

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

September 2010

Dear Member,

MAMOUNIA LOUNGE

Our Appeal against the licensing hours granted by RBKC to the new Mamounia Lounge on Brompton Road is due to come to Court in October, and until then is obviously sub judice. However members will be pleased to learn that Mamounia did not appeal against the opening times granted by the RBKC Planning Committee (10.00 – 24.00 each day), and now RBKC have themselves withdrawn from defending our appeal against the licensing hours they granted. However this still means we may need to oppose Mamounia regarding the licensing hours – which are different from the planning hours! The legal process is complicated, but we are still very hopeful of achieving our own – and our members' – objectives.

STOP PRESS! RBKC have just curtailed an application from two restaurants on the Brompton Road for very late service at their outside tables, and have permitted outside service only until 10.30 pm. Huge thanks go to Martin Sixsmith, who led KA's opposition, and to Councillor Quentin Marshall, who lodged an objection. Following this, supported by Councillor Tony Devenish, we successfully opposed an Al Arez application to

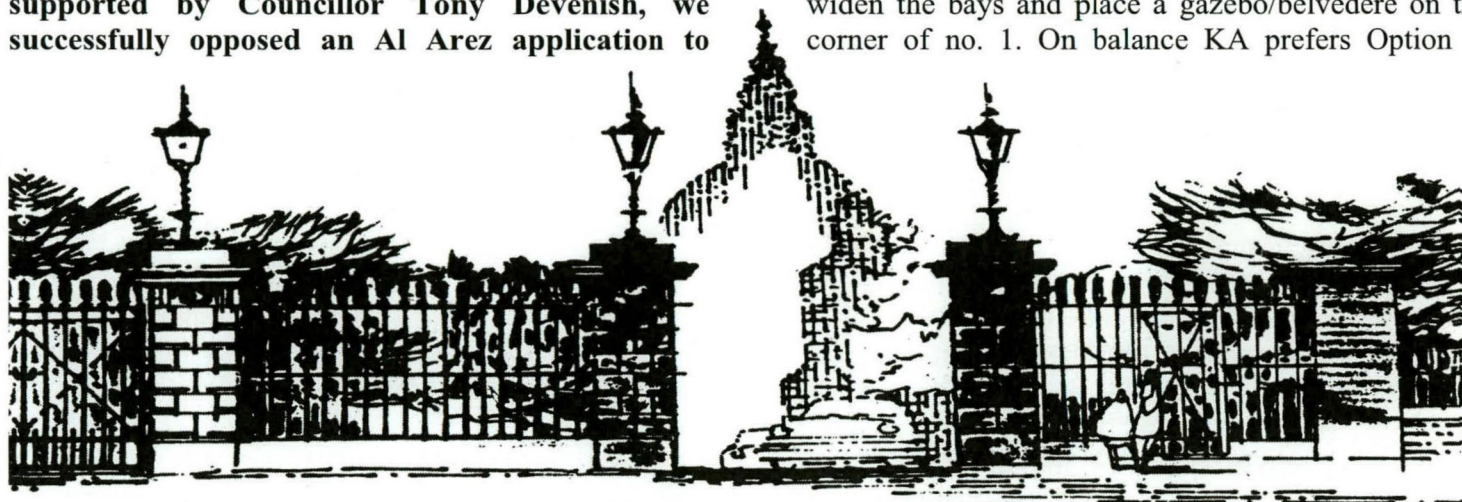
WCC to have their license extended until 1.00 am. These important decisions should help us stop late opening on Brompton Road getting out-of-hand

PLANNING & CONSERVATION

55-91 William Street and 1-7 William Street

In May KA received a copy of the full planning application and supporting documents for the redevelopment of this major site near Hyde Park Corner. There had been two exhibitions for local residents, the general public and other interested parties to view the plans and question the developer's architects and planners.

As outlined in the June newsletter, the proposal is to retain the Knightsbridge frontage, demolish the building behind, demolish 1-2 William Street to provide access to the site during demolition and construction, and to repair and restore 3-7 William Street. There are two options for the rebuilding of 1-2 William Street after the main work has been completed. Option 1 is to rebuild like-for-like, but to carry the original Carøe design round the corner and paint the brickwork. Option 2 is to rebuild, changing the floor levels to reflect the Knightsbridge frontage, widen the bays and place a gazebo/belvedere on the corner of no. 1. On balance KA prefers Option 1.



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.

The application is due to go to WCC in October for a decision. Any major development such as this causes immense disturbance, and if it goes ahead we will liaise with the Council and the developers to mitigate the worst disruption.

One Hyde Park

The envelope of the building is now complete and some of the flats have already been sold. The northern pavement will probably re-open early-October, and the opening of the new northern entrance to the tube is anticipated end-October (subject to final approval), as is the new pedestrian way between the Mandarin Oriental and One Hyde Park. Epstein's sculpture returned in August.

Knightsbridge Palace Hotel

This is rising phoenix-like from the depths (6 basements). The confluence of the completion of One Hyde Park and work starting on this new hotel has caused major traffic problems at the Knightsbridge junction and very long tail backs. A recent application for extra space on the roof was turned down by the Council. This decision is now being appealed. The hotel should be ready for occupation in 2011.

Kensington Palace Loggia

In the Annual Report we referred to major improvements to the Palace, all of which received planning permission from RBKC, except for the rather ornate loggia at the new entrance in the eastern façade. Historic Royal Palaces appealed that decision while submitting a revised application for a simpler design. KA acknowledges the new entrance needs to be emphasised, but still found the design too ornate, and again RBKC gave it the thumbs down. The Appeal on the first loggia design was dropped but may be revived now the second proposal has been turned down.

Natural History Museum

Earlier in the year KA, the Kensington Society, Brompton Association and other interested parties were asked to a meeting to discuss the Museum's draft Grounds Strategy. There was a quite heated discussion about the proposals which essentially involve paving over of the East Lawn to facilitate more events (most not connected with the Museum itself) and the idea that the Museum should be allowed to erect temporary structures on a regular basis up to one storey along the main frontage, and to a considerable height to the east of the building. The Museum appears deaf to the concerns not only of the local groups but of the Victorian Society. All are concerned about the increasing number of commercial activities outside the Museum. These now happen almost all the year round, and the draft Strategy is clearly intended to facilitate expansion of such activity.

The garden setting of this major Grade I listed building designed by Sir Alfred Waterhouse, arguably one of the finest Victorian buildings in the world, is now seriously at risk. Several months after the meeting notes were circulated to all attendees. These bore little resemblance to the content of the meeting.

V&A Design Studies for New Exhibition Road Project

Design studies by eight international architectural practices are on view at the V&A Studio Gallery from 21 June to 19 September. All the concepts keep the Grade I Listed screen by Aston Webb – in KA's view an absolutely essential element for any such project - with a courtyard behind the screen and exhibition space below ground. **Well worth a visit.**

Local Development Frameworks (LDF)

New round of planning policy making

Consultations have been held into the 'Core Strategies' of the 'Local Development Frameworks', major documents which will replace WCC and RBKC's Unitary Development Plans and form the policy basis on which future planning decisions will be made. KA retained the services of consultant Adam Hilton, formerly a WCC planning policy officer, to help draw up our representations and to speak on KA's behalf at the hearings held in both Boroughs by government Planning Inspectors.

Our main object was to ensure the interests of residents are properly taken into account in the balance of policy. In addition there were problems with coordinating policy across the boundary at Montpelier Street, and the WCC Strategy implied the so-called 'Strategic Cultural Area' around the Albert Hall is ripe for development with new hotels! We were worried, too, that the WCC policies on the size and height of buildings seem to have been relaxed over recent years. Let us hope the Inspectors see sense on all these matters.

Cycle Docks

The Mayor's cycle docks came on stream in August and the two in Montpelier Street and Holy Trinity avenue appear to be well used and at present look clean and tidy.

Al Arez

An application to extend their opening hours is being vigorously opposed by KA. Planning permission to legitimise their hideous plastic sidescreens was turned down by the Council.

Bomber Command Memorial:

In the March newsletter we reported the comments we made to WCC, that whereas a memorial was long overdue, the proposed one was unsuitable. Nonetheless the Council duly granted

permission. KA received one unpleasant phone call and an unpleasant email for daring to make any criticism of the scheme. So much for free speech!

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens -

Senior Playground

This goes from strength to strength – with so much publicity about the need for pensioners to keep healthy and lead active lives, the idea has really caught the public imagination. Pensioners have even been bussed in from outer London boroughs.

Events September onwards – look out for road closures

5 September: Annual women only 5km fun run, Hyde Park

11 & 12 September: Last night of the Proms and Sunday Concert, Hyde Park

10 October: Royal Parks' Foundation half marathon, including Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Western extension of the congestion charging zone

The consultation on the Mayor's proposal to remove the western extension of the congestion charging zone (WEZ) closed 2 August. KA lodged an objection to the proposal, among other things, because of: concerns about congestion and the expected rise in harmful emissions (forecast by TfL to increase by between 15% and 21% and some 4% to 8% respectively); and the prospect of local residents losing their 90% discount to travel in a more expensive central zone (where the charge is due to rise with 'Auto Pay'). A final decision is expected in the autumn, possibly as late as November. We should remember that, despite the impression some may wish to create, the Mayor promised in his manifesto to hold a consultation on the removal of the WEZ, not to remove it *per se*.

Air quality

The Mayor has bombarded us with air quality-related consultations in recent months. As well as his WEZ consultation, we have seen his draft Air Quality Strategy at the end of March and his consultation on the postponement of Phase 3 of the London low emission zone (LEZ3) from October 2010 to January 2012. The former included his estimate of some 4,300 premature deaths per year (each up to nine years early) due to long-term exposure to dangerous airborne particles. After legal and media pressure from the Campaign for Clean Air in London (CCAL), the Mayor published his full health study which showed estimated air pollution levels and premature deaths for every

ward in London. Brompton Ward was the 10th worst in London (of several hundred wards) in 2006, before the WEZ was introduced. We have objected to the Mayor's plans to postpone LEZ3 and consider his draft Air Quality Strategy is still not 'fit for purpose' as it fails to say when or how air quality laws will ever be complied with in London. CCAL continues to champion a Berlin-style low emission zone to discourage the most polluting vehicles (mainly older diesel-engined vehicles) from entering the most polluted parts of London.

Edinburgh Gate, the right turn at Scotch House Corner and roadworks

Edinburgh Gate will probably reopen in early November, when the current nearby roadworks finish, despite our concerns about it increasing rat-running to and from the south-west. Our WCC Councillors have been very supportive in joining our pressure for the implementation of the promised right turn from Knightsbridge eastbound into Brompton Road westbound, and other mitigation measures. Discussions about the location of the Knightsbridge westbound bus stop, currently outside Park Mansions, are still ongoing. The roadworks along the A4 associated with the replacement of a major gas main continue to cause chaos and are due to continue until April 2011. In part, these works are being undertaken now to avoid disrupting the Olympic Route Network which will be implemented in 2012 to facilitate the free movement of athletes and officials.

LAW AND ORDER

Crime Update

We're told statistics show crime has fallen worldwide. Our neighbourhood offers rich pickings for opportunist thieves who come in from other areas, and very few crimes are committed by locals. There have been arrests for shoplifting, robbery and copyright offences. The Brompton Road Starbucks has the highest number of thefts of any in the UK.

Anti-Social Behaviour

It is estimated that three-quarters of anti-social crime is not reported, but anti-social behaviour can be a precursor to more serious offending. To cut crime we must all take responsibility. Tell the police what is going on so they can take action. The Home Secretary Theresa May has said the police should focus on what local people want, not on what those in Whitehall think they want. She has launched a review of the anti-social behaviour powers available, which includes the possible demise of the "ASBO". Though the success of ASBOs has varied hugely from area to area, we in Knightsbridge have benefited greatly from them as

an enforcement against the Eastern European beggars around Harrods. We shall wait with interest to see what replaces it. You can report anti-social behaviour on the Police Non- Emergency Number 0300 123 1212.

In the Park

The Pope is coming to Knightsbridge on 18th September, when an open air vigil of prayer is to be held in Hyde Park. This event will attract millions, but with the experience the police have had in dealing with the 450,000 concert goers who visited Hyde Park this year we do not anticipate any real problems.

Litter

Littering fines were intended to stop anti-social behaviour from a small minority who consider the world to be their dustbin. Unfortunately this summer there has been a massive increase in the amount of rubbish left on the Knightsbridge streets, and it has been difficult to maintain standards.

Cycling

The introduction of the Mayor's Cycle Hire Scheme may result in an increase in cycle theft, as during the first six months of the scheme: in Paris 40% of the cycles were stolen. The number of pedicabs around Knightsbridge during the summer evenings has increased massively this year. They have started giving foreign visitors tours of residential streets while blaring amplified music late into the night. We passed on numerous complaints from residents to the police and they responded vigorously, but they are hamstrung as current legislation treats pedicabs as bicycles, so they need not be licensed or insured, and it is not illegal for them to play music while riding. Operations are held to check the vehicles and the riders to establish whether they are in the UK legally. They are now well aware Knightsbridge is a "hot" area for them. We shall continue to lobby tirelessly for legislation to cover this anti-social phenomenon.

Tax and Insurance

The number of vehicles driven without tax and insurance on our roads is high. On a recent operation in Sloane Street the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system detected "vehicles of interest" and some were seized or the drivers fined. Recently at 1.30a.m. a German plated E200,000 Lamborghini driven dangerously at high speed in Lowndes Square, collided with four parked cars outside The Sheraton causing substantial damage. When the police arrived, a UAE national claimed to be the driver. However, a witness clearly saw that the driver was in fact another UAE national. Both were arrested and taken to Notting Hill police station. They stuck to their story despite a witness

clearly contradicting them. The CPS authorized charges against both men for perverting the course of justice, dangerous driving and no insurance. The men were a clear flight risk as they were due to return to the UAE later that week. They were kept in custody and appeared at West London Magistrates Court where they were remanded in custody until 12th October. This will have been a big shock to them, but hopefully send a clear message that foreign registered cars in this country must have insurance cover.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

Tuesday 14 December: 6pm in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music.

Social Event

Serpentine Boat trip: 8 Sept: For a repeat of our extremely popular evening Serpentine Boat trip with drinks and canapés in the boat house. Members will already have received an application form.

Other Events

16-19 Sept: 20/21 British Art Fair, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore. All the great names of the 20th & 21st centuries.. Free entry for members: email info@britishartfair.co.uk or tel: 020 8742 1611 quoting 'The Knightsbridge Association'.

Friends of Imperial College Lectures at Blackett Lecture Theatre, Prince Consort Road.

Lectures open to KA members, tickets £10.

19 Oct: "The end of ageing" – will humans be able to regenerate their bodies?

16 Nov: "How the sun influences climate" – what are the implications for climate change?

More info: www.friendsofimperial.org.uk or 020 8441 6229

You will see from the enclosed letter that changes are in hand at KA, but meanwhile, I hope you had a very good summer and thank you – as ever – for your support.

With best wishes,



Winston Fletcher CBE,
Chairman

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