

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

March 2010

Dear Member,

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find a separate letter asking you to help meet the costs of an appeal we are making against a recent decision taken by the RBKC licensing committee regarding the opening hours of a new Mamounia restaurant on Brompton Road (see also below). The enclosed letter is self-explanatory, I hope, and so I won't repeat its contents here. But I feel it worth making two additional points.

First, we realise this issue affects those members who live close to the Mamounia far more directly than those who live further away; nonetheless we believe all Knightsbridge residents will be affected detrimentally if the Brompton Road is allowed to become a late-night destination, which is why the letter is being sent to you all, wherever you live. Second, please do not worry that this appeal means the Association is in any financial difficulty. Despite these tough times, our finances remain extremely healthy, as our audited accounts prove. But we have made similar special appeals in the past, to deal with particular individual problems – and one of the reasons the Association's finances have always been sound is because our members have generously supported them.

Planning and Conservation

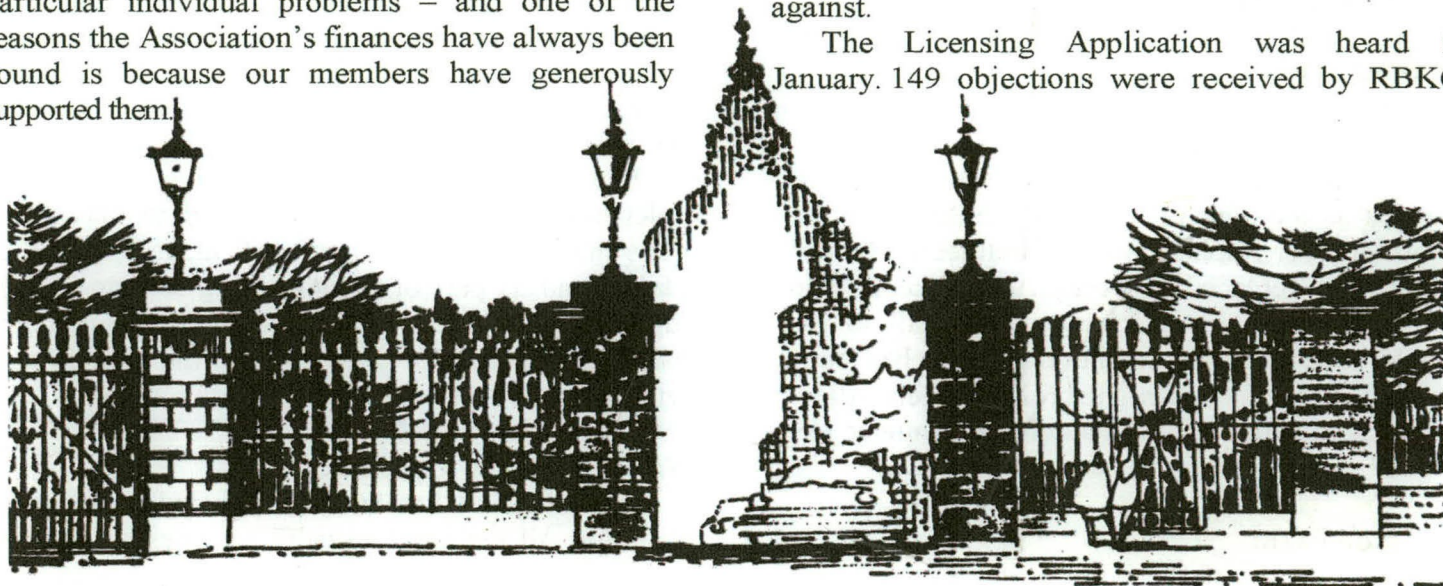
Mamounia, 136 Brompton Road

Following the departure of Taro, the Japanese restaurant, early in 2009, the new owners submitted Planning and Licensing applications to open a branch of the Mamounia Lounge, a Lebanese bar cum restaurant cum entertainment venue, whose existing premises in Mayfair attract a mixed clientele and open into the early hours of the morning.

The application for Brompton Road asked for opening hours to 5am, seven days a week. Local residents were horrified. This was totally out of character in our neighbourhood; it would generate noise and disturbance in residential streets, revving sports cars, doors banging and chauffeurs sitting for long periods with engines running.

In December KA and many local residents objected to the Planning Application. The RBKC Planning Committee granted planning permission but imposed a midnight closing time, which the Mamounia owners have said they will appeal against.

The Licensing Application was heard in January. 149 objections were received by RBKC



President: The Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Winston Fletcher CBE, Vice-Chairman: Edward Davies-Gilbert

Hon. Secretary: Carol Seymour-Newton, Hon. Treasurer: Phyllis Lusher.

and over 30 objectors attended the hearing. Despite this overwhelming opposition, the RBKC Licensing Committee granted opening hours to 00.30 Mon-Thursday and 01.30 at weekends. This is in direct contradiction of RBKC's own Statement of Licensing Policy, which says "this Licensing Authority will not, generally, grant licences with a terminal hour beyond midnight when its discretion has been triggered by the receipt of relevant representations". We have therefore decided to appeal against the RBKC decision, hence the letter herewith.

158-166 Brompton Road & 35 Cheval Place:

A second planning application was submitted to RBKC towards the end of last year to increase the size of this building. The KA and others objected and it was withdrawn. Since then a further application to increase the size has been submitted to which we have again objected. Meanwhile we continue to try to sort out access problems which may arise during construction and to mitigate the upheaval which will be caused to local residents in the narrow streets to the rear of the building.

55-91 Knightsbridge:

Following the public exhibition in the run up to Christmas, plans to demolish and rebuild behind the retained Knightsbridge frontage have moved on. A further public exhibition to view the updated proposals will be held at St. Paul's Church Hall, 77-79 Kinnerton Street on Thursday 25 and Friday 26 February between 1pm and 7pm, and a planning application will shortly be submitted to WCC.

63-77 Brompton Road:

Plans to demolish and rebuild behind the retained Brompton Road frontage are still progressing. A planning application is likely to be submitted to RBKC shortly.

Knightsbridge Palace Hotel:

Excavation is well under way. Plans have been amended as the developers were unable to acquire the bridge over Raphael Street. Architects Michael Squire have replaced the original architects, and have made some minor changes of detail to the exterior. The entrance to the restaurant has been relocated further up Knightsbridge Green Alley; underground parking for the hotel will be under 199 Knightsbridge.

One Hyde Park:

The envelope of the building is complete and fitting out is taking place. See Transport and Environment for comments on traffic etc.

Imperial College, Princes Gardens:

Mayor Boris Johnson visited the College campus in January to open officially the redeveloped halls of residence in Princes Gardens, marking the culmination of a seven-year project.

South East Quadrant:

The new Foster designed proposals for the South East Quadrant, which included the demolition of the Black Tower, redesign of the Exhibition Road entrance and a new building to replace the Sixties building on the corner of Exhibition Road and Imperial College Road, went to WCC's planning committee in December for a 'steer'. The committee agreed with several of the points the KA had made, mainly that it should be set back from the boundary as were the listed Royal College of Music and, indeed, the Business School, which is set back behind the pillars. We don't yet know what further plans the College may have.

Hyde Park Senior Playground:

Knightsbridge Association's proposal for London's first 'Pensioners' Playground' has been given the go-ahead and will open at the end of March. Located in the Pavilion Tennis and Bowls Centre, at the top of Exhibition Road, in Hyde Park, the equipment will be free to use and we hope this new facility will encourage older people to socialise and have fun together. The project has been funded under the WCC Ward Budget Scheme with the backing of The Royal Parks. KA put forward the idea for this playground as in the UK there are now more pensioners than children but few facilities specifically for them in our parks.

News of the approval for this exciting project was picked up immediately not only in the UK but by the international press and was beamed to hundreds of newspapers worldwide. Radio stations called for live interviews and we have had emails from all over the world asking for advice on how to set up similar playgrounds.

People need to stay active, maintain independence and are never too old to play. We hope that our local residents will make use of the playground as part of their walking routine in the idyllic location of the park. Although the equipment has been selected for older people, the playground will be open to all adults, no bus pass required!

Natural History Museum:

The Museum has at last produced a Grounds Strategy. All the local amenity societies have been pushing for this, since the current system of ad hoc applications for use of the East lawn as a kind of rolling road show, with so called temporary

structures occupying the lawn almost continuously is detrimental to the landscape and the setting of the Grade I listed Waterhouse building. Many of the 'events' have no conceivable connection to the ethos of the Museum, but are purely commercial. First study of the Strategy if anything gives greater cause for concern.

Hans Road/Basil Street junction:

The majority of residents consulted on four options for the treatment of this junction, went for option 1 – which presented the least change. RBKC are committed to commence work in November 2010, completion in April 2011.

31 Brompton Square:

The developer having experienced 'financial' problems, the house now appears to be owned by Barclays Bank who will no doubt be seeking a buyer. So let's hope things move on.

Consultations on Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)

The KA has continued to make its contribution to the consultations on both WCC and RBKC LDFs.

Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens:

Events May onwards

May-Sept: Speaker's Corner programme: a series of events, exhibitions etc. to celebrate this unique place in British history.

15 May: Moonwalk – overnight walking marathon starting and finishing in Hyde Park

19 -14 June: Antique fair in marquee.

Transport and Environment

Double yellow lines

WCC launched a consultation in late January on proposals for double yellow lines around the Knightsbridge area as part of its Ward Funds initiative. These are focused on tackling places where legally parked vehicles can currently block access e.g. on street corners where there are dipped pavements for disabled people, where roads are too narrow to allow through-traffic to pass; and at the entrance to 'driveways'. We had asked WCC to hold a separate, informal consultation in Ennismore Garden Mews, which, partly as expected, indicated opposition to such a scheme there. The wider formal consultation, which included notices on lamp posts in relevant streets, closed on 19 February with strong support for the scheme from many residents. WCC will take account of all

views submitted. We hope the scheme will be implemented by end March 2010.

Edinburgh Gate

We are closely involved in discussions about the re-opening of Edinburgh Gate in the autumn. There are several interlinked issues including: congestion in Knightsbridge eastbound; turns north from Knightsbridge westbound perhaps reducing traffic capacity near the bus stop outside Park Mansions; and rat-running to/from the south west through the Montpeliers and/or Trevors and elsewhere. We are pressing for: no southbound right turn from Edinburgh Gate (as before), not least because it would exacerbate congestion in Knightsbridge; and controls on the eastbound turn north. The removal of the western extension of the congestion charging zone, perhaps to be announced in May after a General Election, would add up to 20 per cent more congestion in our area inevitably exacerbating local problems.

Law and Order

Squatters

Serial squatters continue to target long term multi-million pound unoccupied homes. If they spot a For Sale or To Rent sign they have been known to ask to view the property through the agent and surreptitiously open a window so they can return later and take it over. Legal action is then necessary to remove them which is a long and costly process. Owners take care and squat-proof your home!

Robbery

Just before Christmas a lady had her handbag stolen. She went to get out of her car at a hotel and as she opened the driver's door, a nicely dressed man said to her "you just dropped some money" and she heard something fall. As she went to look for it he went to the passenger door and took her handbag.

A robbery occurred right outside Chelsea Police Station, three men jumped out of a car and stole jewellery from a lone female then drove off. Lots of high visibility patrols and covert operations followed but as yet no arrests have been made so ladies beware!

Illegal number plates

Resulting from the summer operations targeting illegal number plates and insurance offences, a local male resident was arrested for a twenty thousand pound fraud and is currently awaiting trial.

Safer Neighbourhoods

In order to raise the profile of Safer Neighbourhoods the Knightsbridge and Belgravia Team has decided to visit all residents. If no one is home a leaflet will be left for the owner with contact details and our ward panel priorities. Street briefings in all areas have been arranged. To receive local crime alerts within your area and updates relating to local events, crime trends and policing activity sign on to www.communitysafe.gov.uk

The biggest challenge is still to get people not to leave valuables or shopping bags on show in their cars. The police distribute STOP cards to reduce vehicle crime in locations where theft from motor vehicles has been a problem. These cards placed inside the windscreen remind drivers not to leave anything on show in their cars and also let potential thieves know there is nothing of value left inside to steal. There is some evidence that 'grabber devices' are being used to open remote locking on car doors. Theft from motor vehicles is an opportunist crime.

Under Operation Spotlight residential burglary hotspots and all building sites are visited and victims and potential victims of burglary are given crime prevention advice and reassurance patrols. This advice and high visibility policing is then broadened to the whole street if felt appropriate. There has been increased activity on ladders to and from the properties adjoining structures.

Cyclists

The number of complaints about cycling on the pavement by residents in the Knightsbridge area continues to remain constant. The teams have been involved in almost daily operations to deter cycling on the pavement during peak commuting times. An increasing number of cyclists are riding through red traffic lights and fixed penalty notices can be issued for failing to comply with a red traffic signal.

Ward Panel

The Ward Panel Priorities for Knightsbridge and Belgravia have been set as:

Pick pocketing and theft from the person, theft from shops, residential burglary.

The Ward Panel Priorities for Brompton have been set as:

Street drinking, begging (non Romanian), youth engagement.

The Parks

In Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens the Safer Parks Team are using speed guns to assess average cycling speeds in certain areas and they are looking at ways of making some of the routes, particularly Rotten Row, safer.

The Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park which was much larger than last year attracted over 1.6 million

visitors, equal to an average of 40,000 per day. Despite these huge numbers, only 22 allegations of crime were recorded, 18 of which were either thefts of unattended property or pickpocket offences. In the recent harsh weather thick ice formed on the Serpentine, Long Water and Round Pond. Despite signs to the contrary, members of the public walked on this ice or encouraged their dogs onto it. This is incredibly dangerous and the PCSOs patrolled the water side with loud hailers to try and prevent such foolhardy behaviour.

The Law and Order Committee continue to liaise regularly with the police so if you have any issues you would like us to raise please contact us either by telephone or the Knightsbridge Association website.

Cleansing:

WCC has awarded a new waste and street cleaning contract to Veolia. This will run for 14 years and cover the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Olympics – quite a challenge!

Membership

Please pass our details on to neighbours who might be interested in joining the KA and learning more about what goes on in Knightsbridge.

KA Events:

Visit to the Royal College of Arms, 23 & 24 March: This visit is already oversubscribed.

Dinner in Westminster Lord Mayor's Parlour, 29 April: Details are being finalised and will be sent out shortly.

Stop Press: Putin's Oil: The dramatic story of how Russia sold off its oil reserves which were then grabbed back by Vladimir Putin by fair means or foul – is told in Martin Sixsmith's just published book Putin's Oil. We have invited Martin to give a talk to members about the background to the book in a couple of months – time and place to be advised. More news will follow!

I hope that you have found this Newsletter informative and interesting – and thank you for reading.

With best wishes,



Winston Fletcher, Chairman

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