

CHRISTMAS 2007

Newsletter



PALAIS DE KENSINGTON CIRCA 1851 KENSINGTON PALACE FROM THE ROUND POND

From the Kensington Society
(Founded in 1953)

MEMBERSHIP

The Annual Subscription is £10. Members will simplify the collection of their subscriptions if they will fill in the Banker's Order below.

Please return the Banker's Order or send your cheque to:

The Membership Secretary, The Kensington Society,
c/o 2 Campden Hill Court, Observatory Gardens, London W8 7HX

BANKER'S ORDER

TO:.....BANK

.....Address of Bank

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Please immediately pay Barclays Bank PLC, Kensington (20-47-34) to the credit of The Kensington Society (70519138) my subscription of £ and continue the same on 1st January annually until further notice.

Name Mr/Mrs/Miss/Title).....

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GIFT AID

I am a UK tax payer, and I should like the Kensington Society to claim Gift Aid on this Gift and any others I may make in the future.

Name Mr/Mrs/Miss/Title).....

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Post Code:.....Date:.....

The Kensington Society - Registered Charity Number: 267778

Secretary's Letter

Dear Members

Those of you who came to our AGM this year will know I took over from Ethne Rudd as Secretary of our Society on that day. We are missing Ethne hugely and it will be a challenge for me to follow her. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible next year when the Kensington Society's Annual General Meeting is held at the Kensington Close Hotel, Wrights Lane, London W8 5SP, on Tuesday 29th April 2008. Our guest speaker will be Mr. David Prout, who is the new Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development at the RBK&C.

The Executive Committee is delighted to have been fortunate enough to co-opt Mrs. Gill Foley. Her role will be Events Secretary and she will be announcing future arrangements in our newsletters and Annual Report.

Loveday Waymouth, 12 Princedale Road, London W11 4NJ
020 7229 9650 email: vlw@lovedaywaymouth.co.uk
www.kensingtonsociety.org

Become a member of your local hospital

Did you know that you can have a say in your local hospital by becoming a member of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust?

More than 13,000 patients, members of the public and hospital staff are already members, which means that they:

- Receive a regular newsletter
- Are invited to hospital events including the Open Day and Annual Meeting
- Can vote in elections of patients, public and staff representatives to the Members' Council which has a key role in the running of the hospital

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, which opened in 1993, is in the top five NHS trusts for improved mortality rates, its infection rates are almost half the national average and the Healthcare Commission rates the quality of its services as 'Good'.

If you would like to become a member of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, register online at www.nhs-membership.co.uk/cwht or call 0870 707 1567

AGM 2008

The Society's Annual General Meeting
will take place on Tuesday 29 April
at the

**KENSINGTON CLOSE HOTEL
WRIGHT'S LANE, W8**

Doors open at 6.30pm, and the meeting will begin at 7.00pm.

This year's speaker will be Mr David Prout
Director of Planning and Development of the
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

A glass of wine will precede the meeting.

AGM 2008

Members will see that we have invited Mr David Prout, the Royal Borough's new Director of Planning and Development, to be our principal speaker. Since our outstanding concern is planning, and since the whole context of planning is in process of radical change both nationally and locally, this is the ideal time to ask our new Director of Planning to set forth his view of the way forward within the Royal Borough.

We are grateful to him for accepting our invitation, and we hope that many members will come to hear how the Royal Borough plans to negotiate the not always ideal planning conditions within the revised national and London framework. This will be an important and useful occasion.

Members should please note the new meeting place.

Robin Price

Holland Park School

The application, which this Society opposed on closely argued planning grounds based on the policies laid down in the UDP, has now been called in by the Secretary of State for review. The Society has written to support our position.



De Vere Gardens

The application to convert the significant site between De Vere Gardens and Victoria Road from primarily hotel use to residential accommodation was, after some deferrals, decided in favour of a modified scheme by the Royal Borough's Planning Applications Committee in July. Throughout the long drawn out process this Society and the Victoria Road Residents'

Association had opposed the successive applications on grounds of height, bulk, excessive excavations, unsuitability of the Kensington Road elevation, offsite affordable housing and unnecessary destruction of pleasing and appropriate 19th century elevations.

Although the final application was decided against us, we can reasonably claim that the two Societies' representatives have achieved an acceptable though by no means ideal compromise. Michael Bach and Amanda Frame are to be congratulated on their sterling representation of the amenity case throughout this difficult process.

100 West Cromwell Road (‘The Tesco Tower’)

The application for the huge, bulky, 27 storey (303 feet high) residential tower of uninspired aspect and strange internal disposition was turned down by the Council in July. Following misinformation that an earlier meeting of the Planning Applications Committee had been minded to approve the scheme, this Society and other local groups, including the local Ward Councillors, had raised considerable opposition to it, particularly because it would have created an unacceptable precedent for the immediately adjacent Warwick Road developments now being considered.

In the event, and for many good reasons, not least because the Council held that it had been internally misadvised, our representations, ably led by our Planning Chairman, Amanda Frame, as advised by Michael Bach, won the day.

Vicarage Gate Care Home

The High Court has referred the Inspector's decision of 2005 to yet another Appeal before an Inspector. The developers have since lodged with RBKC a second application for the Vicarage Gate site for 20 flats, of which 10 would be market housing and 10 affordable housing.

RBKC, greatly to its credit, bearing in mind the length, complexity, and expense of the case, maintains its view that the High Court referral relates to procedure and not to the main principle of social and community use of the site, a matter on which the Judge strangely failed to comment.

In brief, RBKC has decided to maintain its opposition to change of use of the site, both in relation to the original Northacre application and to the second application. The Vicarage Gate Action Group unanimously supports the Council's policy to maintain the Vicarage Gate site for social and community (nursing home) use, and so of course does your Society. Developers are relentless, so is the Council, and so are we.

Floods and excavations

The Society's active and often expressed concern at the increasing number and depth of excavations under houses and gardens, together with our frequent objection to such schemes, appears to have been vindicated – and very painfully for householders – by severe and widespread basement flooding during the torrential downpours in July. Norland Square, St James's Gardens, Holland Park Avenue, Blenheim Crescent, Elgin Crescent, and doubtless many other areas in Kensington have been very seriously affected. The Council has contacted householders in order to record the dismal tally. Under its new leadership, the RBKC Planning and Development Department seemed to have taken on the potential problem of the impedance of underground water percolation by impermeable excavations. We continue to hope that these serious and very damaging disasters will add considerable weight to our call for a full, and fully supported, ban on further excavations, bans which can stand firmly against the Appeals which will inevitably follow.

Robin Price

News from the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership

The Partnership's Steering Group oversees delivery of the Community Strategy and the outcomes contained in the Local Area Agreement, which is underpinned by the Strategy. While guidance is awaited from the Government on the requirements for the new LAA, the current Community Strategy is being reviewed and updated, taking into account new developments, e.g. the production



of the Local Development Framework, as well as such issues as sustainability and climate change. Monitoring the Strategy's aims and objectives shows that, in the Environment and Transport category, the green development guide for building and planning professionals is nearing completion; street lighting faults are being repaired more quickly; and the installation of white

lighting in residential areas (an aid to security) is progressing.

Work is continuing to improve the Borough's parks, and the green waste collection scheme is running throughout the year. Efforts are being made to encourage all schools in the Borough to introduce recycling schemes and to draw up travel plans. The introduction of an improved one-way system around South Kensington Station is expected to take place next year, and designs for improving the streetscape in the area are being completed. Also on the Steering Group's agenda is the consideration of a partnership approach to climate change, particularly focusing on its implications of energy and water use, waste disposal and travel. In the short term, Steering Group members are contributing to the Council's own project aimed to identify over the next six months the most significant factors expected to influence the future of the Royal Borough during the next 20 years.

The North Kensington Environment Project

Excellent progress has been made in improving 'grot spots' in the north of the Borough. Despite the unhelpful weather, the wildflower meadow opposite the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre bloomed; staff and pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit enjoyed school grown vegetables; the garden created beside St Michael's Church in Ladbroke Grove was formally opened, as was the new exhibition space beside St Marks Road under Westway (during the day of the great flood);

and the admired pocket park at the Ladbroke Grove end of Kensal Road was encouragingly not damaged during the Carnival. Voluntary sector participation is being sought to help with the maintenance of improved sites, particularly the one at the junction of Elkstone Road and Goldborne Road, and a wide-ranging consultation is now taking place to determine what improvements should be made to Sunbeam Gardens.

London in Bloom

The Royal Borough was judged to be the only Borough worthy of a gold award this year, an outstanding performance which means Kensington and Chelsea can take part in Britain in Bloom in 2008.

Celia Rees-Jenkins



VITAL INFORMATION!!!

The Mayor of London is on the verge of charging £25 a day to drive within the congestion zone...and there will be no exemptions for residents. This will affect anyone with a car which is in the band zones even if it is an old model. Please email your reply to the consultation* today....I know he does not pay any attention to consultation but we still have to try.

£8...with the reduction to a residences may be acceptable...£125 a week without exceptions is not!

*www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/projectsandschemes/roadsandpublicspaces/congestioncharging/consultations2007

Notes!

by George Wightman



London is the world's greatest city – rich history, superb buildings, marvellous parks, intimate villages, vibrant business. Nevertheless, a combination of banks, developers, planners and a new loving Mayor are transforming it into a copy of a soulless East European conurbation. The director of the Greater London Authority's Design for London Office (I bet you had never heard of that one), Peter Bishop, was reported as saying *The last thing London needs is vision* – an assertion which is as much a threat as it is a statement. Simon Jenkins (*Evening Standard* 28 September) recently alerted us to the fact that 20 towers over 300 feet are planned to rise in inner London and another 20 throughout the rest of the capital. Soon many of London's splendid (and spirit lifting) views will be obscured by rows of giant glass boxes.

The Government's *Green Paper on Housing* (23 July 07) proposes that 3 million homes should be built by 2020. It includes a lot of aspirations concerning improved design, affordability, carbon zero emissions, and government subsidy. In the main the *Green Paper* has been well received. It depresses me. While it may be the case that building standards have been upgraded, and no doubt are

becoming greener, the stated objective is numbers of units and not numbers of neighbourhoods. The unintended consequences of artificial housing units in high rise blocks and dead streets are all around us. Communities do not flourish in legoland.

It is known only locally that one of London's largest brownfield development sites lies alongside Warwick Road on the Royal Borough's western boundary. It is London's Western Portal. It should be a showcase entrance to London and represent the Royal Borough's twenty-first century architectural achievement. Instead the district is a shanty town which Tesco does little to improve. However, it is hot with unrelated planning applications for a variety of building footprints. The Kensington Society, together with local councillors and local residents, has fought vigorous and skilled battles in contending the worst proposals which foremost include the monstrous Tesco Tower. Amanda Frame's papers to the planning applications committee have been devastatingly professional and cogent. It is self-evident that the area needs a strategic overview so that as well as marking London's Western Portal it can become a thriving neighbourhood in which people (yes people) are glad to live and others wish to visit.

The new executive director of planning and borough development is Mr. David Prout. It is a good sign that his title now includes borough development as well as planning. It is also encouraging that he has instituted a review of the area.

Recommendation:

Every major new building and redevelopment should embed a plaque on the front giving the names of the chairman of the planning committee, the director of planning, the developer and the architect severally responsible for it.



EVENTS 2008

Applying for Events:

*Please send separate cheques for each event (payable to **The Kensington Society**) and a SAE to **Mrs G Foley, 34 Kelso Place, W8 5QP.***

A ticket will be sent giving full instructions.

Please supply a contact telephone number.

EVENTS 2008

Tuesday, 29th January 2008 **Visit to the Wellcome Library & Collections**
183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE

A guided tour of the recently opened Library and the extraordinary collection of Sir Henry Wellcome's passion for medicine, life and art. After the tour there are many galleries and Exhibitions to explore. There is also a café serving light lunches.

Meet at the above address at 10.00am **£7 per person**

Wednesday, 18th April 2008 **Visit to Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey)**
Warwick Square, London EC4

The Secondary of London and Under Sheriff, Mr Charles Henty will be our guide. We shall see the Number One Court, the Grand Hall and Roman Wall. Statues and artefacts of legal history, including the introduction of the jury system.

Meet at the Lord Mayor's Entrance at 5.45pm **£12 per person**

Thursday, 24th April 2008 **Visit to Winfield House Garden**
Winfield House, Outer Circle, Regents Park, London NW1

A privileged visit to the garden of the London residence of the US Ambassador. Set in 12 acres of grounds on the western side of Regents Park, it is the largest private garden in central London after Buckingham Palace.

Meet at the above address at 2.00pm **£7 per person**

Wednesday, 18th June 2008 **Visit to Stonor Park and the River &**
Rowing Museum, Henley on Thames

Discover a journey from the source at Kemble to the Thames Barrier & the story of rowing from ancient Greece to modern Olympic. Lunch in the Museum café at own expense.

Followed in the afternoon by a private tour of Stonor Park, home of the Camoys family for over 800 years and set in the beautiful Chilton Hills.

Depart by coach 9.30am (meeting point in Kensington tba) **£33 per person**

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

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President:

Sir Ronald Arculus, KCMG, KCVO

Vice-Presidents:

The Rt Hon the Earl of Snowdon, GCVO
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