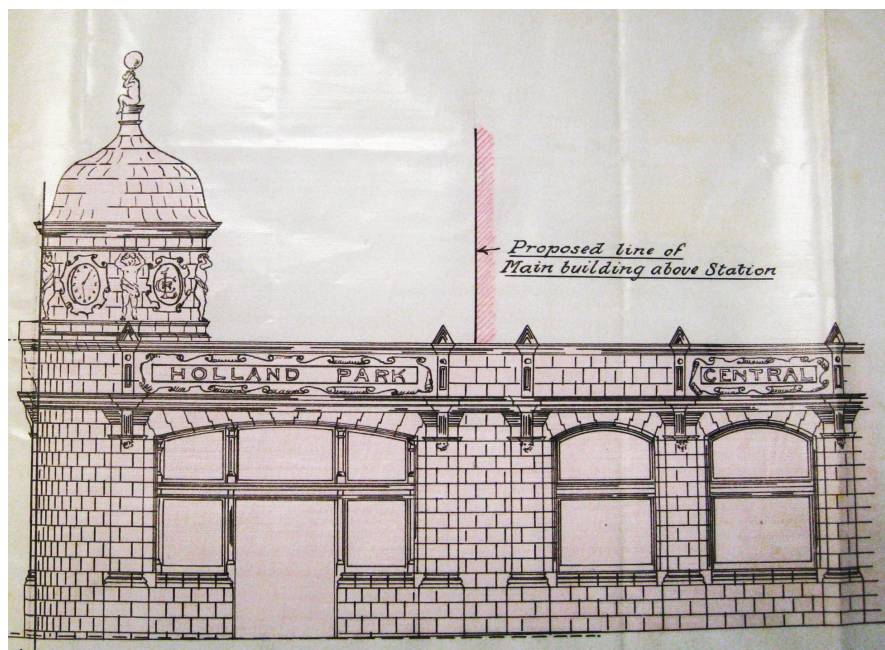


News from Ladbroke

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

Summer 2012



1899 design for the Lansdowne Road side of the station at Holland Park. The cupola was never built. Picture courtesy of the Chelsea and Kensington Local Studies and Archives.

HOLLAND PARK UNDERGROUND STATION

Holland Park station is one of the very few stations on the Central Line to retain its original architecture. The Central Line (or “Central London Railway”) opened in 1900 and was the second of the deep “Tube” lines to be built (the first was a portion of what is now the Northern line). The earlier “Underground” lines like the Metropolitan and Circle lines were built using the “cut and cover” method of tunnelling, with a trench being dug and then a cover being put over the top. Tube lines were much deeper and the tunnels were literally bored through the London sub-soil, requiring what was then a very new technology. Twin tunnels were bored, one for each direction, and the tunnels were only just big enough for the trains (unlike the more spacious Underground tunnels that took trains in both

directions). Even though the tunnels were well below the surface, they were built as far as possible under streets to avoid the risk of subsidence, and the Central Line runs under Holborn, Oxford Street, Bayswater Road, Notting Hill Gate and Holland Park Avenue.

The original Central line ran from the Bank of England to Shepherd’s Bush. The stations all had hydraulic lifts, manufactured in New York, which were probably a lot more reliable than today’s lifts at Holland Park station. Except for Bank (which was entirely below ground), the stations for the line were designed by Harry Bell Measures, a well-known architect of the period. All were similar, in a curious mixture of neo-classical and art nouveau, with handsome facings in beige terracotta. According to a design in the Kensington Local Studies Library above Holland Park Station was originally

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AGM

The Association held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 4 July. About 30 members were present. The Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary were re-elected and two new committee members were elected – see article on page 2. Our accounts show us to have a healthy reserve at the bank and no need to raise the subscription. Subjects raised by members included the disappearance of the old shops in Portobello Road; subterranean development (on which there has still been no movement from Government, although the Council are working to improve their procedures); Neighbourhood Development Plans (see article on page 5); and concerns about the Imperial College development north of Westfield, on which a decision is imminent (for more on the campaign against the latter, see the website www.imperialfolly.co.uk). Disturbingly, two of the members at the meeting reported recent telephonic encounters with the RBKC planning department in which they were given the wrong information.



Postcard with view of Holland Park station shortly after its opening. The board on top is advertising the availability of the space above the station for a "private hotel". Courtesy of Chelsea and Kensington Local Studies and Archives.



Holland Park station in modern times. It is a pity that London Underground has fixed obtrusive blue notice-boards to the terracotta walls, especially as at present most of them are not even being used. Copyright Thomas Erskine 2006.

[Continued from page 1]

intended to have an elaborate cupola at one corner. But in the end, this seems never to have been built, and some of the decorative detail was also changed and simplified.

The stations were deliberately built as single storey structures with flat roofs in the expectation that commercial premises would be built on top – as indeed happened at Queensway, where a hotel was built on top of the station, and also at Oxford Circus, the other Harry Bell Measures station to survive in a recognisable form. But it seems that there was insufficient commercial interest in the

Holland Park area, and our station retains its original single storey form, apart from the protrusion of the circular glass drum required to accommodate the modern lift mechanism.

The station was built on the site of Boyne House. We have no idea what the latter looked like, but it was probably built in the 1820s and early maps show it to have been a large detached house standing in a spacious garden.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Two members of the Association's Committee have resigned: Alex Bell, who was having difficulty finding the time to attend meetings; and our ex-Chairman David Corsellis, who has moved out of the area. However we have two new members. The first is Kay Broadbent. She is of American extraction, but has lived in the UK since 1973 and in the Ladbroke area since 2000. She is recently retired from a career in architecture and market research. The second new member is Catherine Faulks, who was recently elected a Councillor for the Norland Ward and lives in Ladbroke Grove. She replaces ex-Councillor Andrew Lamont who left the Committee last year. It means that we still have on the Committee a councillor from each of the two wards in which the Ladbroke estate lies, the other being Councillor David Campion.

ROBERT MEADOWS MEMORIAL LECTURE

We are organising a lecture on 7th November in memory of the town planner Robert Meadows, one of our founder members and a member of our committee for more than 40 years, who died in 2009. The speaker will be our President Thomas Pakenham. Ten years ago, he gave a lecture for the Association on "Remarkable trees of Ladbroke", and this will be an update. We will notify members of the venue in due course.

Thomas Pakenham is of course well known for his books on trees. His last lecture on the subject attracted a big audience, and we hope that this one will too.

HISTORY OF THE LADBROKE ESTATE

Have you had a look at the history articles on our website www.ladbrokeassociation.org? We would welcome anything that members can contribute to the history of the area; the houses in it; and their past occupants. Contact editor@ladbrokeassociation.org.

POST OFFICE TO AMERICAN FOODSTUFFS

One of our best loved local shops is the newsagents at the Holland Park end of Ladbroke Grove, run by the ever-helpful Punjani family. Until four years ago, the shop was also an extremely useful sub-post office. Despite the vociferous protests of residents, the Post Office decided that Punjanis should be one of the large number of small post offices to be closed down. We were all fearful that the shop would not survive, as it relied on the post office business for a large part of its revenue, and with electronic media the newsprint business is in inevitable decline, so unlikely to provide a long-term livelihood.

With typical enterprise, however, Ali Punjani spotted a gap in the market and has been diversifying into American foodstuffs – all the things like Betty Crocker cake mix and “liquid smoke” to flavour barbecues that the many American expatriates living among us would love to be able to find in London. The shop remains small, and the display may not be impressive, but he is apparently now the largest purveyor of American foodstuffs in London, also selling a lot online through his website www.usafoodstore.co.uk. The American foodstuffs now contribute more to the business than the newsagent side, although happily for local residents he has no plans to wind the latter down. Moreover, the shop still sells stamps and

arranges the despatch of parcels, so it still performs some postal functions.

The Punjani family have been running the shop at 2 Ladbroke Grove since 1972. Ali Punjani’s father was a refugee from Kenya when Uganda and Kenya were doing their best to drive out their Asian populations. He came over in 1960 and originally hoped to train as a doctor. But although he worked hard at various menial jobs to raise the necessary funding, he had a family to keep and concluded that he must abandon his ambition and turn to shop-keeping. He bought the shop in 1972 and ran it until he died in 1981. His death could not have come at a worse time. The economy was faltering and the shop had just developed subsidence for which he was not insured. He also still had two teenage daughters to support.

His son Ali had just graduated with a degree in economics and had been planning to go into accountancy. But Ali decided that he must step in to help his mother run the shop. He successfully kept it going and indeed developed it into a really invaluable local business. He says that he has few regrets for his lost career in accountancy, even though it might by now have propelled him to giddy heights in one of the big firms. Residents of the Ladbroke area – and indeed many on Campden Hill – certainly have cause to be grateful that his career took the turn it did.

CITY LIVING, LOCAL LIFE

This is a Council initiative which provides small sums of money (£20,000 per ward per annum for four years) to part-fund projects “to make your area a better place to live”. The Council is looking to local councillors, in consultation with their residents, to propose projects.

The sort of projects that are suggested include local festivals to support neighbourhood shops; community safety and parking projects; improving public spaces, e.g. by installing benches or works of art; and social initiatives, such as ventures that bring young and old people together.

The Ladbroke area is split between Pembridge and Norland Wards. In Pembridge Ward (east of Ladbroke Grove), the Councillors are planning to circulate a questionnaire to residents about what they might aim to use these funds for, so everybody will have a chance to make their views known.

In Norland Ward (west of Ladbroke Grove), the Councillors are still discussing what to do.

They plan to use some of the money to build a non-political website or blog with local news, possibly in conjunction with the existing “Pavlova Diaries” online magazine for the Notting Hill area (www.pavlovadiaries.co.uk).

The hope is that the website could be made self-financing with advertising from local traders. It would also provide a space for local charities to notify volunteering opportunities.

The website should, however, take only a small part of the funds. So if any residents of Norland Ward have ideas on what to do with the rest, do write to one of your Councillors:–

Catherine Faulks

(cllr.faulks@rbkc.gov.uk),

David Lindsay

(cllr.lindsay@rbkc.gov.uk), or

Julie Mills (cllr.mills@rbkc.gov.uk).

They would also like to know what local residents would most like to see on the website.





25-35 (odds) Ladbrooke Grove. This photo was taken some years ago and some of the clours have changed, but the pilasters are still picked out in white. © Thomas Erskine 2007.

PAINT COLOUR

We reported in our last issue that the Ladbrooke Association was planning to go methodically through the buildings in the area to consider whether new listings or Article 4 directions should be recommended. Article 4 directions remove permitted development rights, so that planning permission becomes necessary before any changes are made. Most houses in the Ladbrooke area have Article 4 directions in respect of any changes to the doors and windows on the front of the building. One short stretch of terrace in Kensington Park Road also has an Article 4 direction which requires householders to seek planning permission to change the colour that their house is painted, and the Council will normally only

give permission for repainting in a narrow range of shades.

One of the questions that we shall be considering is whether there should be more Article 4 directions in respect of paint colour, particularly on terraces where the look of the whole terrace can be adversely affected if one householder paints their house a colour very different from the others. In some cases, it might be appropriate to insist only on pastel shades, or even on all houses being painted white. There is also an issue over whether it matters what colour the window frames are painted, or for instance whether there should be rules on the colour of details such as pilasters. In the terrace at Nos. 21-35 Ladbrooke Grove, although the houses are painted different pastel shades, all the householders

have painted their pilasters white, and this makes for a satisfactory unifying factor.

An example of a tight control over colouring is Royal Crescent at the Shepherds Bush end of Holland Park Avenue, where everything matches, except for the front doors. The original repainting in standard colours was part-financed by the Hilton Hotel opposite with a view to giving their guests an elegant and classy view.

This issue is very much a question of judgement, and of balance between achieving harmonious views on the one hand and leaving people free to do what they like to their own homes on the other hand. So it is bound to be contentious. If members have views, either generally or in respect of your own street, please let us know (email to editor@ladbrookeassociation.org).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

A few months ago, there was a lot in the press about the opposition of the National Trust, Council for the Preservation of Rural England and others about the Government's proposed "National Planning Policy Framework" (NPPF), which had a strong pro-development slant and which, it was feared, would put at risk the countryside and the green belt. Fortunately, the Government listened and the final document is much more reasonable. Its overarching principle is a presumption



Royal Crescent. Only the doors vary in colour. Photo courtesy of Marsh and Parsons.

in favour of sustainable development – i.e. that if development is sustainable, it should be approved without delay. This is better than the previous document, which seemed to be more weighted in favour of development per se. There is also an improved definition of what constitutes sustainable development.

The NPPF is now the statement of Government policy that guides Councils both in drawing up their own local planning policies and in determining individual applications. It replaces over a thousand pages of “planning policy guidance” (PPG) on different aspects of planning. At 65 pages, it is commendably short for this sort of document, and it is written in fairly clear language. It can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>.

A principle of particular interest to those of us in the Ladbroke conservation area is that planning should “conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations”. There is a section on “conserving and enhancing the historic environment” which provides a reasonably satisfactory degree of protection to what are described as “heritage assets”, including listed buildings and conservation areas. But because the document is much less detailed than the PPGs that it replaced, there may be arguments over interpretation, and it may be some time before its true import is clear.

RBKC PLANNING POLICY

Unfortunately, although central Government has simplified its own planning policy guidance, there has been no similar simplification at the local level. Local authorities still have to produce a bewildering array of documents setting out their own policy on planning matters. Collectively, these documents are known as the “Local Development Framework”.

The most important document is

the “Core Strategy”, which replaced an earlier document called the “Unitary Development Plan”. The one for RBKC was published in 2010 and runs to over 500 pages, with annexes running to another 300 or so pages. It covers both the Council’s plans for the individual parts of the Borough and its policies (57 of them) on everything from housing to flooding and street markets.

In addition, there are a number of “Supplementary Planning Documents” (SPDs) which go into detail on particular topics or the long-term plans for particular areas. All these documents can be found on the Planning Policy pages of the RBKC website.

These documents, along with the NPPF, govern the Council’s planning decisions. If a planning application is in accordance with them, then the Council must give consent unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so. So it is important that the council gets the documents right. At the moment, the Council is looking to revise some aspects of both the Core Strategy and its other planning documents. These include the SDP on subterranean development, on which the Association has submitted comments.

It has also been consulting on the policy that it should adopt towards public houses, which are disappearing at what some consider an alarming rate, to be replaced by fashionable restaurants or shops or even residential accommodation. There were 181 pubs in the borough in 1980; today there are only 110. Two of the lost pubs were in the Ladbroke area; one in Blenheim Crescent; and one in Portobello Road, although one new pub has also opened there.

Other subjects on which there has been consultation are a proposed surface water management plan; and “involving people in planning”. The latter is mainly about how the council consults on planning applications. The Association has expressed some concerns about current and proposed practice. In particular, we are worried that, to reduce costs, the Council

now only notifies immediately next door neighbours of planning applications, whereas previously they notified households two or three doors away as well.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

The Localism Act provides for residents in a particular area to get together to draw up a “neighbourhood plan” for their area, setting out what they want by way of development in their area. The plan must accord with Government and Council planning policies and it has been made clear that it is intended to be a tool for positive planning, not a way of preventing development. Once a plan has been adopted, it becomes part of the planning policy guidance for that area and the council must normally abide by it.

The process of preparing a neighbourhood plan is horrendously bureaucratic. First, the local community must apply to the Council to be designated a “Neighbourhood Forum and Area”. Then they must prepare a plan and consult the local people on it. Then they must submit it to the Council for approval. The Council then conducts a formal consultation on the plan, and finally it is put to a local referendum. The Council has offered to give some help, both administrative and financial. But a very strong commitment is needed on the part of volunteers from the local community to carry the exercise forward.

Plans are currently being developed by Markham Square residents and by the Norland Conservation Society. We have considered whether it would make sense to devise a plan for the Ladbroke area. The Norland plan builds on work that the Society has already done on what it wants by way of such things as exterior paint colour; protection of architectural features etc. The Norland conservation area is much smaller and more homogenous than ours, which perhaps makes it more suitable for a plan. For the moment, although we are conducting our own survey of the Ladbroke estate to decide what features are

worth preserving, we think there may be less bureaucratic ways of achieving our objectives. But we shall be watching the progress of the Norland plan with interest, and we would welcome views from members.

A plan does not have to cover a whole conservation area. There is no minimum area, and a plan could cover a single street or terrace, for instance settling on a uniform painting scheme and deciding what the policy should be on rooflines etc. That might be a much easier exercise. If anybody does think it worth developing a plan for their part of the estate, we should be very interested to know and would hope that we could help.

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

When planning permission is given, the applicant is required to build only what has been set out in the plans, abiding by any conditions that the Council has set as regards materials to be used etc. The council does not, however, do any systematic checking of completed projects to see whether they comply with the planning permission. So it falls to the neighbours and others to notify the Council if they think that the planning permission has been breached, or indeed if something has been done without planning permission. The Council has an “enforcement team”, which it will then send to inspect the alleged breach. If there is other than a minor breach, the owner will be required to do whatever works are necessary to comply with the planning permission.

It is open to the owner or developer in such cases to apply for retrospective planning permission for the features that do not comply with the planning permission. This is always a slightly tricky area. On the one hand, nobody likes rewarding an unlawful action. On the other hand, some breaches are genuinely inadvertent. Others may actually constitute an improvement on the original plans, or are for something the Council would normally have granted permission for if they had been asked. The Council is bound

to look at all applications on their merits and cannot refuse permission merely as a way of “punishing” somebody for not observing the rules. So retrospective permission is often granted.

We hear fairly frequently about minor breaches of planning permission – for instance walls being built too high; the wrong materials used. If such a breach comes to your attention, contact the enforcement staff by phoning the planningline on 020 7361 3012 or emailing planning@rbkc.gov.uk. Usually, the enforcement staff, despite limited resources, are quick to go into action. However, developers can be expert at delaying tactics – and the enforcement team sometimes fail to act as quickly in the follow up phase. So if the enforcement team finds there has been a breach, it can pay to make sure you are kept aware of progress on it, so that you can give them a jog if things seem to be going too slowly. Also, keep an eye open for any applications for retrospective planning permission.

It is also worth bearing in mind that, if something is done without planning permission, any enforcement action has to be taken within four years. So any approach to the Council must be within this timescale. There have been cases, for instance, of people building roof terraces without planning permission on the top of rear extensions. The original occupants of the roof terraces may have used them rarely, causing no problems to neighbours. Then, five years on, the house is sold and the new occupants cause consternation by their frequent parties on the roof terrace. But by that time, there is nothing that can be done through the planning system. So if your neighbour builds a new feature, it is worth considering not just its present use but how it might be used in the future.

Listed buildings and enforcement

The new owners of the listed building at 18 Kensington Park Gardens were granted planning permission earlier this year for a lower ground floor extension beneath the garden

and certain internal alterations, and work started shortly afterwards. It came to the Association’s notice that the work on the interior was going well beyond what had been agreed in the planning consent. In particular, decorative mouldings and cornices were being stripped out. The Association notified the Council’s enforcement officers, who immediately ordered a halt to all building on the site. We are glad that this desecration was stopped. The interior mouldings on the Ladbroke estate are particularly fine and should be valued accordingly.

It is important for all owners of listed buildings to remember that it is not just the exterior of the building that is protected; normally the protection extends to interior plasterwork, fireplaces and the like. Listed building consent is needed before any alterations are made.

RECENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee continues to scrutinise all planning applications in the Ladbroke Conservation area and to comment as necessary to the Council. The following are two of the applications that it has looked at recently.

16 Lansdowne Walk

It is not often in our densely built-up area that there are proposals for brand new houses. But there has been one such for 16 Lansdowne Walk. This site already has a two-storey building on it, originally built as a studio in the 1930s. The proposal is for this to be demolished and replaced by a new three storey building in a modern style, with a two-storey basement beneath it. The Committee noted that neighbours had raised a number of apparently legitimate concerns over the proposed double basement, but in principle they saw no problem with erecting a new building. The site is just the sort of place where a stylish modern building could enhance the street. But they were concerned that the proposed building was far from



16 (on the left) and 16 ½ Lansdowne Walk. No. 16 ½ was built a few years ago, replacing a nondescript structure built in the early 1960s. The architect has the challenge of finding something that fits in both with No. 16 ½ and the Victorian houses on either side.

stylish. It made no reference to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Brick and render, the predominant and appropriate finishes for the area, had been eschewed by the architects for no good reason, in favour of a wall material, Kalumba brick, that is quite alien to the area. Moreover, the application lacked a lot of detail.

Despite our views, the officers of the planning department recommended acceptance of the proposal. They did however recommend a different type of brick and various other design changes, but proposed that the details of these changes should be cleared by Council officers only after the application had been approved.

We are happy to say that the Councillors on the Committee did not accept the officers' advice. Councillor David Campion said that it was unacceptable for important design issues to be decided by Council officers without input from Councillors.

The Committee turned down the application as failing to preserve or enhance the conservation area; and they also accepted the concerns of No. 15 Lansdowne Walk that it would lead to unacceptable loss of light to their property. So there

will now need to be a new planning application; we hope for a really excellent modern design.

85 Ladbroke Road

85 Ladbroke Road, or Horbury Villa, is the next house on from the police houses in Ladbroke Road.

The property actually covers three plots, but the other two plots (between the house and the police property) have nothing on them but a couple of ugly garages and small outbuildings at the back. The land backs onto Ladbroke Walk.

The new owner is proposing a major project which involves getting rid of the garages and other outbuildings and building an extension onto the house that is if anything bigger than the house itself. He also plans a basement extension with swimming-pool.

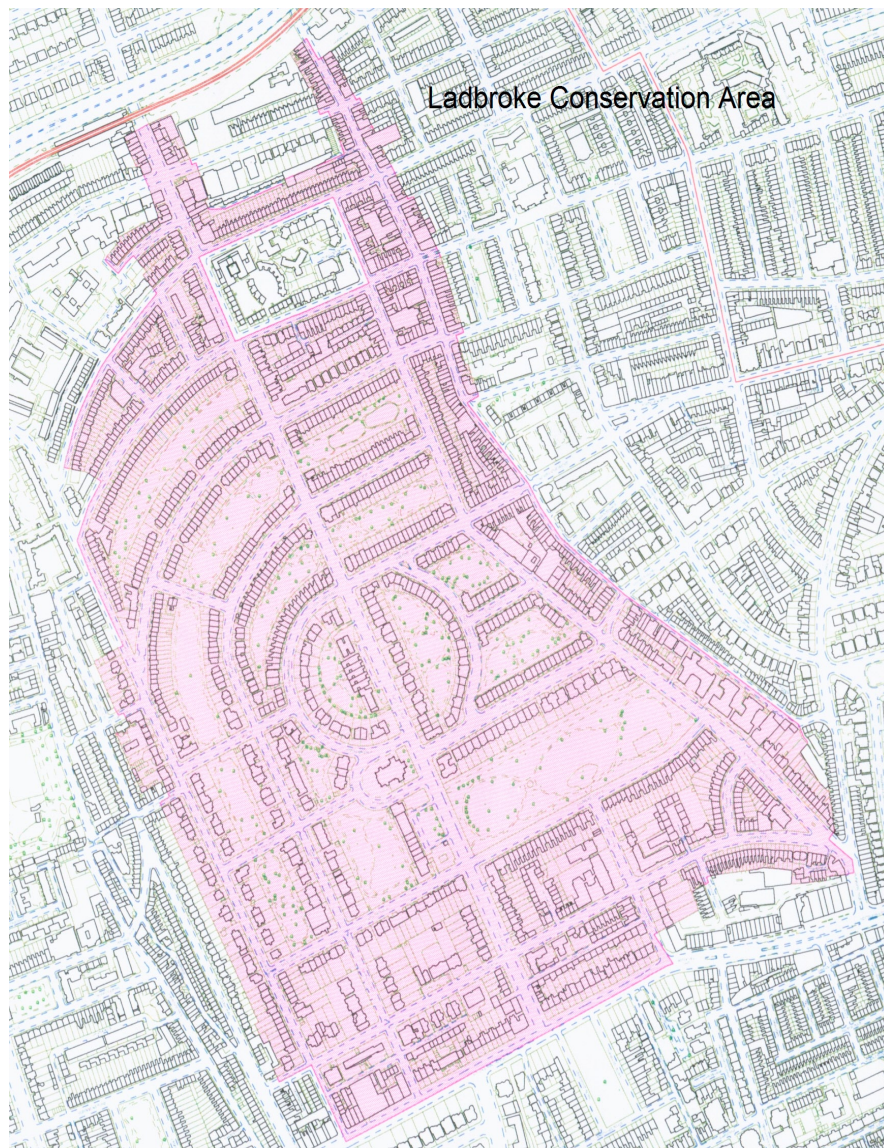
The proposed extension is in the style of the existing house and the resulting building will be a very large house.

The view of the committee was that it is well-designed and will be an improvement on the eyesore constituted by the garages.

Because the plot is so large, it should be possible to excavate the basement without too much effect on any neighbours. We have, however, expressed the strong view that construction traffic should not be allowed to use Ladbroke Walk, which is a cobbled mews with few proper pavements. (See photo below).



Ladbroke Walk, a pleasant cobbled mews.



THE OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

Officers:

President: Thomas Pakenham

Chairman: Graham Child

Vice Chairman: Peter Chapman

Hon Treasurer: Paul Bastick

Hon Secretary: Anne Chorley

Committee Members:

Kay Broadbent

David Campion,

Catherine Faulks

Maurice Fraser,

Sandra Kamen,

David Marshall,

Peter Mishcon,

Malcolm Pawley,

Peggy Post.

Newsletter: Sophia Lambert

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

The Association is a charitable non-political organisation. Its constitution requires it to promote and encourage the following objectives by charitable means but not otherwise:

- ♦ To encourage and promote high standards of architecture and town planning within the Ladbroke Estate Conservation Area
- ♦ To stimulate and promote public interest in, and care for the beauty, history, and character of the neighbourhood
- ♦ To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.

The complete constitution of the Ladbroke Association is on its website at:

www.ladbrokeassociation.org.uk

and the website also includes much historical information about the conservation area.

This edition of the newsletter was edited by Sophia Lambert; the layout was composed by David Campion with the Adobe InDesign software and the printing was done by The London Printing Company.com in Notting Hill Gate.

TO JOIN THE LADBROKE ASSOCIATION

If you wish to join or support the Ladbroke Association, please complete this standing order form and send it to Paul Bastick, the Hon Treasurer, 75A Ladbroke Grove, W11 2PD. The minimum subscription is £15 for family or individual membership but many members pay more to support our activities. We would also appreciate it if you could complete a Gift Aid Form which is available from the above address and on the website.

To:.....Bank plc Sort Code:

Address of Bank:

Please pay to Barclays Bank plc, 212 Regent Street, PO Box 4BP, London W1A 4BP Sort Code: 20-71-74, immediately and thereafter on 1st April each year until further notice the sum of £..... for the credit of the Ladbroke Association (Account No: **80522635**)

Name: [Please print]

Signed..... Date.....

Address.....

.....Postcode:.....