

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

JUNE NEWSLETTER 2004

In the last few months several new projects have been completed and, apart from 195/199 Knightsbridge (The Knightsbridge) and the Imperial College Sports Hall, there are no major projects under construction, though work is well under way on the demolition of the old Boots/Post Office building in Lancelot Place. As will be seen from these notes, there are many new and important schemes in the planning stage and the respite will not last for long. The development of The Knightsbridge continues to disrupt traffic with frequent deliveries of heavy materials and equipment which is off-loaded from the main road.

THE ROYAL PARKS

In January the Royal Parks circulated a draft "Events Strategy". Though confirming their intention to continue with commercial events in order to maintain current levels of income, they accepted that Hyde Park had been over-used and recognised that some events had been intrusive, disturbing the tranquillity of the Park and causing excessive wear and tear, especially to the Parade Ground area. This is good news. We and other amenity societies must ensure that the Royal Parks implement this strategy.

In commenting on the draft we drew attention to the apparent lack of control exercised by the promoters, and added that in future the Royal Parks' Agency should take effective measures to ensure that the conditions of any licence, especially in respect of noise, should be enforced. We also made the point that Westminster City Council is saddled with the job of clearing the litter and cleansing the

streets after these events, and that in future these costs should be met by the promoters rather than local residents through their Council Tax.

Work continues on the Princess Diana Memorial water feature. Completion is expected in July when it will be opened by the Queen. It has been designed to provide an attractive area for quiet enjoyment by visitors to the Park. We hope that it will be as successful as the Princess Diana children's playground in the north west corner of Kensington Gardens.

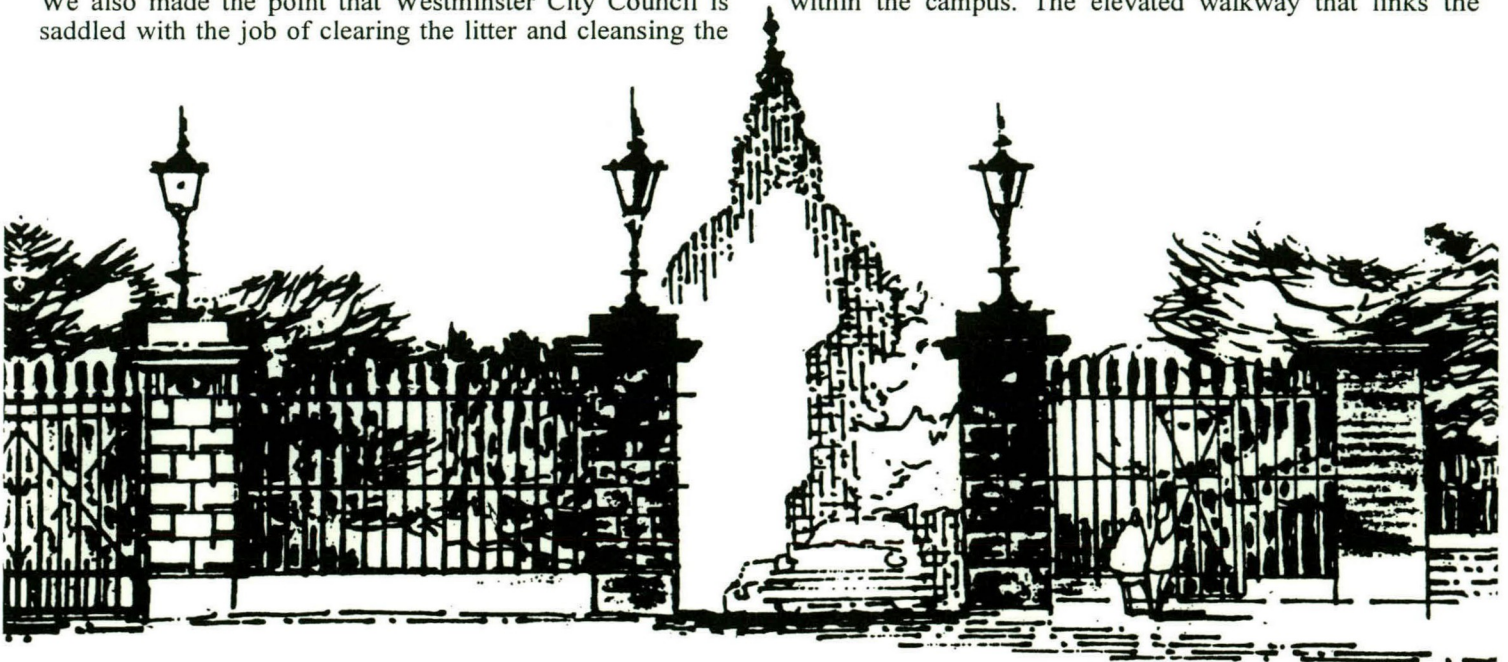
CITY OF WESTMINSTER

The Barracks

Originally refurbishment of the stable block was scheduled to take fifteen months, during which period South Carriage Drive would have been closed for three months (April to June) to provide space for the additional stabling required during the ceremonial season. The effect of this closure was considered to be so serious that the authorities were asked to think again and it is now hoped to complete the project in nine months, starting in July with completion at the end of March 2005, before the start of next year's ceremonial season.

Imperial College

April was an important month for the College - the Tanaka Business School on Exhibition Road was occupied, as was the new Faculty Building, which is tucked away within the campus. The elevated walkway that links the



President: Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge, *Vice-President:* Lady Grade –
Chairman: Jonathan Charkham CBE, *Vice Chairman:* A M J Wright, CMG, FRICS, RIBA
Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon Treasurer:* Christine Gilbertson

various faculty buildings has been greatly improved by the completion of the College's new main entrance, through the Tanaka Building, and the raised level of Dalby Court with the Faculty Building as a backdrop.

Work commenced on the Sports Centre in Princes Gardens to provide extra facilities, upgrade existing ones and provide flats above for academic staff.

The official opening of the Tanaka building by the Queen, is due to take place on 24th June.

On May 25th some seventy members and residents attended a presentation of the preliminary proposals for the redevelopment of the Halls of Residence in Princes Gardens. As mentioned in last year's Report, architects have been appointed to prepare a master plan for Princes Gardens, reinstating it to its original form with the height of the new buildings matching that of the original Victorian buildings. A further presentation will be arranged in a few weeks time when the scheme will have been further developed. The College anticipates submitting a planning application some time in July. The Association together with local residents will be studying the submitted plans closely and commenting in detail to the Council.

Royal Geographical Society

The extension along Exhibition Road has been completed. There is not much to see after an eighteen month long building contract, but the bulk of the building is below ground, much of it beneath the Society's garden. It provides air-conditioned storage space for their historical archives and artefacts, many of them having a direct connection with Victorian expeditions. The glass enclosed pavilion will be used for exhibitions and the display of items selected from the archives, which total over half a million maps, photographs, books and manuscripts.

Royal College of Art

Throughout 2003 and the early part of this year, opposition to the Ellipse extension has grown as it was argued that the building which would replace the single storey Gulbenkian wing would detract from the setting of the Royal Albert Hall and harm the conservation area. There has been a call for a public enquiry into the suitability of the design.

Plans for this controversial building were given conditional approval by Westminster City Council in February, subject to a direction from the Government Office for London that full approval was not to be granted without the specific authority of the First Secretary of State. At the end of May we learnt that the Minister had "called in" the application – a decision that will lead to the public enquiry sought by those who oppose the scheme.

It is the view of the Association's Planning and Environment Committee that the replacement of the Gulbenkian wing by a taller building to balance Albert Hall Mansions to the east, would improve rather than harm the setting of the Royal Albert Hall, though it did have reservations about some aspects of the design.

Park House, 24 Rutland Gate

Last in use by the Accademia Italiana, from 1989 to 1994, this building had become increasingly dilapidated until work started in 2002 on its refurbishment and conversion back to a single family dwelling. This work has now been completed. For many years the Association has been pressing for the listing of this fine building. With new information provided by the Survey of London this persistence has been rewarded and it has now been listed Grade II.

There are welcome signs that work has finally commenced on its neighbour, 26 Rutland Gate, at one time home to the famous Mitford family. Another run-down

building in great need of attention, plans were approved last year for its conversion to three maisonnettes.

Ennismore Arms

In spite of opposition to change of use, the Council accepted the claim that the building could no longer be operated profitably as a public house and gave permission for its demolition and replacement by a single family dwelling. Plans for the house have now been approved; the large basement storage area will be incorporated into the house as a family room, with ground and two floors above.

Trevor Square Depository

Conversion of the Depository to residential use by a middle eastern developer has been completed and the flats are ready for occupation. Harrods retains use of the basements for delivery purposes.

10 Lancelot Place and 72-74 Brompton Road

The ugly 1950s building on this site, once occupied by the Post Office and Boots, amongst others, has been demolished. We understand that the new owners, who acquired it from the Prudential, will implement the scheme for which planning approval was granted in 1999. This provided for 50 flats on the Lancelot Place frontage and shops and offices on the corner along Brompton Road. Parking for 70 cars will be provided with access from Raphael Street.

60 Brompton Road, Silver City House

Plans for redevelopment of this site with shops, 32 flats and basement parking have been approved by Westminster City Council. This is the site that the Prudential was unable to acquire as part of their comprehensive development scheme. For reasons connected with the original development of this area, the building will be serviced from Lancelot Place via a right of way that crosses the site of 10 Lancelot Place, referred to above.

Bowater House

Plans are in hand for the demolition of Bowater House and redevelopment of the site with flats. Bowater House was built in 1956-58 and, on the insistence of London County Council, had to incorporate a new double carriageway entrance to Hyde Park. Though finished to a high standard with first class materials, it has never sat comfortably between its late Victorian neighbours. The redevelopment plans are still at an early stage and a very interesting layout plan is emerging. The access to Hyde Park through Edinburgh Gate would remain, but it would be pedestrianised and left open to the sky. A new road – no longer a dual carriageway – linking Knightsbridge and South Carriage Drive would be provided at the west end of the site. The new development would consist of three blocks of flats, one to the east of the Edinburgh Gate open space and two to the west. The height of these blocks has not yet been decided, but some 130 flats would be provided, with basement parking and other facilities; shops and cafés would surround the open space.

The scheme is still in its early stages and plans have not yet been submitted for planning approval. At the time of writing we are in the process of arranging for a presentation to members living in the surrounding area.

Changes at the Council

Cllr. Cathy Longworth, one of our Knightsbridge & Belgravia Ward councillors is the new Lord Mayor.

The former Planning and Transportation Department has been abolished and replaced by the Planning and City Development Department; Building Control and Transportation functions have been transferred to the Environment and Leisure Department whilst Parking has gone to Customer Services. In May members of the Association's Planning and Environment Committee had a

useful meeting with the new Director of Planning and City Development and members of his staff.

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Natural History Museum

Plans for the Darwin Centre Phase Two were approved by the Royal Borough in May. Provided funds are forthcoming building work should start in 2006 for completion in 2008.

Enclosed on three sides by existing museum buildings, only the west front, overlooking Queen's Gate, will be visible. Well set back from the road it will be nine storeys high, faced with translucent glass enclosing a pod which will contain, and protect, the very delicate insect and plant collections. This new crystal palace will provide a link between the original Waterhouse building and the more recent Darwin Centre Phase One.

Victoria & Albert Museum

The original planning approval for the Spiral extension, was granted in 1998, but lack of funds has prevented further progress. In March of this year an application was submitted for renewal of that permission, which was about to expire. In spite of objections from the four local amenity societies, who drew attention to many aspects of the design which did not meet the requirements of the revised (2002) UDP, the application was approved. The Museum is now seeking funding.

Earlier in the year it was announced that Kim Wilkie Associates had been selected from the shortlist to work on redesigning the central courtyard, previously known as the Pirelli Garden. It is hoped that the new garden will open in the summer of 2005. New galleries for sculpture and architecture will open in the autumn.

Harrods

Harrods' appeal in connection with the conversion of the Georgian Restaurant to banqueting use and the opening up of the Food Halls for evening functions, extending to 12.30am and, in some cases, to 1.30am, opened in February for three days, continued in April for another three and was concluded in May. We await the result. The Association was amongst the objectors on the grounds of late night noise and traffic disturbance. One of our committee members spoke at the February hearing.

32-44 Hans Crescent

Located on the corner of Hans Crescent and Basil Street, the building is nearing completion and the developers have applied for change of use from retail to restaurant in respect of the shops on the Basil Street frontage. The Association has objected on the grounds that such use in a predominately residential area would adversely affect its character and amenity as a result of late night noise and a material increase in traffic and parking – much the same as the reasons for objecting to Harrods proposals for the Georgian Restaurant, mentioned earlier.

South Kensington Station

Proposals for the redevelopment of South Kensington Station were described in last year's Annual Report and included a very unpopular eleven storey tower.

When submitted to Kensington and Chelsea for planning approval last year, they were severely criticised by local amenity societies and residents. Subsequently an "action group" was formed that sought major changes, including elimination of the office tower and the decking over of the platforms, a general reduction in density and retention of many of the station's Victorian features, including the arcade.

Last December the developers withdrew the application and we understand they are working on an amended scheme.

Meanwhile, led by the Brompton Association, with the support of other amenity societies, a series of concept sketches have been prepared to show how the station could be adapted to cope with increased usage and meet the needs of the disabled, while at the same time preserving the general character of the station, including the historic arcade. It is hoped that as a result of this initiative those concerned with the redevelopment will have second thoughts and produce a scheme more in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood.

Exhibition Road Project

This is a collaboration between the Royal Borough, the Greater London Assembly and Westminster City Council which aims to "create one of the finest streetscapes in London". Architect Sir Jeremy Dixon has been selected to head the design team for this project and a detailed brief is now being prepared. As originally envisaged the project, covering Exhibition Road and the pedestrian tunnel, stops at Cromwell Road. It has been suggested that as part of the South Kensington Station development it should be extended to include Exhibition Road south of Cromwell Road and the tunnel up to its termination at the station.

Change at the Royal Borough

Cllr. Barry Phelps, a former chairman of the Planning and Conservation Committee has been elected to serve as Mayor.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE INITIATIVE

Transport for London was making good progress on the split level pavement between 106 and 130 Brompton Road (east of Montpelier Street), until problems arose with some of the underground services. It is these services that make it impossible to plant trees along this section of road. However, the narrowing of the junction with Montpelier Street and associated improvements have been completed, and work has recommenced on the split level pavement.

The next stage of the Initiative is to improve the Brompton Road / Knightsbridge / Sloane Street junction, with the inclusion of some form of public art on one of the central islands, but this will have to await the Bowater House redevelopment.

Meanwhile, associated with The Knightsbridge flats development, the Council proposes to resurface the Knightsbridge Green pedestrian alley with natural York stone in place of the drab, uneven asphalt. At the same time the rest of Raphael Street, up to Lancelot Place, will be paved with matching granite setts.

THE GREATER LONDON PLAN

The final version of the Mayor's Plan was issued in February. As a result of the Examination in Public of the original draft, some changes have been made; the Plan now shows greater respect for the protection of the built environment and local character and there has been a softening in its support for high buildings, recognising that sites must be "acceptable in terms of design and impact on their surroundings".

It suggests that local UDPs should identify areas that could be sensitive to high buildings. Affordable housing now includes an element of 30% for the housing of those with incomes up to £40,000 pa (index linked). The proposal in the original draft that the Mayor should seek legislation to enable him to be a party to certain Section 106 Agreements has been deleted.

CONSULTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Government is putting pressure on local planning authorities to reduce the time taken in processing planning applications and at the same time seeking to encourage more public interest in the planning process. Arising from the very short time available to the Association to arrange for a

presentation of Darwin Centre Phase Two plans at the Natural History Museum, we took the matter up with the Royal Borough.

They were unable to extend the three weeks allowed for receipt of comments. We have now written to both Councils asking them to encourage applicants for major schemes to arrange public presentations before submission for planning approval.

TRAFFIC MATTERS

Congestion Charging

Details of the Mayor's proposal to extend the congestion charging zone further west to include most of Westminster, were published in February and circulated to all residents, seeking their comments by 23rd April. In a letter to Transport for London, who are responsible for implementation of congestion charging, we queried some of their assumptions in the presentation paper and expressed the view that the reasons for the proposed extension had not been sufficiently thought out. There has been no response to date.

A comprehensive report is being prepared for consideration after the mayoral election on June 10th. The newly elected Mayor will then decide whether or not to proceed. If he or she does decide to go ahead, there will be a further opportunity to comment on the detailed scheme proposals at a later stage.

Montpelier Square/Trevor Square Traffic Barriers

Following the decision at the end of last year to remove the traffic barriers, this has now been done though the islands, as we requested, remain. 'Entry treatments', in fact strips of granite setts, have been installed at road junctions, but without road narrowing and other markers (such as TfL has done at the Brompton Road / Montpelier Street junction) these are proving to be ineffectual. The Council has issued an Order prohibiting goods vehicles over 7.5 tonnes in weight and buses from using the routes previously controlled by the barriers. Notices to this effect have been erected at entry points.

Changes to Exhibition Road Junctions

Westminster City Council proposes to alter the Prince Consort Road / Exhibition junction to allow buses to make a right turn. In commenting on the proposal we suggested that the plan should be amended to allow cars also to make the right turn, thus reducing the number of u-turns at the top of Exhibition Road. An unheralded change was made recently allowing vehicles from Hyde Park to make a right turn into Kensington Gore – also reducing the number of u-turns in Exhibition Road.

Brompton Road / Hans Crescent Junction

No decision has yet been made as to whether Hans Crescent should re-open to traffic or remain permanently closed. This is mainly due to delays to works on the entrance to the underground station. TfL has now taken over responsibility for Brompton Road and the eventual decision will be theirs.

STREET LIGHTING

All the problems seem to be on the Westminster side of the border. We send a monthly report to the Council on all lights which are damaged, not working or where the lamp has been removed. The track record is not good. However, at last there are signs that things may be improving. The Council has made changes in its own organisation and there has been a change of contractor. Most important of all, more money appears to be available this year – so there will be less excuse for failure.

LAW AND ORDER

The incidence of reported crime in the area has shown a marked decrease with the exception of theft from cars. The committee is supporting a further campaign to encourage

drivers not to leave any items of value in their cars and certainly not have any "on show". We now have two local beat officers, PC Lee Rogerson (Chelsea) and PC John Roberts (Belgravia). Neighbourhood Watch is now active, to varying degrees, throughout Knightsbridge. An important function of the Watch is to provide up-to-date information at a local level. We hope to set up a Community Noticeboard to help with this. **We would also welcome further organisers** for individual buildings, blocks of flats and / or streets / local areas. For further details please contact your local Crime Prevention officer – **PC Dave Pullan (Belgravia): 020 7321 6814;**

PC Jeremy Laxton (Chelsea): 020 8246 0317.

EVENTS

Middle Temple Dinner

In May members and their guests enjoyed a Black Tie evening in the beautiful setting of Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court. Robert Seabrook QC (a former chairman of the Bar Council) gave an entertaining talk on its history and background.

DIARY DATES

Clarence House – Tour and Coffee –

Wednesday 6th October

We have been fortunate to have been allocated a block of tickets for a tour of Clarence House on 6th October. The morning will begin around 9.15am with coffee and croissants at the Reform Club, followed by two tours of Clarence House (11 and 11.15am). Tickets will cost £20.00. We anticipate the limited spaces for this event going very quickly, so **if you are interested in joining us, **please write to: Maria D'Amario, Social Events, The Knightsbridge Association (see address below), or ring Maria D'Amario, 7589 1183.**

Dinner in the Wine Cellars of Berry Brothers & Rudd

We have an opportunity to hold a gourmet Wine Dinner (with possible informal tutoring) in the historic Napoleon Cellar of Berry Bros & Rudd (St. James's). This provides an unmissable chance to sample fine wines from Berry Bros famous cellar. The cost would be in the region of £100 per person. **If this is something you would be interested in attending, please write to Maria D'Amario, Social Events, at the Knightsbridge Association, or ring her on 020 7589 1183.**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 7th December 2004

In the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music. Reception and refreshments at 6pm followed by the meeting at 6.45.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2004 – Please make sure that you have renewed your subscription or, if paying by Standing Order, that it is up-to-date:

Single	£ 10.00
Couples/families	£ 15.00
Corporate	£ 40.00
Life Membership:	
Single	£100.00
Couple	£150.00

NB If you have changed to Life Membership, please make sure to cancel your Standing Order if applicable.

NEW MEMBERS – Your help in introducing new members would be very much appreciated. Please pass names to Carol Seymour-Newton, tel: **020 7823 9103.**

The Knightsbridge Association

6 Montpelier Street, London SW7 1AE.

Tel: 020 7823 9103 Fax: 020 7581 3130

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