

ESSA NEWS

WINTER 2020

• EDWARDES SQUARE • SCARSDALE • ABINGDON •

ESSA
your conservation
association

From Anthony Walker

Having lived in RBKC from 1961-5, and then from 1985 to the present time, I feel that Andy and I have a longstanding relationship with the Borough, and in particular with the built environment which we have grown to love. I have been a member of ESSA for twenty years and have been a Trustee and then Chairman for most of that time.

I have found this very interesting with many challenges which have led to lots of stimulating interactions with the other amenity associations in the area. I am delighted that now **Barry Munday** has agreed to take on the role and we have already seen that he is exceptionally well qualified for this.

The main concerns involve dealing with planning matters, traffic, the development of relevant legislation and the opportunities to modify or improve existing building stock and building types which offer special challenges. In particular, as we

live in a mansion block, both Andy and I have taken an interest in the development of mansion blocks, including modern examples and ways in which the more recent, often very large, examples can fit into the historical development of the area or mar it. There is a lot to learn!

As you will all be aware there is always a wide range of issues to be considered, many of which are discussed in this ESSA Newsletter. The possible changes in planning legislation could have a significant impact on ways in which the environment develops, including the introduction of cycle lanes, and the impact of the large new developments along Earls Court Road such as the Odeon site and the Cromwell Road developments will give us much to debate in the months to come.

Best wishes to you all,

Anthony Walker

Your New Chairman Barry Munday

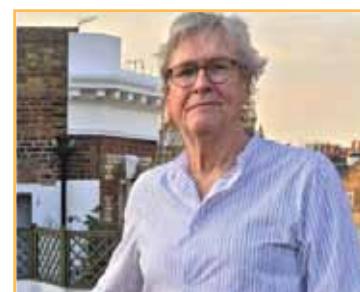
I am delighted and honoured to be taking on the role of chairman of ESSA, following Tony Walker's decision to stand down after 20 years in the post. I am also incredibly pleased that Tony will be remaining on board as a trustee to lend us the benefit of his enormous experience in conservation and planning. I look forward to his continuing advice and wisdom.

Our editor asked me to say something about myself, so here goes. Having lived in Sussex Gloucestershire, Devon, and Norfolk during a peripatetic childhood, I became aware that local materials and construction techniques and traditions created a special character or sense of place, a good grounding for any budding architect.

After studying architecture in London in the 1960s I joined the firm Powell and Moya. I worked on Oxbridge Colleges, hospitals, Chichester Festival Theatre and the Museum of London, but housing soon became my lifelong passion. I joined Phippen, Randall and Parkes (now PRP) in 1973 where I remained until I retired in 2007.

In the early 1990's I set up its City branch especially to deal with inner city regeneration projects.

After becoming chairman of PRP I became involved in several housing industry organisations dedicated to improving the quality of



UK housing including looking for good examples of higher density inner city housing in Europe, much of which has now fed through into best practice guidance. I have lived in Lexham Mews for the past 20 years, which is a joy and a privilege. We have some of the finest historic housing in London including stuccoed Victorian terraces and beautiful Edwardian and Art Deco Mansion blocks as well as garden squares and two magnificent parks on our doorstep. There is still a village feel to our neighbourhood but also an abundance of world class galleries and museums.

As ESSA moves forward, there are plenty of challenges ahead. On the planning front, enormous changes have been proposed by Government in their recent White Paper. The main thrust is to speed up the planning process through simplification. If adopted, this could have far reaching effects on the way local plans are drawn up and how applications are dealt with. There is a danger that local democracy might suffer in the process and we will be making representations to Government in association with the Kensington Society.

There are also proposed changes to the way target housing numbers are allocated and how affordable housing is funded. These changes could bring additional pressure on RBKC to find more sites. Affordable housing funding is also mooted to change from the present section 106 agreements to a broader based Infrastructure Levy on developments. This will pose challenges in high value areas such as ours. I will be keenly following the passage of these proposals and ensuring that ESSA's voice is heard.

Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor planning applications large and small and make sure that they enhance rather than detract from the area. The Odeon Cinema site is now moving forward rapidly. The long and hard-fought battles over the several planning applications by Tony and others are hopefully going to result in a good development and an exciting new cinema complex. Our local traders have served us well over lockdown and we want to support them as much as we can. They are

working hard to maintain a level of service against many restrictions. It is good to see a sensible approach by the council towards temporary licences for outdoor eating.

On the transport front, there are going to be temporary cycle lanes through Kensington High Street which may or may not cause knock on effects on our residential streets as motorists look to circumvent traffic jams. We will be looking to the Council to provide a safer and quieter residential neighbourhood and reduce traffic pollution. Well-designed housing and attractive streets and public spaces should be the foundations of any civilised society. I look forward to contributing my experience to help conserve the best of what exists and looking for high design standards in what is to come.

Andy von Bradsky, Head of Architecture at The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government has agreed to be our guest speaker at the AGM and talk about proposed planning changes and design coding.

Due to **Covid 19** we were forced to postpone our normal May meeting and had hoped that by November we would be able to gather at Leighton House with a guest speaker and refreshments. Unfortunately, recent Government announcements have made that impossible. To comply with our constitution and with Charity Commission requirements, we will hold an **online meeting via Zoom on Tuesday 3rd November at 6:30 pm**, with chairman and treasurer's reports and the election of trustees. There will be an opportunity for members attending to ask questions on the day or to submit them in advance of the meeting.

If you would like to attend please contact us at **ESSAW8@gmail.com** with **AGM** as the subject heading, and we will send you a link to enable you to join the meeting. We hope that things will return to normal next year and that we shall be able to meet in person.

Best wishes,

Barry Munday Chairman of ESSA

► WATCH RBKC's VIRTUAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Council is now running planning and most other meetings online as a live streamed event via YouTube. You can even set a reminder to be notified for a scheduled planning meeting you may have a personal interest in when the meeting goes live. Another advantage is extending our knowledge of planning matters or other concerns that are addressed at such meetings, which can be difficult during physical meetings. For example during the meeting of September 3rd, sunlight and daylight issues and the two main methods of assessing the impact of development, VSC and NSL were aired.

https://www.youtube.com/user/kensingtonandchelsea/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=1

Anyone can watch and listen by logging in to [Livestream youtube.com/kensingtonandchelsea](https://livestream.youtube.com/kensingtonandchelsea).

However, if you wish to speak be sure that you register first, as only those who have registered their intention to speak can do so. There are rules about the amount of speaking time allocated to objectors or supporters. Having attended two of these meetings I have been impressed with how well it works. The officers set out their report and recommendations clearly and can show key drawings and diagrams by screen sharing. Applicants and objectors have generally been able to make their cases well.

There are obvious benefits as it avoids having to turn out on a cold or wet night to get to the Town Hall. The sessions are also recorded so that you can watch them later if you are unable to watch them live. You can even pause them if for any reason you are interrupted.

The technology also seems reliable as long as you have a good internet connection. The downside, of course, is that not everyone has the IT skills or the equipment to join in. However, on balance I would say it is a success and ESSA would encourage you to tune in to a meeting just to see how it works.

By Barry Munday

► MAYOR'S AWARD FOR ANTHONY WALKER AS HE STEPS DOWN AS CHAIR

With the unanimous support of ESSA trustees, and the three Abingdon Ward councillors amongst others, Anthony Walker (nominated by Lloyd North) received a Mayor's Award for services to the community. A ceremony at the Town Hall had been planned but due to Covid-19 restrictions, awards were sent out by post.

Tony has been a conservation architect for much of his working life. His commitment to protecting architecture in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea has been tireless. ESSA have no doubt that his unpaid work has protected and saved much of the historic building of our borough, as well as enhancing the standard and quality of many buildings and developments in our borough.

In particular, during the past 20 years, since taking over the chair of ESSA, Tony has put in a considerable amount of time and work, with his professional background, to conserve some of our beautiful buildings and green spaces. His kindness and care has also been a hallmark of his efforts to support residents groups and individuals in our community.



Image: The Abingdon's socially distant pavement tables.

HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF THE ESSA CONSERVATION AREA

There are several ways in which the special significance of our built environment can be recognised and for those of us who live in Conservation Areas their designation is of particular importance. Unlike 'designated heritage assets' such as listed buildings which were designated by central government as Heritage Assets, Conservation Areas are the responsibility of Local Government. A conservation area is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act).

The Edwardes Square Scarsdale and Abingdon Conservation Area (ESSA) was first designated as such in January 1970, and was largely based on Edwardes Square, Pembroke Square, Abingdon and Scarsdale Villas, Alma Terrace, Allen Street and Earls Court Road. The area was extended substantially in 1974 and then in June 1982 Allen Mansions, Illchester Mansions, the Royal Naval Provost Headquarters, Wynnstay Gardens and Kensington High Street 197-213 (the odd numbers) were added. The views expressed by ESSA for the Conservation Area Review identify three main character areas:

- 1. The area to the west of Earls Court Road which is focused around Edwardes and Pembroke Squares,**
- 2. The terraces of houses from the east of Earls Court Road to Marloes Road and including Scarsdale and Abingdon Villas, Abingdon Road and Allen Street.**
- 3. The North-East part of the Conservation Area which was developed in the late 19th Century to include a number of red brick Mansion Blocks.**

VILLAS, whether alone, semi-detached or as terraces and squares, dominate the building types in the area. Stucco is used as dressing and in some cases as complete facings to the ground floor with decorative window surrounds to the upper floors. Edwardes Square was one of the first formal developments along Kensington High Street having started building in 1811 with houses lining the main road as far as Earls Court Lane (Road). A toll gate controlled this junction between Kensington to the west and Earls Court to

the south. In 1819 an Act of Parliament was passed for paving, lighting, watching, watering, planting and improving Edwardes Square.

MEWS. There are a number of small mews developments such as Lexham Mews or Adam and Eve Mews, which were situated to provide industrial or commercial accommodation, partly because the new flat occupants who crowded into the district after 1885 had no need for their own stables. Many of the mews properties, regardless of their original use, were converted to houses or flats.

ARTISTS' STUDIOS.

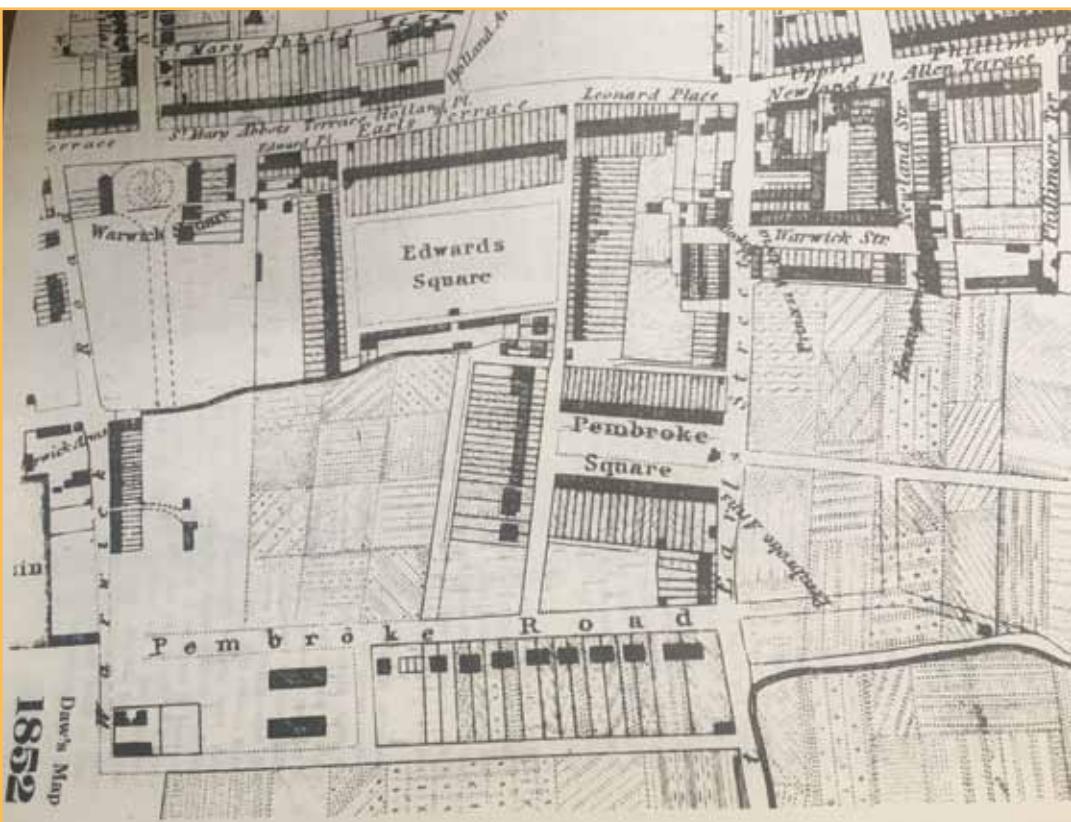
There are a number of artists' studios in small groups around the Conservation Area which provide a distinctive building type. It is sad that, although a limited number of studios have survived, most have now been taken over to provide attractive and valuable houses or flats. The Supplementary Planning Guide on Studios provides a useful guide to the re-use of these buildings.

PUBLIC HOUSES.

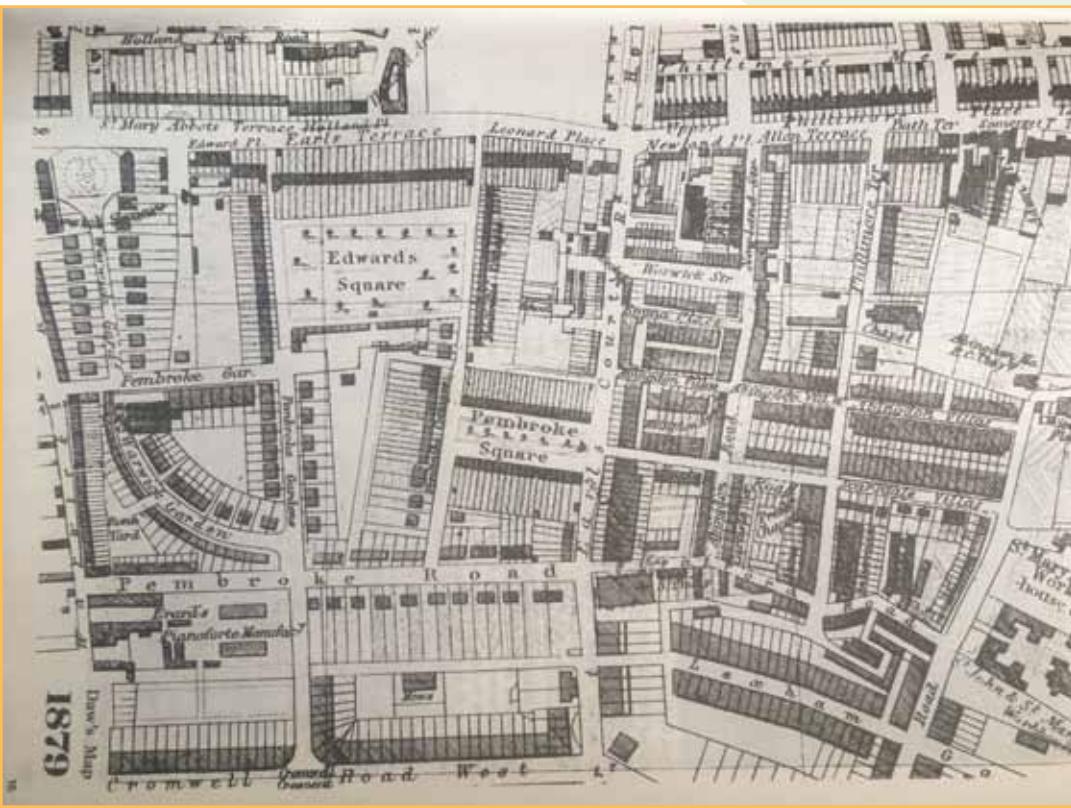
There are a number of these in the area, many of which were related to local breweries, for example the Britannia at 1 Allen Street and the Britannia Tap in Warwick Road, both of which were linked to the Britannia Brewery and were close to the docks situated near Warwick Road. The Star and Garter stood at the corner of Kensington High Street and the Earls Court Road until it was converted to a Lyons Corner House in 1910 which was sadly hit



Left:
Illustrations from
the RBKC
Conservation Area
Policy Statement



Above and below: Illustrations from the RBKC Conservation Area Policy Statement



by a flying bomb in 1944. Retail buildings on a small scale have developed in several locations and in many cases have made a positive contribution to the character of the area. These include the eastern end of Stratford Road, the northern end of Earls Court Road and Abingdon Road, and the terrace in Kensington High Street adjoining St Mary Abbot's Place. The following public buildings in the area are among those which contribute to its character:

- *St. Sarkis Armenian Church*, listed grade II in January 1981.
- *Our Lady of Victories*, Kensington High Street.
- *St Philips Earls Court Road*.
- *St. Mark's Coptic Church*.
- *Kensington United Reformed Church*, Allen Street.
- *New Apostolic Church*, Warwick Gardens.
- *The Church of Christian Science*, Wrights Lane.
- *Police Station*, Earls Court Road.
- *A wide range of primary schools*.

The ESSA Conservation Area Policy Statement illustrates with attractive pen and ink drawings many of the buildings in the area including Rassells the Nurserymen at the eastern end of Pembroke and overlooking the Earls Court Road. Yet another example of the variety of building types in the area which contribute to its character and charm. Illustrations are from the RBKC Conservation Area Policy Statement.

By Anthony Walker

► PLANNING CHANGES ARE COMING

Or more accurately have come. Late July and early August saw the government issue papers which both announced changes coming into effect on 1st September and a white paper proposing radical changes to the whole planning system which are presently out for consultation and are likely to involve major changes over the next few years.

The key aims of the white paper are to simplify and speed up the process but also to put the emphasis on simpler and quicker-to-produce local plans which are going to provide the main opportunity for public consultation, removing the present emphasis on consultation relating to actual applications in the (possibly vain) hope of reducing the NIMBY tendency. The headline claim is to clear the way for more homes to be built but the legislation when it comes will affect all classes of development.

Most controversially the government aims to eliminate the labourious and time-consuming business of local authorities having to assess the need for more housing land and then demonstrating a sufficient land supply for the next few years. These processes take up an inordinate amount of time and effort at public enquiries and so forth. Government feels that handing down housing targets on the basis of an algorithm apparently based on affordability of housing in the area should do the trick.

Sadly life is not quite so simple. The algorithm is aiming at over 300,000 new homes a year for England and putting one third of that burden on London. Without significant greenbelt release London does not have the land on which to build these numbers.

To give one simple example: For the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea the London plan anticipates something like 448 new homes are to be built annually while the algorithm (which is out for consultation and stirring up predictable hostility) suggests that the borough needs to produce 3,285 new homes per annum. That is a measure of the problem.

I expect to follow all this up in the next ESSA newsletter to avoid filling these pages with speculation. More useful might be a note on the changes which have now come into effect. These

HOW THE NEW UPWARDS EXTENSION P.D. RIGHTS WILL WORK:



Above: Fast-tracked approval for building upwards Diagram explaining how this works by Andrew Rogers for the Association of Consultant Architects©

principally affect permitted development and the use classes order. Put simply, the first effectively grants planning permission for certain developments which means local authorities can do little to interfere. The second classifies different uses so that uses falling within the same class can be interchanged without the need for permission. Authorities may grant permissions which impose limits but can't easily limit changes for existing uses.

What the government has done, ostensibly in the interests of saving High Streets, is to put the vast majority of commercial uses into a new class, class E. Over the years the number of classes and subdivisions has constantly grown resulting in excessive levels of micromanagement. The impact on the economy is cumulative. In 1987 light industrial uses were merged into the same class as office uses and Chancellor Nigel Lawson observed that this change gave a greater boost to the British economy than did Big Bang – the deregulation of financial services. These are not insignificant measures.

Many will be concerned that the new class E is a step too far and indeed there are one or two uses which look odd in the way it has been done (see BOX) and may be adjusted in due course. For ESSA the main effect is likely to be on Kensington High Street though a problem there is the fragmented ownership which inhibits good 'curation' of the retail mix.

Whilst owners do not enjoy empty shop units, for investment reasons they are likely to be cautious about allowing other uses.

What about upward extensions and the other permitted development rights which were also introduced, I hear you ask. Well ESSA is a conservation area so these changes generally do not apply within or if they have a harmful impact, on the periphery.

Brian Waters, an ESSA committee member, is an architect and town planner and chairman of the London Planning & Development Forum and editor of **Planning in London** magazine.

BOX 1: Latest government guidance

On 18 September 2020 MHCLG amended its guidance to take into account the amendments to the General Permitted Development Order that I have covered in recent posts. So now we have:

- Updated Planning Practice Guidance on when planning permission is needed
- Updated Planning Practice Guidance on town centres and retail
- Updated Planning Practice Guidance on planning application fees to reflect the new permitted development rights to build upwards
- “Key fact sheets” on recent permitted development rights and changes to the Use Classes Order.

permission, but will always need planning permission to convert to another use.

- There will be protections for community uses, such as small isolated shops, community halls, outdoor sports areas etc will be able to change between these functions without planning permission, but will always need planning permission to convert to another use.
- Existing rights to convert buildings into residential will be unaffected until 31 July 2021. Consideration is being given to a new right to change use from the new Commercial, Business and Service use class to residential.

Why are you making these changes?

As we protect and grow our economy post covid, we must think flexibly about how best to support our high streets and town centres. These changes will give high streets the ability to adapt quickly to new uses where they might be greater value, or to change into housing in due course. This gives the high streets and our town centres the best chance of adapting and thriving, but we are protecting uses which bring unique benefits, like local pubs – and local authorities will still be able to control use changes that might bring nuisance to the community – like betting shops.

What safeguards are in place?

- Some types of building are listed with ‘no class specified’ – for example pubs, cinemas, and concert halls – so if an owner wants to repurpose the building, they would need full planning permission and local consideration. This means buildings which bring particular benefits to the local community will be protected.
- Also listed separately are ‘nuisance uses’ – buildings like hot food takeaways & betting shops which attract strong views locally. Buildings will not be able to transition into hot food takeaways or betting shops without full planning permission, and licensing consent will still be required for selling alcohol.
- A new ‘Local Community’ use class, which protects uses important to local communities – like swimming pools, skating rinks and areas for outdoor sports
- Planning permission will still be needed to convert homes into other uses
- See: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020 No.757)

BOX 2: Flexible use on the high street: The government key facts brief

What are the changes? Before now, property holders would generally need to seek full planning permission or make use of permitted development rights to change the use of their premises, e.g. from a shop into a restaurant, or a restaurant into an office. We are simplifying this into a streamlined system, so that:

- Buildings can convert between commercial, business and service uses – shops, restaurants, services (like banks), gyms, offices, research facilities – and into a mix of such uses – without needing planning permission
- There will be protections for learning uses, such as schools, libraries, art galleries etc, which will be able to change between these functions without planning

► TEMPORARY CYCLE ROUTE IN HIGH STREET KENSINGTON

One of the many effects of Covid-19 in London has been the reduction in public transport usage, whether by physical seating restrictions on the part of TfL or simply by the public's reluctance to use buses and tube trains. There has been a corresponding major increase in cycling both for commuting and leisure purposes. RBKC is a small Borough but includes several important east west routes to and from the West End and City.

Back in June 2019 RBKC rejected Transport for London's plans for an ambitious cycle route along Holland Park Avenue which was fiercely opposed by residents. However, the Corvid epidemic has placed further pressure on the council from TfL and the London Mayor as well as central government to find ways to assist cyclists to commute to work or school. On 13th July I attended a "virtual exhibition" chaired by RBKC Councillor Johnny Thalassites, lead member for Transport, to reveal plans for a proposed temporary cycle route for the length of Kensington High Street. The plans were having to be drawn up as a matter of urgency, under pressure from TfL and the London Mayor in order to create a cycle route from Hammersmith through to Hyde Park Corner, linking with the schemes already proposed or in place within the neighbouring boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster. Consequently, the normal timescales for full consultation were not available. The threat was also apparently made that unless this happened, TfL would take control of the High Street from RBKC.

It was emphasised that the scheme would be temporary in nature and would not involve any permanent highway infrastructure changes. It was hoped that attracting more cyclists through the High Street might have a beneficial side effect on High Street retail and food and beverage outlets. It was also pointed out that many of the new cyclists would be inexperienced and would need to be protected as far as it was possible to do so. The proposals will involve cycle lanes adjacent to the kerb lines on the north and south sides of the High Street each with a minimum width of 2.2 metres. These lanes would be separated



from the vehicular traffic by means of "wands" or posts at 4 metre centres. The plans would involve the need to provide temporary loading and unloading bays for local businesses, either within the central reservation or within the local side roads.

Since the July meeting further changes to the proposals have been made including an increase in width to 2.5 metres where possible, additional loading bays and improved signalling at the major junctions to protect cyclists from left turning vehicles. Bus stops offer a challenge and it is anticipated that where there is space, the cycle lane will run between the bus stop and the footway. Reactions to the proposals have been mixed. Encouraging cycling self-evidently is a good thing for reasons of health and fitness as well as the environmental benefits of less air pollution, Co2 emissions and noise. However, not everybody is able to cycle, particularly the elderly, the very young or those with disabilities. With the irresistible rise of online shopping there are more delivery vans on the road. Thus, the extremely low levels of traffic experienced during lockdown have since risen to somewhere approaching previous norms. That trend is likely to continue.

One of the fears expressed to Cllr Thalassites was that congestion at either end of the High street, as a result of the cycle lanes, would cause traffic to divert through the side roads such as, Earls Court Road, Allen street and Wrights Lane . I was assured that this would be carefully monitored and, if necessary, the temporary scheme modified or halted.

We have now been told installation will begin from 28 September. The first phase will involve installation of the cycle lanes and "wands" on both sides of the road. This phase will be completed by the Council and will provide protected lanes for most of the route. The second phase - expected to take place by the winter - will upgrade the junctions to complete the route. This phase will be undertaken by Transport for London.

We will be carefully monitoring to see whether there are harmful side effects on the ESSA area such as rat running and increased pollution. You can find the RBKC information here:

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/timetable-confirmed-kensington-cycle-lane>

By Barry Munday

► ODEON SITE

There's hope if you live next to a building site! On the corner of Kensington High Street and Earls Court Road, a complex mixed-use development is coming out of the ground incorporating a Multi-Screen Cinema, leisure and retail accommodation, flats, terraces and parking space.

We have lived next to a potential major development site for as long as anyone here can remember. After living through battles over planning permissions, appeals, financial crashes, developers being taken over, work starting and then stopping, leaving a derelict site with an uncertain future, we ended with the site being acquired by the current developer, the Lodha Group.

They produced, after full consultation with residents, amendments to the existing planning permission which were, in the main, a great improvement and supported by most residents. They have now been approved and work is well under way.

Any major development, particularly one digging deep underground is bound to cause nuisance and inconvenience to immediate neighbours, particularly in relation to noise and vibration and we have all

experienced these as the digging stage has progressed. That said, Lodha have continued to consult throughout and, in the main, have attempted to deal with the points we have raised.

We feel it will all be worthwhile in the end, although there will always be losers as well as those who benefit from the new local facilities.

By Vanessa Gordon

Report from **Brett Henderson from the Lodha Group**, the developer, is shown below:

"Regarding our development's progress, piling works have been completed and the piling contractor will be looking to demobilise in the next couple of weeks. This is good news from a noise perspective as the noisiest development works, demolition and piling, are now all completed. The next phase of works will involve more people and on-site social distancing protocol is underway."

We are continuing to excavate and break down piles in preparation for concreting the capping beam on top of the piles around site and this activity will continue until the middle of December to complete the capping beam. Please bear with us as the breaking of the top of the piles will create some noise, however these works will certainly be done within



Above: Odeon Site 3d view from Google



the permitted high impact hours stipulated within our CTMP (Construction Traffic Management Plan). Excavation works inside the piled area will also take place with soil regularly transported away from the site.

We have also started creating the new site entrance from Earls Court Road. The new entrance will allow us access on to the new logistics slab which is now being erected. A temporary pedestrian diversion will be in place, as agreed with the Council, while these works are in progress. We plan to have the pedestrian walkway reinstated by the 6th of October 2020.

All the vibration, sound and dust monitors are still active and will trigger alarms via an email for

management to take action in the event that it goes above the trigger levels agreed by the Council. We will continue striving to minimise disruption and disturbance from our works as far as possible, and we will continue to update the local community as work on site progresses."

We invite you to follow progress in the coming issues of the ESSA Newsletter.

► 97-109 CROMWELL ROAD KENSINGTON FORUM HOTEL

This site is not within the ESSA area, but you will recognise it as the enormous hotel tower opposite Sainsburys. It has always appeared, to me at least, completely out of scale and keeping with its surroundings and is visible from miles around. But if you think that is bad, something much bulkier and taller could be taking its place.

In 2018 an application was lodged for a comprehensive redevelopment and erection of building comprising part 30 storeys, part 22 storeys and part 7 storeys building comprising hotel

bedrooms and serviced apartments with ancillary bar, restaurants, conferencing and dining areas and leisure facilities together with private and affordable housing. The application was turned down by RBKC mainly on the grounds of its inappropriate height and bulk.

The Mayor of London decided that the site was of such strategic importance that he would take over the application through an Article 5 direction and duly decided to give the scheme consent. Legal proceedings were instigated by RBKC against the Mayor's actions and it was found that the Mayor's decision was taken "for improper purpose" and was quashed by the High Court.

Notwithstanding, the application is due to be redetermined by the Mayor at a public meeting on 22nd October. It is understood RBKC will be represented and will be maintaining their original objections. The Kensington Society together with other residents' associations will also be objecting and have engaged specialist skyline consultants to help demonstrate the adverse impact of the proposals over a wide area. This is close to the ESSA area and will have visual impact upon it, the trustees have agreed to give some modest financial support to the cost of the consultants' work.

The virtual Public Hearing is provisionally arranged for 22nd October at 13:30pm. Confirmation of this date and how to log in will be published on the London Mayor's website 21 days before the hearing.

By Barry Munday



► RECENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

AVON HOUSE is the former nursing home in Allen Street, next door to the Grade II Listed United Reformed Church. The care home closed in 2013 after poor Care Quality Commission reports. It was bought by developers who in August 2016 received Planning Consent for a 24 bed 4 storey neurological unit which included a double basement. Because there was no interest from operators, a new planning application was submitted in 2019 for a 46-bedroom care home. The developers claimed that only a unit of this size would be viable. Further, because they had made a "meaningful start" on the permitted scheme it meant that the proposed double basement could still be built.

After a period of discussion, during which the architects changed and the design was pushed and pulled to fit the very tight site, it went to committee in March 2020. The committee did not approve the scheme and asked the developers to make several changes and return to the next committee meeting. The meeting was delayed until September 3rd. ESSA, together with Kensington Society registered objection partly on matters of detail but also regarding the impact on adjoining properties in terms of daylight and sunlight.

During the intervening period, a very vigorous campaign of opposition was organised, principally by the adjoining owner at 16 Allen Street, Dr Nikki Lee, and the residents of Abingdon court led by Mary Forsyth together our local Ward Councillor Anne Cyron and MP Felicity Buchan. At the committee meeting it was decided on a majority decision that the application should be refused on the grounds of the significant impact on the living conditions of surrounding properties. It was felt by the committee that the harm would not be outweighed by the benefits that would be produced through the development. No doubt this site should be developed to provide a much-needed care facility. Unfortunately, it will remain vacant until a development which is more sensitive to its neighbours comes forward.

ALLEN HOUSE

This distinguished mansion block next door to the old Waterstones has once again come forward as the subject of a planning application. Permission was granted back in April 2019 for 44 apartments in a new building behind a retained façade with basement parking for 16 cars. Construction was not started within the following 3-year period and thereby the permission has expired.

A new application was made in 2019 for a similar scheme with the exception that there would be no basement parking, thereby allowing one further apartment to be provided. On the face of it, this could be regarded as an improvement except that the developers were asking for all the apartments to have a right to apply for resident parking permits. ESSA objected on the grounds that this would create unacceptable pressure on the existing resident parking within the area.

After further study, it was felt that the application was really a re-hash of the earlier expired permission and did not conform sufficiently with the latest Local Plan or the GLA's London Plan. ESSA has therefore submitted further set of objections on the grounds of non-conformity with environmental policies, affordable housing provision, fire safety and insufficient private open space. The Kensington Society has submitted similar objections.

By Barry Munday



► SEASONAL TIPS FOR OUTDOOR SPACES

If you have a garden or balcony with pot plants, now is the time to inspect and make decisions about pruning away overgrowth and clearing away leaf litter around the garden and potted plants.

Cherry trees in particular should be pruned before leaf fall to prevent rots on branches and stems - at this time of year their leaves start to look dull before leaf fall. They also often show spread out laterals that could be cut back to keep the tree in shape. Do look out for damage to box plants from the box tree moth. Visible signs are dead browned leaves with a webbed covering that may hide little green & yellow striped caterpillars. The moth is white with grey markings. Treat with TopBuxus bacillus thuringiensis, available online.

Keep cutting back dead stems from herbaceous perennials to encourage new ground level growth for next year. Pull out weeds and finally plant out bulbs so that Spring is a time to look forward to, following what may be a long difficult winter for us all. Bulbs look best where planted under trees and deciduous shrubs. There are so many options as bulbs can look great in tubs & window boxes - just make sure they are planted deep enough to prevent squirrels digging up crocuses or wind blowing down narcissi leaves. Lots of advice can be found on the RHS website about bulbs.

By Jacqueline Tucker



*Left image:
A dash of purple
on the balcony*



Above: Autumn in Edwardes Square

► MANSION BLOCK GROUP UPDATE

We would like to welcome Ladbroke Grove House as our newest member. Over the Spring & Summer we carried out a survey for our 25 Mansion Blocks. We will use the results to guide our future meetings, which we hope to re start as soon as we can, when Covid-19 guidelines allow.

Mansion Block Group representatives have been in touch with each other to discuss various matters in common. Security has been raised as a matter that many have been concerned with, followed by a strong interest in future environmental matters to include energy saving ideas.

We are also looking into history and architects who designed other Mansion Blocks outside London, such as 4 Grand Avenue in Hove, which was designed by the same architects as designed Chatsworth and Marlborough Courts, in similar Art Deco style.
More news soon...

By Lloyd North



*Left image:
Ladbroke
Grove House*

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