

The Knightsbridge Association

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June 2013



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2013 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member,

Looking out of the window, I did question the wisdom of calling this the Summer Newsletter, but I soldiered on in the hope that by the time you receive it, it will have become entirely apt. There have certainly been some bright spots in our work over the past few months. As you will read in the following pages, we have made progress on many fronts, most notably with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea publishing new guidelines on limiting basement development which, gratifyingly, were largely consistent with the 2011 KA position paper on this subject. Elsewhere, we have been cheered by planning decisions, both approvals and rejections, and enforcement actions have brought long running sagas to a close. Crime rates remain comfortably low.

Rest assured, however, we will not be resting on our laurels. With the summer visitor season just weeks away, we are preparing for the usual need for vigilance on pedicabs, supercars and licensing issues in the late night cafes. Changes at the councils, both in terms of personnel and of the way in which they interact with residents and amenity societies like the KA, promise further challenges to come.

Finally, news junkies among you may have seen a piece on CNN this month talking about how prime parts of London are becoming ghost towns because so many owners don't actually live in their multi-million pound investments. If you did not blink during the three minute video, you may have spotted your Chairman describing the

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

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

Treasurer: Olivia J Cox.

changing mix of nationalities and residents our neighbourhood has seen over the years. London is quite possibly unique among the world's major cities in having a real sense of community, where the anonymity that defines so many cities is not the norm. Estate agents have often referred to the capital as 'a collection of villages', for good reason. Wherever we have come from, we are all very privileged now to call Knightsbridge our home and the KA will continue to work tirelessly to maintain that special feeling.

CLOSURE OF FIRE STATIONS

As we mentioned in an email alert last week The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) is holding public meetings on the proposal to close down 12 London fire stations including the one in Basil Street. It is essential that we find out exactly what is proposed and how the Fire Authority propose to maintain the level of service currently provided. Questions need to be answered. Logic dictates that if the appliances have to travel further to a fire, attendance times will increase. With every extra second taken the risks to life increase exponentially. Enclosed are details of two local meetings – you can attend either or both. Full details are also available on London-fire.gov.uk/LSP5.

Schedule of Public Meetings

RBKC: Monday 10 June, 7-9pm

The Small Hall, Town Hall, Hornton St W8

WCC: Tuesday 11 June, 7-9pm

Parker Morris Hall, 34 Great Smith Street, SW1

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

BASEMENTS

With the ever-increasing number of basements being excavated, please be aware that for houses that are not listed, even if they are in a conservation area, basements are considered to be permitted development: so they do not need planning permission, notices do not need to be posted outside and neighbouring owners do not have to be informed. They do however have to be posted on the council's weekly planning list on its website. For those who share a party wall with the property, a Party Wall Agreement, instructed by the developer, must be in place before work starts. Each party is entitled to appoint their own Party Wall Surveyor, and all costs to the neighbouring owner - fees, damage, redecoration etc. – are payable by the developer. Listed buildings still need Listed Building Consent and the usual consultation/notification has to take place. The KA have commented in detail on both WCC and RBKC's proposals to tighten up their basement regulations and await the outcome. RBKC have recently published tighter guidelines, which are a most welcome first step.

BROMPTON ROAD

Knightsbridge Summit - now a regular meeting hosted by WCC, attended by RBKC and the Police. With the holy month of Ramadan commencing on 9 July this year, the influx of Middle Eastern visitors is likely to be even more intense than usual in the late summer. The KA and others will continue to monitor the problem trio – supercars, shisha and pedicabs.

Nos 158-166 The proposed demolition and replacement of this building with the controversial “gem” design has been scaled back. The owners are said to have settled on a more conventional refurbishment.

No 206 The saga of the massive illegal advertising hoarding seems finally to have come to an end. The structure had been attached to the side of the building owned by the Ministry of Defence; as Crown property, it was exempt from prosecution for a breach of planning regulations. However, following interventions by the KA, councillors and MPs, the gantry has now been removed. It does pay to persevere.

HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS

Prince of Wales Gate Lodge The Royal Parks have been renting out the Lodges within the Parks as compact pieds-a-terre's. The tenant at Prince of Wales Gate appears to be using the building as a venue for all night, for profit parties, where tickets, alcohol and drugs are sold. The parties – complete with prices – are advertised on facebook. Although these activities were reported to all the relevant authorities last year, no significant action had been taken until this month, and even now, they are dragging their feet. At a minimum, the tenant must be in severe breach of their residential lease, and if criminal activities – observed by residents of Kingston House Estate across the road – are taking place, it is surely a police matter.

Re-turfing the areas damaged by a combination of the weather the Olympics and the Concerts in 2013 has now been completed. We can only hope that the weather is kinder this year and the expected concert crowds don't undo all the good work.

Concerts The KA, together with other associations round the Park perimeter, have attended several constructive meetings with the Royal Parks and new promoter, AEG. Six concerts are planned on July 5-7 and 12-14 July – including one for Bon Jovi and two for the Rolling Stones. Midweek the arena will be used for a series of daytime activities such as cooking demonstrations by celebrity chefs and a tennis showcase. AEG assure us that sound levels will be kept within the lowered levels stipulated in the licence and will be closely monitored by them and by WCC. They will pay for extra stewarding and extra litter clearance in and out of the Park. In case of complaints about noise, ring WCC on 7641 2000.

International Showjumping and Dressage RBKC planning committee turned down the application to hold a 4 day international competition, which would have seen a significant part of Kensington Gardens to the south east of the Palace being cordoned off for a month during height of summer. The KA applauds this surprising decision that showed a welcome acknowledgement of the needs of local residents and park users.

Summer Pavilion Thirteenth in the annual series, this year's commission has gone to Japanese architect, Sou Fujimoto. Designed as a flexible, multi-purpose social space – with a café inside – it occupies some 350 square-metres of lawn in front of the Serpentine Gallery. Described as a delicate, three-dimensional structure, each unit of which will be composed of fine steel bars, it will form a semi-transparent, irregular ring.

Serpentine Sackler Museum Work is progressing on renovating and extending the old Magazine building, situated across the Serpentine bridge, into the brand new Serpentine Sackler Gallery. The restoration and extension of the Grade II (recently upgraded to Grade II*) listed building will provide nearly 900 square metres of galleries and social space. Due to open in September, it will provide an exciting new addition to London's cultural life.

Science Museum Ian Blatchford, the new director of the Science Museum, and his team have produced a ten year masterplan to co-ordinate future projects including new galleries and redevelopment of existing ones; upgrading the infrastructure; and investing in the design and quality of the building. All this involves raising significant funds and some of this is already in the pipeline. In May they started consulting the KA and other local associations on their plans for the future of the old Post Office building, an attractive early 20th century building on the corner of Exhibition and Imperial College Roads. They no longer need the building and see its development as a source of funding for some of the improvements to the infrastructure. Their favoured option appears to be to convert it to residential.

LICENSING

Pressure continues to build to turn Knightsbridge into a late night destination with applications for music and dancing to 3am having recently been granted to the Rib Room at the Jumeirah Carlton Hotel. Additionally an application by Harvey Nichols, where part of the 5th floor is already licensed to 3am, seeks to extend this to an additional area of the same floor and to licence the other floors to 10 pm on ten nights a year. The licence covers music, dancing, films and general

entertainment. The application has been vigorously opposed. A decision by RBKC's licensing committee is awaited.

As we went to press the Natural History Museum applied for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) for 1.00AM to 6.00AM on 26th May in connection with Champions League celebrations. Under current legislation only the Police and environmental health officers can object to TENs, and the event is likely to have gone ahead.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sir Merrick Cockell has retired after 13 years as Leader of RBKC. He remains a councillor for Stanley Ward and will serve another year as chairman of the Local Government Association. The new Leader is Cllr. Nicholas Paget-Brown, who has been Deputy Leader since 2011. Nick has been a firm supporter of the KA, and we very much look forward to strengthening our relationship in his new role.

Boundary Changes The Knightsbridge/Belgravia boundary in Westminster will remain unchanged, however under RBKC proposals Brompton Ward is due to disappear and be split between several neighbouring wards. The KA has written to object to this proposal which would over ride the historic boundaries of a long standing community. We would also regret greatly losing the services of three able and proactive young councillors, Quentin Marshall, Louis Mosley and Abbas Barkhordar. We urge the Boundary Commission to change its mind.

Neighbourhood Forums We are continuing to explore whether to form a neighbourhood forum within Westminster, where the Council is cajoling all the local amenity societies to do so. From RBKC there does not seem to be the same enthusiasm. This is a sensitive issue since while it has the noble goal of formalising the involvement of residents in their communities (something that the KA has been doing since 1961), the practicalities of the effort are, it appears, needlessly complex and onerous for the people willing to take it on.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Changes to permitted development were laid before Parliament on

the 9 May and will come into force on 30 May 2013 until a review in May 2016. The main change is the change of land use. For a limited period of 3 years, if a property wants to change from an office use to a residential use, planning permission will only be required if it is located within the Central Activity Zone (CAZ). Outside of the CAZ, this will now be permitted development, except: buildings that were not offices immediately before 30 May 2013 or when last in use; listed buildings; scheduled monuments; and properties within safety hazard or military explosive storage areas.

Planning permission will still be required for works to the exterior of the building in the usual manner. As most of Knightsbridge falls within the CAZ, these changes should not have a significant impact on our area.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-breathe-life-into-empty-buildings-and-boost-growth>

A legal perspective and summary document:

http://www.speechlys.com/media/181589/briefing_-_new_permitted_development_rights_to_take_effect_-_13_may_2013.pdf

In addition, the Government will be consulting this summer on the possibility of converting shops to residential use.

LAW AND ORDER

Thefts Ladies handbags and mobile phones stolen in The Brompton Road have raised our crime statistics and together with pick pocketing is by far the biggest problem in our area. There have been thefts from motor vehicles, particularly in the Squares, where quarter lights have been broken. A recent campaign reminded people to Look and Lock. This means that when you lock your car with the remote don't just click as you walk away but look back to see that the doors have actually locked as someone could be nearby blocking your signal.

Scaffolding means Burglaries Scaffolding attracts burglars even if it is alarmed. If you or your neighbours are having building work done please ensure that the scaffolding is alarmed up to the top of the building not just to the first floor. Some burglars are extremely agile.

Scams In the last Newsletter we focused extensively on scams. More telephone scams continue to target us non-stop, particularly the elderly. Someone calls to say that your appliance, TV warranty or membership has expired and needs to be extended by credit card. These calls are often not genuine. In your own time check that you actually even own these appliances. On street cash machines are still quite unsafe, enabling cash and cards to be stolen. Go into the bank to withdraw money if possible. Residents must still be wary of people knocking at their doors asking for money for various reasons. Don't open your door to strangers and if you want to support a charity send them a donation directly and never give your bank details to anyone in the street or outside supermarkets as you never know who they really are.

Doggy Don'ts Dog waste must be bagged and binned. Please make sure everyone who walks your dog is aware that leaving dog waste or a bag containing dog waste in a public area, besides being anti-social, is an offence subject to a fixed penalty fine of £80. Dog waste can be placed in all City Council bins and new solar powered bins are to be placed on Knightsbridge routes frequented by dog walkers on their way to the parks.

Walking Dogs in the Park There are new rules for professional dog walkers in the Royal Parks to tie them in line with fitness instructors. They are now required to be licensed and can only exercise a maximum of four dogs at once. Coloured arm bands will identify them. An illegal Hyde Park Pot Party held in April at Hyde Park caused some anti-social behaviour when the crowds were leaving towards Victoria but the situation was well controlled by police.

Big Mess As you will have seen in the press, the Eastern Europeans / Roma are proving difficult to dislodge from Marble Arch and continue to make the central island look like a rubbish tip. The intervention by WCC and the police seems to have made no difference and we hope that something can be done soon as the situation gives a very bad impression of London.

Police Stations Many front desks at police stations will no longer be open all night as the number of visitors using the facility is extremely

low. Instead of going into police stations people now prefer to save time by reporting online or by calling 101. In an emergency always call 999 but for any other concerns use the 101 number.

KA BUSINESS

2013 AGM We have a provisional date of Monday 2 December. Please mark your diaries.

Officers A heartfelt "thank you" to Robert Crichton who has been verifying our accounts for over five years and has now decided to take a well earned break from the KA. And a hearty welcome to Paul Meitner, who has graciously agreed to take over the role. We are also delighted to announce that long time member, Melville Haggard has accepted our invitation to join the Executive Committee. He will be taking over responsibility for, among other things, Licensing and outside Tables & Chairs.

Stop Press We are continuing to develop our website and email communication capabilities. If there is anything you would especially like to see on the website (www.knightsbridgeassociation.com), please do let us know. In addition if you could let us have your email address we will be able to send you live information as they occur. Please send your address to info@knightsbridgeassociation.com.

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