

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEW NEWSLETTER

March 2005

Dear Member,

With so much now happening around Knightsbridge, your Executive Committee and I decided we should launch a quarterly Newsletter, to help you keep up-to-date with local developments and activities that may affect you personally. We'll aim to keep the Newsletters brief, so they will focus on the most important matters in the pipeline. The reality is that month-in, month-out, Michael Wright and the KA Planning and Environment Committee consider countless planning applications. Carol Seymour-Newton attends, often accompanied by Michael, a host of Council and other meetings.

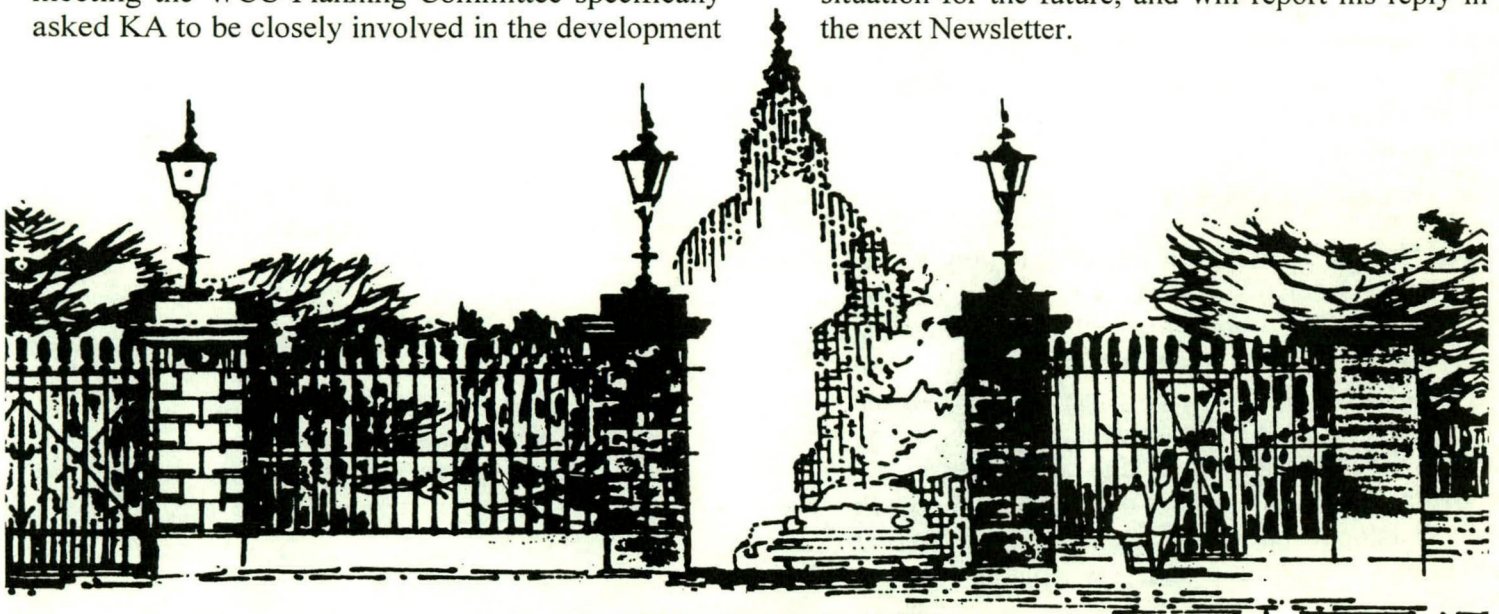
A brief Newsletter cannot begin to do justice to all this essential work. But during the year it should be possible to cover most of what is happening.

Imperial College Development

Westminster City Council gave conditional approval to the Imperial College plans to rebuild its Princes Gardens halls of residence, at a meeting on January 20th attended by many KA members. At this meeting the WCC Planning Committee specifically asked KA to be closely involved in the development

of a '106 Agreement' – a legal agreement between Imperial and WCC which will define the actions the College must take for the benefit of the local community. Together with our planning advisor, the KA sub-committee which has been working on Imperial's plans, under the chairmanship of Edward Davies-Gilbert, is now considering this section 106 Agreement with the Council. The 106 Agreement will be the crucial means of determining that – as far as possible – the amenities and indeed the lives of the nearby residents are properly protected and, hopefully, in some ways enhanced.

Many KA members, though, feel WCC's planning procedures are far from fair. The developers (in this case Imperial) were able to present their proposals personally to the Planning Committee, while the objectors had no such opportunity. This is Westminster's normal procedure, but most other councils allow both sides to present their own cases – the Government's recommended practice. I have written to the Leader of WCC, Simon Milton, asking him to review this situation for the future, and will report his reply in the next Newsletter.



President: Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Vice-Presidents: Lady Grade, Jonathan Charkham CBE

Chairman: Winston Fletcher, *Vice Chairman:* Michael Wright, CMG, FRICS, Edward Davies-Gilbert

Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, *Hon Treasurer:* Christine Gilbertson

Bowater House

For many months now the Bowater House landlords have been progressing a redevelopment scheme, to change the building from offices to residential accommodation and retail premises. Architects' plans have been produced, and considered by KA, and been studied at residents' meetings, and changed, and then reconsidered - while simultaneously the landlords have been negotiating to sell the entire site. If, as looks likely, the sale goes through, the new owners will almost certainly change everything yet again - so it will be back to the drawing board.

Exhibition Road Project

Enthusiastically backed by Ken Livingstone and the GLA, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (together with WCC) is exploring plans to improve pedestrian access from South Kensington Station up Exhibition Road, which serves so many cultural institutions, while at the same time maintaining the flow of traffic on this arterial route. As long as this is done sensibly and sensitively, we are not averse to the idea - much the contrary. But various plans have been mooted, some of which looked downright daft to us. As a result a letter went to the Leader of the RBKC Council, and he has replied promising KA "will be fully consulted" as the plans get closer to finalisation. Good news, which we much welcome.

Normandie Hotel

Preliminary proposals for the redevelopment of the Normandie Hotel site, with a 156 bedroom hotel, were discussed at our most recent Planning & Environment Committee meeting. The existing building, which only covers part of the site, is not listed, but is in a Conservation Area, and we will have to decide whether to object to its demolition. The KA is not hostile to modern architecture. We simply believe, as do all good architects and planners, that new buildings must be sympathetic to their environment and not clash with existing buildings nearby.

Miscellany

South Kensington** - thanks largely to the Brompton Association, South Kensington station has now been listed, and this will help ensure that any new redevelopment plans are more suitable than the last ones....Hyde Park** - closed because of the building work at Knightsbridge Barracks, Hyde Park's South Carriageway is due to re-open at the end of June. To make matters worse, when the work on the flats opposite the Barracks, which at present blocks one west-bound lane, is completed (end

March) the Council will start re-instating the highway and pavements, necessitating continued closure of this lane for a further ten weeks!....The Princess Diana memorial is due to reopen on May 1, extensively returfed and with improved drainage....***Barriers** - following the legal action taken by the Montpelier and Trevor Squares Association, WCC must reconsider the barrier scheme there, and they have assured us they will be consulting widely during coming months....***Knightsbridge Green** is due for improvement, and KA is keen for the passageway to be properly repaved....***Cleansing and Lighting** - we continue to press local authorities to improve street cleaning and lighting, and would be grateful for members' reports of any failings on these counts....***Law & Order** - crime in the locality remains low, happily, but we have heard of a door-to-door Conman claiming to be from KA asking for inflated membership subscriptions in cash: be warned, and warn your friends, KA never, repeat never asks for membership subscriptions to be paid in cash.

Social Events

Maria D'Amario is sadly leaving us to return to the United States, but she will be departing on a high note, when we hold our dinner at the Royal Institution on May 25, at which the RI Director, Baroness Susan Greenfield CBE, will address us. We are also planning special members' events at Bonhams and the V&A in the autumn. Details of all of these will follow. The AGM will be at the Royal College of Music on December 12th.

Finally, I greatly hope you have found this Newsletter interesting and worthwhile, but it is not intended to be a one-way communication. If you feel there are any issues the Knightsbridge Association should be tackling please let either Carol Seymour- Newton or me know - and we promise to get back to you swiftly.

With best wishes - and thanks for reading.



Winston Fletcher

The Knightsbridge Association
6 Montpelier Street
London SW7 1EZ
Tel: 020 7823 9103

Registered with the Civic Trust