



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER

Dear Member,

It was a great pleasure to see so many of you at the recent licensing committee hearing for the application by McDonald's to extend their opening hours. As you will read in the following pages, we were successful in having the application denied. Those of you who follow these things will know that of course the applicants have the option to appeal, but the entire episode for me was a model case study of the Knightsbridge Association and the work we do. First it was our licensing team that spotted the application and immediately lodged an objection with the council. This was followed swiftly by our electronic and paper campaign to alert members to what was going on and to encourage those who felt the same way to object in writing. As the committee chairman mentioned on a number of occasions, over one

hundred and twenty letters of objection were received as a result of our campaign.

At the hearing itself we were supported not only by council officers and councillors but by a large cohort of KA members as well, and we are fortunate in having achieved the result we had hoped for. There is no doubt whatsoever that the strength of feeling as expressed by the sheer volume of letters and the attendance on the day had a decisive impact on the committee. Points were put forward robustly but the proceedings were cordial throughout. We were unanimous in praising the applicant as a responsible operator and a good neighbour – it was just that the proposed extension of opening hours was a step too far.

That a major global corporation can have its plans influenced by local residents is truly a triumph of democracy. As a contrast it was interesting for me to hear, as part of the ongoing debate about the expansion of Heathrow airport, the CEO of a large middle eastern

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

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airline opine that the airport should remain open 24 hours a day. When it was suggested that residents living under the flight path might object, his response was 'they will soon get used to it'. No doubt that sort of prioritization of commercial interests is what has enabled his airline to thrive but at what cost to the amenity of ordinary people? We are lucky enough to live and work in a country where due process is sacrosanct. Everyone has a right to be heard and all voices carry equal weight.

Knightsbridge is a community, and a definitively urban one at that. Living in any city there has to be an expectation that there is going to be some noise, litter and other problems that are inevitable where large numbers of people gather. But as always, a balance needs to be struck where different people's needs and desires are weighed against often opposing requirements of others in the community. Reflecting on the outcome of this hearing, I feel that here was that balance at work: as residents we have to accept the problems generated by busy late night restaurants, at least up to a point. But the other side of that coin is that even a global business has to be

prepared to limit their operations so as to be good members of their community.

Have a great summer.

PLANNING AND CONSERVATION

Neighbourhood Forum

Neighbourhood Forums were introduced in the Localism Act 2011 and the KA applied to WCC to designate Knightsbridge as a recognized neighbourhood. Our application, with some amendments, was approved in March. The area covered runs from Hyde Park Corner along South Carriageway to Queens Gate, with Knightsbridge and Brompton Road forming the southern most boundary. The purpose of a designated neighbourhood is to provide a geographic focus within Westminster around which a Neighbourhood Forum can be convened to take responsibility for 'neighbourhood planning'. The concept of neighbourhood planning represents a fundamental change to the planning system. Communities will be able to develop policies that will become part of the planning framework for their area. They will also be able to grant 'permitted

development' rights for certain types of new development. Having been granted officially recognized neighbourhood status, the KA can now - should we choose to - begin setting up a Neighbourhood Forum. We are now considering whether to apply to RBKC to have their stretch of Brompton Road and the Knightsbridge thoroughfare similarly designated.

Natural History Museum.

The Museum ran a competition to find a design team that would improve and enhance the gardens in front of the Waterhouse building. There were five finalists and following a public consultation a panel of judges, comprising the museum trustees and local representatives, made the decision in April to appoint Niall McLaughlin Architects (NMA) and Kim Wilkie. Although all entrants submitted plans and designs, it was the teams themselves that were being judged. It was clear to us that NMA from their plans demonstrated the greatest understanding amongst all the teams of the Grade I building itself and its context, not just in relation to the grounds but also in relation to the wider area of South Kensington and Exhibition Road. The KA is

delighted by the result, as we feel confident the right team has been selected. The museum is in the process of putting together a master plan that could be implemented over a 20-25 year period. It will be a wide-ranging review covering everything from the public space and how people will be able to circulate to office and laboratory space. Following the generous donation to the museum from hedge fund manager Sir Michael and Lady Hintze the Central Hall will be renamed the Hintze Hall.

Brompton Underground Station

The KA combined efforts with the Brompton Association to urge English Heritage (EH) to list the former Tube station, the only remaining entrance of which is the distinctive oxblood tiled façade in Cottage Place. As we wrote in the Annual Report, the station, which closed in 1934, was taken over by the War Office in 1938 as suitable underground space for use as command bunkers. Sadly our efforts were in vain. We were disappointed with the response but whilst declining to list the building, EH recognised that 'Brompton Station's strategic importance in the wartime defence of the capital is

beyond dispute'. RBKC has said that although the frontage has not been listed it is a heritage asset that contributes to the character of the conservation area and they will make it clear to developers that it should be retained in any development scheme. Interestingly, the main entrance on Brompton Road was demolished in the late sixties together with a number of other buildings fronting Brompton Road to allow for the road widening scheme. The old tube station together with the modern buildings flanking it have been acquired by a developer, reputedly with Ukrainian financing for around £53 million, and pre-application discussions are taking place with RBKC planners.

34/35 Brompton Square

Last year the owners lost their appeal to build a new house in the rear garden, fronting Ennismore Street. The double building now appears to have been sold to developers and a planning application has been lodged to provide four luxury flats, entailing building an extra storey and rear extensions; excavating part of the garden for living accommodation and siting a carport accessed from Ennismore Street. It would also

mean demolishing some of the historic hitching rails and posts – see under RBKC ward funding. We are currently considering our response.

31 Brompton Square

The original owner went bankrupt and is now languishing in gaol having been found guilty of fraud. The new owner gained permission for a slightly altered proposal, and then everything went quiet about two years ago. However, things may be about to happen - workmen who were spotted entering the site recently were taking 'samples'.

RBKC SPD

The Council produced a Supplementary Planning Document for consultation on options for change of use for the Royal Brompton Hospital's site in Fulham Road, between the Royal Marsden Hospital and the Institute of Cancer Research. The KA objected to the fact that continued use as a health facility was not included in these options. Members were given the opportunity to comment.

Events in Hyde Park

This year's British Summer Time concerts will take place in Hyde Park between 3rd-13th July. In order to

accommodate the schedule of certain acts, four concerts will be held on the first weekend (3rd-6th July), then two the following weekend (12th and 13th). Midweek the site will be open to the public and will again feature various smaller events and include a farmer's market. Changes to the orientation of the stage, technical improvements and regular meetings between the promoters, the KA and other associations around the perimeter of the park resulted in fewer complaints last year than in previous years. Further meetings are taking place in the run up to this year's concerts. The designated noise telephone number for all events / concerts throughout the year is 0800 567 7079.

ITU World Triathlon 31st May and 1st June The event will again take place and will follow most of the 2012 Olympic route but remain entirely within Hyde Park.

To find out about road closures during the summer of events, go to tfl.gov.uk/road-closures.

WCC and RBKC LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Core Strategy - Partial Review

RBKC have consulted on the 'soundness' of the planning policies on Basements and Conservation and Design as part of the Partial Review of the Core Strategy. The Consultation, which is now closed, ran for a six week period during February and March. At the end of April the Council submitted its draft policy on basement development to the Secretary of State for examination. A Planning Inspector appointed by the Government examines in public the soundness of the submitted policy. Interested parties may attend and make representations at the examination. The Inspector will issue a binding report confirming that the policy is either sound or not. The Inspector's report may contain some recommendations and the Council will then make further changes before adopting the policy.

WCC completed their consultation in December for draft basement planning policy and they have published a table of the comments received. They are now going through the long process of reviewing and amending the policy. They plan to hold a further consultation on the amended basement policy in the more

complete City Plan for Westminster at the end of this year. They will also hold an Examination in Public, which will be reviewed by an independent planning inspector next year. In the meantime as an interim measure, WCC have drafted and consulted on a guidance note on basements. The final version of this will go to the Cabinet Member for agreement and adoption in early June.

Naturally the KA, on behalf of residents, welcomes the possibility of a tightening of the rules regarding subterranean developments. However, we are very aware that there has been fierce opposition from builders, developers and particularly basement specialists to any change to the status quo.

LICENSING

McDonalds had wanted to extend hours so as to open from 05.00 to 02.00 Mon - Sun (currently 06.30 to midnight). The KA mounted a successful campaign against the application with over 120 letters of objection being sent to RBKC's licensing committee including letters from WCC and RBKC Councillors. The KA was represented by Richard

Brown, a solicitor specializing in licensing from the Westminster Citizens Advice Bureau and a large number of residents attended the hearing. The Licensing committee rejected the Application and the Applicant has 21 days in which to state its intention to appeal. [The KA's principal grounds for objection were that the application, if successful, would draw people into the area; attract transient, late night customers in motor vehicles into the Montpeliers, Beaufort Gardens and neighbouring residential streets; result in more late night and early morning HGV deliveries creating noise and disturbance; create more rubbish in Brompton Road; and set a precedent for a late night entertainment culture in the area].

Raphael Cigar Shop: Sautters 8 Raphael Street applied for a license to open a cigar shop. The KA submitted an initial objection but further discussion with WCC revealed no real grounds for objection. The application involved a change of use to retail which is considered appropriate as long as trading hours are observed.

Polish Hearth Club: The KA, working closely with Exhibition

Road residents associations, raised a number of objections to the club's application to extend licensing hours, decouple alcohol and food consumption, permit access to non-club members and vary the usage conditions of the outside terrace. The WCC Licensing sub-committee granted the application while imposing a number of conditions in response to the KA's concerns. The Polish Hearth Club is appealing the decision but WCC plan to oppose the Appeal strenuously. The Council's lawyer will draft our witness statements (based on the KA's original objection letter). The Appeal hearing date has been scheduled for 4th, 5th and 8th September 2014 at Westminster Magistrates' Court, 181 Marylebone Road. Court commencing at 10am. We understand that the applicant has appealed pretty much everything - not just the terrace part of the decision.

Meeting with RBKC Councillors took place on 7 May with prospective RBKC Councillors for the new Brompton & Hans Town Ward to discuss steps that could be taken under Licensing [and Planning] regulations to redress the "café monoculture" now evident in

Brompton Road. The KA pushed strongly for RBKC (and WCC) to engage with freehold owners in the Brompton Road to commission a street scene / public realm report on ways to improve the local environment as recently undertaken by the Cadogan Estate to cover Sloane Street and other parts of their Estate

LAW AND ORDER

Fraud

Too many elderly residents are being conned out of their money and property and cash so we would like to remind you that:

- The police will never phone you to say they have intelligence that you are going to be burgled.
- The police will never take any of your property away from you to stop it being stolen.
- Your bank will never send a courier to your home to collect your bank or credit card. If someone phones to say they are sending a courier to collect your bankcard - they are about to

commit fraud with your card.

- If anyone phones you whom you do not know personally - do not give out any of your details to 'confirm identity', even if they say they are from your bank or credit card company - ask them to contact you by post only, and if still unsure contact a friend or family member to look at the letter for you and confirm its authentication. If it is from your bank, attend the branch if possible and have a face-to-face conversation about your affairs.

If you have a neighbour who is elderly or vulnerable please pass this information on to them. If you have any questions about crime, or would like further advice about protecting yourself please contact The Law and Order Committee through The Knightsbridge Association and if you wish we could arrange for a local police officer to call or visit you.

Begging & Aggressive Behaviour

Members continue to tell us that they are being targeted by the Roma beggars around Harrods and along

the Brompton Road. Unfortunately they will continue to come to this area if tourists, especially the Middle Eastern visitors, continue to give them large sums of money. Please don't give money to people in the street. These women are not poor women with babies who need help but members of organised Fagin-style gangs who are operating all over Europe and can be quite aggressive. Recently a young boy, who looked about four, was seen begging in the piazza next to Harrods. If anyone witnesses such behaviour or feels intimidated call the police non-emergency 101 number from your mobile and officers will respond. You don't have to wait for them just report it. Photos are useful evidence for us to use when campaigning to the police for more resources so please take pictures and send to maddie.elsdon@knightsbridgeassociation.com

Burglary

There have been a couple of recent burglaries. No need to panic, but to deter an unfortunate event homeowners are asked to review their security arrangements. Police have advised that:

- Safe and security keys should be in a place unlikely to be found easily and should not be identifiable as safe or security keys.
- When not in use, keys to the front door should be out of sight of the letterbox but easily accessible to those inside the premises in case of emergency.
- Keep safes and safe rooms locked shut at all times.
- Do not permit any unauthorised person to know the combination code to your safe - no matter how long you have known them.
- Consider keeping items of jewellery of significant value in a bank vault.
- Extend your security camera and alarm system to cover the area where the safe is located.

“Out of control” Dog?

Recent changes to the Dangerous Dogs Act mean that it’s now against the law to let any dog be “dangerously out of control” not only in a public place, but in your own home too. A friendly dog might jump up at someone when

you open your front door but this can now be perceived as “threatening behaviour”. A court could decide that your animal is considered dangerously out of control not only if it injures someone or someone’s animal, but even if it just “makes someone worried” that it may injure them or that they could be injured if they tried to stop your dog attacking their animal. The new Act states that a dog does not have to actually bite to be deemed dangerous, a person can simply “feel” that a dog may injure them. The law applies to ALL dogs so please: be sure to keep those ferocious chihuahuas away from the postman.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Residents Parking

We are very pleased that WCC has smoothly implemented 24 hour ResPark throughout our area and managed to do so before the local election. This change was much needed and should reduce circulating traffic and noise late at night. Thank you very much to everyone who replied to WCC’s consultation supporting the change.

Exhibition Road

By mid-May, WCC had completed the new layout at the top of Exhibition Road at the junction with Kensington Road. Amongst other things, the changes were needed to take account of increased pedestrian traffic since the implementation of the shared surface scheme in Exhibition Road. The simultaneous red light phasing on all four legs of the junction caused some initial teething problems for traffic but we are confident these will be sorted over the next few weeks, not least as drivers and pedestrians get used to the changes including no right turn from Exhibition Road northbound into Kensington Road eastbound. We may need the Royal Parks to take a more active role in managing traffic through Hyde Park (e.g. pedestrian lights rather than crossings at one or two locations on West Carriage Drive, small road layout changes and fewer closures of South Carriage Drive).

Drains

We understand WCC has let new contracts separately for street

works and drainage. We have asked WCC please to confirm which streets have so-called closed drains (i.e. which don't run freely into the wider London network) and clarify how frequently these drains are maintained (e.g. pumped out). Our inquiry was prompted after one concerned call to WCC's Environment Action Line about blocked or overflowing street drains got the response that it would be looked into by their contractors within 28 working days! In somewhat of a panic we contacted our Councillors who were able to expedite matters on that occasion.

MISCELLANY

PO Delivery Office

The South Kensington Delivery office in Imperial Institute Road closed at the end of March. Details of alternative arrangements for collection or delivery of items that they have been unable to be delivered will be shown on the 'Something for you' card they will leave at your address.

RBKC Ward Funding

Our application for ward funding for the restoration of the historic hitching posts and rails in Ennismore Street was successful and repairs and painting have now been carried out. It is hoped to install a small commemorative plaque after the local elections. Up until the early seventies, Fred the flower seller used to stand there with his pony and trap, before driving off round the streets. If he had any flowers left over at the end of the day, he gave them to the nuns at the convent at 44 Ennismore Gardens - long since gone.

Elections

EU and Council elections took place on 22nd May. We will give details of the successful candidates in the September newsletter. Brompton Ward disappeared and was split between the new ward of Hans Town and Brompton, and two other wards, Courtfield and Queen's Gate.

The Lanesborough Hotel.

The Lanesborough closed temporarily at the end of December while it undergoes a

major refurbishment and modernization programme. The hotel, which is currently shrouded in scaffolding, is due to reopen in the latter part of this year.

KA EVENTS

Visit to Bentley Priory

The pouring rain did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of around forty members and friends who left the bustle of Knightsbridge for a visit to Bentley Priory, a handsome country house set amongst beautiful gardens on the northern heights overlooking London. This was the Headquarters of Fighter Command during World War II and from where Sir Hugh Dowding directed his men in The Battle of Britain.

Upon arrival, over coffee and biscuits, Keith, our extremely well-informed guide, gave us the background and historical significance of this stunning house. After watching an extremely well-produced short film we toured the interactive Museum which detailed how the great events were played out at Bentley Priory. By the

afternoon, the rain had turned to a light drizzle and a few intrepid members were able to venture out into the Italian Gardens. It was a most interesting and enjoyable day. It was also an excellent opportunity for members to meet other local residents.

Due to the success of this visit we have been asked if it is possible to arrange similar days out so if anyone has any suggestions or would like to volunteer to share part of the load of arranging these type of events do let us know.

Drinks reception and Private View of 19th Century European, Victorian and British Impressionist Art, courtesy of Bonhams. 9 June 2014.

Apply by email to:

info@knightsbridgeassociation.com

or

by post to The Knightsbridge Association,

6 Montpelier Street, SW7 1AE.

Details have been sent to members by email or post.

AGM – to be confirmed

Annual Gala Dinner – to be confirmed

Yoshi Nishio

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Chairman

[chairman@](mailto:chairman@knightsbridgeassociation.com)

knightsbridgeassociation.com