



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN 2013 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member

So it truly is darkest before the dawn - in sharp contrast to the conditions at the time of the last newsletter, the best summer in a decade is upon us. There is no lovelier place than England when the weather is like this and it has to be said that Knightsbridge has been looking especially radiant over the past few months. I do hope you are enjoying it.

As usual it has been a busy time for us and I thought I might tell you *A Tale of Two Applications*. These are two unrelated applications on which your committee have been hard at work over the past few months, and as they have now both been concluded I can talk about them freely as they illustrate rather neatly the trials and tribulations of the work of the KA. Both applicants are long-established, highly regarded, multi-million

pound global enterprises. As thriving businesses both are, quite understandably, always looking for ways to boost their revenues by altering their licenses. This summer both were applying to have certain conditions on their licenses altered. But there the similarities end.

On the one hand, we have Amenable Applicant, who joined the KA at the first opportunity and has consulted us every step of the way in formulating their planning and licensing strategies. We have not always seen eye to eye. Far from it - as you know we judge all applications on their own merits regardless of who the applicant is - but the discussions have always been cordial and, above all, constructive. Amenable understands well, as do we, that to get a little, you need to give a little. There is a very clear sense of mutual respect. In the opposite corner, we have Naughty Applicant,

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

Chairman: Yoshi Nishio, *Vice-Chairmen:* Edward Davies-Gilbert, Carol Seymour-Newton,

Treasurer: Olivia J Cox.

another venerable enterprise with a long history. Over the years, their approach to the KA has been quite different – in fact, it was only when we met them earlier this year across the bench at a council hearing that they decided it might be an idea to join the KA. In the most recent episode, Naughty informed us of the variations for which they were applying as a *fait accompli*, in spite of being advised by the council hearing chairman that it would be beneficial to advise and consult with us prior to submitting anything. Naturally the KA along with many area residents objected, with the result that the permitted hours were scaled back. When we took Naughty to task over the lack of notice let alone discussion, they came back with the excuse that the person in charge was ‘on annual leave’ at the time. Well, call it annual leave if you want, but the idea that one person being on holiday causes a breakdown in correct procedure in an organisation with over ten thousand employees sounded like a big fat porkie to us. In short, it is hard not to feel that they regard the KA and their other neighbours as nothing more than annoying nuisances.

I will not name and praise Amenable, just as I will not name and shame Naughty. But I will offer a bottle of champagne to the

first member who correctly identifies the two parties. Answers to me at chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com. please.

In concluding, I have two dates for your diary: on Monday 14th October, what promises to be a lovely Celebration Dinner at the Royal Thames Yacht Club; and the AGM this year is earlier than usual, on Monday 2nd December. Invitations to both will follow in the post.

PLANNING

CLOSURE OF FIRE STATIONS

The formal consultation was online and additionally meetings were held in each borough. The proposals - to close Basil Street and Greycoat Place (both WCC) and to reduce from two to one the number of appliances at Chelsea (RBKC) - were vehemently opposed by one and all. There may be far fewer fires than twenty years ago due to improved regulations for new buildings and better protection for older ones, but it beggars belief to think that appliances from further away will be able to maintain the same attendance times. Each extra second increases the intensity of the fire. We felt that the die was cast before the consultation took place but thankfully it seems to have resulted in Chelsea not losing its second engine.

BASEMENTS

Both councils are revising their planning requirements for basement developments. RBKC consulted on their proposed basement policy and are now awaiting the inspector's examination to ensure it is legally sound. The new policy calls for: maximum basement of 50% under a garden; no sub-basements in terraced houses; no excavation underneath listed buildings; and permission to be refused if there is loss, damage or long term threat to trees of townscape or amenity value. In WCC, no changes have been agreed but officers are working on a new policy which includes a proposal to limit residential basements to one storey. The policy will emerge as part of the Local Plan, which is now in draft form with consultation scheduled for autumn 2013. A number of legal hoops remain so it is unlikely that the council will adopt a formal policy on basements until late 2014/15. An interim guidance note on basements will, if approved, be in place until the policy can be formally adopted.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

The government is intending to split English Heritage into two separate organisations: English Heritage (EH) and National Heritage Protection Service (NHPS). An initial £80 million

“government support investment” will be given to EH before becoming an independent, self-financing charity in 2015. It will continue to look after the National Collection of properties but will have the freedom to raise its own money. The NHPS will deal with conservation of non-publicly owned property “for the survival of England's historic environment”.

HYDE PARK

British Summertime Concerts in the Park The new promoters AEG started off on the right foot by talking to the associations around the perimeter of the park and other “stakeholders”, to inform them of what was proposed and to take on board any suggestions. Noise was reduced from previous years but was still audible in Knightsbridge during the weekend concerts. A debrief is to be held with the promoters at the end of August. There will also be a meeting with the Parks to discuss the broadcasting of the last night of the Proms.

The Football Pitch This large area of grass, site of the 1851 Great Exhibition, has for generations been free to use for games of all descriptions from football, rounders and more recently softball. The Parks started charging for formal sport in March this year. Management has now been handed over to a commercial firm who will

be charging fees "from £5 per hour", based on group size. It remains to be seen how much of the area will remain open to those families merely wishing to kick a ball, throw a frisbee or walk the dog. Sadly, more and more of the park is being commercialised, doubtless due to the steady reduction in funding by central Government.

THE SERPENTINE GALLERY

The Serpentine Sackler Gallery With its core as The Magazine - the 19th century gunpowder store - and extended by Zaha Hadid, the new gallery will open on 28th September. A major gift from the foundation of the late philanthropist Mortimer Sackler and his wife, Theresa, provided funding.

The Summer Pavilion

This year's sensational, cloud-like construction by the Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto may be the best of these annual features yet. It will remain open till 20th October, so it is well worth a visit. Refreshments, by Fortnum & Mason no less, are served under the structure for human and canine visitors alike.

USE CLASSES ORDER

Recent legislation is making it easier for premises to change from one use to another, taking control away from local councils. This can

have an unfortunate effect. Change from offices or residential to financial could mean a stream of betting shops, as has already happened in one borough. Retail to café/restaurant could lead to a mono-culture in Brompton Road. Applications are now appearing on the planning lists with the prefix NOT - this is notification of change of use - which now do not need permission. With a newly released consultation document "Greater flexibilities for change of use" the Department for Communities and Local Government has announced details of the widely trailed similar relaxation of changes to shops. The objective is to change permitted development rights allowing shops (A1) and financial and professional services (A2) conversion to residential. Although the policy is launched as another measure "to reduce burdens and support better use of existing buildings", there are concerns this might inadvertently result in an irreversible loss of not only small independent shops but the erosion of variety and cause lasting damage to local character. The KA will respond to the document. We are opposed to the ever increasing loss of diversity, and Brompton Road remains a key concern for this reason.

CAFES AND RESTAURANTS

Last year Caffè Concerto opened without planning

permission or permission for change of use in the former American Express office on the corner of Lancelot Place. Planning permission was eventually applied for and given for alterations to the shop front. The owners' agents maintained that they did not need permission for change of use; WCC demurred and eventually an application was submitted for *sui generis* use. With KA's encouragement, WCC refused permission and it went to appeal. Earlier in the year, the same thing happened on the RBKC side at 176 Brompton Road: Café Luna materialised in place of hairdresser Equus with no planning application for the new shop front which can be completely open to the street and no application for change of use. RBKC is currently taking enforcement action.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

The KA met principals of The Knightsbridge Estate for an update on their plans for the future of this substantial block bounded by Brompton Road, Hans Crescent, Basil and Sloane Streets. The main thrust is to upgrade Brompton Road by smartening up the buildings installing high value tenants, with several of these taking over a whole building. The small offices would go; access to the residential units would be from the rear. Hooper's Court, the dingy

alley from Brompton Road to Basil Street may be reconfigured. There may also be potential for widening the pavement on Brompton Road.

PARK MANSIONS

An application to build five flats on the roof of this Edwardian block was turned down in the face of fierce opposition from the tenants, supported by a planning consultant, and the KA. An application has now been received to build nine new flats on top of the building. This will be opposed equally vigorously.

31 BROMPTON SQUARE

The saga of 31 Brompton Square continues. In the last Annual Report we reported that we had had a meeting with the new owner's architects to discuss their proposals. They submitted a revised application which improved somewhat the landscaping of the 'garden' which would cover the excavations. Permission was granted, but all seems to have gone quiet again. Convicted conman Achilleas Kallakis, the former owner, and his co-conspirator received eleven and eight year gaol sentences respectively for defrauding Allied Irish Bank of £740 million.

RUTLAND COURT – A SWIMMING POOL!

To the horror of residents an application was lodged to put a

swimming pool into a lightwell. Residents and the KA objected. In the event, it turned out that some of the documents submitted were inaccurate and that insufficient evidence was provided. The application was withdrawn, but we remain vigilant.

31-32 RUTLAND GATE

These two houses, previously owned by the Government of Sudan, have been allowed to fall into terrible disrepair. The KA tried for many years to get the Council to take action, but as they had diplomatic immunity, nothing could be done. There was some relief when the building changed hands. The proposal is to return it to two separate houses, each with the inevitable excavation to allow basement swimming pools. This is causing alarm to neighbours who fear that their buildings may suffer severe damage due to the proximity of an underground stream. The KA suggested they take advice from a planning consultant and they are also considering appointing a structural engineer.

APPEALS

The Tea Clipper To the regret of some and the relief of others and only after the inspector overturned WCC's refusal, permission was given for change of use turning the last pub within the hinterland of the northern part of Knightsbridge, to

residential. The inspector did not agree with the WCC's assessment that the loss of the public house would have a negative effect on the character and vitality of this part of the Central Activities Zone.

LICENSING

HARVEY NICHOLS

Harvey Nichols applied for multiple amendments to their Premises Licence covering the entire store. This included a proposed extension of hours in the 5th floor Bar for and increasing the size and licence for their Fifth Floor restaurant. The KA together with local residents made representations to limit extent and scale of the licence and RBKC made some concessions including the rejection of the extension of hours to 3.00AM. The concern is that customers park cars in residential streets and squares which results in nights disturbed by drunken shouting, banging car doors, revving engines and excessive traffic movement in the early hours.

HARRODS

Harrods applied for an entertainment licence for the pedestrianised area of Hans Crescent for the first day of their summer and winter sales. This was to be from 7.00AM to 1.00PM. (When RBKC first proposed a

pedestrianised area, we feared that it could lead to increased traffic movements in the vicinity). The KA and local residents made representations with the result that the hours were reduced to between 8.00AM and 11.00AM. RBKC instructed Harrods to consult local people and the Association about future licensing applications before submitting them and Harrods duly carried out a local consultation regarding the Christmas Parade. The application has now been approved by RBKC but with a start time of 8.00AM, as opposed to the requested 7.00AM.

BVLGARI

The Bvlgari Hotel applied for licence amendments to (i) decouple food and alcohol sales (ii) increase licensing hours and (iii) increase the numbers of people permitted to use function rooms. The KA met with Bvlgari management repeatedly, and after much discussion a revised proposal was agreed in light of our grave concerns. The proposals were considered at a hearing on 1st August. The WCC Licensing Sub-Committee agreed those parts of the application relating to the increased use of the private dining area, the business centre and the proposal to allow non-residents to use the Cigar Bar. The application to increase the hours of use for the function room and for later hours

including an increase in numbers was refused. Full details of the revised licence will be available shortly.

LAW AND ORDER

Holiday Horror Police and Council operations during the summer continued to deal with **pedicabs** in and around Knightsbridge. It was noticeable that pre-Ramadan fewer of them were using amplified music and blocking the pavements, and we believed that they had finally got the message that residents will not put up with unacceptable behaviour. Unfortunately to the fury of residents, after Ramadan they were back out in force and it was necessary to request additional measures to ensure disturbance was minimized and to enforce safety regulations. Brompton Road became extremely busy as usual with the influx of people, money and high performance “**supercars**”. Regular operations continued to check that these cars were on the road legally, had correct readable number plates, clear windows and valid insurance cover for the UK. They were also advised not to drive erratically or rev their engines. These cars were driven at dangerously high speeds through our neighbourhood until the early hours, some with flames coming from their exhausts. Knightsbridge

resembled and sounded like a Formula 1 racetrack at times. If we choose to live in Central London we have to accept a certain amount of noise but this August was unacceptable. The police responded to our complaints by increasing the number of patrols but residents continued to report inconsiderate and dangerous driving. We shall discuss this issue when we have our joint meetings with both councils and the police teams. Unfortunately, due to "the cuts" the police have to do more with fewer personnel and our teams are unable to cover Brompton Road 24/7, although of course the response team will always attend in an emergency.

Caught on Camera. Thieves can use their phones surreptitiously to photograph luggage at airports so if you don't want to become a victim of burglary while you are away police advise not to put your home address on your suitcase label.

Cycle theft statistics are still high and although the police actively offer advice and free marking many bicycles continue to be stolen. If you have a bike fit a D Lock as they are the only locks that our Safer Neighbourhood police team say they have seen which have not been "chopped".

Cashpoint Fraud is endemic all over London and Knightsbridge is not immune. Thieves distract people by tapping them on the

shoulder, pointing out money on the pavement and various other ruses so their accomplices can relieve the victim of their credit card. **Telephone Fraud** continues to catch even the most intelligent people out. If you are asked to call back to check on the legitimacy of anyone claiming to be from a bank who is calling about a credit card that they tell you has been compromised then do not call back from the same phone. Use a different phone or mobile as the fraudster is keeping the line open so when people call back after having checked that they have their cards they are tricked into thinking they are speaking to someone working at the bank. It's a scam, don't fall for it, many have.

Home Security advice is to ensure your home is as safe as possible. Make sure your doors are always secured properly and consider investing in a door with a sophisticated lock, spy hole and door chain. Never leave keys near the door as burglars can reach them via the letterbox. Avoid leaving valuables near your windows and always close and lock them when you go out. **Security Alarms and Lights** make it less likely for you to be burgled. Setting a burglar alarm and leaving lights on indoors can be a good investment. **Theft from Cafes** has fallen dramatically due to the work done by our Safer Neighbourhood Teams who visit

all the local cafes and restaurants and advise clients not to leave property unattended or leave handbags hooked over the back of a chair.

Doggy Don'ts Any More. There has been a noticeable reduction in the number of plastic bags containing dog waste being placed by lamp posts since both councils provided more bins on routes frequented by dog walkers. Dog waste was residents' number one complaint to the councils, so well done everybody!

The Met Police and WCC, supported by the UKBA, homeless charities and the Romanian Embassy have been regularly working together to try to remove the **Roma squatters** who have been sleeping rough in Marble Arch and reconnect them with their home country by offering them free flights home if they agree to move immediately. Cllr Nickie Aiken, Cabinet Member for Community Protection says that WCC are spending thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money removing and cleaning up piles of rubbish, disused sleeping equipment and human excrement from the site. The site appears to be a base for low level crime such as pickpocketing, nuisance and intimidating begging and there are also sanitation issues. Our Safer Neighbourhood Teams are aware of our concerns that this anti-social

behaviour should not be allowed to spread into Knightsbridge.

Neighbourhood Link is a FREE messaging service that enables you to regularly receive information from the Metropolitan Police Service. The information will be in relation to crime and safety in the areas where you work or live. To register visit: www.neighbourhoodlink.met.police.uk

The next meeting of the Law and Order Committee will be held at 6pm on 12th November. If you are interested in attending please contact The Chairman, Madeline Elsdon on 020 7589 4006 for more details.

The police won't necessarily know what is going on unless we tell them and the more reports they receive on a particular issue, the more evidence they have to action it. **To report non-urgent crime phone 101 or go to www.met.police/101. In an emergency (where there's an immediate threat to people or property) always Dial 999.**

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

'YEAR OF AIR' in 2013

The European Commission's 'Year of Air' is 2013. The KA is an Honorary Founder Supporter of Clean Air in London (CAL), a cross-party, not-for-profit organisation, having encouraged the campaign of the same name since it started in

2006. Simon Birkett is Founder and Director of CAL. Further details at <http://cleanairinlondon.org/>

TOP 15 MOST POLLUTED ROADS IN LONDON

Brompton Road and Knightsbridge (the road) are two of the top 15 most-polluted roads in London for emissions of carcinogenic diesel exhaust according to new figures obtained from the Mayor of London by CAL. Brompton Road ranked eighth for emissions of dangerous airborne particles (PM_{2.5}) and Knightsbridge ranked 13th for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), a toxic gas and the only 'modern' combustion gas regulated. The World Health Organisation (WHO) classified diesel exhaust as carcinogenic for humans in June 2012. The figures, obtained using access to environmental information laws, showed vehicles at the worst point in Brompton Road emitting PM_{2.5} diesel exhaust at a rate of 814 kilograms per kilometre per year in 2012. The top three sources of these emissions were identified as taxis (61%), diesel light goods vehicles (14%) and diesel cars (10%). At the worst point on Knightsbridge vehicles produced NO₂ diesel exhaust at a rate of 7.3 tonnes per kilometre per year in 2012. The top three sources of these emissions were London Transport buses (41%), diesel cars

(18%) and diesel light goods vehicles (14%). Diesel vehicles produced up to 30 times more of these pollutants than petrol vehicles. The excellent London Air Quality Network reports NO₂ concentrations in Brompton Road (i.e. what we breathe rather than tailpipe emissions) in 2012 were an annual mean of 92 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m³) with 500 hours exceeding 200 ug/m³. These compare with the legal limits, aligned with WHO guidelines and in legislation since 1999 to be complied with by 2010, of 40 ug/m³ and 18 hours respectively. A preliminary analysis suggests Mayor Johnson did not keep his promise to ensure air pollution would not worsen after the removal of the western extension of the Congestion Charging Zone.

The story was picked up widely in the media. CAL shared the information it had received with the four main political parties. The Green Party in London has produced a map of diesel exhaust emissions searchable by postcode <http://www.howpollutedismyroad.org.uk/>.

CARCINOGENIC DIESEL EXHAUST

CAL has called for the banning of all diesel exhaust from the most polluted parts of London by 2020, including Brompton Road and Knightsbridge. The Mayor has not done enough to tackle this problem

with results limited mainly to a few new hybrid buses and a ban on taxis more than 15 years old. We need much bolder policies to tackle this serious health issue e.g. the rapid retrofitting or replacement of all buses travelling along Brompton Road and Knightsbridge as Putney High Street is getting. Taxis are a major part of the pollution problem in central London (with only two taxi models meeting the Public Carriage Office requirement to turn 180 degrees within two walls 28 feet (8.535 metres) apart). The media has reported that at least one of the two new taxi models may make NO₂ emissions worse so we need the Mayor to remove the turning circle requirement to allow taxi drivers to buy less polluting vehicles. In general, we need fewer and cleaner vehicles with an emphasis on encouraging the high mileage vehicles particularly to become electric in inner London e.g. buses, taxis and light goods vehicles. Meanwhile, people can protect themselves by walking or cycling down side streets when possible, rather than the most polluted roads and reduce pollution for themselves and others e.g. by not driving diesel vehicles in the most-polluted parts of London unless absolutely necessary. We also need WCC and RBKC to do much more. For example, WCC has many proposals in its new Air Quality Strategy to lobby others

but its success can only be judged on which of those measures (and its own actions) deliver tangible reductions in pollution. We are concerned also that WCC did not include air pollution in its Joint Strategy Needs Assessment or in its new Health and Well-being Strategy despite being told by the Department of Health that WCC and RBKC are the two most-polluted local authorities in England with 8.3% of all deaths here attributed to air pollution. CAL has produced a free App which uses Government estimates to calculate continually for the year-to-date the number of deaths attributable to human-made air pollution in each local authority and region in England. At the time of writing, it shows 42 and 59 such deaths in RBKC and the bigger WCC respectively so far this year. The App can be downloaded at <http://itun.es/i6xj69k>. Air pollution was the top environmental issue in the Mayoral election last year and is likely to receive special attention again in next year's local London and European elections.

IMPROVING INDOOR AIR QUALITY

There is much we can do to protect ourselves from outdoor air pollution by improving indoor air quality. CAL has therefore been working with a number of local businesses and residents, supported

by Camfil (its first Gold Sponsor and the world leader in air filters for buildings) to improve indoor air quality. Buildings may have ventilation, air filtration and/or air conditioning or none of these. It is possible to reduce the concentrations of particles and/or gases by over 90% using low energy air filters through central air handling units or a standalone unit such as the CamCleaner. If your building has mechanical ventilation, ask if it uses regularly maintained air filters that comply fully with British and European standard EN 13779. Very few do.

MEMBERS' SECTION

EATON SQUARE CONCERTS

Friends of Music at St. Peter's Square, a member of the KA, supports Eaton Square Concerts. Dates for the Autumn 2013 series (Thursdays, concerts start at 7.30pm):

- October 10th** Artesian Quartet:
Prokofiev, Haydn, Ravel
- 17th** Tom Poster, piano:
Schubert, Beethoven,
Gershwin, Stravinsky
- 24th** Vasari Singers: Allegri,
Jackson, Macmillan,
Parry
- November 7th** Trusler Carroll Wass
Trio: Copland
Mendelssohn, Ravel

14th Royal Academy of Music:
Nielsen, Rossini, Brahms

KA members are warmly invited to enjoy these evenings and can purchase tickets for £10, an **£8 reduction from the standard price**. Please call 020 7823 9103 or email info@knightsbridgeassociation.com for the KA discount code. For information eatonsquareconcerts.org.uk or call 020 7288 6511.

2013 AGM *IMPORTANT NOTICE*

In a slight change to past years, the AGM this year is taking place a little earlier, on Monday 2nd December. We will also be enjoying a new venue, in the magnificent form of the V&A Museum. Reception at 6.00pm followed by the AGM at 6.45pm. Guest speaker to be confirmed.

EVENT – SAVE THE DATE

Monday 14th October: The Knightsbridge Association Celebration Dinner at the Royal Thames Yacht Club. Invitations will be sent out shortly.

Yoshi Nishio

Yoshi Nishio,
Chairman
chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com