date of this report, we have no further news.

### **The Academy Pub**

Despite the community-supported planning permission in place from 2018 to develop the Academy pub site whilst respecting its Asset of Community Value status, in February of 2021 the owners submitted a new planning application, to develop the site to the side of the pub with the loss of the conservatory and convert the two upper floors for flats. The 'refurbished' pub was to be relegated to the basement and a smaller area of the original ground floor. The proposed new layout would have made the pub business unviable.

The Kensington Society, along with the Norland Conservation Society and Clarendon Cross Residents' Association commissioned a viability report from an independent pub expert and met with the RBKC planning team to discuss our concerns. Over a hundred objections were submitted and it was refused in August 2021. The applicants appealed in February 2022.

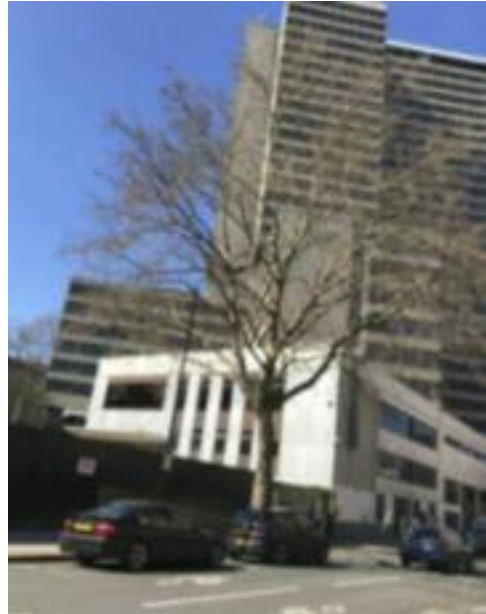
The appeal hearing on 6 December was well attended and our group, in support of the council's refusal, put up a strong case for the appeal to be dismissed. We knew we had given it our best shot and on 17 February our seven-year fight was rewarded – the appeal was dismissed. We had a moment to celebrate and reflect on the next steps. Now we need to develop a strategy to secure the refurbishment and reopening of The Academy.

### **Kensington Forum Hotel**

Following the withdrawal of the planning application in March 2021, just ahead of the call-in public inquiry due in May 2021, the hotel was sold, and the building closed by end of February 2022. The new ownership is a partnership of a Singaporean hotel company (51%) and the previous owner, a Hong-Kong based company, Queensgate Bow Ltd.

The proposals are that the hotel will be refurbished rather than redeveloped. Several applications have been granted including:

- Removing rooftop plant, and replacing it with a two-storey rooftop bar; and
- Replacing windows and repairing the facade, erecting plant enclosures at podium levels, and installing new, and removal/rearrangement of existing plant.



Forum hotel under partial wraps

The society and local groups will now focus on restoring the protected garden to its original purpose and of an equivalent size for the benefit of local residents.

### **Odeon Site: Kensington High Street**

Work on the superstructure of the main building has reached its full height and awaits cladding which will include reinstatement of the Odeon entrance arch. There have been several planning applications for minor amendments to the approved scheme, none of which are felt to be detrimental to design quality and conservation area issues. The proscenium arch will not be completed until the end of 2023.





### **Allen House**

This building changed hands in 2022. It already had a planning permission for demolition and construction of 45 dwellings behind a retained façade and including an affordable housing contribution.

A new planning application came forward from developers Residence One to retain the whole building, add a penthouse floor and infill the interior lightwell. This was something that the Kensington Society and ESSA had proposed to the previous owners and were told it was impossible to make work. The revised scheme which was supported by many of the local residents was approved by RBKC in a very short space of time because there was a limited amount of work requiring planning permission. However, the sting in the tail was that the development will not be required to provide any affordable housing contribution as the new floor space is below the 650m<sup>2</sup> threshold at which affordable housing is required. The project is now under construction.



## Avon House

A few hundred yards further south from Allen House sits Avon House, which was a care home for the elderly until its closure in 2013. Since then, developer Melford Capital had been seeking planning permission to redevelop the site for various uses.

The most recent application was approved by the planning committee in September. The application was strongly opposed by local residents, the Kensington Society and ESSA. Whilst the need for care homes was not in doubt, the proposals included a double basement, contrary to planning policies, across much of the site with a consequent requirement for an enormous amount of mechanical ventilation and heating and cooling plant, much of which will be at roof level, with consequent concerns about noise and appearance. The daylight and sunlight as well as the outlook for residents' rooms at the lower levels will be poor to say the least. The council's own conservation officer's report was damning of the design quality and its impact on the Conservation Area.

## High streets/ BIDs/Public Realm

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have now been established for the King's Road, Brompton Road and Kensington High Street. The first two were agreed by the businesses in autumn 2021. The latter, with the name Opportunity Kensington, had its vote result on 11 February 2022, which will enable the BID to implement improvements over the next 5 years. So far, with the High Street BID running for less than a year, there has been little to see, except the Christmas lights, but future projects could include environmental improvements, improved security and more publicity.

The council is now promising to prioritise 'place making' – improving the public realm in town and local centres, including projects to improve Bute Street, Notting Hill Gate and Portobello Road. In addition, the council have promised to support local initiatives for improving the public realm in local centres using the Community Infrastructure Levy. Let's hold the council to these promises!

## Al Fresco Dining

In July 2020, the government in response to the Covid pandemic and the need for outdoor dining, introduced pavement licences under the Business and Planning Act 2020 as an emergency measure to permit hospitality businesses to operate on-street with minimal bureaucracy. These pavement licences remove the need for express planning permission and include dining 'parklets' using part of the highway.

These measures proved popular with the hospitality industry and their customers. RBKC supported the concept, and the original scheme was further extended until 30 September 2022. However, residents have since expressed opposition to the evening noise and light pollution.



The council issued a consultation document on Al Fresco Dining towards the end of 2021. This proposed bringing back annual licences based on British Summer Time. The Kensington Society broadly supported the proposals.

The proposals would move to something semi-permanent requiring higher standards of design, amenity and consultation. We welcomed the approach and would be concerned if the government extended the fast-track scheme. Each location will need to be considered on its merits and with full local consultation. However, the government has now introduced a new licensing procedure designed to be a one-week turnaround on applications, which means that licensing applications are consulted on daily and required to be determined within 7 days, which means we all need to be alert.

The council has recently initiated a planning requirement for all outdoor operations to have WC facilities available for customers.

### **Old Oak and Park Royal Opportunity Area**

The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation has been the planning authority for this, the ‘largest of the UK’s regeneration areas’, since 2015. The OPDC boundary abuts that of RBKC and new development in this part of London impacts on North Kensington. The OPDC Local Plan was finally adopted (4.5 years late as compared with its original timetable) in June 2022.

The timeline for the construction and opening of the HS2/Queen Elizabeth Line/GWR rail interchange has similarly gone backwards from 2026 to 2029–32. Since 2019, when the OPDC switched its plans for a ‘new major town centre’ away from the Cargiant landholding at Hythe Road to what is now termed ‘Old Oak West’, more and more questions have been asked about the spatial coherence and timing of OPDC proposals.

The major development sites at Old Oak West are in the hands of the Department for Transport and in use by HS2 as construction compounds. Dates for release of these sites have been postponed to 2028–32 and no new town centre can begin to emerge until then. These dates are now up in the air again following announcements of a further delay to completion of the stretch of HS2 between Old Oak Common and Euston.

Whilst Old Oak and Park Royal Opportunity Area is different from our two Opportunity Areas in that it is a mayoral development corporation, the tendency to promote extremely dense, high-rise developments should be a warning for us.

### **Looking Ahead**

If 2022 was busy, 2023 will be even more so. Having responded the final version of the New Local Plan in December these comments have been sent to the planning inspectorate for an Examination in Public in June. There will be major planning applications for Kensal Canalside, a new master plan for the Earl’s Court site, a new application for Newcombe House and the result for the public inquiry for the South Kensington Station scheme.

**Planning Team – Michael Bach, Amanda Frame,  
Sophia Lambert, Peter Mishcon,  
Barry Munday and Henry Peterson**

# Reports from AFFILIATED SOCIETIES, 2022

## ASHBURN COURTFIELD GARDENS RESIDENT ASSOCIATION

ACGRA's area may be small, but we never have a dull moment. It is probably common knowledge by now that the former Penta/Forum/Holiday Inn Hotel, currently closed for total refurbishment, was sold again and is now owned by a Singapore-based hotel property group, who to everyone's relief went the refurbishment, rather than the demolition route. While the structure is being spruced up, residents are currently (for the 10th year running!) engaged in negotiations with the freeholders and council representatives with the aim of finally restoring the protected square garden on which the hotel structure stands to a pleasure and leisure garden, as was originally intended.

Apart from that mammoth project, there are lots of smaller, but nonetheless important matters occupying our time: preventing double-glazed PVC windows replacing traditional wood sashes; illegally installed and poorly maintained A/C units; making sure planning enforcement orders are actually 'enforced'; protecting our trees ... the list goes on. We are very grateful to the Kensington Society and to all our neighbouring RAs for their stalwart support, which we are happy to reciprocate whenever needed. We are after all stronger together!



**Frederike Maeda, chairman**

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## THE BOLTONS ASSOCIATION

Probably in line with many locales in the Borough, the Boltons conservation area is currently the scene of a veritable post-pandemic rash of 'basement digs'. To put it mildly, this has generated Enforcement issues regarding compliance with Construction and Traffic Management Plans – whether in relation to constructors' adherence to agreed 'ingress' and 'egress' routes, 'loitering' and inconsiderate parking of concrete and materials deliveries, 'spoil removal' and the suchlike.

We have observed that so many 'basement digs' are taking place on a contemporaneous basis that the contractors are effectively competing with each other for the time and space to get their





works undertaken. We have reported to Police and RBKC's Planning Enforcement numerous incidences of lorries being reversed down streets, blocking the highway and contravening the terms of their respective CTMPs – for example, delivery vehicles not keeping to the submitted and agreed 'CTMP location diagrams'.

We have engaged constructively with RBKC Enforcement – making detailed written reports and submitting photographs of alleged contraventions. The point we make repeatedly is that RBKC's planning committee grants planning approval on the basis of CTMP conditions, accordingly there needs to be a reasonable level of Enforcement activity. Otherwise, it could well be argued that there is a breach of statutory duty on the part of RBKC.



Three other issues have caused us concern this year. First, Zapp's 'store' on the Old Brompton Road has generated complaints of delivery riders waiting in an inconsiderate fashion around the premises and then not riding responsibly on their 'delivery rounds'.

Second, the way in which the 'terrace parklets' in Hollywood Road and Park Walk have been operated. We have repeatedly made the point to RBKC that most of the 'immediate neighbours' purchased their properties before 'terrace parklets' were ever thought about and, therefore, deserve the very highest level of protection from noise and disturbance caused by patrons dining in the carriageway.

Third, we have made strong representations against Gilston Road (a one way street) becoming two-way for cyclists in its entirety. This is not because we do not support the borough's endeavours to promote more cycling. Our view though is that it is palpably dangerous to permit two-way cycling on such a narrow carriageway, with no 'run off' areas/harbours – particularly as Gilston Road is the main 'ingress route' for large contractors' vehicles (such as, concrete lorries). With the assistance of Redcliffe Ward councillors, we have suggested far better alternative cycling routes to RBKC Traffic.

**Calvin Jackson, chairman**



## CLARENDON CROSS RESIDENT ASSOCIATION

In 2022 things started to return to something akin to a pre-covid normal around Clarendon Cross. Construction traffic, scaffolding, dust, and noise returned as building sites and basement digs continued apace. As a popular area for filming and photo shoots, approaches from production companies began coming in again. Whilst grateful to receive donations from these shoots, a lot of time and effort goes into liaising with the teams to keep disruption to a minimum for residents.

The highlight of the year was a street party celebrating the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee on 5th June. Attended by over 200 residents, it included live music by local musicians, children's entertainment and a raffle with prizes donated by local businesses – a good time was enjoyed by all and £1790 was raised for UNHCR.



The latest planning application for The Academy pub was refused by the council but the owners appealed the decision, and the hearing was held in December. Along with the Kensington Society and Norland Conservation Society, members of the CCRA committee spoke at the hearing and we received the good news in February that the appeal had been dismissed by the inspector. We'll now see what the owners will decide to do next.

In January '23 our local iconic restaurant 'Julies' closed and was put up for sale by the owners who are retiring having originally opened it in 1969. Our hope is that a new buyer will be found quickly and reopen it offering locals and fans from afar the sort of fayre they grew to love it for in the past.

**Carolyn Arnold, chairman**

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## CORNWALL GARDENS

Filming took place in and around the gardens to record scenes for the suspense series 'You', subsequently being shown on Netflix TV. This provided a welcome boost to our garden and residents association funds. We also hosted performances of 'The Music Man', a special Platinum Jubilee Concert by the Earl's Courtiers; and 'The Tempest' by Shakespeare in the Squares. We participated in the London Open Gardens Squares Weekend and concluded the year with a Halloween Party and, finally, a carol concert around the Christmas Tree, with a visit from Santa Claus.

We provided a coordinating role for local resident associations and Kensington Society to help stop two large



and unsightly towers being built to replace the existing tower in Ashburn Gardens and succeeded in recovering our costs following an aborted public inquiry. We continue to work with these associations and RBKC to encourage the present owners undertaking a makeover of the existing tower to restore the garden to its former state so that it can be enjoyed as a protected garden by the residents living around it.

With the support of our Queen's Gate ward councillors, we successfully obtained community funding to enable two webcams to be installed, part of a street mobile cctv system, to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

We welcome the zero-tolerance policy adopted by RBKC in dealing with fly-tipping and incorrect disposal of refuse. More complaints are being investigated and fixed penalty notices issued. This, together with further initiatives to curb short lettings, should see further improvements in the appearance of our streets. The beauty of all three gardens will therefore continue to be enhanced, enabling us to reflect on the pleasure and privilege of living here.

**John Varley, chairman**

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## **EARL'S COURT GARDENS & MORTON MEWS RESIDENT ASSOCIATION**

This past year was a very pleasant 'back to normal'. In June 2022 we held our first in-person AGM since 2019 in which was very well attended.

Last year we reported that the Earl's Court Health & Wellbeing Centre had taken the decision to install doors to close off the rear alcove which has become coupled with anti-social behaviour. After some delays, NHS Property Services applied for and received planning permission for the works (PP/22/04640) which we supported. We are hopeful that having received permission in October 2022, implementation will follow soon.

Also on the planning front, our RA has been concerned with activity in neighbouring Barkston Gardens. Rumours have been circulating about the sale of the former hostel at 1 Barkston Gardens. Pre-COVID this building, with over 400 beds in bunk rooms, had issues with noise and other nuisance. We await further developments. Also in Barkston Gardens, we were disappointed that the Merlyn Hotel received permission for a redevelopment (PP/22/02145). We objected to this application on various grounds, including the loss of two mature trees.

Earl's Court Road has come back to life with vacant shops reoccupied including the much-welcomed LEON café in the Earl's Court Station Parade. We hope that new businesses will provide amenities used by the local community. We have unfortunately lost all our banks and a concentration of fast-food delivery and gaming outlets has sprung up.





We still suffer from the congestion caused by the COVID era bus build-outs on the Earl's Court Road. The bottleneck caused by the build-out on the corner of Earls' Court Gardens makes exiting our street by car difficult and dangerous. We hope that these build-outs will be removed by TfL. Our ward councillors are working with the Council and TfL to try to make this happen.

Finally, like all RAs in Earl's Court, we are concerned about the early indications of very tall buildings coming forward on the former Earl's Court Exhibition Centre site. We believe it is vital that the developer produces a MasterPlan that will weave in with the existing Earl's Court neighbourhood and provide critical elements such as significant and consolidated green space and a cultural venue of national significance.

**A.C. Level and J.N. Green**

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## **EARL'S COURT SQUARE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

As we gradually recover from Covid, the importance of community is paramount. As a Residents' Association, our focus remains on enabling community cohesion within the Earl's Court Conservation Area. Our catchment covers around 650 households, all of which received a copy of our annual magazine.

During 2022 ECSRA hosted six events. February's AGM started the ball rolling with the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea, Cllr Gerard Hargreaves, bringing his splendid regalia to illustrate his talk on the role of mayor. During March, ECSRA led a 'History of the Square Walk'. We celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in the Garden with a brass band and a delicious array of food contributed by residents. Our popular July BBQ/Disco, held in the Garden, is our main fundraiser and members marked Oktoberfest with a party in The Bottlery. The year culminated with the 'Christmas Tree Lighting' with all ages enjoying the festivities whilst consuming complimentary mulled wine, mince pies and cookies accompanied by a brass band playing Christmas carols.

Increased levels of anti-social behaviour remain our main concern. Most buildings have been affected with squatters on doorsteps either buying or dealing drugs. We have



actively lobbied for more 'bobbies on the beat' and co-authored a petition (supported by 1000+ residents) drawing attention to increased crime in the area.

Despite some initial opposition, our cycle hangar is filled with six bicycles. We are consulting our members on whether additional hangars should be sited in Earl's Court Square and if they should *only* be occupied by our residents.

**Chrissie Courtney, chairman**

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## **EARLS COURT VILLAGE RESIDENT'S ASSOCIATION**

The most remarkable thing during lockdown was the total lack of traffic on Cromwell Road and Earls Court Road. We could walk across the junction of thirteen lanes without air pollution and under exceptionally clear skies. Residents were able to have quiet nights because of the lack of Heathrow air traffic.

Since then, there have been a few house renovations with more roof terraces and a basement, some of which were extremely noisy and dusty. Another basement application is on the fifth or sixth attempt to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan which has been unsuccessful so far.

Owing to our proximity with Earls Court Road, the local anti-social behaviour affects us. We had a tyre slasher writing off six tyres of two cars in Wallgrave Road, seen



and dramatically heard by a resident's CCTV systems. Owing to the identification of the culprit, he was located and given a given a Community Protection Order.

We had a well-attended very successful Platinum Jubilee Party in Providence Patch in June 2022, with gorgeous weather.

We show you a photo taken by a resident looking down Wallgrave Road of the mid December 2022 deluge of snow, which surprised everyone.

**Philippa Seeböhm, chairman**



## EDWARDES SQUARE, SCARSDALE & ABINGDON ASSOCIATION

Our year has seen the usual mixture of wins and losses on the planning front. The long running battle over Avon House ended with approval last September. Our main objections were harm to the conservation area and the huge amount of plant with consequent noise. The planning committee decided that the care facilities provided outweighed any potential harm. Avon House has now been demolished and we face prospect of a two storey basement being dug over most of the site.

More positively, Allen House was saved from demolition by a far sighted developer who recognised the possibility of keeping the entire building rather than just the facade. Work is now under way on a full refurbishment and internal remodelling. We lost the battle, however, for any contribution towards affordable housing.

The Odeon Site is taking shape with the main residential block reaching its full height. The frame of the former proscenium arch is now visible and awaits the return of the faience cladding to restore at least the appearance of the great days of cinema.

The Seraphine Hotel is to build an upwards extension and to incorporate the existing coffee shop and Ryman's Stationery shop at ground floor level. This will become a delicatessen/ hotel lobby, thus continuing the relentless march of food and beverage outlets at the expense of the useful shops we previously enjoyed.

The Tesco site at 100 West Cromwell Road is now about to start after lying dormant for several years.

The enormous Earls Court development will certainly impact on views from within the ESSA area. The recently released masterplan has many positives but it is daunting to think that construction will last for 20 years. Traffic congestion in the area has reached epic proportions and the slightest amount of roadworks causes complete mayhem. How will the roads cope with another mega construction project?

Our committee is developing a new programme of events for members and friends. Our aim is to celebrate some of the great buildings and spaces within our area. We started with a highly successful visit to Leighton House, learning that King Charles had been there earlier that day. Future events include a site visit to Earls Court, a tour of our garden squares and family orientated trip to Holland Park Eco Centre.



**Barry Munday, chairman**





## THE FRIENDS OF HOLLAND PARK

Conservation of grade 1 listed Holland House was completed to a high standard by Borras, supervised by conservation architects, Allies & Morrison. The work was on schedule, on budget and the building is no longer on Historic England's 'At Risk Register'. The Friends were consulted throughout.

Proactive tree healthcare work continued.

The Friends organised demonstrations of a fluorometer which analyses the underlying health of trees, so that the effect of treatments can be assessed and tests can indicate which trees should be selected for treatment each year.

To inform the visiting public about the history of Holland House and Holland Park, The Friends commissioned two information boards, to the front and rear of Holland House and ran Blue Badge guided tours throughout the year. Regular Friends' pop-up stalls in Holland Park served as an information point, provided activities for children, generated funds through sales of merchandise and signed up new members, culminating in a highly popular Festive Event in December.

The park is a solace to many who craved fresh air, exercise, or just a quiet space to enjoy the tranquility of the woodlands. The downside is that high visitor numbers cause compaction and erosion of grass right across the park. Compaction reduces oxygen to tree roots and results in rainfall run-off, rather than it being absorbed where it falls. Solutions are being sought.

We are fortunate to have this safe green space in our borough and work hard to ensure it remains a benefit for future generations.

**Jennie Kettlewell, chairman**



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## THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

In September we joined the nation in mourning the death of our longest reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. Many members queued for hours for the lying in State, others watched the funeral procession in the Mall, Whitehall or around Parliament Square. The royal hearse passed north of Knightsbridge along South Carriage Drive on its way to Windsor. We look forward to joining in the celebrations of the coronation of King Charles III on May 9.



We were delighted that finally our much postponed 60th anniversary was able to be celebrated alongside our 61st Annual General Meeting back at our favourite venue, the Mandarin Oriental. This took place on Monday 16th January. Our thanks to the management of the hotel who twice held over our booking. This year's raffle raised a record £2000 for Age UK Westminster, thanks in no small part to a generous donation from one of our members.

The closure of northbound traffic in Sloane Street for a year, and then southbound traffic for a further year is causing a good deal of disruption whilst works take place to enhance the public realm. We are told traffic will flow smoothly once works are completed.

The new entrance to Knightsbridge tube on Brompton Road is now open and we expect the step-free access in Hooper's Court to be opened later in the year.

This past year has witnessed the long drawn out appeal process on South Kensington Station, still ongoing at the time of writing. The KA lost our appeal against the high end international restaurant which will replace the family run Montpeliano restaurant in Montpelier Street.

**Carol Seymour-Newton, chairman**

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## NORLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

When NCS applied for an ACV (Asset of Community Value) on The Academy pub at 57 Princesdale Road, we could not imagine that seven years later we would still be campaigning for its future.

But together with Clarendon Cross RA and The Kensington Society a milestone of sorts has been reached. Kingscastle Ltd (developers) appealed the council's decision to refuse their application to turn the pub's first and second floors into flats. The appeal hearing was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December with a site visit the following day. NCS, CCRA and The Kensington Society all gave evidence as did Sarah Gentry and Caroline Goddard for the council. The Kensington Society's expert witness, a publican, was questioned closely by the inspector on the applicant's proposed functionality and viability report. In February we received the inspector's report. Kingscastle Ltd had lost their appeal. The Academy requires its top two floors if it is to have a viable future.

We wait now to see what the developers propose to do next. The pub remains closed while



**St James Church is a Grade II listed building and sits in the heart of Norland CA. All of its eight doors, hinges and fittings required extensive repair and repainting. Local builder David Bradfield oversaw the doors restoration work while local residents, St James Garden Committee and NCS raised through donations funds to help pay for the work.**



the first and second floors have an enforcement notice lodged by the Council to remove the current occupants who have converted them illegally into a flat.

How wonderful if this time next year NCS was able to report that The Academy pub was in the hands of a sympathetic developer who could see the potential of a community pub with a good restaurant and space for private parties. Many local residents think so too and it is thanks to their continual support that NCS, CCRA and The KS have fought off developers for so long.

**Libby Kinmonth, chairman**

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## **OLD COURT HOUSE RESIDENTS**

Around 8.20 one dark February evening, families in our apartment block heard a terrific bang – followed by a thud.

It was an horrific accident in Kensington High Street which left a 37 year-old male pedestrian dead and two people in a car seriously injured.

The driver was arrested and police are investigating the cause, but it happened at the junction with Old Court Place, a choke point, where cars, trucks, buses and cyclists heading in and out of town battle for limited space on a 17 metre wide stretch of road. Had the road been wider the death could possibly have been avoided.

Cyclists, with high profile campaigners like broadcaster Jeremy Vine, want a lane for themselves.

RBKC experimented with a 'pop up' cycle lane in 2020. Traffic gridlock followed and the council recently won a High Court judicial review over its decision to remove the lane.

But questions about High Street congestion and how to accommodate the growing tide of cyclists are not going away

One clear solution is High Street widening last done in the 1950s in front of what was then Barker's. The problem is any new major widening would entail knocking down buildings and does the council have the stamina for that challenge?

Our residents' group is concerned about the number of premises in the High Street thought to be money laundering operations run by foreign organised crime

At a recent meeting a council official told me: "Yes, but we can't regulate who landlords let their premises to."

And a police representative told me they: "don't have the resources," to investigate the source of dirty money from overseas.

**John Cookson, chairman**





## **ST HELENS RESIDENTS AND THE ST QUINTIN AND WOODLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

These two bodies share the same membership of 370 local residents, in the north eastern corner of the Royal Borough. We are a pocket of Victorian and Edwardian streets, the latter built in red brick with wide streets and tree-lined pavements on a layout devised by landowner W H St Quintin.

These well-planned streets and houses remain in high demand as adaptable family homes, even in a period when London house prices are falling back.

Our neighbourhood forum, established by the residents association in 2013, celebrates its 10th anniversary this summer. The new Draft RBKC Local Plan endorses all the policies and site allocations in the StQW Neighbourhood Plan. We hope that this will help to fend off another round of development proposals on one of the three 'backland' sites at Nursery Lane, all designated as Local Green Spaces.

Major high density/high rise developments continue to be proposed all around us, in Wood Lane in North Hammersmith, in Scrubs Lane by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Forum, and at Kensal Canalside in the Royal Borough. The Mayor of London's intervention, in requiring second staircases in tall buildings over 30m, looks as if it will prompt late redesigns for some of these plans.

We are not are sorry to see the resultant delays. We live in hope of a time when this particular building typology will once again cease to be the first choice of the developers (as happened for a couple of decades after the collapse of Ronan Point in 1968).

**Henry Peterson, chairman**

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## **THURLOE OWNERS AND LEASEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION (TOLA)**

Sandra Cavlov has been named chair of the Thurloe Owners and Leaseholders Association (TOLA) in March 2023. She is a long-time resident of the TOLA footprint and South Kensington. Her arrival presents an exciting opportunity for TOLA to pursue initiatives and broaden its impact on the community.

TOLA is currently undertaking two key projects: 1) a feasibility study on the installation of CCTV cameras in the area, and 2) the creation of a 'Design Guide' in conjunction with Tim Butler (CEO of South Kensington Estates) with the assistance of Donald Insall Architects.

The feasibility study on CCTV cameras is an important project that will help ensure the safety and security of the community. The project began under the previous chair, Ed Franklin. Both he and Cynthia Oakes will continue to be engaged with the project as vital members of TOLA's executive committee. The study will identify potential providers and technologies appropriate for the area and its residents.



Another important initiative currently underway is the creation of a 'Design Guide' to help freeholders, leaseholders and their architects when embarking on the adaptation of the buildings on the TOLA footprint. This guide will provide essential information on necessary permissions and design standards to ensure that any changes made to properties in the area are realised in a responsible and appropriate manner.

**Sandra Cavlov, chairman**

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

**Thomas' Schools:** 2022 was dominated by the prospect of the relocation Thomas' Schools from Victoria Road and Cottesmore Gardens to larger premises on St Albans Grove and their expansion from 400 to 500 pupils. The transfer alone would cause considerable traffic problems and the conversion of the former carpark to a playground would cause major noise problems. The planning decision was repeatedly deferred from June to September to December and eventually to January 2023.

We were very concerned by the committee report, which showed a lack of understanding about the suitability of this location for a 500-pupil school and the need for admissions criteria giving priority to children within a 10-minute walk in order to reduce the car traffic. It also acceded to large numbers of children using the 'playground' despite being warned about the likely noise, which cannot be mitigated. The planning committee agreed the application but recognised that the number of pupils should remain at 400. The major challenge now is to design effective management plans to manage the traffic numbers, drop-off and collection, parking and routing of traffic, as well as the use of the 'playground'. These management plans will need to be jointly agreed with council, Thomas' Schools and the community. The proposals include St Albans Grove becoming a 'school street' to prevent traffic jams in the morning and afternoon.

**Heythrop College:** This scheme has still not started. It would appear to have run into difficulties, and the site is currently on the market.

2023 should at last see the installation of piece of public art associated with the One Kensington Road development in Victoria Road.

**Michael Bach, chairman**



**THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY – CHARITY NO. 267778**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED**  
**31 DECEMBER 2022**

| <b>Income</b>                                   | <b>2022</b>        | <b>2021</b>       |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Donations and legacies</b>                   | <b>£</b>           | <b>£</b>          |
| Membership subscriptions                        | 10,557.00          | 9,757.00          |
| Donations and legacies                          | 2,975.71           | 2,553.50          |
| Gift Aid  | 2,730.06           | 2,238.49          |
| <b>Total donations and legacies</b>             | <b>16,282.77</b>   | <b>14,548.99</b>  |
| <b>Charitable activities</b>                    |                    |                   |
| Events  | 4,038.00           | 625.00            |
| Annual report advertising                       | 10,250.00          | 5,225.00          |
| <b>Total charitable activities</b>              | <b>14,288.00</b>   | <b>5,850.00</b>   |
| <b>Investment income</b>                        |                    |                   |
| Bank interest                                   | 491.76             | 32.89             |
| <b>Total income</b>                             | <b>31,062.53</b>   | <b>20,431.88</b>  |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                              |                    |                   |
| <b>Charitable activities</b>                    |                    |                   |
| Newsletter                                      | 3,001.97           | 2,719.94          |
| Events  | 6,590.21           | 750.00            |
| Annual report                                   | 9,347.96           | 9,344.93          |
| Planning  | 14,540.96          | 9,330.68          |
| Membership                                      | 1,030.65           | 1,079.99          |
| Charitable                                      | 195.00             | 195.00            |
| <b>Total charitable activities expense</b>      | <b>34,706.76</b>   | <b>23,420.54</b>  |
| <b>Other</b>                                    |                    |                   |
| Insurance                                       | 658.31             | 518.78            |
| Examiner  | 660.00             | 0.00              |
| <b>Total other expense</b>                      | <b>1,318.31</b>    | <b>518.78</b>     |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>                        | <b>36,025.07</b>   | <b>23,939.32</b>  |
| <b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>                 | <b>(4,962.504)</b> | <b>(3,507.44)</b> |
| <b>Total unrestricted funds brought forward</b> | <b>73,191.33</b>   | <b>76,698.77</b>  |
| <b>Total unrestricted funds carried forward</b> | <b>68,228.79</b>   | <b>73,191.33</b>  |



## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

|   | 2022             | 2021             |
|---|------------------|------------------|
|   | £                | £                |
| <b>Current assets</b>                                 |                  |                  |
| <b>Debtors</b>  |                  |                  |
| <b>Accrued income and prepayments</b>                 |                  |                  |
| Interest  | 122.31           | 0.00             |
| Insurance   | 64.00            | 596.09           |
| <b>Total accrued income and prepayments</b>           | <b>186.31</b>    | <b>569.09</b>    |
| <b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>                       |                  |                  |
| Nationwide Building Society                           | 60,000.00        | 60,000.00        |
| Barclays Bank   | 12,738.57        | 15,181.41        |
| PayPal  | 1,604.06         | 1,520.61         |
| <b>Total cash at bank and in hand</b>                 | <b>74,342.73</b> | <b>76,702.02</b> |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                           | <b>74,529.04</b> | <b>77,298.11</b> |
| <b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b> |                  |                  |
| <b>Deferred income</b>                                |                  |                  |
| Subscriptions and donations                           | 1,010.00         | 702.00           |
| <b>Creditors</b>                                      |                  |                  |
| Creditors   | 3,632.09         | 2,389.94         |
| City Living Local Life – Norland                      | 998.16           | 1,014.84         |
| Accruals  | 660.00           | 0.00             |
| <b>Total deferred income and creditors</b>            | <b>6,300.25</b>  | <b>4,106.78</b>  |
| <b>Total net assets</b>                               | <b>68,228.79</b> | <b>73,191.33</b> |
| <b>Funds of the charity</b>                           |                  |                  |
| <b>Unrestricted funds</b>                             | <b>68,228.79</b> | <b>73,191.33</b> |

**Approved by the Trustees 16 January 2023**

Signed: Martin Frame

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 £10,577.00, donations and legacies of £2,975.71 which qualified for Gift Aid of £2,730.06.

The total income for the year was £31,062.53, an increase of £10,630.65.

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

The total expenditure was £36,025.07, an increase of £12,085.75.

The balance sheet has unrestricted funds £68,228.79, a reduction of £4,962.54. These funds are necessary to secure the future of the Society. However further planning costs are anticipated of £18,943.00 in 2023. Rebuilding funds through subscriptions, donations and legacies is welcomed.

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS For the year ended 31 December 2022

- **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 £20 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 £ 20 Renewable annually on 1 January.

Donation £

Total £ 20 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 Kensington Society, Westwoods, Clatford Bottom, MARLBOROUGH SN8 4BY. For further information email [kensingtonsociety@outlook.com](mailto: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 Nutting 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](mailto:kensingtonsociety@outlook.com)

Alpha Plus Group  
17 Individual Schools - 3 Individual Colleges

Little Wetherby Edge Street  
opening in September 2023

# NURTURE

Wetherby Kensington School  
is part of the Alpha Plus Group.

Learn more: [www.wetherby-kensington.co.uk](http://www.wetherby-kensington.co.uk)

Tel: 020 7487 6000

Twitter: @Alpha\_PlusGroup

[www.alphaplusgroup.co.uk](http://www.alphaplusgroup.co.uk)

 Alpha Plus  
group

£5 for non-members

