



The chairman's report

Amanda Frame

It seems that the harder we work, the more there is to do. The government gave us a brief rest from its muddling during the election, but without the coalition to worry about it is now back in full force.

Michael Bach's planning report, which follows after this article, covers the major current developments, planning consultations and new planning rules and regulations, so I'll concentrate on our many other activities and only mention a few planning related issues.

Natural History Museum

You may remember the ongoing battles we used to have with the Natural History Museum. However, during the last two years we have worked hard to improve the relationship. A group consisting of seven local associations and the Kensington Society have regularly met with the museum to discuss their plans.

NHM have truly grasped the nettle and faced the challenges of limited funding while visitor numbers have increased massively. What is now proposed is a highly creative and forward-thinking design, which addresses both the museum's history and the evolution of the natural world, while significantly improving how visitors access the museum from the surrounding roads and the listed tunnel connecting to South Kensington Station.

South Kensington Station

Following on from the successful working relationship with NHM, the same local group is now meeting with Transport for London, as they develop plans for the future of South Kensington Station. Again, as we all remember, there have been deplorable proposals



SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday 14 April 2016, 6:30 for 7:00pm

The Kensington Society AGM

On Thursday 14 April 2016 at 6:30pm, you are all welcome to the Kensington Society annual general meeting.

As usual it will be held in the Great Hall, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, and it will be followed by a wine reception in the Mayor's Parlour.

Guest speaker will be Sir Peter Hendy CBE, who was the head of Transport for London from 2006 to 2015.

in the past for the redevelopment of the station. The plans are in their infancy, but we are greatly encouraged by the dialogue so far.

Exhibition Road Cultural Group

The society and a representative from the same South Kensington working group have represented local opinions on [Exhibition Road Cultural Group](#), the partnership between the council and 16 museums, schools and other institutions. We have met several times to review a variety of issues.

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The new plans for the Natural History Museum, due to be lodged as a planning application shortly, show that early involvement with local residents' associations can create very good results. This is the vision for the new East Lawn. Picture courtesy of Picture Plane.



The council has already placed several of the new, large and advertisement-covered bins at various locations, claiming it's just a trial, such as on Hornton Street (furthest left) and by the Science Museum (the other two). Unfortunately, the area around them seems to be messier than usual, as seen in the right-hand late night picture, perhaps because people find opening them both difficult and unhygienic.

Advertisements

Kensington and Chelsea have very few advertisement spaces in our public domain. Yes, we have the ten terrible billboards on Cromwell Road, recently allowed to be replaced by enormous digital display screens, christened "[The London Gateway](#)" by JC Decaux, and we shall soon have another one, approved by the council's planning applications committee, as JC Decaux's plan to replace their innocuous advertisement pavilion on Cromwell Road with a massive [meringue-formed digital "advertising sculpture"](#), designed by none other than architect [Zaha Hadid](#). We are also facing JC Decaux's recent agreement with TfL to change most of our bus shelter advertising boards to bright digital screens.

And to top it all, the council has begun – without any public consultation – to replace many of our iconic rubbish bins with solar-powered large bins from American manufacturer Bigbelly. On paper the bins may appear great, as they have an inbuilt compactor and can send a message to the rubbish collectors when they are full. But not only must one pull a handle down to open them – which many find unsanitary as well as difficult when hands are full of rubbish – what is worse, is that the bin sides carry advertisements. What happened to the council's own requirements to reduce advertisements and street clutter? Westminster resists all adverts on street furniture, so why can't RBKC?

Short lets

As anticipated, the government's Deregulation Act 2015 has removed the London ban on short lets of residential properties. "Temporary sleeping accommodation of any residential premises in Greater London" is now allowed as long as two conditions are met: 1) that the number of nights per year are no more than 90, and 2) that the person providing the accommodation pays council tax for the premises. The last requirement disqualifies non leaseholder tenants from subletting their homes.

However, the government provides no guidance on how authorities are supposed to keep track of the number of nights used for such accommodation, to ensure that the 90 nights limitation isn't exceeded and that tax is paid on the income from the letting.

Unfortunately, several of our members have already reported problems. There is a provision in the act for boroughs to seek exemption from the new rule for "certain residential premises or residential premises in certain areas", but it is not yet clear what this may mean in practice.

New director of planning

In April, the council announced the appointment of Graham Stallwood as the new director of Planning and Borough Development. The previous director, Jonathan Bore, announced his retirement last year. Graham used to be the department's head of Development Management & Conservation and is well-known to us all. We anticipate changes under his direction and are very pleased to have almost immediately established a closer working relationship with the planning department.

Pre-application advice and public engagement

As reported last year, the government's advice to developers to take pre-application advice from the council is fraught with complications. The idea of seeking advice prior to a formal application seems reasonable, but in practice there can be major difficulties, and this is an issue we have already discussed with Mr Stallwood and Councillor Coleridge, the council's cabinet minister for planning.

The developers are encouraged both to consult the public and to respond to the public before the application is made, and then to present the results of the consultation within the application. However, in many cases the consultation is lip-service at best. In some cases, the council's planning officers are beginning to allow limited communication between themselves and the public before an application is formally submitted. However, we continue to be forced to use the Freedom of Information Act (FOI requests) to receive copies of the council's pre-application advice letters to the developers and for the comments received from the council's Architects Appraisal Panel. It is our opinion there should be no need for confidentiality or financial privacy once the public consultation has begun.

We are hopeful that Mr Stallwood and Councillor Coleridge appreciate the problem we face with the lack of public engagement, and the opportunities such engagement offers.

Lecture series

Our lecture series continues to be a success. Traci Weaver's planning and Frances Brunault's excellent support has meant that all the events have been successful and well attended. You can register for an event on-line. Please review the programme and join us for one, if not all, of the events.

Amanda Frame



The planning report

Michael Bach, chairman of the planning committee

Managing the pace of change has never been more difficult. The government has changed the planning system to promote changes in use and, as a result, developers are putting the Borough under even greater pressure. No sooner has the RBKC council begun to get the tidal wave of basements under control – it has taken the best part of five years – than we are faced with a succession of major developments. In January we managed to persuade the council to turn down several of these major schemes – the Odeon, Dukes Lodge and a casino on Cromwell Road – but now we face the appeals, all involving public inquiries. Meanwhile, there are the long-running enforcement sagas and the constant pressure of the weekly list of applications.

On the “creative” front, a handful of supplementary planning documents (SPDs) are nearing completion. SPDs are designed to elaborate and interpret the council’s policies either on a subject, such as basements, or for an area, such as Notting Hill Gate.

In short, the last six months have been extremely busy – the next six months could be even busier.

Consultations update

The council’s core strategy: Following the adoption of recent partial reviews, the council now has [a consolidated local plan](#) on its website. It is word searchable, so one can search the whole document for key words.

The next issues on which the council will be consulting are housing and enterprise.

Housing: We have expressed our concern about the amount of time it has taken to revise the housing policy. The current policy puts too much emphasis on producing large houses and flats – stating that 80% should have 3, 4 or more bedrooms – which has played directly into the hands of the international investment market. Such a rule does not produce housing that meets our needs for homes, but predominantly “buy-to-leave” properties that remain empty for most of the year. The buy-to-leave phenomenon is the subject of an upcoming report to the housing and property scrutiny committee. The council needs to change its planning policies to achieve a better mix of new housing that meets the needs of people who want to live here.

The council has tightened up its approach to conversions that reduce the number of flats, but that is peanuts compared with the “loss” of new housing that is never used full time as homes.

adoption of the basement policy in January, the next steps have been to prepare revised SPDs on basements and on transport and streets and a code of practice for managing working hours, noise and vibration.

Consultation on the draft basement SPD closed on 11 August and that for the code of construction practice closed on 21 October. We’re pleased with the progress. The Kensington Society has worked closely with the council to ensure that these documents provide better protection for neighbours.

Notting Hill Gate SPD: The SPD has now been adopted. A proposal for Newcombe House is expected soon (see further down), but the council has still not committed to a major scheme to upgrade the streetscape of Notting Hill Gate. We are pressing for the council to include provision for a project in its three-year works programme next March.

The owners of 66-74 Notting Hill Gate (The Book Warehouse building and the Victorian buildings next to it) have recently submitted a second planning application, for replacing the 1930s corner building with a modern interpretation of it and keeping the exterior of the Victorian one. It’s a much better solution than the first plan, which was refused in December last year.

In June, the remaining part of the huge Notting Hill Estate, of which Newcombe House originally was part, was sold to a group of investors who surely plan to do more than just collect rents from the seven large buildings that the purchase consisted of. So, Newcombe House and 66-74 NHG are probably just the first phases in a major redevelopment of the Notting Hill Gate area.

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The Notting Hill Estate, bought by William Pears and LaSalle in 2010, covers a large part of Notting Hill Gate. The buildings sold in June 2015 are in yellow, while the buildings in blue were sold in 2011. The owners of 66-74 Notting Hill Gate (in red) have recently submitted a revised application for a total rebuild, after having had their first refused. The new one reflects public opinion much better.



Basement developments continue to be a big issue in some parts of the borough, although the new CTMP rules, currently in draft form, should cut down the number of huge hoarding boxes enveloping one or more parking spaces, often for more than a year.

Brompton Hospital SPD: NHS England's advice has still not been received to help resolve the impasse between the two hospitals, after which the council will produce a revised SPD. The Kensington Society has supported the principle of a Chelsea medical quarter.

Heythrop College SPD: The major site behind Kensington Square could become the subject of development proposals, possibly including major residential development. The current uses are educational, with halls of residence and open space. This could prove very controversial and a challenge if education use were to be lost.

Neighbourhood planning: On 26 October, John Parmiter, the independent examiner of the draft neighbourhood plan for St Quintin and Woodlands, which has been developed by the St Quintin & Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum, sent his report to the council. His report largely supports the plan, and thus the local residents in the forum, concluding that the backland at Nursery Lane meets all the necessary criteria to be designated as "local green space". Although the council isn't obliged to accept the examiner's recommendations, there are indications that it will. If so, the developer who wants to turn the area into housing may try to get the council's okay overturned through a judicial review. So, the battle is far from yet won.

Review of CAPS: The Kensington Society is following the development of the new conservation area appraisals (CAAs) which will replace the conservation area proposals statements

(CAPS). A three-year programme, which aims to produce one new CAA per month, is under way. It includes a walkabout with residents and consultation on the draft. We are concerned about the content and coverage, and their usefulness to all parties – developers and residents, as well as planners. In particular, we would like to see CAAs being more positive in highlighting opportunities for enhancement, which is one of the council's legal duties.

New rules and tougher enforcement

Basements: In addition to the new basement rules – which were adopted in early spring, and means that basements normally will not be allowed to be more than one storey deep and cover more than 50% of any garden (front and back) – the council has also issued a proposed borough-wide Article 4 direction which, if agreed by the full council, will come into effect in April 2016. This will mean that basement constructions within the footprint of the building will also require planning consent. Unless under a listed building, such basements are currently permitted development and thus application free. However, as the new basement policy limits the depth of a basement construction to one storey, and requires a CTMP (see below), the new basement rules would be meaningless if a developer could freely construct a five or six storey deep basement within the building footprint without even having to provide a plan for all the lorry traffic it would generate, and how it would affect parking in the area.

CTMPs: The upcoming transport and streets SPD and basement SPD will require that a detailed CTMP (construction traffic management plan) is submitted with all applications for larger developments. For basements, a draft version of the CTMP is already in use, and within the revised pro forma document, applicants are asked to provide information about how and when neighbours and local residents' associations have been consulted about the CTMP before the application has been submitted. As a consequence, developers have started to consult residents' associations on these CTMPs.

The CTMP pro forma also states that the council will not accept permanent blocking of resident parking spaces on streets where 90% or more of the spaces are regularly in use. On such streets, spaces may only be suspended during week days, in order to make them available for the residents at night and during weekends.

A number of these CTMPs have recently been refused and, as a result, the application has also been refused.

Enforcement: We are extremely pleased that the council has put additional resources into enforcement, and the vigour with which this activity is being pursued, whether against the billboarding by basement contractors or the "stripe house" in South End.



Work on the Odeon site has begun, following the approval in July. However, the developer is apparently still hoping to build according to the plans that were refused in January, as the appeal against the refusal hasn't been withdrawn.

Current developments

The Odeon site: Following the refusal in January, a revised application was approved on 21 July. This plan was better than the refused one, but the Kensington Society objected to the use of the post office site as additional entrance for the high-end luxury flats, as this leads to further loss of retail on Kensington High Street. Meanwhile the developers are still pursuing an appeal against the January refusal. We will be supporting ESSA (Edwardes Square Scarsdale & Abingdon Association) at the public inquiry.

Duke's Lodge: The developer has appealed against the council's refusal last January and a public inquiry was held in late October. A "revised" scheme, with only token gestures to meet the grounds for refusal, was submitted in August but withdrawn a month later, probably because the developer realised it would be refused.

Casino, 97-109 Cromwell Road: The proposal, for a massive structure built over the garden and tacked onto the front of Holiday Inn hotel, was refused in March before it even reached the planning committee. The developer has appealed. In addition, they have applied for a land swap to compensate for loss of green space, but what they offer is not equivalent to what could be lost.

1 Derry Street, 25 Kensington Square & 99-121 Kensington High Street: This scheme, which would have introduced an entry to the 1 Derry Street offices via Kensington Square, as well as several changes to the Grade II* listed Derry & Toms building, was comprehensively rejected by the council in March. In early September the developer appealed.

186 Holland Park Avenue: This property has been the subject of successive unsuccessful applications, appeals and enforcement action. Latest development involves excavation of the garden to produce basement level terrace and two gates – one to Holland Park roundabout and another to Royal Crescent Mews. Enforcement is in hand. There are several appeals in progress – we are working closely with the Norland Conservation Society.

Newcombe House: The developers intend to have a second public exhibition in the autumn, hoping to submit their planning application shortly thereafter.

Westway Information Centre, 140 Ladbroke Grove: Located under Westway, this was originally developed as a one-stop information centre with a mix of council and voluntary sector services. The council is now seeking to refurbish it and change the uses. As a social and community use the voluntary sector offices need to be replaced by equivalent premises and formally recognised as uses that the council's local plan is committed to retain. It is matter of applying the same policy to council property as would be applied to privately-owned property.

Allen House: Following successful negotiation for improvements – reducing the size of the basement and improved fenestration - the developer reopened the debate to seek a bigger, two-storey basement car park, but has now withdrawn his application.

Another pub listed as community asset

The legendary 150 year old Ladbroke Grove pub formally known as Kensington Park Hotel, but locally known as KPH, became property number five on the council's list of "assets of community value" on 20 October. This designation means that for the next five years, whenever the owner wants to sell, a community group can bid for it and then be allowed six months to raise the necessary funds. However, the freehold owner, SWA Developments in Chelmsford, which bought the property in 2013, appealed the decision the very next day. Although appealed, the listing remains until the appeal has been reviewed.

The pub's ownership situation is complex, however. Shortly before the freehold changed hands, the current landlord, former music promoter Vince Power, took over the management of the pub with power of attorney from the leaseholder of 40 years, Patrick Burke, who is too ill to run it himself. Power cleaned up the pub and re-introduced live music (this is where Tom Jones played his first London gig). In July, SWA Developments won a court judgment forfeiting the tenancy. Although the judge lambasted what he called



An application for demolishing and rebuilding the Newcombe House complex in Notting Hill Gate (consisting of the 12-storey Newcombe House tower as well as the buildings here seen in front of it) is expected towards the end of 2015.

SWA's "aggressive campaign and unreasonable stance to the defendant from day one" and found its owner, Steven Archer, to be "unreliable and untrustworthy", he ruled for Archer because of confusions over Vince Power's relationship to leaseholder Patrick Burke. Power's lawyers have appealed, and that fight continues.

SWA claims that they intend to continue running it as a pub, but with a new landlord, but documents have circulated which indicate that SWA may have other plans for the premises.

Government changes to planning

In 2013 the government altered the rules for change of use from offices to housing so that planning permission would no longer be needed. Originally the change was presented as a three-year experiment until May 2016. After strong lobbying by both the council and the Kensington Society, the government gave us a borough-wide exemption during the trial period.

In October the government announced that it was implementing this change permanently, not even waiting for the trial period to end. Fortunately, the RBKC exemption will be extended until May 2019, which will hopefully give the council time to adopt an Article 4 direction before the exemption is lost. This should protect our offices.

In April, just before the general election, the government introduced further "freedoms" to change use to housing from other uses, as well as turning shops into banks, estate agents and restaurants, without requiring consent. These freedoms are now being used, so we can expect a loss of shops and an increase in estate agents and restaurants. The composition of our high streets and, particularly, our local centres may change rapidly.

And more recently, in its budget, the government announced proposals for further changes in the Treasury's policy paper "[Fixing the Foundations: Creating a more prosperous nation](#)". This will create further challenges, especially proposals to allow additional storeys without planning consent. The proposals are half-baked and will need refinement limiting them to proposals which create additional flats – but there is no indication yet whether conservation areas and listed buildings will be excluded.

Michael Bach

More than 50% of properties are sold abroad

The typical buyer of a property in the “PCL” (Prime Central London) property market has for quite some time not been someone living and working in London, but an international investor: either a rich individual or an investment company, and both usually hiding their identity behind a shell company in a tax haven. This is confirmed both by recent research by the magazine *Private Eye*, as well as by the statistics from our local estate agents.

In early September, the website of the magazine *Private Eye* published the result of a thorough mapping of all properties in the UK bought by foreign companies between 2005 and 2014. Using Land Registry data released under Freedom of Information laws, and then linking more than 100,000 land title register entries to specific addresses, the magazine managed to place all leasehold and freehold interests acquired by foreign registered companies between 2005 and 2014 [on a clickable map](#), which shows ownership details for each property. The overwhelming amount was bought by shell companies registered in tax havens.

The map shows that some 300 houses and flats have been bought by foreign registered companies in the small Campden Ward area alone since 2004 (Campden Ward is the area between Holland Park and Kensington Palace Gardens). For the whole borough, the number of properties bought are several thousand. And we must remember that the *Private Eye* research doesn't show the whole extend of foreign registered ownership, as it is limited to sales since 2005 - and numerous properties owned by foreign-registered companies were bought long before then.

According to *Private Eye*, some £8 billion worth of properties in Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Camden were acquired by tax haven companies between 2012 and March 2015.

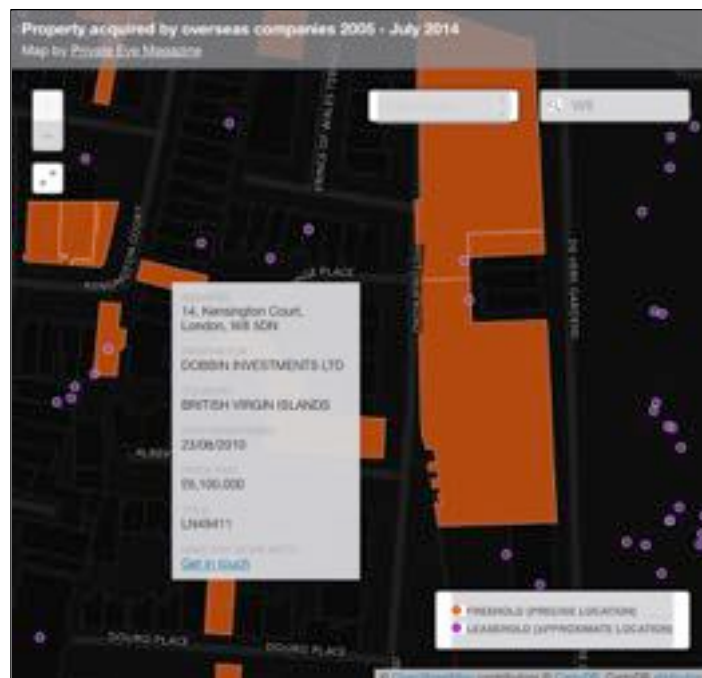
The statistics from the estate agents show a similar picture. Those who do report it, state that less than half of the buyers of resident PCL properties are UK residents. This trend is especially noticeable in the new build market. The estate agents also report that between 60 and 90% of the PCL properties they handle are bought cash, which is a further indication of the amount of foreign resident purchases. It is also emphasised by the fact that some 75% of the buyers are either investors or people buying a trophy home.

What is the PCL market?

The definition of which areas of London that are part of the Prime Central London market varies slightly from estate agent to estate agent, but they all include Kensington, Holland Park, Notting Hill, Chelsea, Knightsbridge Belgravia, Marylebone, Regents Park and St John's Wood. Many also include Fitzrovia, Maida Vale, Pimlico and Victoria. In addition to Prime Central London, there are four other “prime” areas, collectively known as “Prime Outer London”: Prime North West London, which includes Hampstead Garden suburb and Highgate, Prime North London, which includes parts of Islington, Prime East London, which includes Wapping and Canary Wharf, and Prime South West London, which includes Battersea, Clapham, Wandsworth, Wimbledon, Putney, Fulham, Barnes, Chiswick and Richmond.



The *Private Eye* map shows thousands of Kensington properties that have been bought by foreign registered companies since 2004. Below: The map allows close-ups which show when each property was sold and who the registered owner is.



The estate agent analyses of market trends show clearly that the foreign investors are a substantial part of any London estate agent's business. In their financial forecasts, UK employment figures are hardly mentioned, while much time is spent analysing the effects that a possible downturn of the Chinese economy may have on London property sales.

Estate agents optimistic about the future

After the general election in May, the London estate agents were ecstatic. In their spring forecasts for the PCL market, they all forecasted a quick return to growth after a temporary slow-down ahead of the election, as *"the Conservative majority win is exactly the result the property market in prime central London had hoped for"* (Winkworth's *Insight*, Spring 2015). After the worries for what a mansion tax could do to the market, they concluded that *"the more property tax favourable approach of the Conservative Party should help increase confidence for those buying and selling homes over £1.5m"* (Strutt & Parker, May 2015). They all predicted a quick pick up of sales after the election.

However, a few months later, that optimism was somewhat subdued, as sales hadn't increased as much as hoped. The general conclusion is that the rise in stamp duty, especially for properties worth more than £5 million, is to blame for the slow pick up. They are all, however, very optimistic that 2016 will be a boom year, and long term they forecast a price increase in the PCL area of 23-24% for the next five years, and they expect the increase in "Prime Outer London" to be even higher.

The estate agents do not seem very concerned that the hectic building of luxury flats all over London may lead to a saturation of the market. *"It is almost impossible to imagine new-build delivery ever outpacing demand for housing in London"*, commented Knight Frank in their August 2015 forecast.

So what does all this mean for people living in Kensington who aren't property speculators or estate agents? Well, except for the few who plan to leave the area and move somewhere less expensive (and thus can benefit from rocketing house prices), it brings nothing good. It means continued disruption from constant building work everywhere (be it new builds or "upgrades" of existing properties); it makes it increasingly difficult for most people to move within Kensington, even to a smaller home (those new flats often cost the same as a house and their service charges tend to be enormous); and it makes it virtually impossible for those leaving home to find something affordable anywhere in central London.

Thomas Blomberg

Sources: Knight Frank Prime Central London Sales Index, August 2015; Knight Frank UK Residential Market Forecast, August 2015; Marsh & Parsons Intellectual Property, Summer 15; Strutt & Parker London Residential Quarterly, Summer 2015; Savills Prime Central London, Summer 2015; Winkworth Insight, Spring 2015 & Summer 5.



The three luxury mansion blocks called Holland Green, which surrounds the new Design Museum in Holland Park on the former Commonwealth Institute site, are near completion. The 62 flats have been heavily marketed to Far East investors, with the main selling point being high security with CCTV cameras all over the site, a spa with a 20m swimming pool, and a 24 hr concierge services that will offer restaurant food delivered to the flats, suggestions and tickets for shows and events, valeting and housekeeping. According to one agent, most have already been sold off-plan. Prices have seldom been published, but one of the 13 two-bedroom flats was put on the market in early September 2015 for £5.4 million. One can only imagine what the 28 three-bedroom and 11 four-bedroom flats are going for. The largest flat, with five bedrooms and four reception rooms, appeared earlier on an agent's website for £22 million...



Vicarage Gate House, the 13 flat luxury development, which after a long battle was allowed to replace the 50 patient nursing home in Vicarage Gate (near Kensington Church Street), will be finished this October. After originally have been a 20 flat scheme, of which 10 affordable, the developer eventually convinced the council that it should instead be 13 very large flats (plus two very small for staff) with no affordable flats on site. Instead, an old office on Campden Hill Road was turned into 11 social housing flats for 52 people. Several of the VGH flats are larger than many terraced houses in the area, and prices are "on application" only. According to the developer's website, two are sold (one being the 357sqm penthouse) and four are reserved, while the remaining seven are still looking for buyers.

The angry residents of Gloucester Road

Campaigns for a local area don't always start because a developer or the council plans to do something that locals dislike – sometimes it's because of the opposite: that nobody is doing anything to improve things. This story is a great example of residents helping themselves.

It all started a year ago, when a local resident came up from the Gloucester Road underground station late one evening and was dismayed by what she found around the station plaza: litter swirling round, rough sleepers, broken benches, and stained and broken pavements. The litter bins were overflowing, and old rusty newspaper stands blighted the area.

She sent an angry letter to her ward councillors about the state of the area, and copied it to some civic-minded neighbours. Soon three other local women stepped forward to join in, trying to fight back against the shabby look of the Gloucester Road station surroundings. Ward councillors have also provided assistance.

The members of this informal group, sometimes jokingly calling themselves "the angry residents of Gloucester Road", prefer not to be named, as they are still working on various projects and want to keep a low profile. But they want to share their successes and setbacks with other members of the Kensington Society, to show that small groups of dedicated residents can make a difference, provided they have determination and patience.

Victories

- Arranging for hanging flower baskets to be installed on lampposts in the area early next year, paid for by Courtfield Ward community funds.
- Getting the strings of small white lights turned back on in the large plane tree that dominates the station plaza.
- Having the Evening Standard replace its old and dirty newspaper stands with new clean ones.
- Getting the leaking station awning repaired.
- Achieving a significant reduction, through police enforcement, in the number of professional beggars working the area.
- Getting self-seeded plants pulled out from between the oxblood tiles on the façade of the Grade II-listed station.
- Bringing in enforcement officers to remove illegal advertising banners that were fixed to nearby railings.
- Having the broken benches repaired.

Setbacks

- Despite encouragement, many merchants show no interest in keeping the area outside their shops litter-free.
- "A"-style advertising boards on the pavements aren't being removed – on the contrary, they seem to multiply.
- Illegal buskers are taking up pitches on the pavement.
- The former International Herald Tribune newspaper stall (now licensed to a fruit seller) looks tired and dirty. A member of the campaign group filed a Freedom of Information Act request to trace the £30,000 Thomas Heatherwick-designed newspaper stand originally destined for the station many years ago. The answer was that the stall, in fact two of them, are in storage at a depot in Wokingham Berkshire. The council has not announced any plans for using or selling these stalls.
- The BT phone boxes are still full of "tart" cards.

Westminster's approach

The group has recently started to look at how the City of Westminster is handling enforcement of street regulations and trading standards. Westminster is developing a system of city inspectors, one for each ward, who have a wide variety of responsibilities for public areas. This means that people making



The area outside the Gloucester Road tube station is in need of much improvement.

complaints have a single person to contact, instead of just being told, "oh, that's Planning, that's Waste Management, that's Highways, that's Licensing..."

The campaign group is now considering lobbying our borough for a similar type of system, as they are convinced that it would be very helpful for residents to have a single ward contact for various street issues.

Holly Smith



Formed in 1953, the Kensington Society strives to ensure that our part of London retains its magnificent heritage of buildings, parks and gardens alongside the best of contemporary architecture and design.

With our 660 members and 25 affiliated societies, we are very active in planning issues and able to exert a real influence on planning decisions in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea. We also have a programme of lectures and talks, which covers a wide range of subjects, both historical as well as informative. The events offer the chance to meet your Kensington neighbours.

Interested in joining? It only costs £15 per year.

How to reach us:

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Kensington Society is a registered charity (number 267778)

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