



# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017



The picture:  
The Grenfell Tower disaster has shaken the council to the core, ending the careers for several politicians and the collapse of England's largest TMO.

*Picture by Natalie Oxford (CC BY 4.0)*

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# The chairman's report

2017 has been a tumultuous year for Kensington, to say the least. On 18 April, eight days before the Kensington Society annual general meeting, Theresa May called a snap election for 8 June in the hope of getting a larger majority in the Commons ahead of the difficult Brexit negotiations. But instead of increasing their majority, the Conservatives ended up losing 13 seats, while Labour gained 30. One of the constituencies affected was Kensington, where the staunch Brexiteer Victoria Borwick very narrowly lost the seat she had won in 2015 to Labour's Golborne ward councillor Emma Dent Coad. It's the first time Labour has won a parliament seat for Kensington since the constituency Kensington North was abolished in the early 1970s.

Less than a week later, on 14 June, a old fridge-freezer caught fire in Grenfell Tower shortly after midnight, and by 3am the whole building was burning, resulting in the loss of some 80 lives and more than 200 homes. The council was paralysed and had only a few persons at the rescue centre during the first few days, while hundreds of local volunteers and charity workers rushed in to provide water, food, shelter and clothing. They immediately began a coordinating effort with very little help from the council and other authorities. This soon led to a new leadership in the council, eager to promise everyone that from now on everything will be different. Time will tell...

## Grenfell Tower

The fire at Grenfell Tower shocked and horrified the nation. Those of us who live near the estate and can see the tower from our homes will never forget the shocking sights we witnessed for days after the start of the fire. We still live with its harrowing, blacked hulk. For most it is incomprehensible that a tragedy of this scale can happen in the 21st century, much less on our own door step. For those who lived there and pressed for improvements for many years, it is a wretched reality.

The relaxation of fire safety inspections and the building codes over the last decade appears to have contributed to the causes. All too often health and safety is viewed as an unnecessary burden which is superficial, costly and a time waster. That this "red tape" has been created for a reason – to protect people – seems often to be forgotten until something like this happens. However, as we wait for the result of the public inquiry we must continue to do what we can to help the survivors.

## Changes to the RBKC organisation

On 12 September, the council's administration committee accepted a report and plan from the new chief executive, Barry Quick, titled "Fit for New Purposes". It makes for very interesting reading. It proposes changes to the structure of the borough organisation. He notes that *"it is crucial that the organisation of RBKC is reshaped so that it is fit for these new purposes. This will require new management arrangements that reinforce corporate responses to challenges rather than fragments and silo'd responses."*

This is music to our ears, although there is a feeling that it looks too closely at the internal management and not enough on many issues which irritate local residents. We agree, however, with the silo'd assessment. We have for years expressed our disapproval in the way that many departments have little or no relation to each other, leading to frustration when a problem involves several departments. Hopefully we, along with our associated societies, will be able to discuss these concerns with Barry Quick.

## The future of Notting Hill police station

In late August, the Kensington Society, along with many residents associations, primarily Pembroke and greatly assisted by Pembroke resident Jacqueline Pruskin, initiated a campaign against the proposed closure of the Notting Hill

police station. And in early September, the RBKC council joined our campaign. As I write this our 38 Degrees petition has close to 2,400 signatures.

A short background: Since 2010, the Met has cut £600 million from its budget in response to the government's demand for spending cuts. As part of that savings effort, 149 police stations were reduced to 73. However, a government freeze of police budgets until 2021, announced by George Osborne in his autumn statement in November 2015, means that the Met now must save another £400 million in order to cope with unavoidable cost increases. Because of this, the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) presented a savings plan in July 2016, where a focus on protecting the number of Met police officers would necessitate the closure of a further 41 police stations, leaving only one in each London borough.

The proposal went out for a public consultation which ended on 6 October. Less than a month later, on 1 November, MOPAC presented its conclusion of the consultation, which - as everyone expected - is that the plan is to be implemented almost exactly as suggested. In the foreword to the now adopted plan, the head of MOPAC, Sophie Linden, and the head of the Met, Cressida Dick, write: *"We know that our proposals, particularly around front counters and police buildings, are not universally popular. But we are clear that, given the financial situation the MPS faces, these decisions represent the best option for keeping officer numbers as high as possible and keeping Londoners safe."*

The plan means that the Met will close and sell Notting Hill police station, the former Notting Dale police station at 58 Sirdar Road (which now serves as offices) and the office annex to Kensington police station at 74 Earl's Court Road. The only remaining station in the borough will be Kensington police station at the top of Earl's Court Road, off Kensington High Street. The rented offices for the safer neighbourhood bases at Lancaster Road (Royalty Studios) and Kenway Road (Earl's Court) will also be closed – unless it is found that they will be better or cheaper as patrol hubs in the new type of neighbourhood patrol teams than any other available space in the area.

In order to compensate for the loss of police stations, a new type of ward dedicated neighbourhood foot patrol teams – each consisting of two police officers and one PCSO (police



*We may have lost the fight to keep Notting Hill police station as a police station, but policy CK1 in the RBKC core strategy document requires the council to resist loss of buildings of social or community use if they can have other have other social or community use – and we can think of many of good community uses for this lovely Edwardian building, instead of replacing it with yet another block of unneeded luxury flats owned by anonymous property speculators hiding behind tax haven companies.*

community support officer) – will be introduced, replacing the current local policing system. Contrary to the current system, these DWO (designated ward officer) teams can not be used for anything else than patrols in their designated ward (except in extreme situations). They will be given new technology that will enable them to do their “paperwork” while on patrol in their ward, and they will start and finish their shifts at a small local hub instead of a police station far from “their” ward.

The local objections against the closure of Notting Hill police station has not been totally meaningless, however. The plan states that “during the consultation, concerns were expressed by the local community about closing Notting Hill Police Station, given the deep trauma suffered by that part of London after the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower.

*In response to this trauma, we accept the need for an ongoing,, accessible police presence in the north of the borough, which was set out in consultation responses which specifically referred to the changing needs of the community following the Grenfell fire. To that end, we will be working with*

*the community to see if they support our plans to open a new front counter facility near the Grenfell site, operating during the daytime. This will allow residents to meet with officers face to face and carry out the normal services available at a front counter.*

*Subject to this local discussion we aim to open a front counter very near the Grenfell Tower site, and we expect to have the site ready early in 2018. While this is not a replacement for the Notting Hill front counter, and we are continuing with our plans to close this site, we will not close the existing Notting Hill Police Station until the new Grenfell counter is ready, assuming the community tell us this a facility they want. We expect the front counter to operate for at least two years while the recovery work continues, and this will be kept under review, in consultation with the local community, to ascertain whether the site is needed longer. Once the site is open we will continue with our plans to close and dispose of Notting Hill Police Station."*

So, does the now adopted plan mean that the Edwardian  
(continues next page)

Notting Hill police station is definitely lost to the community and will, like the Chelsea police station in 2015, be sold off to the highest bidder who then uses the site to build yet another luxury flat complex that Kensington doesn't need? Not necessarily. Following the loss of the Vicarage Gate care home and the Princes Louise hospital, the council added policy CK1 to the RBKC Core Strategy, which seeks to protect land and/or buildings where the current or last use was a social or community use, by resisting change of use to something very different if it can have other social or community use. As the Notting Hill police station could be converted to a very useful community centre for various activities, we therefore applied for it to be made an ACV (Asset of Community Value), and on 7 November the council approved this. The Met can appeal against this ruling, but in the meantime the property has the protection of an ACV.

We are not going to allow the loss of our community properties without a fight.

### **CTMPs and inspections**

In the beginning of November we held a sounding board meeting where a councillor and a transport planning officer met a few residents who are experiencing horrendous and ongoing problems with neighbouring basement developments because the CTMP (construction traffic management plan), submitted by the developer and accepted by the council, has been largely ignored, and even after the enforcement officers have intervened the breaches continue without any consequence.

The very lively discussion soon covered other planning permit breaches as well, and the conclusion from all involved was that the CTMPs in many cases do not work as intended, that they are needed for many more types of developments than just very large ones and basements (today the only developments that require CTMPs), that the enforcement team's ability to put a stop to breaches is too limited and, most importantly, that the council needs to expand its enforcement team drastically.

The council's enforcement team is working flat out, but it is severely understaffed and breaches against CTMPs has become a major workload for them. Of the enforcement actions taken by the council in August and September 2017, almost half (45%) were against builders disregarding CTMPs. We should remember that the enforcement team almost only act after complaints, as it does not have any resources to do routine inspections. The true amount of breaches is much, much higher than reported.

The cowboys among the developers know that the risk of being caught doing a breach is very small - and even if caught and slapped with an enforcement action, they often continue the breach as they know that the council's ability to take them to court is very limited.

A larger enforcement/inspection team would cost money, and the council's budget is limited. However, that problem has been resolved by some boroughs, who have begun to make frequent inspections part of their planning application approvals - with the developers having to pay the cost.

A good example is nearby Westminster, which in 2016 adopted a code of construction practice (CoCP) that covers all developments involving "extensive demolition and rebuilding" - and this includes any basement development. Westminster has set up a special Environmental Inspectorate, which charges between £7,200 (minimum

charge for a basement) and £32,504 (maximum charge for a large site) for its services. For a basement the average charge is £8,228, based on an hourly rate of £68, which means an average of 121 man hours for each basement. This money is used for six advice meetings, review of the construction management plan, community liaison and complaints follow-up, and on-site inspections every fortnight over the duration of the development. The inspectors also check that developers are keeping neighbours informed, provide a point of contact for residents with complaints, and monitor the level and impact of traffic to make sure that multiple sites in an area coordinate their traffic movements in order to reduce the cumulative impact on residents.

Westminster shows that charging developers for inspections is both legal and doable, so it's time RBKC sets up a similar, self-funding scheme that would enable the council to employ an army of inspectors.

As the council has approved each project, it is also the council's responsibility to ensure that the rules are followed and that neighbours are protected from developers, builders, subcontractors and delivery firms who disregard those rules or do not know even about them. The cost for this should, of course, be borne by those who profit from the development, not the tax payers.

### **The pre-application process needs to change**

There is growing concern over how the council administers the pre-application process. At the moment pre-applications are only used for planning, but we understand that there have been reviews to extend it to other areas.

Originally, the purpose of the pre-application planning phase was to save time and money for both the applicant and the planning department, by having a planning officer take a look at a plan before the the planning application was sent in, to see if it met basic requirements and did not go against established planning policies. Any advice given was to be general.

However, the planning department's pre-application service has nowadays turned into a planning consultancy, which helps applicants create applications that will meet the formal requirements so the planning department can approve them. The more the applicant is willing to pay, the more help is given, in effect by a whole team of officers, to create an application that will be approved. In practice, such applicants use a team of private consultants to negotiate with the council's planners to ensure that the application sails through.

It used to be that the written advice from the pre-planning officer was confidential and remained so forever, but since March 2016, after pressure from the Kensington Society, that advice is made public when the actual application is made public. By comparing pre-application advices with the actual applications and their outcome, we have found that even when applications go against the pre-app advice, they are often approved by the planning department or the department advises the planning applications committee to approve them. We have also found cases with contradictory advice or advice that has changed through the process. This has made us concerned that the officers are "captured" and work too closely with the applicant.

There is an obvious risk that the officers' sometimes very close relationship with the applicant during the pre-application phase, when the applicant acts as a client buying





*CTMP rules are constantly being flaunted all over the borough, the most common breach being deliveries outside the permitted working hours. These pictures show a typical early morning in narrow Princes Gate Mews with construction deliveries before 8am.*

advice from the planning department, may influence the department's decision-making when it at the next stage acts as an authority determining if the application is acceptable.

Another issue – in many ways is the most concerning – is the total lack of consultations between the planning department and residents or their associations during the pre-application phase. The reason given for this, is that the pre-application process is informal and confidential, so until an actual application has arrived there can be no dialogue between the department and the locals.

We can see the sense in that argument when a presumptive applicant approaches the department in secret to discuss a possible development, but it does not make much sense when the applicant (as encouraged to do by the department) is having meetings with both the department and one or more residents' associations during the pre-application phase. We then already know what the applicant wants to do and are in discussions about this with the applicant. Unfortunately, the applicants are often "economic with the truth" when relaying residents' opinion to the planners, so It would be productive for the pre-application officers to know our views and it would definitely be helpful for us to know their views. But as such meetings are not taking place, the planners are working in a void and lack local knowledge, concerns and even opportunities. As a consequence, we often become objectors to a proposal deemed acceptable by the pre-app officer simply because the officer did not know it was unacceptable for the local affected parties on planning grounds.

Right now the planning department is meeting the owners' consultants about a possible redevelopment of the Kensington Forum hotel site on Cromwell Road. We have also met with the owners' consultants but – as usual – have not had any meeting with the officers who are involved in pre-application process.

This process must change, or we will have more incidences like the Dukes Lodge and Odeon cinema applications (which were turned down by the planning committee), where the very positive pre-application advice and the officer's planning report played a major part in the planning inspector's decision to overturn the council's refusal.

### Thank you

The trustees continue to work very hard in all our endeavours. Without their constant and professional work this society would not be where it is now. We continue to work with our associated societies and residence associations on multiple issues, from Exhibition Road Cultural Group to the redevelopment of the South Kensington Station and TfL pressing for step free access. The council is presenting some challenges with change and change again. However, some areas have not changed enough and Michael will address that in his report.

The planning committee, lead by Michael Bach and including Anthony Walker, Sophia Lambert, Thomas Blomberg, Henry Peterson and Amanda Frame, review planning applications every week and comment on those we find being contrary to planning policy. Michael Becket is already mid-way through the editing of the annual report which will be, hard to believe, better than ever. Holly Smith has worked with Michael Bach on the funding donation committee. Thomas Blomberg is many things: our Sherlock when challenged on information needed, our newsletter editor and the man who hold our website together. Martin Frame has expended the membership database and has held the reins on our finances, which is no small feat when the government is changing the Gift Aid rules.

We would not be here if we were not needed by our members and we would not be here if you did not support us. Thank you all for your support

Amanda Frame

# The planning report

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Although the Grenfell Tower disaster has overshadowed all other the council activity, and still does, there are a number of other important issues going on as well, such as threats to valuable public buildings, from pubs to police stations; attempts to invade Kensington with digital advertisement panels claiming to be phone boxes; plans to replace Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road with something 50% larger; the second application for Newcombe House in Notting Hill Gate; and plans to turn Heythrop College into gated, luxury housing for elderly millionaires.

## Post Grenfell

Following the Grenfell Tower disaster, Elizabeth Campbell, the new leader of the council, promised that “the culture of the council will change”. In particular, she emphasised that in the future the council will work together with residents and with neighbourhoods, listen to their expertise and experience and will nurture our communities, and, she promised, the change would start immediately.

Unfortunately, these seem to be mere promises. In fact, the council has, if anything, become more closed to the public. Councillors and officers seem unable to continue with the other business and do not return emails or telephone calls. We are promised change and it cannot be soon enough.

To deliver these changes means a change in culture, not just shelving controversial projects, such as the regeneration or redevelopment of housing estates or leasing off the North Kensington Library to a private school. It will take more than restructuring the way the council is organised and operates. Now the council needs to take the next step – it needs to change the way it engages with the community, learn to listen and to respond to what the residents want. The loss in trust is not limited to council tenants or the residents of North Kensington, but involves the whole of the borough.

The council must now find new ways of engaging directly with residents. We need a new “charter” or contract between the council and residents which assures us that the council will engage, listen and respond. This change must be a positive legacy of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

## Local Plan

The revisions to the Local Plan – the policies and proposals for how the borough should develop over the next 10-15 years – should have been sent to a planning inspector in September, to determine if they are “sound” in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. As part of the post-Grenfell fallout, the council has postponed this examination in order to withdraw the estate regeneration projects (Barlby/Teverton, Silchester and Warwick Road estates) from the plan and the associated policy. The council also proposes to do an early review of the Local Plan “*at least in part, to consider issues related to North Kensington, the Latimer 'Place', estate regeneration and housing supply, to be adopted within five years of the Local Plan Partial Review's adoption*”.

However, the planning department still refuses to take into consideration the objections posed by the Kensington Society to the plan's housing mix. The policies still propose that at least half the housing should be in large units (3 or more bedrooms). The housing policies have over the last decade played directly into the hands of the international investment market, instead of producing housing that people who need to work and live in London can afford.

In addition, the policies for town centres, particularly South Kensington, Fulham Road, Kensington High Street and Notting Hill Gate, should be revised and should maintain a high proportion of shops. The planning department's continued misinterpretation of the policies and absence of any strong protection has allowed these centres to become dominated by cafes, fast-food restaurants, coffee bars, estate agents and – in the case of Kensington High Street – even banks. We will present our opinions and hopefully these will be dealt with successfully at the inspector's examination.

We will also be objecting to the council's limited commitment and resistance to further changes, and to the long timescale for further updates to the Local Plan.

## Preserving public buildings for community use

The decision by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC), to go ahead with its plan to close and sell off 41 more police stations and a number of other police properties in London (see the chairman's report for more details), highlights the need to resist the loss of public buildings in order to protect their continued social and community use.

In response to the very strong objections from the local community, Kensington Society launched a petition to save Notting Hill police station from closure during the consultation of the MOPAC plan. By early November, the petition had over 2,370 signatures. This campaign was supported by the council and its leader, and we expect this to be presented at the full council meeting on 6 December.

On 7 November, the council approved our nomination of the Notting Hill police station as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

In addition to the Notting Hill station, two more police buildings in Kensington are to be sold: the former Notting Dale police station on Sirdar Road in North Kensington and the office annex to Kensington police station near the junction of Earl's Court Road and Kensington High Street.

In its chapter 30, “Keeping Life Local”, the RBKC Core Strategy identifies police stations as buildings of “social and community use” and its policy CK1 clarifies that land or buildings of social and community must, if at all possible, continue in social and community use. With luxury housing wiping out every other use if given the chance, there is a huge unmet need for premises for social and community uses.

The council needs to be both firm on its policy and creative in encouraging the reuse of the buildings for a mix of such uses. There must be an option where a police branch office could share with other suitable users, such as a GP surgery or a public nursery.

## Advertisements

Following the spate of large digital advertising panels on bus shelters by international advertising company JCDecaux,



the borough is now faced with another onslaught: large digital advertising panels on new telephone “kiosks”.

A new telephone company, variously known as Maximum or Maximus Networks, has proposed some 40 new “kiosks”, which are nothing more than an excuse for putting up advertising panels. Referring to rights to introduce more payphones, given by the government in the 1980s (before the invention of the mobile phone), and permitted development rights to erect kiosks, they are proposing new boxes with space for a large digital advertising panel.

Another company, New World Payphones, which is owned by a major advertising company, Clear Channel, are proposing to replace many of their existing, largely unused kiosks, with another 40 kiosks. Other initiatives by BT/LinkUK and Euro Payphones are also in the pipeline.

These new advertising phone kiosks are to be erected in the same places where most of the traditional BT kiosks, most of the BT/JCDecaux adverts with phones on the back, and most bus shelters with digital panels already are: Kensington High Street, Notting Hill Gate, Earl’s Court Road and similar streets. We have already too many adverts and too many pay phone boxes/kiosks/panels – especially in an age where almost everyone has a mobile phone.

We are pleased that the council has refused almost all of these proposals, which have now gone to appeal. We strongly support the council, but we are handicapped by the government’s 30-year old “freedoms”, which were introduced to promote competition between telephone companies, not for competition between major advertising companies.

### **Holiday Inn Kensington Forum, Cromwell Road**

Having seen off a major casino at the Holiday Inn on Cromwell Road, the new owners, Queensgate Investments and Rockwell Property, are preparing plans for redeveloping this massive, 29-storey hotel eyesore. The developer has been softening up local residents with promises of a reinstated garden. The redevelopment propose 50% more floorspace, consisting of a new hotel, almost as high as the existing, on the Cromwell Road frontage, and a further two residential buildings immediately to the south of the tower.

The proposal includes the reinstatement of the original Ashburn Gardens Square garden, which was dismembered and encroached upon by the hotel and subsequent additions. The residents of the surrounding area have proposed – and the developer has agreed in principle to – a consolidated garden square open to the public in daylight hours, which is to be managed and maintained by the freeholder. This is a non-negotiable minimum requirement for local residents. However, they must not lose sight of the big picture.

For the Kensington Society and other associations outside the locality, the main concerns are the height, bulk, scale and massing of the proposed buildings, which would perpetuate the harmful intrusion of the existing building on long views, from Kensington Gardens, Battersea Bridge and even from Cromwell Road, when approached from the west.

We are concerned that the council officers seem to place too little weight on the fact that the existing building is too tall for its context and consider that putting even more development on the site is needed to encourage redevelopment. The council’s Local Plan should be the main deciding factor – and this proposal should fail because it



*We are very concerned about the proposals for the Holiday Inn site on Cromwell Road. Picture by Richard Sutcliffe (CC BY-SA 2.0).*

would not be in accord with the plan. The existing building is a material consideration, but not an argument for putting yet more on the site. It is not a precedent. The current Local Plan must rule. However, if the planning department through the pre-application process has accepted the increase in volume, we are up against again a fight such as we had and lost with the Odeon Cinema and Dukes Lodge.

On one thing, however, all resident groups agree: they would rather keep the current building than accept a bigger building, not to mention the huge disruption of years of demolition and redevelopment.

### **The Academy pub**

The Academy pub on Princedale Road has been closed since August 2016, when the owners placed it on the market. The Norland Conservation Society had previously succeeded in nominating the pub as an Asset of Community Value. The ACV gave the community the right to bid to buy the pub. The Kensington Society took over the lead last December and prepared a scheme to bid in April. We were unsuccessful in convincing the council that our proposal would be successful. Soon after the expiry of the bidding deadline the pub was allegedly bought.

During the summer, the Kensington Society, Norland Conservation Society, the Clarendon Cross Residents’ Association and local representatives met the developer and had a number of robust discussions before he submitted an application on 27 September.

We are extremely concerned that the 40% reduction in the ground-floor area for eating and drinking would undermine the future viability of the pub, despite the use of the first floor

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*A new application for the Newcombe House complex in Notting Hill Gate is soon to be decided on, with the building nearest the camera set aside for social housing. Picture courtesy of Brockton Capital and U+I.*

as a dining room. We also object to the reduced basement storage space and the proposed deletion of the manager's flat on the second floor. Taken together these changes would put the long-term viability of the pub at risk.

There is now a second application, which provides more ground-floor space and retains the manager's flat, which we support. The developer has promised to withdraw the first application if we support the second. As he does not own the pub and it is now back on the market, there are fears that he cannot deliver his promises, but we have agreed with the two residents' associations to support the second application. We now wait to see if he keeps his promises.

### **Step-free access to the underground**

The Kensington Society has been working, in conjunction with local groups in South Kensington, to secure an acceptable scheme for the redevelopment around South Kensington Station and, as part of the scheme, to secure step-free access to the District and Circle Lines by 2022 and a lift to the Piccadilly Line by 2025.

Transport for London (TfL) has a step-free access programme, although at present none of the borough's stations, other than South Kensington, are included in that programme. The society has set up a programme of meetings to bring together the various parties in order to see what can be achieved to get step-free access at High Street Kensington, Notting Hill Gate and Ladbroke Grove. We hope to complete these by Christmas.

### **Newcombe House**

The Kensington Society is aware that the redevelopment of Newcombe House is very controversial, especially with immediate neighbours in Notting Hill Gate Village. The

existing building is regarded as an eyesore, but refurbishment is not a viable option, so redevelopment is the only realistic solution. The council's SPD for Notting Hill Gate, whilst not supporting a development which is more than 10 metres taller than current Newcombe House, required the retention of the offices and shops and welcomed the creation of a public square. The development of the site is constrained by the underground line and rights of light along Kensington Church Street. This constraint and the public square are the main reasons for the height of the tallest building.

Kensington Society and the local residents associations pressed the developer to produce a public square which can function as a farmer's market on the weekend, a major GP surgery, and provision for step-free access to the underground. It is the only development site in Notting Hill Gate that could produce these significant public benefits. However, since these public benefits are part of the same "pot" of money used for affordable housing, the more that is taken for these benefits the less is available to spend on affordable housing (see the article on affordable housing on pages 14-15).

The previous scheme, which the Kensington Society supported, was refused by the council's planning committee on the grounds that the building was too tall, the design not acceptable, and that there should be provision for affordable housing. The developer appealed to the Planning Inspectorate, and after a public inquiry the planning inspector concluded that only one of the council's reasons for refusal was valid: the lack of affordable housing. He felt that it should be economically possible to provide affordable housing on site and urged the developer to look into this.

The current application, due to be heard by the planning committee later this year, now includes the on-site affordable housing at social rents that the inspector requested, so his sole ground for dismissing the appeal has therefore been met. The Kensington Society maintains its support for this scheme, whilst recognising that not everyone will be happy. We would all have preferred a much lower development, but then all the public benefits would have been lost – and a much smaller scheme or a refurbishment scheme would be unrealistic.

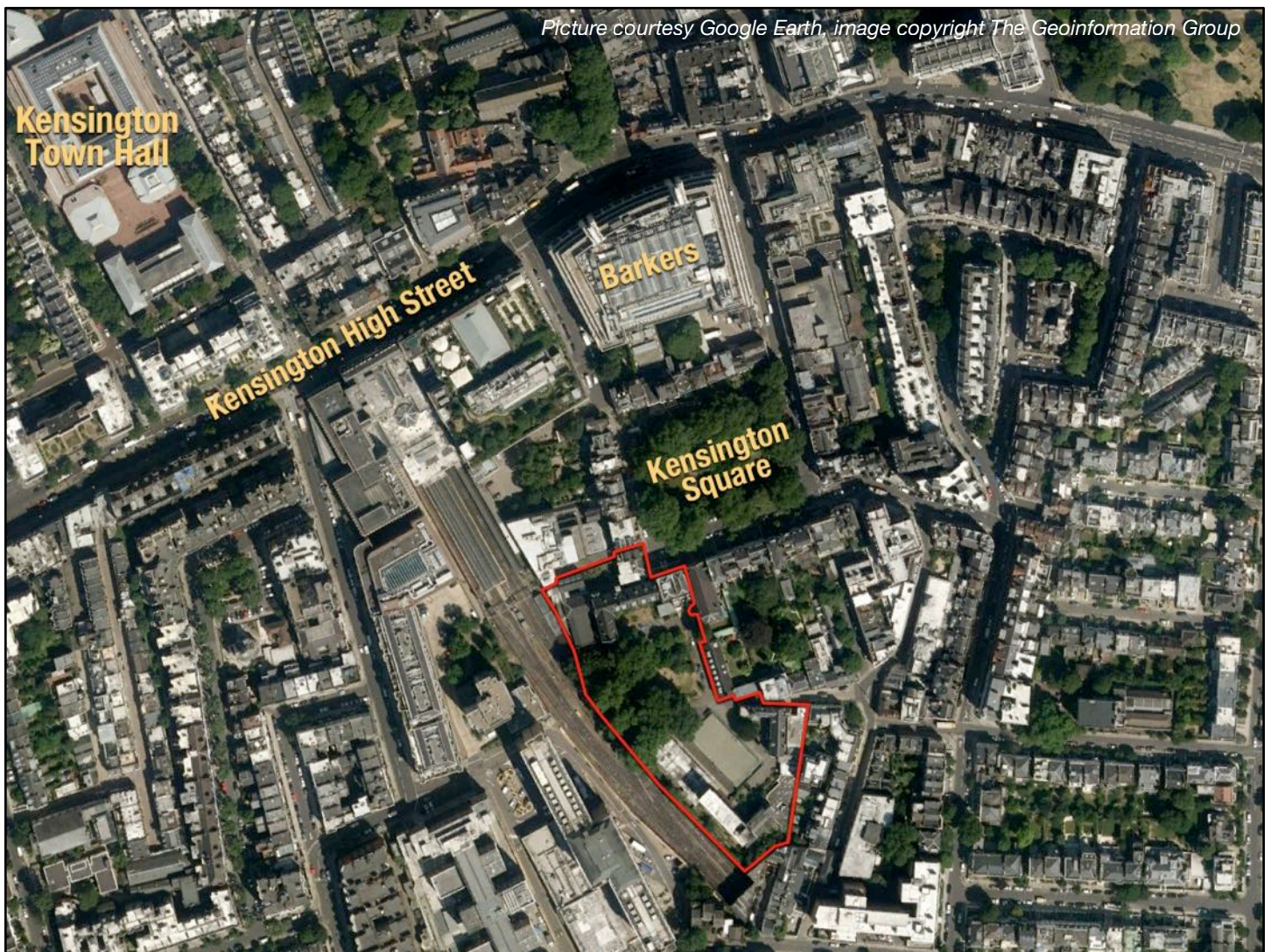
### **Heythrop College**

The Jesuit-run Heythrop College occupies a very large site behind Kensington Square along the underground lines. For the last 150 years the site has been in educational use, since 1993 for university level courses, and includes a 109-room hall of residence for students. Heythrop College recently sold the site and will move out at the end of 2018.

The council produced an excellent SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) for the site in May 2016, which sets out what types of development would be acceptable. This includes retaining a social and community use on the site, preserving its tranquil and picturesque nature, maintaining a high-quality green space, and preserving and enhancing the appearance and setting of the heritage assets. As the site currently has the 109-room residence, residential provision is also required.

The current social and community use is tertiary education, but a primary/prep school would be strongly resisted by surrounding residents because of the extremely limited road access via South End and the amount of car traffic that such





*The Heythrop College site (edged in red) is very large and in the very centre of Kensington. There are plans to turn it into a gated luxury village for retired millionaires or their parents. Some Russian oligarchs are said to be interested in parking their mothers there...*

schools generate. The council's policy (Local Plan policy CK1) is to first look for replacement with something of same or similar social and community use (i.e. education), before looking at other social community uses, let alone before allowing it to go to housing.

The new owner – Westbourne Capital – is proposing luxury retirement housing with some limited care service as well as a private GP surgery and a dentist. The proposal includes building a raft over the underground, thus enlarging the site by a third, whilst retaining some of the green space in the centre of the site.

We are opposed to the proposal, as the site would in effect become yet another luxury housing scheme, although only for "the aging population" (which apparently is anyone aged 55 or more, according to the developer): 150-170 units with starting prices at £3 million, plus £11,000 per year in service charges. We do not consider this to be a care home. It is simply luxury housing with additional facilities: pools, gym, restaurant, private GP surgery and dentist. At this time the proposal includes no offer of affordable housing or any public community contributions.

The layout has not yet been finalised and the developer is likely to have to increase the amount of green space retained in the centre of the site. The site would be gated, but with public access to the gardens from dawn to dusk. We are opposed to the loss of educational use and the general lack of public benefits from the scheme. As elsewhere, CK1 is the

policy we will look to for protection and planning direction. It seems the developer has not. As the pre-application stage excludes the public we have no idea what the planning department is requiring or has agreed to.

### **CTMPs**

Kensington Society strongly supports the council's requirement for construction traffic management plans (CTMPs), to protect residents from traffic-related impacts of construction projects. The CTMP form should, since three years ago, be submitted with every basement application (although the planning department often approves applications without it, on condition that it is submitted before construction begins). We feel, however, that the CTMP requirement should not be limited to basement projects and very large developments, and CTMPs should also always be required before an application can be determined, to ensure that it is part of the public consultation. Most importantly, we feel that the CTMPs should be firmly enforced. There are increasing problems with contractors who are either unaware of or wilfully ignore the requirements, and are irresponsible and aggressive toward neighbours.

Enforcement, however, is costly. We would like the council to adopt a licensing system where applicants pay more for the production of the CTMP, but also for monitoring and enforcement. The cost of this enforcement should fall on the applicant, not the council tax payer.

Michael Bach



# The fire that changed Kensington - but for how long...?

The Grenfell Tower fire disaster on 14 June, which took some 80 lives and made some 250 homeless, has had repercussions throughout the summer and into the autumn. It caused a council meltdown and ended the careers for several local politicians, it damaged an already weakened government, led to the collapse of England's largest tenant management organisation, may result in criminal persecutions, and will definitely lead to new building and fire safety regulations. One thing is for sure: very few local politicians will now dare ignore the views of residents - at least not before the local elections in May 2018, in which promises about better community engagement will dominate the RBKC council election.

It all began shortly before 1am on 14 June, a warm night when many windows were open. A fire engine was called to the 24-storey Grenfell Tower in North Kensington to deal with a rather routine fridge-freezer fire on the fourth floor.

The fire in the kitchen, caused by a Hotpoint FF175BP from 2006-2009, was quickly extinguished, but when the firemen were outside, preparing to leave, they looked up and saw that the cladding outside the flat had caught fire - and that fire was quickly spreading upwards. They called for reinforcements, and as the fire spread, more and more fire engines and crews from all over London arrived.

Eventually there were 250 firefighters with 70 fire engines battling the fire that was engulfing the tower block's 129 flats. In addition, there were 20 ambulances, 100 medics and 100 police officers at the scene. The fire wasn't under control until around 5am, but not fully extinguished until late the next day.

By the end of the day, the police reported 12 confirmed deaths and that 75 had been taken to hospitals. By late June, the number of confirmed and suspected deaths had grown to 80, and in September it was revealed that 18 of the then 67 identified victims were children.

For several weeks, the number of people who were in the building when the fire began was uncertain, but analysis of CCTV camera footage eventually revealed that 223 persons had left the building between midnight and 8am. Of these, 65 had been escorted out by firefighters.

Already by 2am, local churches, charities, social clubs and neighbourhood organisations had begun organising shelters for the tower survivors and those evacuated from surrounding buildings, and during the early morning

organisations, companies and individuals from all over London began delivering clothes and food which quickly grew into mountains that other locals began to sort and distribute to the various local shelters.

In the midst of it all, 56 students at the Kensington Aldridge Academy, the school that replaced the Lancaster Green park next to the tower, showed up at 9am and sat their AS-level maths exam in a hastily rearranged exam hall. And at Sacred Heart High School in Hammersmith, a 16 year old girl who fled out of the tower in the early morning, sat her GCSE chemistry exam.

It was soon revealed that the resident group called Grenfell Action Group already in November 2016 had warned that years of poor fire safety could result in a disaster.

Throughout the day there were growing complaints that the council and KCTMO (Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation), the council's landlord for the tower, didn't seem to have any staff at the site.

By the evening, only 44 of 249 families from the tower and nearby evacuated houses had been housed in hotels by the council, while the rest spent the night in churches, sport halls or with friends.

The next day, 15 June, Theresa May announced there would be a public inquiry into the fire. Both she and Jeremy Corbyn visited the site, but while he met residents and volunteers, she only met staff from the emergency services, something she was heavily criticised for afterwards.

From then on the consequences of the Grenfell Tower disaster topped the news every day for at least a month;



A sorting centre for the thousands of items, donated by individuals, organisations and companies, was quickly set up under Westway by various local organisations, manned by several hundred volunteers who worked tirelessly for several days while staff from the council and the government were nowhere to be seen.



during the next month every other day; and during the third month every third or fourth day. Below are just a few of those news items:

**16 June:** The Queen and Prince William visited the Grenfell Tower site and met survivors in the morning. In the afternoon, several hundred angry residents marched to Kensington Town Hall, demanding answers and action from both the council and the government.

**18 June:** The government took away the responsibility for the relief efforts from the paralysed council and gave that task to a new Grenfell fire response team, made up of representatives from government, the Red Cross, the police, other London councils and the fire brigade.

**19 June:** A minute's silence was held across the country for the victims of the fire.

**21 June:** The council's town clerk and head of paid service, Nicholas Holgate, resigned after being asked to do so by the communities secretary, Sajid Javid. In a statement Holgate said that Javid "required the leader of the council to seek my resignation". The same day, the prime minister told the House of Commons that the initial support for the survivors hadn't been good enough. "As prime minister I apologise for that failure. And as prime minister I've taken responsibility for doing what we can to put things right."

**22 June:** Council leader Nick Paget-Brown appointed Barry Quirk, chief executive of Lewisham Borough Council, as interim head of paid service for RBKC after Nicholas Holgate, while the formal appointment as town clerk after Holgate required a full council vote. Downing Street announced that some 600 high rise buildings in Britain have cladding panels, many of the same type as Grenfell Tower, and that the local councils had been urged to send in samples for fire testing as quickly as possible.

**28 June:** It was announced that appeal judge Sir Martin Moore-Bick had been chosen to preside over the public inquiry.

**29 June:** A closed RBKC cabinet was forced by a court order to allow the press to attend. As a consequence, council leader Nicholas Paget-Brown cancelled the meeting, stating that it could not proceed with journalists present.

**30 June:** The cancellation of the RBKC cabinet meeting the previous day was strongly criticised by the government. Robert Black, the head of KCTMO, was forced to resign. In the evening, both council leader Nick Paget-Brown and the deputy leader, Rock Feilding-Mellen, who was ultimately responsible for the refurbishment of the tower, announced that they would step down.

**3 July:** The Conservative councillors selected Elizabeth Campbell, councillor for the Royal Hospital ward, as new council leader, to be confirmed at the next council meeting..

**7 July:** It was decided that the ongoing cladding testing programme should be extended to cover the whole cladding package, instead of just the outer panels.

**9 July:** It was revealed that the RBKC council places some 75% of its homeless households in temporary housing outside its borders, more than any other council in England.

**10 July:** Scotland Yard announced that the starting point of their criminal investigation is that manslaughter caused 80 deaths.

**19 July:** The first council meeting after the Grenfell fire



*All through summer, the burnt-out hulk of the 24-storey Grenfell Tower loomed over North Kensington as a black tombstone over years of social housing neglect in Britain's richest borough. It is now being shrouded, but it will still be there for at least another year.*

became a meeting where the councillors listened to survivors of the fire for most of the almost four hour long meeting. Many angry voices were heard. Some 100 visitors saw the proceedings via the webTV broadcast on a large video screen in the Great Hall, while another 200-300 saw the broadcast on a large screen placed in the Town Hall forecourt. The meeting elected Elizabeth Campbell as new council leader, and approved the appointment of Barry Quirk as interim chief executive (RBKC's new title for what was previously known as town clerk).

Elizabeth Campbell announced the appointment of six councillors to her cabinet (although she preferred to call it her "senior leadership team"), whereof two as deputy leaders.. Four were new, while three (including herself) also sat in the old cabinet. Two were from Kensington wards, one from a cross Kensington/Chelsea ward and four from Chelsea wards.

**21 July:** In a letter to all victims made homeless by the fire, the council promised to rehouse everyone within 12 months and allow them to live rent and utility bill free for the first year.

**26 July:** The government announced the creation of the Grenfell recovery taskforce, which will act as a watchdog, controlling that the RBKC "has the proper arrangements in place to engage with the local community on their long-term recovery plans". The same day, faith leaders urged the council to invest more in mental health service. Sikh leader Bhupinder Singh revealed that at least 20 people had tried to take their lives in North Kensington since the fire.

*(continues next page)*



*While the council debated in the town hall on 19 July, hundreds of residents watched the proceedings on a large screen outside.*

**27 July:** Metropolitan Police stated that there were reasonable grounds to suspect the council and the KCTMO of corporate manslaughter.

**28 July:** The government announced that an independent review of building regulations had been commissioned. Led by Dame Judith Hackitt, who chairs the Engineering Employers' Federation, it will look at the guidelines around design and construction of buildings, compliance and regulation enforcement. An interim report is planned for the end of this year and a final report no later than spring 2018.

**31 July:** Former housing boss in Birmingham and Hammersmith & Fulham, Elaine Elkington, was appointed interim chief executive of KCTMO, following the resignation of Robert Black in June.

**4 August:** The consultation period for the terms of reference for the Grenfell Tower inquiry ended. It had received 330 submissions from individuals, community groups, campaigners, professional bodies, politicians and faith leaders. The same day, the director of public prosecutions, Alison Saunders, said that she didn't rule out criminal charges with long prison terms against individuals over the Grenfell Tower fire.

**15 August:** After having considered the proposals for the scope of the Grenfell Tower fire public inquiry from its chairman, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, the prime minister decided that the inquiry shall examine the cause and spread of the fire; the design, construction and refurbishment of Grenfell Tower; the scope and adequacy of fire safety regulations around high-rises; the actions of the RBKC council and other authorities before the fire; and how the fire service and the government responded to it. It will, however, not deal with broader questions of British social housing policy, which many had demanded.

**23 August:** The council approved a £76.5m package to permanently rehouse survivors. The package includes at least £16.5m to reimburse 17 households who had bought flats in Grenfell Tower and nearby Grenfell Walk.

**27 & 28 August:** This year's Notting Hill Carnival was made into a tribute for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. It began with a ceremony where white doves were released and a multi-faith prayer was held, followed by a silent minute both

days, observed both by most of the several hundred thousand carnival-goers as well as the firefighters at North Kensington fire station, who lined up outside the station, removed their helmets and bowed their heads.

**5 September:** The communities secretary, Sajid Javid, revealed details from the nationwide test of whole aluminium-based cladding systems. Of the seven cladding and insulation combinations tested, only three met current standards and only one of these was deemed truly safe. Of 173 high-rise social housing blocks fitted with cladding systems, 165 had cladding that didn't meet the minimum safety standards. Non-aluminium cladding systems have not yet been tested.

**11 September:** Barry Quirk, the Lewisham council chief executive on temporary loan to RBKC since 23 June, agreed to stay on as chief executive and head of paid service for RBKC and informed the mayor of Lewisham that he was resigning from the post there, which he had held since 1994.

**12 September:** The council's administration committee adopted a plan from Barry Quick for a new organisational structure for the council's activities. The plan means that the 15 different departments under the chief executive will be merged into eight, whereof one will be a temporary special Grenfell team and four will be linked to the bi-borough activities with Westminster and Hammersmith & Fulham.

**14 September:** The public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire began. It will have two phases that will run simultaneously. Phase one will look at how the fire started and spread, and the responses of the emergency services and the evacuation of residents. Phase two will look at the design and refurbishment of the building and relevant decision-making processes. It will also include the efforts to provide food and shelter to survivors. The inquiry team, lead by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, consists of 22 persons: 10 lawyers and a 12 staff secretariat. An interim report is due to be published by next Easter.

**19 September:** The Met said that individual manslaughter charges may follow the police investigation, in addition to the corporate manslaughter charges mentioned in July.

**27 September:** The RBKC council held its second meeting since the fire, where more statements from survivors were heard and where the councillors unanimously agreed to terminate the contract with KCTMO. At the council meeting it was also agreed that a special Grenfell recovery scrutiny committee would be set up, which would hold the council to task over how it is dealing with the disaster. Chaired by Labour councillor Robert Thompson, it would consist of seven Conservative and two Labour councillors, plus four lay-members from the North Kensington community.

**6 October:** A number of councils complained that the government was failing to release funds to improve the fire safety of dozens of tower blocks. While the government had promised to consider help "where works are essential", it had said no to retrofitting of sprinklers, with the housing minister, Alok Sharma, describing sprinklers as "additional rather than essential," although sprinklers have been compulsory for new-built high-rises since 2007. However, those regulations do not apply to older blocks.

**11 October:** The communities minister, Sajid Javid, told parliament that although 151 homes were lost in the tower and in neighbouring Grenfell Walk, the number of households to be rehoused were 203, because many





*With the black skeleton of Grenfell Tower present in the background, this year's Notting Hill Carnival was made into a tribute to the victims, with green being the colour to symbolise the tower and the disaster.*

households had chosen to split and be rehoused separately. He revealed that only 10 of the households had been permanently rehoused four months after the fire. A further 44 had moved to temporary accommodation, while 149 households were still staying in hotels.

**13 October:** Fearful that a formal disbandment of KCTMO at its annual general meeting on 17 October could mean that its officials could be allowed to escape blame and scrutiny for their part in the Grenfell Tower disaster, a letter was sent to RBKC and KCTMO from two legal firms, representing many of the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire. The letter urged postponement of a vote at the AGM to make RBKC the sole shareholder of KCTMO, as that could mean that the RBKC could dissolve the company, thereby potentially impeding both prosecution for corporate manslaughter or a civil action. Grenfell Action Group urged all residents with voting rights to vote for an adjournment of the AGM, as another way to prevent a formal disbandment of KCTMO.

**17 October:** The board of the KCTMO recommended a motion to adjourn the AGM, and 87% of the members present supported this. Afterwards, RBKC deputy leader Kim Taylor-Smith expressed the council's disappointment, stating that if RBKC had been made sole shareholder it would have enabled the council to quickly take over the running of the company and ensure continued service to all residents, and that there was never any intention to dissolve it.

**19 October:** The former leader of the RBKC council, Nicholas Paget-Brown, announced that he will not seek re-

election as councillor at next May's local elections.

**24 October:** It was announced that on 14 December, on the six-month anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire, St Paul's Cathedral will host a national memorial service for survivors and relatives of those who died. 1,500 free tickets will be distributed via community and faith organisations in North Kensington.

**30 October:** It was revealed that more than 1,300 people had been seen by the Central and North West London NHS Trust and GPs after the fire, either for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) screening or physical health concerns related to Grenfell.

**16 November:** The police announced that the final death toll was 71 people: 70 died in the fire and an unborn baby was stillborn in hospital afterwards while his mother was unconscious due to severe smoke inhalation. Investigations have concluded that 293 people were inside the block when the fire broke out, and 223 escaped and survived.

More than four months on, Grenfell is still consuming Kensington Town Hall, pushing almost everything else aside. Urgent other issues are put on the back burner and it's harder than ever to get answers about major planning issues and other concerns, both from leading councillors and borough officers. In her inauguration speech in July, Elizabeth Campbell promised a culture change, where the council listens the residents. It may happen one day, but at the moment they are hardly even picking up the phone...

Thomas Blomberg



# Affordable housing: whatever it is, it is not what you think

There appears to be much confusion over what is “affordable housing”, and when and how it is a planning requirement. If you are confused, you are not alone. The term has changed meaning several times, and depending on who is using it they may mean different things.

The government currently defines affordable housing as “*the sum of affordable rent, social rent, intermediate rent, shared ownership and affordable home ownership.*” That is basically everything below full market price.

It used to be that “social housing” and “affordable housing” were terms which essentially meant the same thing: housing let by councils or housing associations where the rent was set at a much lower level than in the private sector.

All housing priced or let at levels between social/affordable housing and full market price, was known as “intermediate housing”. This included leasehold homes bought through shared ownership schemes, through which a person with limited savings bought a leasehold on the open market in partnership with a housing association, with the idea of gradually paying off the debt to the housing association afterwards.

As long as “affordable” only meant inexpensive rented homes managed by councils or housing associations, the supply of affordable housing has been shrinking ever since Margaret Thatcher in 1980 introduced the right for social housing tenants to buy their homes at a heavily discounted rate (often close to 50%) and removed most of the councils' ability to replenish their shrinking housing stocks by ensuring that almost all of the income from the sales went to the Treasury instead of the council's own coffers. By 2014, more than half of Britain's 3.5 million council homes had been sold off.

## Affordable rent at 80%

So when the coalition government in 2011 introduced a new concept, calling everything below 80% of full market rent “affordable rent” and reducing “intermediate” to mean the band between 80% and 100%, politicians like the then London mayor, Boris Johnson, could boast that the production of affordable housing had increased drastically. The fact that 90% of the Londoners couldn't afford those affordable flats was another matter.

The current London mayor, Sadiq Khan, introduced a new term last year: “genuinely affordable”, meaning homes where the rent should be affordable for those earning the London Living Wage (currently £10.20/hour), through a mix of rented and shared ownership housing schemes called “London Affordable Rent”, “London Living Rent” and “London Shared Ownership”.

So, when politicians use the term “affordable housing” very generally, they may often mean different things, depending on their political affiliations. Some may mean anything lower than full market price, while others used to new variants of the old meaning: affordable for those on low income.

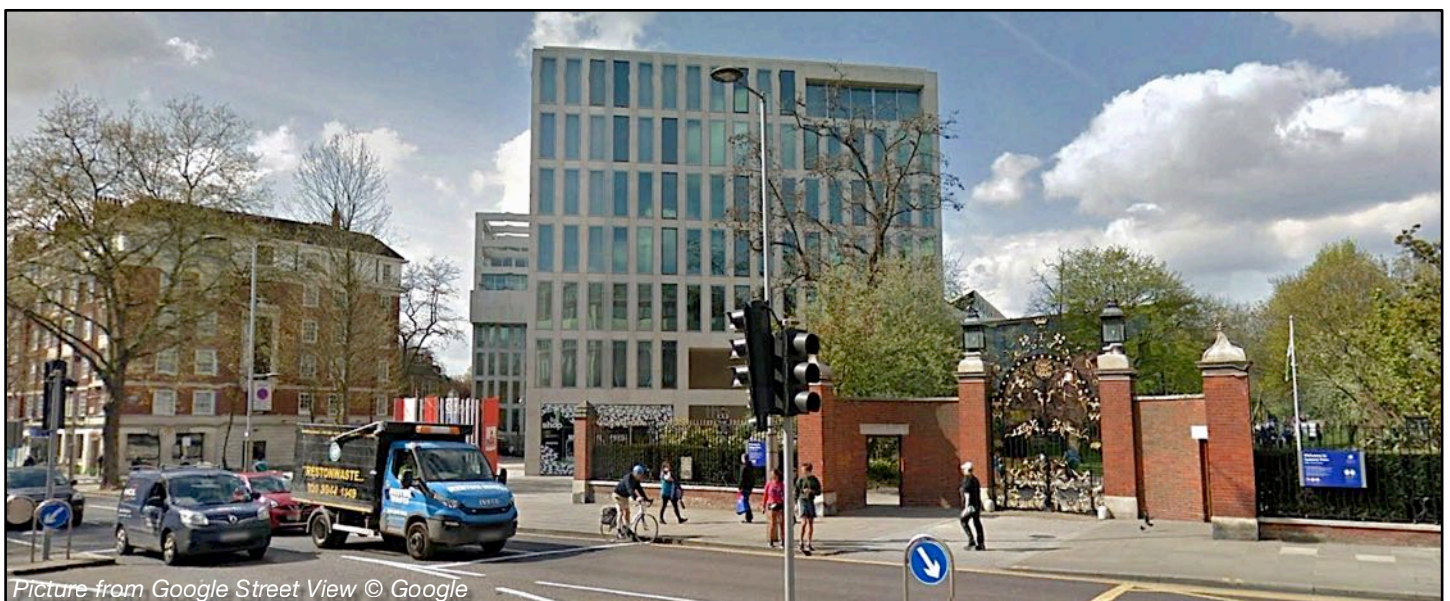
## Section 106 agreements

However, the term is also used more technically when talking about developments delivering a certain percentage of affordable housing. Much of that is based on planning obligations under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, commonly known as s106 agreements.

S106 agreements are often referred to as “developer contributions”, along with CILs (community infrastructure levies - charges by local and regional authorities to help pay for infrastructure, such as schools, transport, hospitals and parks) and less commonly used s278 highway agreements, where applicants for very large developments agree to carry out or pay for work on local or national highways affected by the development.

The sizes of all developer contributions are based on either the economic value or the size of the development, but while CIL charges are simply fixed fees that the developer has to pay, s106 agreements are negotiated for each development individually, covering specific things that the developer shall provide on-site, off-site or pay into a council fund for.

Regarding affordable housing, the s106 agreements in RBKC have increasingly consisted of payments to the council's affordable housing account, instead of requiring



Picture from Google Street View © Google

For the Holland Green development, the council decided to put all of the s106 funding towards the Design Museum.





*The luxury development Vicarage Gate House, which after a long battle replaced a nursing home with the same name against the wishes of the council, originally had on-site affordable housing, but this element was eventually moved to a former office block in Campden Hill.*

the developer to build such housing on site or at least within the borough. This was a practice developed by the former council leader, Sir Merrick Cockell, and perfected by the recently resigned deputy leader and cabinet member for housing, property and regeneration, Rock Feilding-Mellen. But what were they spending the money on? There are indications that much of the money intended for new affordable housing was instead used for maintenance of the council's existing housing stock. There are, however, signs that the borough now is reverting back to demanding on-site affordable units, following the Grenfell Tower disaster.

But most importantly, while many seem to believe that s106 agreements are all about providing affordable housing, this is just one of the many things the funds in a s106 agreement can be spent on. Basically, the more other items that are included, the less money remains for affordable housing, sometimes nothing at all.

In the case of the Holland Green development, the extensive cost of restoring parts of the listed Commonwealth Institute and turning it into the Design Museum, plus the public realm improvements of the surroundings, meant that the affordable housing requirement was dropped. The Vicarage Gate House development, which replaced a much needed nursing home, did deliver affordable housing, but only off site in Campden Hill Road. The affordable housing requirement for the Dukes Lodge site consists exclusively of payments into the council's affordable housing account.

To complicate things further, the calculations for the size of the s106 money are based on rather complex formulas, making the s106 negotiations between the local planning authority and the developer far from straight-forward. These calculations can either be based on a site's viability or its development costs, and as neither is exactly known and largely based on the developer's figures. It is not uncommon that the developer comes back later, claiming that the s106 agreement is not viable anymore, due to unforeseen costs or a drop in housing prices, so the s106 agreement needs to be

renegotiated. In some cases this has led to previously-agreed affordable housing disappearing altogether.

### **RBKC housing**

The housing targets set in the RBKC Local Plan policy CH1, approved in 2010, required a minimum of 350 new homes a year with a maximum of 200 affordable units a year (45% affordable). This target has changed over the years, with the 2015 London Plan requiring RBKC to produce 733 homes per year, whereof 50% being affordable. In late October 2017, Sadiq Khan presented his assessment of London's housing needs for the next ten years, in which the RBKC requirement had been reduced to 488 new homes a year, which may be far more achievable.

RBKC "boasts" in the 2015-16 Annual Monitoring Report, pre-Grenfell Tower fire, that "there is a focus on achieving a diversity of housing in mixed communities across the Borough". We have questioned the results of that focus, as the report shows that only 341 of the required 733 homes were produced, of which a meagre 67 were affordable.

### **Grenfell fallout**

Shortly after the Grenfell Tower fire, it was revealed that the RBKC council places some 75% of its homeless households in temporary housing outside its borders, more than any other council in England. In the past few years the council has purchased 31 units in as far afield as Croydon and West Essex.

The Grenfell Tower fire has changed everything, and there is now a promise that, wherever possible, all developments will have on-site affordable housing. However, most developers are still determined to provide as little as possible, so time will tell how well the council will be able to fulfil that promise.

With the realisation that past practices are no longer acceptable, the council's affordable housing policy will need to be tightened up the borough's Local Plan.

Amanda Frame



Don't miss these important  
Kensington Society events!



## Christmas carols in the Mayor's Parlour

**Tuesday 5 December 2017, 6.00 for 6.30pm**  
**The Mayor's Parlour, Kensington Town Hall**

Get into the Christmas spirit - come and join us singing carols with the chamber choir from St Mary Abbots School, in the Mayor's Parlour.

Music is incredibly important in this Church of England primary school, and the children learn singing from the beginning, with simple songs, chants and games. By years 5 and 6 all the children join the school's church choir. They sing at the Albert Hall, the Cadogan Hall, Kensington Palace and Westfield, as well as at the Town Hall and now for us.

We will have a good sing of traditional carols, which we can all join in with, and they are also giving us a special performance. All this will be followed by drinks and nibbles.

**Cost, irrespective of membership: £10**

This event can only be booked via our website, as it's so close at hand: [www.kensingtonsociety.org](http://www.kensingtonsociety.org)

## Benjamin Franklin – His British Life

**Monday 19 February 2018, 11.00am - 12.30pm**  
**Benjamin Franklin House, 36 Craven Street**

Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States, lived for almost 16 years, between 1757 and 1775, as a lodger at 36 Craven Street in London. He came as a representative of the Pennsylvania Assembly to mediate between the colonists and the British government – in effect he was the very first American ambassador. As an energetic and enthusiastic scientist, he also took an active part in the intellectual and social life of the city, making close friends among the leading figures of the day.

George Goodwin, Franklin's biographer and a highly entertaining raconteur, will tell us more about his life and friendships in London. We will also be able to look around in the house, which in the beginning of this century was rescued from dereliction and restored to its original state. It was opened to the public in 2006, on Ben Franklin's 300th birthday.

The house cannot accommodate more than 30 visitors, so sign up early for a fascinating morning.

**KS members £20, non-members £25.**

See our website and the 2018 events folder for more details.



## SAVE THE DATE!

Monday 14 May 2018, 6:30 for 7:00pm

## The Kensington Society AGM

On 14 May 2018, you are all welcome to our annual general meeting.

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

Our guest speaker will be the historian and former Labour MP Tristram Hunt, recently appointed director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

He is an expert on the 18th and 19th centuries, with particular focus on Victorian urban history and earned a PhD from Cambridge in 2000. When not managing the V&A, he lectures, broadcasts and writes on history and culture.



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 700 members and 33 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.

Membership form and booking form for events can be found on the Kensington Society website.

### How to reach us:

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Kensington Society is a registered charity (number 267778)

*The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Kensington Society*