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NOTTING HILL GATE IMPROVEMENTS GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE 64th MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3 MAR 09 AT 7.30
AT 233-235 WESTBOURNE GROVE LONDON W11 2SE (JOHN SCOTT'S HOME)

The meeting welcomed two enthusiasts who have lived in the area for some 30 years, Jane & Roland Cowan.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Maria Vlotides, Willoughby Wynne, Robin Price, Geoffrey Roome, Robert Meadows & Elizabeth Lindsay.
2. PRESENT were those ticked on the list below.
3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (63rd) held on 30th Nov 08 were approved with the accounts circulated at the meeting and were signed by the chairman.
4. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING Wed 15 Jul 09 – same venue 233 – 235 Westbourne Grove (J. Scott's house) at 7.30pm.

ITEMS FOR REPORT & DISCUSSION

1. RETAIL COMMISSION J.S. reported there had been very little concrete progress on the Commissions Recommendations. 54 of these had been endorsed by the council to secure the diversity of the Borough's town centres. Implementation would require multi disciplinary approaches by The Planning, Transport, Leisure, Environment and Property Services. In essence Central Government has been unwilling to give Local Planning authorities the tools needed to secure this diversity. Discussions with the G.L.A. has resulted in the Mayor of London indicating he will support S106 agreements to require developers to make provision for small shops in major retail schemes. Our Core Strategy under the new L.D.F. seeks to affirm the aims of the Retail Commission. However, because of the Byzantine complexity of securing approval of our Core Strategy involving at least 3 formal stages, approval is unlikely before 2010.

David Prout, our helpful new Planning Chief Executive, in his report to the Council of 19 Feb 09 reports:

Recommendation that the Council should lobby the Government to take the following action:

- 1) Changes to use Classes Order.
Small shops to be in own use class. Alteration to GDPO to require planning permission for changes from small units to large (inc amalgamations) but not large to small.
Define small shops as having a ground floor space of less than 80 sq. m.
Coffee shops and Internet Cafes to be in own use class.
- 2) Amend legislation to require planning permission for amalgamations of small retail units.
- 3) Unauthorised development. Amend legislation to allow LPA to serve Stop Notices on developers, for 28 days.

Comments:

The initial response from Yvette Cooper was polite but ultimately unhelpful as it concluded that there are already "a range of tools available to enable LPA to plan proactively for their town centres."

Following a request for details of this "range of tools", a further letter was received on March 2008 from Caroline Flint, the Minister of Housing and Planning. In essence we were advised to have "clear and locally specific planning policies, which reflect (our) ambitions for the future development of a centre".

The Government will not be providing the new tools identified by the Retail Commission as being necessary if planning is to take a more active role in maintaining diversity of town centres. The Use Classes Order will not be amended, and legislation will not be amended to require planning

permission for amalgamations of small retail units. This is confirmed by the draft PPS6 (Town Centres) a document which Councils have recently been consulted upon.

J.S. showed an example of the magnitude of the battle we face in preserving & enhancing our built environment by recording an Inspector's report. This involved the loss of front garden & balustrade walls at Guest House West 163-165 Westbourne Grove. The wooden decking and huge giant umbrellas appeal was permitted with the comment "...This building and probably many others in the area are roughly contemporaneous with the Great Exhibition held only a short distance away in Hyde Park. Albeit, on a relatively tiny scale, the parasols to my mind create a similarly bold display of which the Victorian builders would surely have approved." This outrageous and wholly inappropriate statement clearly illustrates the mountains of difficulty that we have placed before us. A further workshop on the Core Strategy proposals is scheduled for 2.00 – 4.00 on 7 April at David Game College, N.H.G. Members are exhorted to attend. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance". It is vital to attend and ensure recording of our views.

2. JO HAMMOND RBK&C TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE MANAGER. J.S. reported on a 2½ hour tour of the busy Portobello Road Antiques Market on Saturday 28 February with Costas Kleanthos, the PRTA Chairman. This had concentrated on the arcades the rich depth of wealth in knowledge, experience, expertise, fascination and variety of the art dealers which together make this place with its customers the largest and most renowned Antiques market in the world. It is something the Council should cherish, encourage and help.

Several aspects were identified:-

a. Parking. Parking should be free to 9.30am every Saturday. The road should be cleared of all vehicles from 9.30 – 4.30pm & free thereafter. Bona Fide traders should have free parking elsewhere from 9.30 – 4.30.

b. Arcades Rating Reduction. Arcades that have traditionally only opened on Saturdays from 7.0am to 6.00pm should be rated at a lower R.V.

c. Certain landlords actively seek to spoil the antiques market by selling clothing. They seek to emulate the high rentals achieved in Westbourne Grove, which is now a Mecca for high fashion clothing. Portobello Road is a Mecca for objects (R.R. pointed out these are eternally recycled and cherished). It is a "special" place and should not be "cloned" with Starbucks, American Apparel, cheap clothes & bags that can be bought in any city in the world. Portobello is a seriously characterful destination that any world city would protect, publicise with pride and support.

Currently the Council do nothing to reverse the downward spiral to ruin and loss.

It is hoped that a "Save the Arcades" policy be established with hopefully a separate use designation under the Use Class Order. In the event of failure the principle perpetrators of the loss of character, inter alia Warren Todd & Sheila Cook, should be called into the Leader's office to express RBK&C disapproval. Publicity should be voiced in the RBK&C Newspaper with a strong "Save the Arcades" policy as the strong established RBK&C desire. R.R. stressed that strong and determined action to preserve historic uses had long been very successful through the action of the Council's Mr Wheeler in Greenwich.

d. Shop front design. R.R. reminded the meeting that NHIG had inaugurated with Michael French a preferred shop-fronts policy (exclusion of plastic, aluminium shutters etc.) including grants for renewal of the worst types. It was agreed that this policy should be reactivated with proactive energy by The Planning Dept.

3. BUREAUX DE CHANGE. 148 Kensington Church Street & 99 Notting Hill Gate. These are clearly in breach of Planning and reduce the possibility of other more useful A1 shops. C.B. was requested to try to obtain some action through The Planning Dept.

4. CORONET CINEMA. J.S. reported that Cllr Daniel Moylan, Deputy Leader, had called a meeting with David McDonald, Ron Salamat and Pastor Colin Dye. The last named had irritatingly failed to attend. The Elim Church have now promised a timetable for full restoration.

5. PRINT PROJECT. T.N. reported that grave difficulties had arisen with England & Co., probably caused by the ‘credit crunch’. It was agreed if it was not possible to fix a launch party in June or July we should seek an alternative dealer. Currently only one photo is on view. T.N. will try to get further of the images on display.
6. CHEGWORTH FARM SHOP. The meeting agreed this was a popular shop and all agreed to support this farm outlet which was the essence of our aim to secure “small, independent, family-run” shops.
7. LINDEN GARDENS JARDINIERS PROJECT. Drawings for the proposed planters to sit on top of the plinths designed by Nathaniel Gee & Michael Whiteway were circulated and considered by the meeting. J.S. gave copies of Community Times in which he had written an article on the project in which a prize of £100 was offered for the best design proposed. An idea to plant miniature Linden trees was proposed for the Jardinieres.
8. COUNCIL’S MASTER PLAN FOR N.H.G. BY URBAN INITIATIVE. This has not yet been finalized.
9. N.H.G. UNDERGROUND STATION ART PROJECT. The vast number of advertising hoardings and other statutory notices have crowded out space for Art – as so much is now dictated towards maximising income, a scheme at N.H.G. like Paolozzi’s superbly rich & colourful tile project at Tottenham Court Road (and many others) is now impossible. Following a meeting at 55 Broadway with Mike Ashworth Design Heritage Officer, Tamsin Dillon “Art in the Underground” and Roger Headley Manager a further consultation with Daniel Moylan took place on site on 20th February. It was eventually stipulated that the only possible area for an Art installation was the 8 triangular spaces adjoining the 4 tube entrances/exits. Cllr Moylan suggested a lighting scheme would overcome the space problem and this was applauded as a good idea. Mike Ashworth has agreed to fix a site meeting with Tamsin on site to progress the project.
10. ANNE ELLIOT – ART CONSULTANT. D.M. reported most favourably on a recent meeting in N.H.G. with J.S. and Anne Elliot. She indicated the island outside Kensington Place restaurant was a favoured location for an Art installation and she agreed the Bill Woodrow bronze model of his proposed clock should be submitted. This was viewed by the meeting in the hall and it was reported that Anne & Daniel know the Artist’s work well.
11. FINANCIAL REPORT. This was circulated indicating a surplus of £16,312.
12. A.O.B.
- D.M. hoped that Newcombe House would now be used for small, innovative start-up enterprises.
 - A.P. felt the Clock should be in the central reservation as part of the “The Tree Line Project”.
 - R.R. felt N.H.I.G. should join with all the other local Associations and the Kensington Society to lobby RBK&C Planning Dept to enforce and address all those features (front gardens & baluster walls) that concern us all equally.

The members thanked J.S. for all his hard work.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Distribution:-		*=by invitation		
Petra Brown✓	Christopher Buckmaster✓	David Campion✓	Nathaniel Gee✓	David Marshall✓
David McHugh✓	Peter Mischon✓	Toni Newman✓	Dez O’Neil ✓	Andrew Pilkington ✓
Robin Price	Geoffrey Roome	Robina Rose✓	John Scott ✓	Amin Taha✓
Maria Vlotides	Iain Wilcock	Willoughby Wynne	Elizabeth Lindsay*✓	Kim Finer✓
Jane & Roland Cowan*✓				