



THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2015

Dear Member,

Before too many column inches are devoted to stories about washouts and (yet another) gloomy August bank holiday, it is worth remembering that in June and July of this year, we enjoyed some of the best weather of any summer in living memory. How quickly we all forget. With the winding down of the holiday mood and the ramping up of a new academic year, it feels all too natural to look ahead and forward, to see what is to come. But perhaps this is actually the time to look back, reflect a little and think about what has been achieved.

The Knightsbridge Association has zealously guarded the unique character of this urban neighbourhood since 1961. I think it is safe to say that without the work of our voluntary committee

members, we would all be living in a much less pleasant environment.

As you will read in the pages below, many issues that concern us today have been multi-year, in some cases multi-decade, sagas that rumble on. But again, were it not for the KA and its supporters, they would have ceased to be problems long ago since they would have been concluded, just not in our favour. And so we continue to fight another day, and the cause remains absolutely worthwhile.

As I noted in the Summer Newsletter, we will soon be joined in our efforts by the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF). As mandated by the Localism Bill, Forums will craft officially sanctioned Neighbourhood Plans that will form the basis for planning decisions in a given area.

Vice-President: The Lady Grade

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

Treasurer: Olivia J Cox

www.knightsbridgeassociation.com

So in effect, the KNF will draw up policies and the KA, in time honoured fashion, will endeavour to ensure that they are enforced. The KA has been the lead organisation spearheading the process of bringing the KNF into existence. I am hopeful that our institutional memory, honed over a half century of safe guarding the interests of Knightsbridge, can be smoothly shared with the KNF for the benefit of all.

PLANNING & CONSERVATION

**Edward Davies-Gilbert and
Carol Seymour-Newton**

REVISIONS TO COUNCIL POLICIES

Basements

RBKC's much trumpeted policy is now in place, so residents were somewhat surprised that the new (diplomatic) owners of 33 Thurloe Square, opposite the V&A, were given permission for a large two storey basement, seemingly in contradiction with their new policy.

WCC have now consulted on Basement Revisions to their City Plan and a proposed Article 4 Direction, which will remove permitted development rights for basement development across Westminster. Sadly this does not mean that basements will not get

permission; it means that permission will still need to be sought. See the draft at: westminster.gov.uk/revision-westminsters-city-plan. The emerging Basement Policy will be broadly similar to that adopted by RBKC and we hope will be rigorously enforced. Once the consultation has been reviewed, the City Plan has to be submitted to the Secretary of State and then undergo an Examination in Public. Only then will the Council be able to formally adopt the City Plan.

Office to Residential: change of use

Both Councils are consulting on another Article 4 Direction, which would allow them to opt out of the Government's new policy excluding the necessity to apply for permission to change office to residential use. They, and most central London residents' associations, maintain that the proposed policy would detract from the diversity of uses, especially with the continuing surge in the value of residential properties which has already led to many smaller and medium sized offices being converted to residential. Final approval of the Article 4 Direction would rest with the Secretary of State.

WCC PLANNING GOES DIGITAL

As indicated in the Summer Newsletter, WCC's Planning

Department is going paperless, in theory this month, but much remains to be sorted out between the Council and the twenty or so recognised residents' associations. Planning Committees will no longer be sent paper copies of applications but will have to study them solely online. Without much larger computer screens it will make our job virtually impossible!

THE BARRACKS

No further news has emerged regarding plans to sell off this Knightsbridge landmark. Some 20 investors from around the world are reported to be showing interest in this globally significant site, including one consortium whose plans would include keeping the cavalry on site. A MoD spokesman has said "We are working with the Army to develop an initial business case setting out options for an alternative base for the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (HCMR). No decisions have been taken and any change to current operations at Hyde Park Barracks would be no earlier than 2020."

The KA's greatest fear is that with HM The Queen approaching her 90th year, her demise will lead to calls to 'modernise' the monarchy, a diminished role for the HCMR and a subsequent free for all over

wholesale redevelopment of this historic site.

ALBERTOPOLIS

Natural History Museum

Our next meeting takes place in the middle of September, when we hope to be shown further progress on their plans for the Grounds Redevelopment Project prior to their being submitted to RBKC. We hope to have more details of how the plans are progressing in our year end Annual Report.

Royal Albert Hall

Their planning application, to create more underground space for improved facilities at the south east corner – detailed in the Summer Newsletter - has yet to go to WCC's planning committee for approval.

Royal College of Music

Following consultation with the KA and other local interested parties, as reported in the summer newsletter, the College submitted a planning application to transform the interior of their handsome Victorian building in Prince Consort Road. Whilst welcoming the proposals which will greatly enhance what the College has to offer its pupils and the public, the KA in comments to WCC flagged up a number of problems to do with traffic management which need to be resolved.

V&A Courtyard

Bulk excavation on the Exhibition Road site is now complete after nearly four months of non-stop-digging. The spaces for the new exhibitions gallery, feature staircase and back of house areas are now formed. Concreting works began in August and 13 large trusses to form the structure for the courtyard and gallery roof were delivered to the site and craned into place. To date we have been impressed by how little the work has impacted on Exhibition Road, a remarkable feat considering the magnitude of the project. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2016 and it will open to the public in early 2017.

55-91 KNIGHTSBRIDGE and 1-3 WILLIAM STREET

Important milestones for this project are expected to be as follows:

20 Oct – complete demolition of 1-3 William St

20 Nov – scaffolding to be completed on Knightsbridge

29 Mar 2016 – façade cleaning finishes

13 Apr to 9 Sep 2016 – main demolition works

Major cranes will be installed on 29 Nov 2015 and 10 Jan 2016

A small section of the façade which has been cleaned shows just how

stunning the Knightsbridge frontage will look when the project is completed in summer 2018. A website will be available for up to date information, and details will be posted when we have them.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ESTATE

The first public consultation took place in July concerning the first stage of the Estate's plans. A further consultation will take place at the end of September before the plans are submitted to RBKC in December. This includes the demolition and redevelopment of 33/35 Brompton Road (including the archway to Hooper's Court). In the longer term their plans for the block east from Hooper's Court, bounded by Basil Street, Sloane Street and Brompton Road involve: re-opening the disused entrance/lift shaft; moving the tube entrance away from the crowded corner of the Sloane Street junction; providing a much needed cooling system to the station; and removing the traffic islands/refuges in this part of Brompton Road to allow them to provide a wider pavement on the south side without any loss of road space. Hooper's Court would be retained as a pedestrian thoroughfare. They also propose to redevelop the east side of Hooper's Court above the station with offices and a large rooftop restaurant (if

they can attract one). The aim is to have top class retail in Brompton Road with a mix of office and residential above.

31 BROMPTON SQUARE

The saga of 31 Brompton Square, and its 30ft deep hole – once one of the largest individual private gardens in Knightsbridge – continues. To recap: the first planning application of recent years was submitted in 2004. This included massive excavation and extensions which multiplied by some four fold the total square footage. The KA led the chorus of objections, but to our utter amazement, RBKC granted permission. No work commenced. A revised scheme was submitted in 2007, which also gained permission. The garden was then gouged out and remains unchanged to this day. Meanwhile the owner went bankrupt and subsequently ended up in gaol for fraud and perjury. Then in 2012 the KA was approached by an individual who had apparently acquired the property and now wanted our support for another elaborate scheme. Permission was again granted but no work began. We now understand that the property has again changed hands so we presume we will be getting some new plans soon.

HANS CRESCENT

The KA has become increasingly alarmed about unlicensed street traders in Hans Crescent. They cause unnecessary crowding and congestion around the busy underground exit, an area by Brompton Road that should be free flowing. The type of traders range from peanut, souvenir & umbrella salesmen, to street artists, cardsharps, buskers and street performers. When this section of the Crescent was pedestrianised, RBKC specifically assured us that it would be free from commercial trading of this sort. We wrote expressing our disquiet to Cllr Nick Paget-Brown, who as well as being one of the local Councillors is also Leader of the Council, asking for RBKC to take action. The reply has been encouraging in so far as the Council acknowledges that there is a big increase in street trading in Hans Crescent. They will be taking this up at their joint meeting with the police to see what can be done to put a stop to it. Any action cannot come soon enough as no one wants to see Hans Crescent turning in to the piazza in Covent Garden (except, of course, Mayor Boris Johnson who wants to encourage this sort of street life and make London the “busking capital of the world” ...)

THE ROYAL PARKS CONCERTS

The British Summer Time events included eleven days of live music, comedy, free cinema, sport and community activities. For the third year running we understand complaints were down. Sound management has improved, security has increased and many more portaloos were provided.

Looking ahead, a member of the KA committee will attend each of three stakeholder meetings held by the Royal Parks in connection with the autumn/winter season. Problems experienced or anticipated will be discussed and solutions hopefully found.

Upcoming Events

(royalparks.org.uk/events)

Sat 12 Sep – BBC Proms in the Park. As in previous years, the Last Night of the Proms will be broadcast to outdoor venues all over the country including Hyde Park.

Sun 13 Sep - BBC Radio 2 Live
20 Nov – 3 Jan 2016 Winter Wonderland returns to Hyde Park. Part of the Parade Ground will again be fenced off prior to and after the event to allow for mounting and demounting. Remedial work to the turf will be carried out in the spring. The KA has repeatedly asked organisers to

take trouble to direct revellers leaving the event away from the residential areas.

Complaints - Dedicated

Telephone Number:

0800 567 7079

Residents experiencing unacceptable levels of noise should report them at the time of the nuisance.

LICENSING

Melville Haggard

WCC LICENSING CONSULTATION

We are waiting for the policy to be published once the results of the consultation have been taken into consideration.

CAFÉ BERLIN - 51 Princes Gardens

The KA supported an objection by residents to an application for extended hours on the grounds that it was completely out of line with the terms of the license variation agreed for The Polish Club at 55 Princes Gate, just a few doors away. The Polish Club conditions included provision for closure of the terrace at 10.30, including all staff clearing up. We await the outcome.

HARRODS - Georgian Restaurant

The KA has had extensive discussion and correspondence with Harrods' management about this application, including a site visit in June to meet Martin Illingworth and his team. We have suggested that a better balance of residential and commercial interests would be achieved if the closing hour could be kept to 24.00 on Monday through Saturday; and 23.30 on Sunday; along with a 'best endeavours' undertaking to procure alternative off-street parking when the Rysbrack Street NCP is closed for redevelopment. Harrods were not able to accept this counter-proposal and the KA has sent a formal letter of objection to RBKC. The application has yet to be determined.

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

**Simon Birkett, Chairman
Designate**

I am pleased to say that WCC formally designated the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (KNF) on 21 July. First steps have already been taken by the steering committee. A key objective of the Forum is to produce a Neighbourhood Plan over the next two to three years that will carry weight in local planning decisions. This will involve close work between the

KNF, the KA and others to identify the most important local needs and propose new policies for our area. Key themes are likely to be: protecting, preserving and enhancing the unique character of Knightsbridge; ensuring basement developments are sustainable and properly controlled; addressing traffic problems including speed and noise in Exhibition Road and local streets; supporting efforts to reduce crime and disorder and prevent public nuisance; improving quality of life for residents and enhancing the area for businesses and cultural institutions; and supporting measures which improve air quality and reduce noise nuisance. There will be several opportunities for local residents, businesses and others to contribute their ideas, probably starting with a 'drop in' session over two days in the autumn or new year. Please look out for details. Remember, it is the right of everyone living or working in this area to participate in the KNF and there will be more opportunity to influence the shape of the plan in the earlier stages. The KA will be making its views known and supporting the process

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Another key role of the Forum is to have a say with WCC in the use locally of substantial CIL payments

from future property developments. WCC is consulting on draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) about the CIL. We are very concerned that WCC is proposing to give local people less say than Parish Councils and others in the use of those funds. This cannot be right or acceptable. We will be supporting the KNF in asking our Councillors to tighten the wording of the SPG in favour of the Forum as the Government surely intended in the Localism Act.

LAW AND ORDER

Madeline Elsdon

START YOUR ENGINES

Supercars racing around the streets of Knightsbridge has now become a permanent phenomenon receiving world-wide attention and has been reported in newspapers as far away as China. This is now attracting visitors from all over the world who come to Knightsbridge to see high-value cars and take photographs and videos, many of which end up on YouTube.

These spectators are actually encouraging the drivers to perform stunts and other anti-social behaviour with their cars and the police have conducted operations all summer to try and reduce these activities. On behalf of residents we continue to complain about the manner in which these cars are

being driven and during August and September uniformed patrols in marked vehicles and on foot around Knightsbridge engaged the drivers of these vehicles and pointed out the impact it is having on the local community and issued Sec 59 warnings which could ultimately lead to the seizure of the vehicle if the car is repeatedly driven badly. Drivers of cars are also being warned for idling engines.

PSPO – *VERY IMPORTANT*

(rbkc.gov.uk/pspo)

At the time of writing, RBKC is consulting on introducing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), to address the supercar problem. A PSPO is a new measure, created by the 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, which is intended to deal with any particular nuisances or problems in a defined area that are detrimental to the local community's quality of life. This is done by imposing restrictions on the use of that area. The aim is to stop individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in public spaces. Failure to comply with a PSPO enables the police and Council officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of up to £100 or the individual could find themselves prosecuted. A breach is a criminal offence and liable on

summary conviction to a maximum penalty of a level 3 fine.

Specifically, the consultation is seeking views from residents on the proposal to introduce a PSPO in Brompton and Hans Town Ward.

You can find out where the proposed control zone will be located, what it means, and complete the online feedback survey by going on to the Council's webpage. **The consultation finishes on Sunday 20th**

September so please don't forget to complete. If you do not voice your opinions, you cannot expect anyone to address your concerns.

In addition there will be an information drop-in session in Hans Crescent on Thursday 17 September 2015 from 10am to 12 noon. If you have any questions regarding this consultation you can contact the Council by email BIT_ELRS@rbkc.gov.uk or call Joan McGarvey on 020 7341 5173.

Meanwhile, if you see a vehicle being driven in an unacceptable manner please call 101 (non-emergency number) to report it, just give a description if you don't get the number. You may even call the next day. It can also be reported to the Knightsbridge and Belgravia Neighbourhood Policing Team on 020 8721 2422 who are based at Belgravia Police Station.

It is important to report all crimes, however minor you think they are, as police resources are tight and they act on evidence so if there are few complaints then little or no action may be taken.

The good news is that the KA in the past having raised awareness of the lack of insurance for these cars, Middle Eastern drivers are now mostly insuring their cars correctly and this is a relief.

FOREIGN NATIONAL OFFENDERS/VAGRANCY

Westminster have increased activity with respect to Anti-social behaviour (ASB) (and wider criminality) linked to foreign national offending and vagrancy. Working with RBKC, Home Office Immigration and Outreach, Insp. Ian Rawlings from South Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) is leading three day operations where a significant dispersal zone is introduced on the first day and resources are committed on the following days to deal with people trying to return in breach of the conditions. The result of the first operation included 65 dispersals and 19 arrests. The police are keen to identify any evidence of organised crime in regards to beggars, illegal street trading, busking etc. This will be passed to the local SNT, ideally with details of times, locations, people and/or

vehicle descriptions where safe and able to do so. It is possible for the Police to issue warnings and then seize vehicles where they have documented evidence of vehicles causing ASB.

ENFORCEMENT

RBKC Enforcement Officers have seized various items. These include an ice cream van and peanut sellers' trolleys. There have also been fines for unlicensed street trading and two people were arrested for bursting balloons in people's faces who did not wish to buy the balloons. Tables and chairs outside cafes continue to be monitored.

CONGRATULATIONS

KA Planning Committee member and Knightsbridge and Belgravia Ward Panel Chairman Frances Blois has, after a close run race, been elected as Chair of Ward Chairs and will therefore attend the Westminster Safer Neighbourhood Board Meetings.

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

NIGHT TUBE

The start of the 'Night Tube' has been delayed as a result of strike action. No new start date has been set though the Mayor is clearly determined to push the scheme

through before he leaves office next May.

CLEANSING, HIGHWAYS AND LIGHTING

Marc Winer

The KA will increase its efforts regarding street lighting and cleanliness. As in the past, the focus is on identifying places where more lighting is needed, pinpointing lighting that needs repair, and monitoring streets, pavements and drains for cleanliness. Any of the above areas that need attention are identified to the relevant Council.

RAPHAEL STREET

At the moment lighting, cleanliness and drainage is a main area of work to address horrible smells and potential dangers from street drains outside Tattersalls Tavern. It seems that waste from local businesses has been getting into and blocking one or more street drains. Thames Water has been slow to engage but is now firmly involved in finding answers. WCC has taken first steps towards legal action in case those responsible do not respond properly. Cllr Devenish and street supremo, Ravi Kumar, have been marvellous in taking considered, robust and timely action to help us.

COUNCIL BORDERS

Another is the border zone between Westminster and RBKC around Cheval Place and Rutland Street, where the two Councils divide up street cleaning and rubbish collection between them. Thirdly, the cleanliness of the pavement in front of cafes, restaurants and supermarkets on both sides of Brompton Road (where responsibility is again divided between the Councils) has become more and more of a challenge as the number of tourists increases.

RUBBISH AND VERMIN

The KA and the Councils will have to increase pressure on the businesses themselves to play more of a role in keeping waste and dirt off the pavement. Rats and foxes are brought into our streets by rubbish put for collection. Residents should make every effort to store rubbish in closed containers until it is collected and use the strongest possible black bags, properly tied, when put out. A splash of bleach in or onto the bags seems to be some deterrent. Areas where rubbish is stored and where it is put for collection should occasionally be washed with soapy water, whether it is private property or on the public highway. Any input from the public on aspects that need attention is

helpful. Information can be sent to: info@knightsbridgeassociation.com

AROUND KNIGHTSBRIDGE

VALE – KLAUS LEIST

I am sorry to report the death over the summer of Klaus Leist who had retired from his KA roles earlier in the year owing to ill health. He had undertaken the quiet but essential work of keeping tabs on street lights and cleanliness in our neighbourhood. His calm approach to the frequent inspections of our several miles of streets and interaction with the Councils made an unsung but very important contribution to the safety and standard of living we residents enjoy. Klaus had served for many years on the Executive and Planning Committees. He will be much missed and we offer our condolences to his wife Elizabeth.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 7th December

We are delighted to let you know that the AGM this year will be held on Monday 7th December. We are extremely grateful to Gérard Sintès recently appointed General Manager of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel who is most certainly making his mark on our neighbourhood by generously hosting the event in the hotel's magnificent ballroom overlooking Hyde Park. Invitations to follow.

KENSINGTON PALACE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Independent charity Historic Royal Palaces, which operates the State Apartments and education facilities at Kensington Palace, (hrp.org.uk), are proposing to provide new, improved accommodation on site to maintain their roles and responsibilities within the Palace and its grounds. A public exhibition of the proposals will be held between 3pm and 7pm at the Kensington Palace Orangery on Monday 21st September. Members of the public are welcome to attend this drop-in event to view the proposals, and discuss any queries with the team on hand.

15 LANCELOT PLACE – invitation to view

Members are invited to attend a public exhibition to meet the team and view the emerging proposals for a new residential development at 15 Lancelot Place and 1 Trevor Walk. It will be open between 3 and 7pm on Wed 9 and Thurs 10 September at 15 Lancelot Place. If you are unable to attend and would like to know more, please contact Simon Gartshore (simon.gartshore@fourcommunications.com)

EATON SQUARE CONCERTS

Eaton Square Concerts – members of the KA – have announced details of their autumn season of 5

concerts at St Peter's Eaton Square. The first concert – a piano recital by Janna Fialkowska, is on Thursday 1st October. Full details and further information at eatonsquareconcerts.org.uk

WCC WARD SURGERY

There will be an extended Surgery for Knightsbridge & Belgravia Ward from 6.30 to 7.45PM on Wednesday 30 September in the Carlyle Suite of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. These are good opportunities to meet your WCC councillors and council officers and to raise any issues you may have.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE TUBE STATION WORKS

London Underground are undertaking major works in the ticket hall for a period of a month starting on 13 September. The station will operate as normal during the works but some disruption will be inevitable so allow extra time for your journey. Please note that the ticket office will close and will not reopen after the completion of the works. Tickets will need to be purchased from machines or online. We are assured that staff will remain on hand during tube operating hours.

Yoshi Tishio

Chairman

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