

News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

SPRING 1993

LONDON CONSERVATION AREA CONFERENCE

How to save Conservation Areas from a slow death was the theme of an all-London Conservation Area conference held at the Art Workers' Guild on 25 November 1992 and initiated by the Ladbroke Association.

It might seem *folie de grandeur* for us to take the lead in such an ambitious project, but this was the brainchild of Thomas Pakenham (Chairman 1989-1992), and Dudley Fishburn, MP for Kensington. A high-powered committee was cobbled together, including Marcus Binney, Chairman of Save Britain's Heritage, Teresa Sladen of The Victorian Society and Rosemarie McQueen of the Association of Conservation Officers. The Georgian Group generously lent Steve Parissien, its new education secretary, to organise the conference with professional expertise.

The conference attracted more than a hundred delegates from national and local government and national and local amenity societies. Everyone seemed to pronounce the event a success – even Robert Key, the Minister of State for National Heritage, who found that no one had a good word to say for the Government's record in guidance and legislation for Conservation Areas.

Dame Jennifer Jenkins, conference Chairman, put the central question bluntly to the conference. Conservation Areas enjoyed remarkable support from the public, but how could the authorities be given the powers to prevent continuing damage to them from the accumulation of small alterations and additions?

Sophie Andreae, London Director

of English Heritage, explained the intellectual muddle that lay at the root of relevant planning laws. At present there was no clear presumption against demolition of buildings within Conservation Areas, only the pious hope that the 'character and appearance' of the area would be 'preserved or enhanced' by the proposed new developments. The result was predictably absurd. 'When one scheme after another comes forward over a period of years the absurd situation can arise where a Conservation Area remains designated but consists of almost wholly new buildings echoing the character of buildings no longer there'.

Both the next two platform speakers, Marcus Binney and Rosemarie McQueen, made the same point. As Rosemarie McQueen put it 'the fatal flaw' in the Act was the neutral (or negative) sense of the words 'preserve or enhance', as recently decided by Lord Justice Mann. Provided that new buildings 'did not harm' the 'character or appearance of the area' they could replace the existing unlisted buildings. This was like proposing that you could cut a wood down then replant it with seedlings and the wood would still have the same 'character and appearance'. You would need to keep at least a core of mature trees throughout the growing cycle to give continuity.

Turning to 'permitted development' – the loophole which allows owners of single family dwellings in Conservation Areas to evade planning control even for substantial alterations or additions – Rosemarie McQueen explained the current difficulties in making Article 4 Directions in order to

suspend 'permitted development'. There was the problem of persuading the DOE, often difficult to convince, of the 'special need' to act, either because it was too soon, as there was no immediate threat, or because it was too late, as so much damage had already been done. At the same time, Rosemarie McQueen said there was the real danger that, under the 1990 Planning Act, a householder could claim compensation from a local authority who withdrew 'permitted development' rights, so she concluded that Article 4 was not the 'mass solution'.

From the floor there followed a long litany of complaints about the erosion of Conservation Areas, and the need for putting teeth in the planning laws. Many speakers stressed the need to educate the public about their own responsibilities. The proposal to weaken the power of English Heritage in London was deeply deplored.

Five resolutions were then put to the conference and passed almost unanimously.

1. The Government's new Planning Policy Guidelines should provide for the protection against demolition of buildings which contribute to the character of the Conservation Areas.
2. The General Development Order should be amended to bring under planning control the external envelope and the boundary features of buildings within Conservation Areas.
3. Current legislation should be amended to specify that within Conservation Areas there should be a duty to preserve, and where appropriate, to enhance.

4. Steps should be taken to initiate a national publicity campaign encouraging a more sensitive approach to alterations to buildings in Conservation Areas.

5. In view of the impracticability of London's boroughs being able to provide the necessary level of professional expertise, this conference deplores the plans for London put forward by English Heritage, and asks that English Heritage retain their powers relating to Conservation Areas and Grade II listed buildings.

FILLING IN THE GAPS

Recent building work in Lansdowne Crescent has radically changed the feel of the streetscape. For many years there have been side extensions between some of the pairs of villas on the inside of the Crescent but, almost without exception, they were sin-

gle storey. However, when the Council was compiling its *new* Conservation Area Policy Statement (CAPS) it decided to mark gaps between the houses which gave views of the communal gardens and which they believed should be preserved. There were several of these is Lansdowne Crescent so that, when the new owner of number 9 applied to replace an indifferent single-storey extension with two storeys, the Association employed consultants and decided to object very forcefully. After much deliberation the Planning Committee rejected the application, but the owner went to appeal.

The Association again objected, but the Department of the Environment's Inspector upheld the appeal despite the fact that this gap had been marked for retention in the CAP. He added in his report that his decision should not be regarded as a precedent and awarded costs against the Council.

Since that extension was built at number 9 it has been followed by number 10 (there was an existing permission, granted before the CAPS had been 'strengthened') and at number 11. The result of this is that a building line of at least two floors is now continuous from 9 to 12 Lansdowne Crescent – an oppressive effect even more evident from street level than in our photo-montage. Previously a walk round the Crescent offered glimpses of trees or the communal gardens between each pair of houses. Today those gardens are all-but invisible from the street. In addition front gardens are being lost to large and featureless areas of paving for cars.

Out of the view of our picture work is also in process on a two-storey extension at number 14, and there is an application for a similar extension to number 4. As we go to press an application has been submitted to demolish the garage at number 13 – part of the main building is visible on the extreme

Below: A view of Lansdowne Crescent with the low numbers on the right. Right: The last unfilled gap in the Crescent



left of our photo – and replace it with another two-storey extension.

The street has been transformed in just a few years.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that those who do not have standing orders are due to pay their subscriptions by 1 April 1993 (at a minimum rate of £5 per household).

Payments should be made out to The Ladbroke Association and sent to:

The Treasurer
The Ladbroke Association
75a Ladbroke Grove
London W11 2PD.

LOST AND FOUND

A notebook was found after the Spring Lecture. Owner please phone the Chairman on 221 5167.



SPONSORED TREE PLANTING IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH

BRIAN ELLSMOOR

The Purpose of the Scheme

Each year the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea plants approximately 150 trees in the Royal Borough's highways, far more than those felled. The aim of the scheme is to encourage local residents to join with the Council to increase the number of trees planted in the highways, front gardens and garden enclosures throughout the Royal Borough from 1993 to 1995.

For each tree purchased by a resident the Council will provide the stake and ties to secure it, the labour and compost to plant it and the transport to deliver it to site. The value of this is estimated at £60.

In addition, should the tree die from natural causes during the next two years, the Council will

provide a replacement at no cost. This offer does not extend to a tree damaged or dying as a result of vandalism.

Tree Ownership and Maintenance

Trees planted outside the purchaser's garden remain in the ownership of the landowner, in this case the Council. This means that, once the tree matures, future maintenance will be carried out by the Council.

In those cases where the scheme has been extended to trees in home owners' gardens or communal gardens – for instance, where the pavement would have been too narrow to plant a tree – tree ownership and future maintenance rests with the home owner or garden committee. In all cases trees should be easily visible to those walking or driving in the area.

Selection of Stock

All trees provided for the scheme will be specially selected by our Arboricultural Officers from



major nurseries.

Listed below are a number of varieties of trees that are both popular and suited to the Royal Borough. Should it not be possible to accept your choice then an Arboricultural Officer will meet you to see how the proposal can be adapted. The selection of trees from which you may make your choice are:

London Plane (*Platanus acerifolia*)

Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*)

Turkish Hazel (*Corylus columna*)

Pillar Crab Apple (*Malus Tschonowskii*)

Chanticleer Pear (*Pyrus callieriana* 'Chanticleer')

Finnish Whitebeam (*Sorbus x hybrida*)

How Does the Scheme work?

If you would like to participate in the scheme all you have to do is write to the Council stating your name, address and telephone number, the tree selected and its proposed location. The Council's Arboriculturists will assess the suitability of your choice of tree or trees and their location, and an invoice will be sent to cover the purchase cost. In all cases the cost to yourself will be £60.00 per tree.

Application

For details apply to:

The Director of Planning
Services

Department 705

The Town Hall

Hornton Street

London W8 7NX

or telephone:

Derek Austin on 071-937-5464

Ext 2767

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ROBERT MEADOWS

The Unitary Development Plan is a 'land use' plan containing the objectives, policies and proposals for the use of land and buildings

in the area which it covers for the Local Planning Authority. It is a legal requirement for all Metropolitan Boroughs and, currently, all the London Boroughs, including Kensington and Chelsea, are producing a UDP for their area. When the Plan has been adopted it will provide the statutory planning framework for the next ten years.

The process of producing the Plan and getting it approved and adopted is very lengthy, and includes consultation with all interested parties. Eventually a draft UDP is produced and 'deposited'. Finally, a Public Inquiry is held before an Inspector appointed by the Department of the Environment. Objectors to any aspect of the UDP may give evidence at the Inquiry. In Kensington, the Public Inquiry began on 26 January and is likely to continue until July. It is held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. When the Inquiry has ended, the Inspector, having considered all the evidence, may recommend changes to the draft UDP before it is adopted.

The Kensington Society, with which the Ladbroke Association is affiliated, has been deeply involved with the process of the UDP and has been giving evidence at the Inquiry, supporting many aspects of the Plan, but also objecting to a number of aspects.

In the Conservation and Development section of the UDP, the Society sought a number of changes, ranging from the enhancement of the status of Conservation Area Policy Statements to a strengthening of the policy against forecourt car parking.

By accepted Planning standards, there is a shortage of Public Open Space in the Borough. The UDP seeks ways of increasing the provision, and one way of achieving this would be the wider use of garden squares and communal gardens. The Society felt bound to object to this and to seek protection of the existing status of squares and gardens. Clearly, this

is a matter of great concern in the Ladbroke area.

ANNUAL GARDEN WALK

Wednesday 19 May, 6-8pm

The garden walk, led by Henrietta Phipps, will start at 6pm. Those who wish to join the walk should meet at the west side of Ladbroke Grove by the gate into Elgin Crescent/Blenheim Crescent Garden (by the 52 bus stop). The walk will take in that garden, the Lansdowne/Elgin garden and the Montpelier Gardens, between Lansdowne Road and Clarendon Road.

It will end with refreshments, courtesy of Mrs Anderson, at 67a Lansdowne Road at about 8pm.

THE COMMITTEE

The Officers and Committee for the year 1992-93 are: President, Angus Sterling; Chairman, Stephen Enthoven (221 5167); Hon Treasurer, Paul Bastick (229 1741); Peter Austerfield, Brian Ellsmoor, Ian Grant, James Joll, David Marshall, Jane Martineau, Robert Meadows, Peter Mishcon, Thomas Pakenham, Catherine Porteous, Peggy Post; Hon Auditor, Guy Mayers; Minutes Secretary, Janet Barton.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 21 June, 6 for 6.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of The Ladbroke Association will be held on Monday 21 June at 6pm for 6.30 at St Peter's Church Hall, 59A Portobello Road (Upper South Room, Gallery Entrance).

Derek Austin, Senior Tree Officer of the Royal Borough will give a talk on 'The Natural Landscape'.