



THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2022-2023

Thames Water

The private monopoly
that just isn't working
pages 14-19

The chairman's report
pages 2-5

Planning news
pages 6-13

Two old friends to revisit
page 20



On 21 January 2021, a burst water main flooded Notting Hill Gate for several hours - a vivid illustration of the many problems we have with Thames Water. (Picture by Libor Sečka)

The chairman's report

I know everyone is tired of us saying there is so much to do, but this year it has been worse than ever. Besides the usual planning applications, a few of the anticipated developments have come back to life, there are several major appeals against the council's planning refusal, and, on top of it all, there are the major planning policies plans and updates to keep up with from the government.

As for the government, we now have the new [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#), with a revolving door of housing secretaries. Michael Gove has returned, following Simon Clarke, who was there for a mere 49 days. Clarke followed Greg Clark, who had held the chair for a year in 2015-2016 but this time only lasted three months. Michael Gove was there before Clark for less than a year and 3 days.

And we mustn't forget Robert Jenrick, the author of the famous and potentially disastrous white paper, who held the post (when it was called Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) from July 2019 to September 2021. Amazing he lasted that long!

Which buildings are "beautiful"?

We now have Michael Gove announcing that the government will call in any building that is not "beautiful", so as to reduce opposition to residential developments. The Times quoted Gove this week as saying *"We will see the wide adoption of design codes and ways in which individuals can appreciate how it is easier to secure planning permission if you build in a way that is consistent with those design codes"*.

The idea of codifying "beauty" sends shivers up my spine. Some years ago I had an interesting conversation with our then MP Malcolm Rifkind. He was supporting the de-listing of the Commonwealth Institute to allow the site to be fully redeveloped. Our discussion centred on my perspective, that listing a building sometimes is not about what it looks like today, but what it lead us to today. We would not have Guggenheim Museum Bilbao today without the legend of the

Commonwealth Institute. The same goes for the Derry & Tom and the Barker's buildings on Kensington High Street - or one of my favourites, the Czech and Slovak embassies, which still cause controversy. All taught us something and lead us on.

That was a bit off topic, because what I really want to know is what Gove regards as "beautiful". I understand he has named Poundbury, the controversial Dorset estate promoted by King Charles, as one such beauty. Poundbury required strict adherence to the design codes, with the use of traditional materials and regulations regarding building form and streetscapes. Poundbury may be beautiful as a reference to the past, but what about the future? Certainly, it is questionable how that code can be applied to the 1,050 new homes on the Earl's Court site and/or the possible 3,500 – 5,000 homes on the Kensal Canalside sites. It may, and I think does, works beautifully outside Dorchester for a new green-field urban extension development, but we have cities to build too.

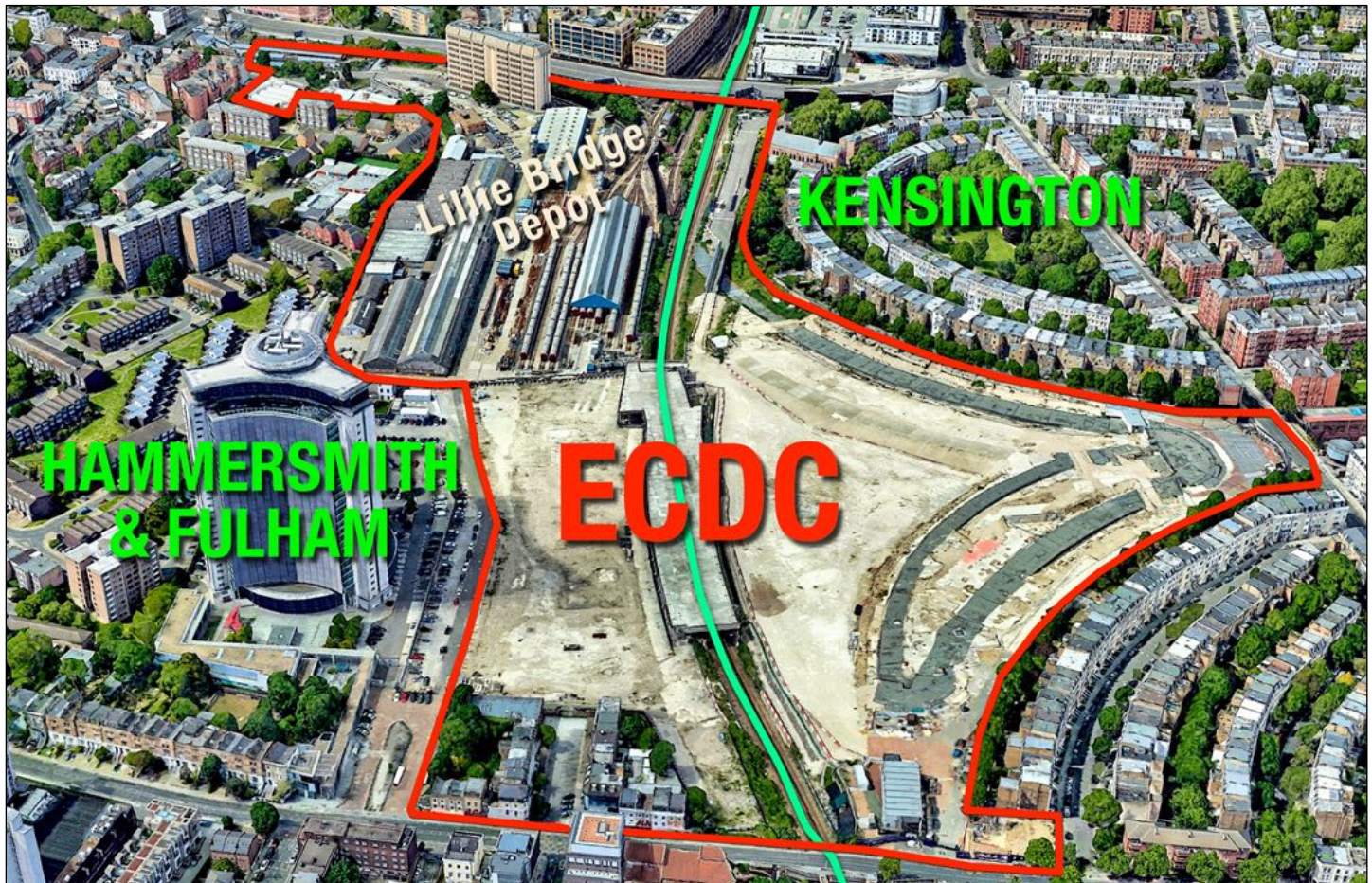
Consultation on the new local plan

The biggest task we have is the review the final version of the new local plan. The new plan has passed through several reviews with this being the final draft. The planners have digested our earlier comments and redrafted and added to the draft. This publication will be the last before it is submitted in spring 2023 to the government-appointed inspector.

The consultation has begun and we are now in the final stage of the eight-week consultation which ends on 22 December. The planning committee of the Kensington Society



Strict adherence to the design codes may work well for King Charles' Poundbury, but it probably can't deliver us 3,000 – 5,000 homes on the Kensal Canalside sites. (Picture from Wikipedia)



For a long time nothing much happened with the Earl's Court opportunity area, after Hammersmith & Fulham pulled two large council estates out of project in 2018. But on 21 November 2022, The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) announced that TfL's Lillie Bridge Depot had been transferred to them (that was always the plan), which means that they now control all the land. Just a week later they announced that three teams of architects had been appointed and that construction is expected to start in 2025. The green line shows the border between the two boroughs, while the area border is in red. (Aerial picture from Google Earth)

is busy developing a report for submission. Comments should be directed to the inspector specifically to address the "tests of soundness" of the plan. Is it: positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy? The council will pass all the representations received to the inspector.

The local plan has evolved from the former aim of "renewing the legacy" to a new vision for "a green, inclusive and liveable future". It identifies the broad locations for growth and includes policies that will shape all development in the borough.

Within the plan, specific places are highlighted, with a vision for each area regarding change and levels of growth. This may be the area you are most interested in, perhaps the area where you live. Or you may be interested in the growth areas of Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court - or the new "green-blue" environmental policies.

You can find the consultation for the new local plan on the RBKC website under "[Planning and Building Control / Planning applications / Planning Policy Consultations](#)".

There you can respond on line or download a response form that can be submitted via email or mailed back to RBKC.

Earl's Court's placemaking framework

The planners are developing a framework for the Earl's Court opportunity area (OA), the larger area which the Earl's Court exhibition site will be part of. The key conclusions from previous consultations/engagements are: the OA should as much as possible be integrated with the Earl's Court development;

building heights is a key concern; Earl's Court is and should remain eclectic and multicultural; and Earl's Court needs green spaces nearby.

There are many areas of concern here. The demolition of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre has greatly harmed the area and the challenges of formulating a workable framework which can be implemented is essential to the revitalisation of the area. We look forward to develop further relationships with the local residents' associations. Earl's Court Society and the Friends of the Brompton Cemetery will be key in this task, though there are others too.

The problem with the NCIL

On 14 November, shortly before this newsletter went to the printer, the council announced "the result of the 2022 bidding round for NCIL money". As this is gobbledygook for most of our readers, I better explain first.

Since 2008, most new developments are charged a fee intended to help the council finance public infrastructure needed because of the development. This community infrastructure levy (CIL) is split into two parts: borough CIL (BCIL) and neighbourhood CIL (NCIL). Most of the money goes to the BCIL, which is used for larger investments such as new or improved schools across the borough, while a smaller portion, usually 15%, goes to the NCIL, which is to be spent in the ward where the development has taken place in consultation with the local community, i.e. the ward councillors get a pot of money and local organisations, authorities, busi-

(continues next page)

nesses and individuals can once a year - that's the bidding round - ask for funding from that pot for specific things in the ward, provided these things meet the criteria set up by the council. This year it tended to be planters, CCTV installations, acoustic camera installations, speed indicators, cycle hangars and tree planting — and almost 20% of the 2022 NCIL awards, £200,000, went towards a future sculpture on King's Road. Any money not awarded stays in the ward pot for next year's bidding round.

However, most CIL charged developments happen in the southern wards of the borough, so consequently those wards get most of the NCIL money, although the northern wards probably have the greatest need. For this year, the average pot size for the five northernmost wards was only £77,000 and they were awarded a meagre average of £14,000, while the five southernmost wards had an average pot size of £407,000 and were awarded an average of £83,000.

The rule that NCIL money should be spent in the ward where the development has happened is imposed by RBKC. Other boroughs in the UK spread the NCIL money over several wards or across the whole borough and the Kensington Society feels that RBKC should do the same, particularly where large developments affect a wider area.

We will look closer at the distribution of NCIL money in a large article on our website in the near future.

Local listed building consent orders (LLBCO)

Local listed building consent orders (LLBCO) are a legal measure which allows the council to grant listed building consent for groups of listed buildings in all or part of the borough, or listed buildings of a particular description.

Following the council's commitments to reach carbon neutral by 2030 and in direct response from the residents, the

council is pressing ahead with sustainability changes. One LLBCO is already in place and another is being consulted on.

LLBCO for solar panels on listed buildings

The first such action, following consultation, was solar panels on the roofs of grade II and some grade II* buildings. The order, which came into force in May 2022 for a 5-year period, allows for the installation of solar panels without the need for individual listed building consent, subject to conditions specified in the order, which say that some grade II* listed buildings will still require permission – and ecclesiastical buildings are excluded.

You can read more about it on the RBKC website under "Planning and Building Control / Planning Policy / Sustainably retrofitting your home". You can also [download the complete LLBCO](#), which contains details about what is and isn't allowed.

LLBCO for windows under consultation

Listed buildings are often very draughty, so the council is consulting on an LLBO to allow double glazing on grade II listed buildings. If implemented, installation of secondary glazing for every window, as well as double-glazed windows or double glazed sealed units within existing frames, would be allowed for grade II listed buildings on certain conditions.

To ensure that no harmful visual effect on the building or the wider area will occur, the order will contain conditions that the windows must be sensitively designed. The LLBCO will include a "statement of reasons" which set out the assessment of the effect.

The consultation began on 14 November and will extend to 9 January. We encourage you to read and respond to it. The consultation documents can be found on the RBKC website under "[Planning and Building Control / Planning applications / Planning Policy Consultations](#)".

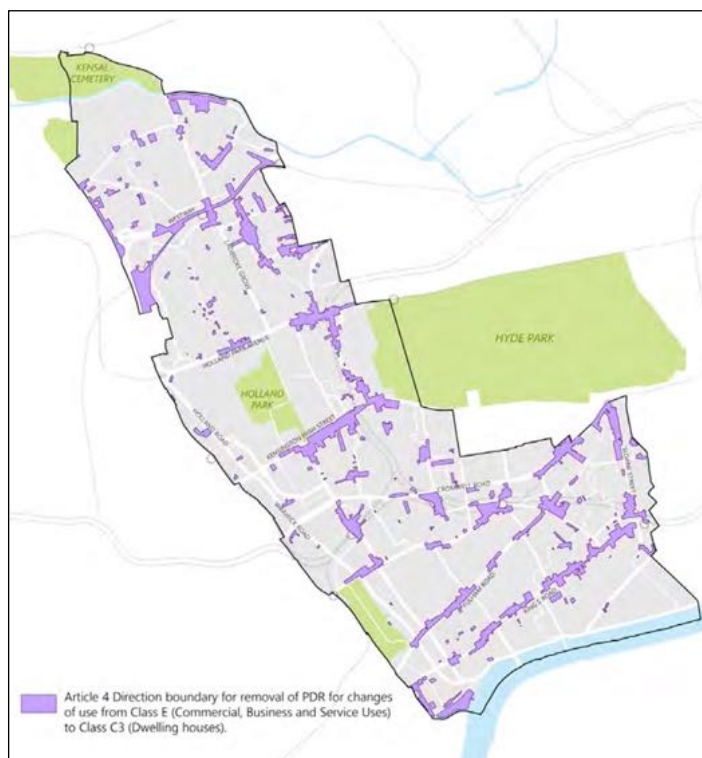
Article 4 directions update

Article 4 directions are a tool for a council to restrict the scope of permitted development rights for a particular area. In September 2020, the government merged the use classes A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional), A3 (food and drink) and parts of D1 (institutions) and D2 (assembly and leisure) into the new single use class E. By doing so, a crèche could suddenly become a fast food outlet and a GP surgery could become an indoor sports facilities without the need for a change of use approval from the council, as they are all in the same use class.

In April 2021, the government went one step further, by making a change of use from class E to class C3 (residential) a permitted development right, thus making it impossible for a council to object to an office being turned into one or more family homes.

As this change could cause many office owners to turn their properties into much more lucrative luxury homes, which could diminish the number of work places within the borough, the council quickly applied to the housing secretary at the time, Robert Jenrick, for an article 4 direction covering the whole borough.

However, when the response came back one year later, at the end of July 2022, the new housing secretary, Greg Clark (who had replaced Michael Gove on 6 July 2022, who in turned had replaced Robert Jenrick on 15 September 2021), announced that such a wide coverage wasn't acceptable. He required that the article 4 direction should be applied to the



This map shows the areas in RBKC where the new article 4 direction protects use class E premises from being changed into housing without the need for a planning application. (Picture from the draft new local plan that is under consultation)



The Kensington Palace evening in August was a hugely successful Kensington Society event, where members got a chance to know each other, have a drink in the Pavilion and visit a couple selected parts of Kensington Palace. (Picture by Michael Becket)

smallest area possible and did not accept that some loss would be driven by the difference in value between class E and some class C3 uses, and not by lack of class E businesses (which has been the government's main argument for this).

To that end, the council has now developed a new article 4 direction. It will cover only 16% of the borough but will protect 95% of class E premises, as it will cover areas with a concentration of offices as well isolated crèches and GP surgeries.

New trees SPD under consultation

For many years there has been growing concern about the poor protection for our trees. The last trees SPD was issued in 2010. All too many trees have since then been lost to development, the stealth of basement construction, or just greed. Trees required to be replaced, after trumped-up reasons for removal, are often not planted – or if they are, they seldom survive.

Because of this, the council has begun consultation on a new trees SPD, which started 14 November and ends 9 January 2023. The purpose of the SPD is to provide detailed guidance/recommendations on the information RBKC will require to be submitted with any planning application where there are trees on or adjacent to the application site.

Though welcomed, the SPD sadly concentrates on existing trees – those few that are left. The Kensington Society will be pressing for an additional SPD to include a tree planting strategy for all major developments.

Consultation documents can be found on the RBKC website under "[Planning and Building Control / Planning applications / Planning Policy Consultations](#)".

Help us through Amazon

The Kensington Society has participated in a small trial with the Amazon Smile charity scheme, which has generated over a £100. If you use Amazon, we ask that you do so via AmazonSmile. They will then donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible Amazon purchases to The Kensington Society. To support the Society, register on: smile.amazon.co.uk/charity, choose The Kensington Society and follow the instructions how to change your Amazon bookmark so your purchases go through Amazon Smile.

The Kensington Society

A few words about us. We are doing very well. Our membership has increased. Our finances remain strong, although increasingly called upon to assist in paying for legal or expert advice. The events since the AGM in June, the Kensington Palace and Leighton House evenings, were sell outs. We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas party, which may happen before this newsletter reaches you.

However I must add another plea. We have created a new group, the Advisory Group, which at this moment consist of three members who have expressed interest in helping the trustees with specific areas. The trustees are diligently working to utilise their special interests and expertise. But the work is increasing, so if you have interest in planning, events, marketing or financial experience, please consider joining our advisors.

Thank you all for membership and support. And please do have a Merry Christmas.

AMANDA FRAME

The planning report

The Kensington Society's planning committee has had a lot to do this year. Although 2022 started off in a quiet way, it was just the quiet before the storm. Below are some of the developments we have been engaged in, but we've also been busy with the review of the new local plan, numerous new SPDs (supplemental planning developments) and consultations on permitted development rights. This on top of our continual support to our members in numerous objectionable applications.

South Kensington Station appeal hearing

Following the RBKC council's decision in November 2021 to refuse proposed redevelopment around South Kensington Station, the applicants, Native Land and London Underground Ltd, have appealed. A major, 12-day public inquiry will be held, starting on 18 January 2023 and due to finish on 3 February. The Kensington Society will be supporting the council and the local associations.

The refused application proposed a massive development covering five areas, to be delivered in two parts. Although proposed in two parts, if approved as a whole, there is no planning means of ensuring that the developer will follow the proposed sequencing or even complete the development.

The council's main reasons for refusal are the negative impact that the proposed scheme would have on heritage, townscape, the design, height and massing and the harm it would do to conservation areas and the associated listed buildings. Several of the local residents' associations and conservation societies have joined together to support these reasons for refusal. The Kensington Society, whilst supporting that case, has focused on the capacity and safety of the station and imperative need for step-free access, which remain unresolved. This is our main issue.

The section 106 agreement outlined in the planning officer's report to the committee provided no guarantee that step-free access or station safety and capacity improvements would be delivered were this scheme to be allowed. The application only claims to "provide for" step-free access and talks about "completing" it through a new entrance in Thurloe Street and the construction of a lift shaft from street level to the ticket office and improved connection to the foot tunnel to the South Kensington Museums. The lifts from ticket hall to the District and Circle Lines and later to the Piccadilly Line were not included, nor the works required for a new ticket hall, expanded platform or the required fire exit to Thurloe Square. The application, as proposed, would neither deliver nor complete step-free access nor address the safety issued outlined by TfL in their own report in 2016.

The officer's report agreed that works to the station upgrade, including the lift installation could be delayed until construction work began on the second part. However, the Kensington Society was concerned that if any portion of second part of the scheme did not proceed as outlined in the 106 agreement, there would be no means to ensure that any of the station improvements would be built.

We have applied for and been accepted as a Rule 6 party at the public inquiry. This allows us to present our case to the



The appeal against the council's rejection of the plans for South Kensington Station, with its large "Bullnose" building in front of the old station, has resulted in a 12-day public inquiry which starts on 18 January. (Picture from the refused application)



An artist's rendering of the new proposal for the Newcombe House site, viewed from Notting Hill Gate and showing the buildings along Kensington Church Street. Astley House (the Barclays Bank building on Notting Hill Gate) is only indicated with dotted lines, in order to show all the buildings. (Picture courtesy of Squire & Partners)

Inspector and to question the appellant on these issues. We are pressing for the step-free access work and the safety and capacity upgrade to the station to be addressed and brought forward earlier in the work programme to guarantee the delivery and completion of step-free access as an integral part of the first part of the scheme.

Please come along and support us at the town hall at 9.45 for 10am on Tuesday 18 January.

Newcombe House under new ownership

In March we were told that the entire site of Newcombe House in Notting Hill had been sold to office specialist Beltrane, with a plan to redevelop the site instead of constructing the controversial but approved development. In July we had a first meeting with representatives from Beltrane, where they outlined their proposals. We stated which aspects of the previous development that we expect to be carried forward into this scheme, including a public square and a large GP surgery.

In our second meeting, in October, we were shown a scheme by architects Squire+Partners. The proposals include adding two more storeys to a refurbished version of the existing Newcombe House. A very heavy, deep and tall brick-fronted block is proposed replace both the existing car park (where the farmer's market has been on Saturdays) and the buildings along Kensington Church Street. Instead of the public square in the approved plan, the scheme will provide a 7-metre wide, largely covered, passage through the block. A separate building at the corner of Kensington Church Street and Kensington Place is intended to contain flats for

social housing (replacing Royston Court, which had such housing some years ago), with its ground floor "possibly" used for a very small GP surgery. There will be no provision for step-free access to the underground station. The approved scheme had both a very large GP surgery and step-free access to one of the station platforms.

Overall, the Kensington Society considers this scheme to be of very poor architectural quality. What is proposed is heavy and over-articulated and would greatly harm the area. We are extremely disappointed by this scheme which would be a major lost opportunity for contributing to revitalising Notting Hill Gate. We have communicated our opinions and do hope that we can meet again to discuss a more positive development.

Beltrane expects to submit the planning application in early 2023 and hopes to get a final approval before the end of 2023. If so, the work would start in the spring of 2024 and take two years.

Selling school buildings for luxury housing

Thomas's School, a private unlimited company, plans to sell existing schools for luxury housing and expand into Richmond University's residential building. For this end, the company submitted four applications in March. The first is to convert Atlantic House (1 St Albans Grove), the former Richmond University student accommodation, into a very large, 500-pupil private preparatory school. The other three applications proposed the conversion of the two existing

Continues on next page

Thomas's School buildings, in Victoria Road and Cottesmore Gardens, to luxury market housing.

These applications have proved very divisive: supported by parents of children who almost entirely are from outside the local area, but strongly opposed by local residents. The two school buildings and a building at 21 St Albans Grove are currently restricted by a legal agreement to a maximum of 400 pupils and a school travel plan designed to reduce the number of pupils arriving by car. The current applications propose increasing the student numbers to 500 pupils.

The main ground for objection by the Kensington Society, as new housing would be created, is that there must either be affordable housing within the development, which we appreciate is not possible, or the company must make a financial contribution for affordable housing which the borough can use for housing elsewhere.

The applicant proposes no contribution for housing, which is against national, London and RBKC policies. There would also be the loss of community facilities, whilst the only benefit would appear to be a private one, for one of the nation's most expensive schools. In addition, we feel that this is an inappropriate location for a school with 25% more pupils, as it would need to draw on an even wider catchment area, resulting in

more cars entering and leaving this entirely residential area twice a day.

We also support the objection by our local members to the proposed conversion of a small car park at Atlantic House to a playground where groups of 200 to 400 children would play each time. This would cause a considerable noise nuisance.

The school application is due to be heard by the council's planning committee on 15 December.

K1 an exemplary development

The refurbished buildings (and a few new ones) known as K1, at the corner of Brompton Road and Sloane Street, have finally been completed. This is an excellent example of how to save and improve at the same time, to the benefit of the community.

K1 is one of the largest projects in the borough for many years and includes demolition of only one building and the partial demolition of seven buildings with their facades retained. Apple and Burberry have moved in to the wedge and all existing retail has been refurbished. There is office space, residential and restaurants. The existing tube station entrance was relocated to the restored Hooper's Court with the original station red faience tiles on the historic façade. Best of all the station now has a new step-free access to ticket hall and platforms.



The refurbishment of K1, the building complex in the corner of Brompton Road and Sloane Street (across the street from Harvey Nichols), has finally been completed. A great example of how to save and improve at the same time. (Picture from Google Street View)



The top picture shows the current 186 Holland Park Avenue billboard, which must be removed by 22 December, and the lower shows what the owner wants to replace it with: a slightly lower digital billboard that will be plastered into the wall of the grade II listed building. (Pictures from Google Street View and the application)

186 Holland Park Avenue's billboard fight

The owner of 186 Holland Park Avenue and its enormous digital advertising billboard (by Holland Park Roundabout) has returned with a new application. There have been 37 applications, 9 appeals and 2 current applications for this site since 1999. Amazing staying power, but sadly the applicant has been granted permission for the billboard a few times, having pleaded the need for financing the restoration of this grade II listed building through advertising revenues. The current scaffolding, 14.4m by 12.8m, with its 9.8m by 10m advertisement hoarding, was refused by the council, but the owner appealed. The planning inspector was once again swayed by the financial pleas and allowed it. Though there is no proof of any works being done to the building, the advertisement hoarding was allowed to remain until 22 December 2022.

Obviously anticipating enforcement actions requiring the removal of the hoarding when that date has passed, the own-

er has now applied for a new form of advertisement. This time it's a 52m² digital advertisement plastered into the grade listed flank wall. The advertisement proposed is 9.4m by 5.6m.

Both NCS, CCRA and The Kensington Society have objected. Besides objecting to the harm this does to a grade II listed building, this time we have concentrated on the carbon factor that such hoardings produce. Recent research indicates that large digital billboards consume a surprising amount of energy and the use of such displays increases the carbon footprint.

Kensington High Street BID established

Local businesses, with the support of the council, decided in 2021 to set up a business improvement district (BID) for Kensington High Street. The purpose of the BID is to improve the image and strengthen the performance of the street, by promoting it and making it more attractive as Kensington's

Continues on next page

main town centre, for businesses, residents and visitors. The cost of doing this is to be borne entirely by a levy on businesses. This will pay for projects that would be additional to anything that the council pays for. After a ballot of businesses, it was overwhelming agreed to set up the BID in April.

The establishment of this BID follows the successful BID in Knightsbridge: The Knightsbridge Partnership.

The board and project groups of the BID are made up of representatives from businesses and the council, as well as two residents, one whom is a Kensington Society trustee. It is still quite early to point to specific activities, except for this year's Christmas lights. Next year could see more improvements.

Academy pub appeal hearing in December

It is hard to believe, but Norland residents, with the support of the Kensington Society, have been fighting to save the Academy pub since 2014 and the fight continues. The latest is an appeal against the council's refusal for an application, which goes against the terms of the asset of community value (ACV). The appeal has attracted over 100 letters to the planning inspector from third parties supporting the refusal. In total since 2014 there have been 8 applications, 2 appeals and only one approval. The approved scheme, which was for the retention of the whole of the pub and new house, did have our and the local endorsement.



We have fought to save the Academy pub, at 57 Princedale Road in Norland, since 2014. (Picture from Google Street View)

In addition, the council has taken enforcement action against the unlawful occupation of the upper floors of the pub. The occupant applied for permission as a residence, which was refused, and the applicant appealed. That appeal



Some good news: the 20th Century Theatre at 291 Westbourne Grove, which began as a music hall in the 1860s, has been saved by a music loving philanthropical foundation that plans to refurbish it and make it a place for chamber music concerts and community events. (Picture from Google Street View)



The future for Notting Hill police station is unknown, as it has been withdrawn from sale for the moment. (Picture Thomas Blomberg)

was dismissed. The upper floors remain unlawfully occupied. We watch with interest what enforcement actions will be taken next.

The appeal hearing is set for 6 December, when this newsletter is with the printer, and the Kensington Society, along with the Norland Conservation Society (NCS) and the Clarendon Cross Residents' Association (CCRA), will be there in support of the council.

20th Century Theatre saved

The 20th Century Theatre in Westbourne Grove opened in the 1860s and was for many years a popular music hall. It closed as a theatre in 1963 and became a warehouse for antiques, although part of it did function between 1999 and 2016 as an events venue. The very good news is that the whole building has now been acquired by a well-funded philanthropical foundation with a particular interest in music. They are planning to refurbish and reopen it for chamber music concerts and community events.

Notting Hill police station in limbo

There is still no news on the future of the Notting Hill police station, which the Metropolitan Police closed to the public in 2019 in order to save money. They put it on the market and the Kensington Society obtained ACV (asset of community value) status for it, so that it had first to be offered to the community. RBKC placed an offer. We do not know what other offers they have received, but they later withdrew it from sale pending a review of their "estates strategy". We have yet to hear the results of this review.

Allen House not to be demolished

Allen House is a distinguished Edwardian mansion block at the northern end of Allen Street, close to Kensington High Street. Planning permissions were granted in 2016 and in 2020 for schemes involving demolition and re-building behind a retained façade. The first approval included a new basement, whereas the latter scheme did not. Both applications had been vigorously opposed by the Kensington Society and ESSA (Edwardes Square Scarsdale & Abingdon Association) on sustainability grounds.



New owners of Allen House are going for refurbishment instead of demolition.. (Picture by Thomas Blomberg)

The building was marketed in 2021 and it was acquired by new developers. They took a completely different approach, based on full retention and refurbishment, with one additional floor within a dormer roof. This was an approach that the previous developers claimed to be impossible on technical and viability grounds. However, the sting in the tail of the new approach was the loss of any affordable housing contribution. For developments with less than 650m² of additional floor area there is no affordable housing requirement. Kensington Society demonstrated that the application was above the threshold but, of course, the developers adjusted their plans to bring it back below the threshold. All of this is completely legitimate, but it points up the problems with the affordable housing mechanisms, particularly in high value areas.

The new scheme received planning consent, subject to a section 106 agreement on zero parking permits for the two new units, on 20 October 2022. Work has already started apace.

The positive result is that as there is no demolition, the carbon footprint of the scheme will be reduced. Also, the neighbouring properties in Eden Close and Allen Street will be less disturbed by noise and dust and the works will be completed more quickly. However, RBKC's affordable housing target will not benefit.

Notting Hill Gate action plan

The council is working with local residents and businesses to an action plan for the short, medium and long-term needs of Notting Hill Gate and what is required in order to deliver their ideas. Following an exhibition at the Essex Church, the Kensington Society had the following suggestions:

- Better pedestrian crossings to "unite" the two sides of the street/centre;
- Make better use of the wider stretches of pavement, with more benches, more trees on the north side, more good public art, and spaces for events;
- Widen the pavement/footway by narrowing the road on the

Continues on next page

Kensington Church Street frontage of Newcombe House;

- Side-road entry treatments on both sides of the road to create a continuous, level footway;
- Reduce clutter, especially redundant telephone boxes and those with advertisement panels attached;
- Need for a “memorable feature” (eg the public toilet/flower shop in Westbourne Grove) that will form part of the new identity of Notting Hill Gate as a pleasant place to be;
- Create a plaza/public square;
- Refurbish to a high standard and reopen toilets in Notting Hill Gate station;
- Curate the town centre – limit take-away food shops (danger that centre/Newcombe House will become a food court); and
- Support small businesses/shops, including pop-up shops or well-designed kiosks.

Kensington Odeon site slowly progressing

The approved scheme on the former Kensington Odeon cinema site comprises 106 residential flats, including 35 affordable housing flats for the elderly, a 6-screen cinema, and four restaurant or retail units and office.

Since taking control of the site, developers Lodha have been committed to bringing back the proscenium arch entrance into the public realm by way of retail uses and retaining the original mosaic floored entrance, instead of it being a purely residential entrance as previously proposed. Unfortunately, Regent Street disease (corrosion of the metal reinforcement) meant that the arch had to be taken down. However, much of the original material has been salvaged and it will be replaced in full as work continues all in accordance with a detailed planning consent.

Lodha report that the works have been delayed by a number of events, such as Covid, Brexit and the war in Ukraine, leading to shortages of materials and labour. However, they are forecasting completion in early 2024, with the arch reinstated by late 2023.

The concrete frame of the main building is now almost complete, with the shape of the arch now clearly discernible.

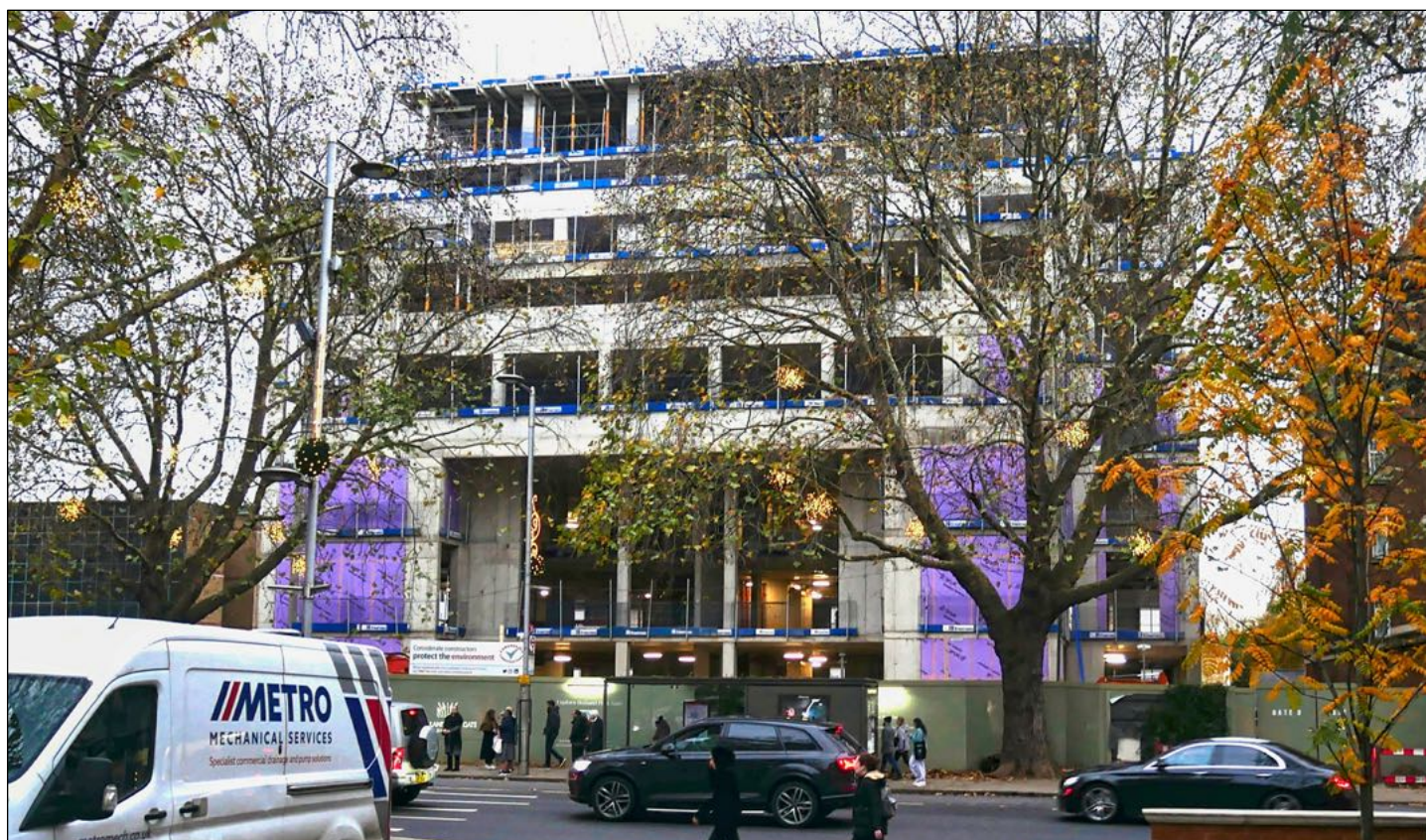
There have been a number of planning applications for non-material and minor alterations to the structure, including improving sightlines, extending green walls to improve air quality, increasing access to outside space and internal room layout changes within the apartments. More major changes, such as additional floors, once floated as a possibility, have now been dropped by the developer.

North Kensington activities

The last six months have seen a pause in development proposals coming forward in the north of the borough. But activity continues across the border with Hammersmith and impacts on local residents living in St Helens and Dalgarno wards.

Since the well attended “development forum”, convened by RBKC this time last year on plans for the Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area, developers St William (Berkeley Homes) and Ballymore/Sainsburys have gone quiet. Their proposals, as presented at this valuable pre-application discussion at Barlby Primary School, were greeted with many pertinent questions from the public. *“How will new residents on this large but landlocked site access public transport?” “Why have towers as high as 35 storeys?” “How will a pedestrian route work across the canal and through Kensal Cemetery, if the cemetery is closed in the evenings?”*

When the council published its current local plan last February, it became clear that RBKC was setting a height limit of



The main building on the Odeon site is now taking shape, and the concrete frame that will hold the cinema's original proscenium arch clearly resembles it. (Picture by Thomas Blomberg)



The "Mitre Yard" development (left) and the "North Kensington Gate" development (right), will be on either side of Scrubs Lane, just a few metres from each other - and the latter will overlook Kensal Green Cemetery's western plots. (Pictures from the developer's website)

31 storeys (equivalent to Trellick Tower). And that this was the maximum height deemed to be "appropriate" in terms of the 2021 London plan policy on tall buildings. This limit has been carried through to the site allocation in the draft local plan currently out for consultation.

Some redesign of the proposals was therefore going to be needed. It may well be that firmer advice from the government's housing department and the London Fire Brigade, on the need for a secondary staircase in tall buildings, has also led to changes in floorplans. This has proved the case on several other schemes in the planning pipeline in West London.

Meanwhile, the forecasts for falling property values in 2023 must also be requiring viability figures to be re-assessed every few weeks. The Kensington Society has no hard news on when planning applications for Kensal Canalside will surface. Sainsbury's very much want to see a replacement of their present outdated superstore on the site, so this first phase may emerge first.

New high-rise developments in Scrubs Lane

Meanwhile, just across the borough boundary in Scrubs Lane, two developments by City & Docklands are under construction at "Mitre Yard" and at "North Kensington Gate" (a name theft of the Kensington brand). Both involve high rise towers and high densities and are "car-free" at a location with very low levels of access to public transport.

Both these schemes were granted planning consent by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), at a time when neighbouring Cargiant had plans for 6,000 new homes and a new "high street" and commercial centre on its 45 acre site. These plans were abandoned in 2018. OPDC continues to claim that Scrubs Lane will become a "highly connected" and attractive location, but locals remain sceptical.

The chancellor's autumn statement confirmed that the HS2 project is safe (at least for the time being). Construction continues at the site of Old Oak Common Station. It is only gradu-

ally dawning on local people that this £1.7bn rail interchange may not open until 2032, and will have no vehicular access at its eastern end (that nearest to central London). This is despite Old Oak being the London terminus of the HS2 line until Euston comes into play many years later.

With proposals for an extra Queen Elizabeth Line station at "Portobello North" off the agenda, and no overground station at Hythe Road, access to public transport in the north east part of the borough will remain poor for the indefinite future.

Edenham Way delayed

In the eastern part of North Kensington, the draft local plan is cautiously worded on the site allocation for Edenham Way (next to Trellick Tower). Plans for a new housing development have been vigorously opposed. The current text gives a "range" of up to 14 storeys and says that this will need to be further tested.

RBKC continues to take a tougher line on high density/high rise housing development than do neighbouring borough Hammersmith & Fulham and the development corporation at Old Oak (OPDC). Infill schemes in the council's "New Homes" programme in North Kensington are continuing to be built out. The smaller ones are not prompting opposition. Those at greater heights are seeing some adverse public reaction (Silchester Arches and Edenham Way).

In this strange new economic climate at the end of 2022, North Kensington residents are left thinking "is delay and re-appraisal by developers a good thing or a bad thing?" Might it be possible for Michael Gove's ambitions to "build better and build beautiful" to be realised, if there is an extended pause for London's development industry and some rethinking of the planning system?

What has been built in the last decade seems unlikely to be well regarded by 2050, on almost any measure. The council's new Local Plan needs to provide a good blueprint for the next couple of decades.

MICHAEL BACH, AMANDA FRAME, SOPHIA LAMBERT,
BARRY MUNDY, HENRY PETERSON

Our 150-year-old sewers aren't fit for purpose

On 12 July 2021, the sky above western London opened up and some areas received a month's worth of rain within a few hours. In many places the street drains couldn't handle the volume, so the streets became rivers and those rivers went into basements and tube stations, and road underpasses quickly became lakes. In Kensington, the worst affected areas were North Kensington between Notting Hill Gate and the Westway flyover, and the area west of Holland Park.

Across Kensington there was flooding on 76 streets, with water flooding more than 340 properties. Holland Park, Notting Hill Gate and Sloane Square stations were closed, and there was also flooding on the A4, A40, and A3220. The council had flooding of many of its buildings, including the North Kensington and Kensington Central libraries, St Marks Care Leavers Centre, three primary schools and Baseline Studios in the Lancaster West Estate.

But why did it happen, and what can be done to prevent it from happening again?

In an attempt to get answers to those questions, the council conducted a large investigation, and its findings were published in a 95 pages report in July 2022.

Large area flooding due to heavy rain is nothing new in Kensington. It has, in fact, happened 12 times since 1888, whereof seven times in the last 18 years. As the report says: "Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of storm events [and] it is likely that the depth, extent, velocity and hazard posed by surface water flooding will [also] increase."

The reasons some areas and properties are more affected than others are a combination of the combined sewer system, all the new, deep basements, and the topography of Kensington.

The combined sewer system problem

Two of London's lost rivers, once tributaries of the Thames, play an important part in the borough's sewer system: the Westbourne River and Counters Creek. Once open, they were culverted to run underground and to form part of the sewerage system during the 19th century. The Serpentine in Hyde Park is actually a man-made lake in the Westbourne River's otherwise underground path to the river. Counters Creek runs close to the borough's western boundary down to the Lots Road pumping station, nowadays totally underground.

The sewer network in RBKC is almost entirely made up of combined sewers. A combined sewer carries both foul sewage from bathrooms and surface water from street gullies and building rain drains.

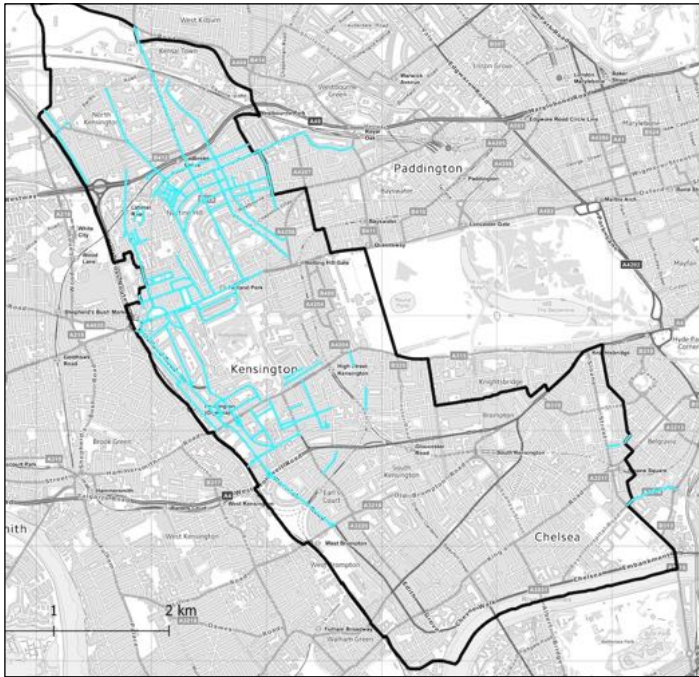
The sewer system is made up of a network of local sewers that take the domestic foul and surface water to much larger trunk sewers, which in turn takes the sewage all the way to a treatment plant in East London.

Another set of sewers are the storm relief sewers, also known as interceptor sewers. These run north to south, either to the Hammersmith or Lots Road pumping stations (from where the water goes into trunk sewers or into the Thames)



The heavy rain on 12 July 2021 caused the sewers to fill up and in many places, such as Cornwall Crescent, the pressure was strong enough to blow the lids off the sewer manholes and create minor geysers. (Picture courtesy RBKC)

THAMES WATER - A PRIVATE MONOPOLY THAT ISN'T WORKING



The blue streets, plus more than 340 properties, were all flooded during the heavy downpour. (Picture from the council's report)

or directly to the Thames. However when there are high volumes of sewage water, the trunk sewers will divert some of their flows into the storm relief sewers, meaning that foul sewage ends up in the Thames.

Thames Tideway Tunnel won't help

The main problem is that many of the sewers, especially the trunk sewers, are very old, often built in the 19th century. One new, very large, sewer is being built: the Thames Tideway Tunnel. This sewer, costing £4.3 billion, is 25km long and 7m wide, and runs from Acton all the way to the Abbey Mills pumping station in Newham, from where the sewage is taken in a new tunnel to Beckton Sewage Treatment Works by London City Airport.

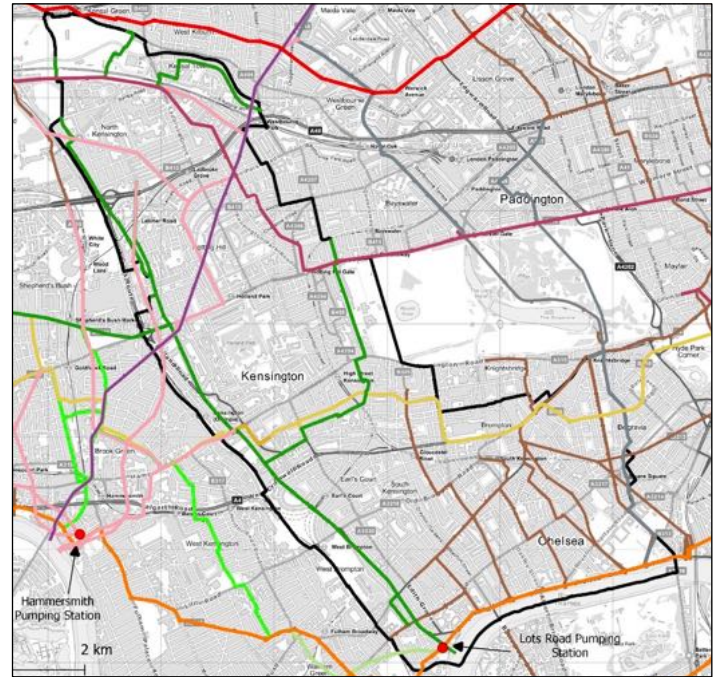
Most of the way the tunnel runs under the Thames, and it will connect to the RBKC system by the Lots Road pumping station. However, its purpose is to improve the water quality of the Thames, by collecting sewage discharges that currently goes into the river during heavy rains. It will not lessen the risk of sewers overflowing. The tunnel is due to be finished in 2025.

Counters Creek relief sewer cancelled

There was a new sewer planned and agreed after the big 2007 flooding, the big Counters Creek storm relief sewer, which would connect with the existing main sewers in both RBKC and Hammersmith & Fulham, and thus increase the sewer capacity during high volume flow events. However, in 2018 the scheme was dropped by Thames Water.

After a consultation in 2014, which had resulted in strong opposition from residents and stakeholders against the very large scheme first planned, as it would lead to major disruptions during its up to four years construction time, Thames Water narrowed it down from 200 connection points with the other sewers to only five. After having looked closer at this smaller scheme, Thames Water concluded that it simply wouldn't have enough effect to justify the cost.

The councils in both RBKC and H&F objected, but to no



RBKC is crisscrossed by trunk and storm relief sewers. Some go all the way to East London. (Picture from the council's report)

avail. Thames Water wanted instead to go down the route of FLIPs, SuDS and local sewer improvements (more about that further down).

The basement problem

During heavy rainfalls, the groundwater level increases. This can create flooding of older basements, and this risk can increase if they are near some of the many large and deeper basements that have been built under Victorian Kensington homes since the beginning of this century. The reason is that these deep basements often go down to groundwater level and can impede the natural flows of the groundwater, which leads to higher levels near the "upstream" side of those basements.

The topography problem

As a highly urbanised central London borough, with large areas of impermeable surfaces and little natural environment to provide floodwater storage, most of the stormwater will go into the combined sewer system. However, when there is intense rainfall over a short duration, the sewers and drains can quickly reach maximum capacity, causing the sewers to surcharge and stormwater to overflow via manholes onto roads, from where the water flows to lower points, following the local topography. The highest local point is Notting Hill, which slopes eastwards and then southwards towards the Thames.

There are also a high number of isolated low lying areas where water tends to pool. The west border of the borough has a particularly large amount of pooling, especially in the north around the A40.

In addition to overland flow, floodwater can also come up directly into properties through toilets, sinks and shower drains. This happens most often in basement flats, especially when water levels are pushed upwards as the sewer reaches capacity.

There are four critical drainage areas in the borough, locat-

Continues on next page

THAMES WATER - A PRIVATE MONOPOLY THAT ISN'T WORKING



The important Lots Road pumping station, from 1904, is likely to remain in an otherwise quickly changing area with new builds all around, as it was grade II listed in 2007. Other buildings on its site have already disappeared. (Picture from Google Street View)

From previous page

ed in Kensington, Holland Park, Sloane Square and North Kensington, where there is a complex interaction of surface and sewer water flooding.

FLIPs, NRVs and SuDS the only solution?

With no new sewers being planned, Thames Water and the council are going for the only solutions left: FLIPs, NRVs, SuDS and local sewer improvements.

FLIPs and NRVs

A FLIP (flooding local improvement project) is a powerful water pump that pumps a property's foul and rainwater into the main sewer in the road, even when the sewer is full, because the pressure of the FLIP is stronger than the pressure in the sewer while a non-return valve prevents backflow from the sewer.

Each FLIP costs approximately £130,000, with the main costs being surveying and installation. They are effective at protecting individual properties from flooding. However, if there are many of them along a particular sewer, there is a risk that they increase the risk of flooding in properties on the same sewer that do not have FLIPs.

Between 2010 and 2020 Thames Water installed 475 FLIPs in RBKC properties that had been flooded in the past or where in a high flood risk area.

They were initially seen as a temporary measure that would complement the planned Counters Creek storm relief sewer, but as that sewer has been cancelled, FLIPs are now a permanent measure. No FLIPs have been installed since 2020, because the money set aside for this ran out. Recently, Thames Water made £10 million available for more FLIPs, but that sum is for all of London, so it's uncertain how many of those

installations will be in RBKC. However, following the 2021 flooding, an independent review has urged Thames Water to start a longer-term FLIP installation programme.

A NRV (non-return valve) is like a FLIP installation, but without the pump: a NRV is fitted onto manhole chambers to prevent sewage from coming up through toilets and sinks, as NRVs only allow domestic wastewater to flow out to the sewer but prevents any flow the other way. There are yet relatively few properties in the borough that have installed NRVs, but as they are much cheaper than FLIPs and easier to install, it's a safe guess that they will become much more common.

SuDS

SuDS (sustainable drainage system) means first of all to use ground surface materials that allow water to seep through, such as pervious concrete and porous asphalt. But SuDS also includes green roofs, wet ponds, bioswales and other things that can store water, slow down water flow or let water seep into the ground.

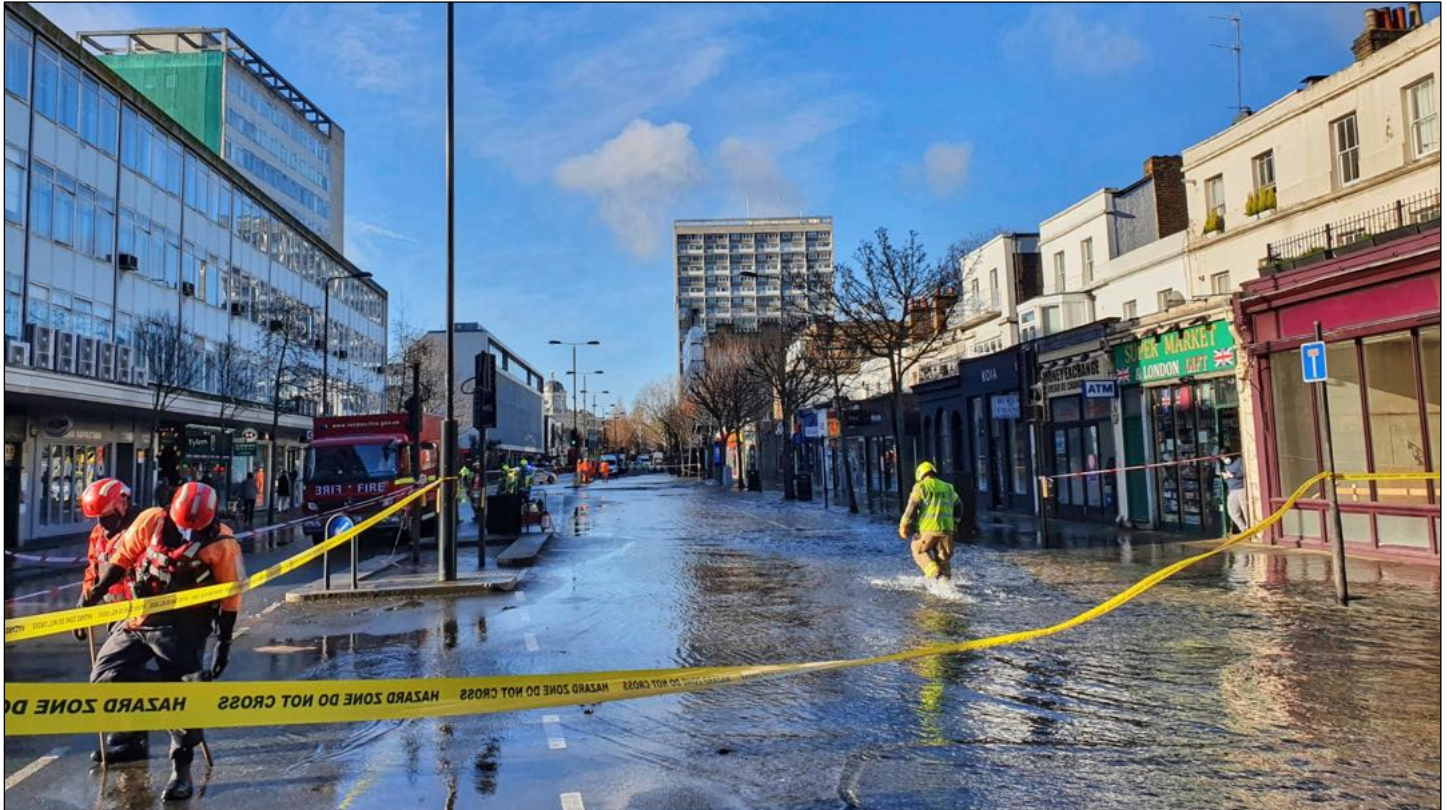
Several SuDS projects have already been implemented in the borough, such as rain gardens at the junction of Dalgarno Gardens and Barby Road, a woodland-themed area in Holland Park's children's playground with swales and attenuation ponds, and installation of porous asphalt at Arundel Gardens. The council have several more SuDS projects planned.

Local sewer improvements

While working on the later abandoned Counters Creek scheme, Thames Water improved the sewer in Queensdale Road, by installing a pumping well that draws water from the sewer upstream, so the area's drainage isn't impeded by high water levels in the trunk sewers. More such improvements may come.

THOMAS BLOMBERG

THAMES WATER - A PRIVATE MONOPOLY THAT ISN'T WORKING



On 21 January 2021, a burst water main in Notting Hill Gate quickly flooded all streets in the area. The Czech ambassador, Libor Sečka, stepped out of the embassy, took this picture and posted it on Twitter a few minutes later, for the whole world to see.

Thousands of miles of leaking pipes

Although sewage water and fresh water isn't flooding our streets every day, due to heavy rainfall and burst water mains, both types of water are constantly leaking from Thames Water's thousands of miles of pipes. The problem isn't the large truck sewers, which are often sturdy tunnels made of brick 150 years ago, but the smaller local sewage/wastewater pipes and, of course, the pressurised freshwater mains pipes.

In August 2022, the Angling Trust presented an analysis of Water UK data from 2021, which shows that English water companies on average replace 0.05% of their water and wastewater pipes per year. In most European countries the replacement speed is on average 0.5% per year, i.e. ten times higher. With that speed they will replace all their pipes in 200 years. However, with the English speed it will take 2,000 years. That wouldn't be a problem if the pipes were made of a material that lasted 2,000 years, but they aren't: most mains water and wastewater pipes currently put out down by the English water and sewage companies are made of PVC, and they last between 50 and 100 years, depending on ground conditions and other factors.

A combination of a very slow replacement and use of pipe materials with a short life span leads to an enormous loss of water through leaky pipes: in 2021-22, the water companies lost an average of 2.9 billion litres of fresh water per day, according to the industry and its financial regulator, Ofwat. Over the whole budget year it means 1.06 trillion litres, which equals more than three and a half Lake Windermers. The daily loss of 2.9 billion litres equals the amount of water in an Olympic swimming pool that is 25m wide, 2m deep and 36 miles long (the distance between Westminster and Reading),

The worst leaker was Thames Water, which, according to

the industry body Water UK, lost 217 billion litres over the year.

Add to that the many burst water mains. Most of them only consist of water seeping up to the surface, creating a constant but limited flow of water down the street. Those leaks are often not fixed for several weeks, as they aren't regarded as urgent, but all too often the burst is very visible and quickly floods several streets in the area.

Most Europeans who move to Britain have never heard of burst water mains in their home countries (except for the occasional accident when a digger has managed to make a hole in a water pipe), but once here, they quickly get used to hearing the expression "burst water main".

The leaking pipes, both freshwater and wastewater, are sometimes discovered when the water has managed to erode so much soil that road suddenly collapses and creates a sink hole, which can take several days to repair.

The leaks from wastewater pipes can also be detrimental to wildlife. In August, a sewage leak caused by faulty pipes by the River Ray near Swindon wiped out almost all fish on a three-mile length of the river. The Environment Agency sent over a fisheries team, which found more than 2,000 dead fish.

THOMAS BLOMBERG

THAMES WATER - A PRIVATE MONOPOLY THAT ISN'T WORKING

From private to public and back to private

Thames Water's history goes back to the early 17th century, when a financier and King James I set up a jointly owned company that delivered fresh water from Hertfordshire to Islington via a man-made river. In 1902, the then eight private water companies that provided London with water were bought with tax payers money and merged into a new public authority. Water and sewage then remained a truly public utility until 1989, when everything was sold to private investors again - but the money from that sale never reached the government's or the local authorities' coffers...

From 1609 to 1613, the 68km long New River was built to channel fresh water from Hertfordshire to Islington. In 1619, the company that had built the river, the New River Company, was incorporated by royal charter. It was largely owned by two men, Hugh Myddelton, a financier who took over the project after its instigator ran into financial problems, and King James I, who in 1612 paid half of the company's debts and convinced troublesome landowners to allow the project to be completed. In return, the king was given half of the shares in the company.

In 1631, King Charles I, who was unhappy about the returns, negotiated an agreement with Myddelton, that he should buy the share back for £500 plus an annual payment to the Crown of £500 in perpetuity. This became known as the Crown Clog.

Became public utility in 1902

In 1902, Parliament passed the Metropolis Water Act 1902, which stipulated that the eight private water companies that provided London with water by that time (the New River Company being the oldest) should be taken over by a new municipal body, the Metropolitan Water Board. This came into effect 1904, and the shareholders were paid £47 million

(equivalent to £5.38 billion today). The Crown Clog continued to be paid to the Crown until 1956, when the Crown gave it up for a lump sum of £8,230.

In 1973 the Water Act 1973 was passed by Parliament, which created the National Water Council for England and Wales, as well as 10 regional water authorities that were answerable to the council. One of these was the Thames Water Authority. It took over all or parts of the responsibilities of the Metropolitan Water Board and 21 other authorities and companies in the Thames estuary.

Privatisation back on the table in the 1980s

However, it eventually became obvious that the water industry was faced by ageing infrastructure and chronic under-investment, both regarding fresh water pipes and sewage treatment, but Margaret Thatcher's government, which took over in 1979, was unwilling to fund the level of investment needed, especially as it ideologically was convinced that public utilities should be managed by private companies. And as the government was convinced that private companies were inherently more efficient, it also believed that once private, the companies would be able to do all the needed investments without increasing the cost for their customers.



This is the New Gauge House (called so although it was built in 1856), situated between Hertford and Ware. This is where the New River begins, with water from the River Lea. (Picture by Jim Osley, CC BY-SA 2.0)

THAMES WATER - A PRIVATE MONOPOLY THAT ISN'T WORKING



The New River is still visible and cherished in northern London. It doesn't go under ground until it reaches the suitably named Myddelton Road in Wood Green. (Picture from Google Street View)

So the work preparing the privatisation of the water authorities began, and the Conservative Party made this a key promise in its 1987 election manifesto.

An appetising offer

Finally, in 1989, Parliament passed the Water Act 1989. This allowed the government to turn the 10 water authorities into water and sewerage companies, in order to be able to sell them. The next thing was to make those companies financially attractive for investors, so the government wrote off £7.6 billion of debts owed by the companies, provided a 'green dowry' which added £2.3 billion to their balance sheets and provided a capital allowance of £12 billion.

The total number of shares for the 10 companies was set at 2,183 million, priced at £2.40 each, and that offer was oversubscribed by a factor of 2.8, meaning that the amount of shares that prospective investors wanted to buy were almost three times larger.

A privatisation that gave no income

The sale raised £7.6 billion, but this was offset against the written-off debts, so so no money from the sale ever reached the Treasury's coffers. In fact, it can be argued, the government paid the investors some £14 billion, in the form of "green dowry" and capital allowances, to take over the companies.

So what happened to Thames Water after the sale? Well, Thames Water Utilities Ltd was listed on the stock exchange and became Thames Water plc, which started expanding abroad by buying up foreign operations, so by 1995 it was the world's third largest water company.

Foreign owned since 2001

In 2001, Thames Water plc was acquired by German utility company RWE, so it left the stock exchange and became Thames Water Utilities Ltd again. RWE continued the com-

pany's foreign expansion but neglected the British operations.

In 2006, following several years of criticism about failed leakage targets, RWE sold the British part of the company for £8 billion to Kemble Water Holdings Ltd, a consortium led by the Australian Macquarie Group, while RWE kept the overseas operations.

In 2012, some of the company's stock was acquired by the BT Pension Scheme (13%), the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (9.9%) and the China Investment Corporation (8.7%), leaving Australian Kemble Waters with 68.4% of the shares. This means that 87% of Thames Water now is foreign owned and only 13% of the dividends stay in the UK to pump up BT's pension fund.

Lots of debts, big dividends and high prices

So what about the hopes that privatising the ten water utilities would lead to more investments and lower prices for the consumers? Well, the new owners took over debt-free companies, but since 1989 they have loaded them with debt again: £48 billion, with an annual interest of £1.3 billion.

Researchers at Greenwich University have found that all those loans haven't been used to fix leaky pipes or treatment works, because that has always been paid by the consumers through ever higher prices. The water bills have increased by 40% above the rate of inflation since 1989, while the accumulated shareholder dividends have been £57 billion. Those £48 billion in loans have probably been used to buy companies abroad, which the water companies like to do.

Privatised water and sewage is very much an English thing now. Welsh Water became a not-for-profit organisation in 2001 and the Scottish water utilities remained public utilities, which in 2002 merged into publicly owned Scottish Water.

THOMAS BLOMBERG

It's time to revisit two old Kensington friends

This autumn, two old friends have opened their doors again after having undergone some serious restoration: Leighton House on the edge of Holland Park, and the Royal Society of Sculptors' Dora House in South Kensington.

Leighton House, built for the painter and sculptor Frederick Leighton in the 1860's and then expanded regularly until 1895, has undergone an £8million refurbishment. Dora House is half-way through a major £6.5million rescue operation which has included rebuilding a chimney stack threatening to fall on unwary passers-by.

The architect was George Aitchison and the first construction phase was 1865-1866, followed by four subsequent additions between 1869 and 1895. One of these was the famous Arab Hall. While respecting the integrity of Leighton's house, architects BDP have extended it into a former storage area at the rear, with a new entrance in the annex that leads into a lovely glass-walled café which shows off the garden behind the house.

Below, a new basement gallery provides space for a revolving exhibition of selections from the 700 drawings left by Leighton, while another gallery currently features work by Leighton's contemporaries in the Holland Park Circle. The basement, ground floor and winter studio on the first floor are linked by a new spiral staircase and a lift, which enables step-free access throughout the whole house.

Dora House, originally a pair of small Georgian houses, was remodelled in 1885 by William Flockhart for Elliott & Fry's Photographic Studio, with a distinctive new brick front, steep Flemish style gables and tall leaded windows. However, a recent survey resulted in a list of 117 defects, with the leaning chimney and west gable being most at risk. The project was divided into two phases: phase 1, now completed, has dealt with the external problems and phase 2 will tackle internal renovations and create a new exhibition space.

Contractors PAYE and conservation architects Purcell called on specialist craftsmen for the external problems: new



You may have visited Leighton House in the past, but the £8 million refurbishment has made it into a new fantastic experience. (Picture from Google Street View)



For Dora House, specialist craftsmen have supplied new handmade bricks, restored and replaced damaged stonework, refurbished the decorative ironwork and made an exact replica of the distinctive front door. (Picture by Alison Sutherland)

bricks were handmade, cracked and damaged stonework was restored and replaced, decorative ironwork was refurbished, and expert joiners made an exact replacement of the distinctive front door.

Both houses are now looking forward to a new lease of life and welcoming visitors, new and old, from all quarters.

ALISON SUTHERLAND



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 700 members and some 40 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 £20 per year.

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

How to reach us:

Website: www.kensingtonsociety.org

Surface mail: The Kensington Society, 95 Highlever Road, London W10 6PW

Email to our chairman, Amanda Frame:
amandaframe@outlook.com

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