

News from Ladbroke

June 1973

It is hoped in future to publish and send to Members and Residents a news bulletin once a quarter. This is the first issue of the more regular news service which the Committee intends to provide. Its principal purpose is to keep Members informed of progress made in protecting and furthering the aims of the Association, and to provide brief reports of Committee activity and future plans.

1 Planning

Over the past year there has been a greatly increased volume of planning applications within the Estate. Most of these call for comment by the Association, either adversely or to the contrary.

Two members of the Committee have accepted responsibility for examining the plans at the Town Hall of each application individually and for looking at the site where any development is proposed. Major schemes are always discussed by the Committee and frequently with the applicants.

It has become noticeable that there is an increasingly high proportion of applications for additions to top storeys. Invariably they present problems, for even a sensitive design can ruin a street or crescent if it causes an abrupt break in the architectural form of the whole. Consequently, each case has to be considered on its merits and the Council has been urged to exercise special vigilance.

2 Liaison with the Borough Council

One of the aims of the Association is to establish regular contact and close co-operation with the local authority on matters concerning conservation. In this aim, while there are many matters on which the Committee remains critical, we have achieved considerable progress. To further this, the Chairman together with the Hon. Secretary and another member of the Committee recently met the Borough Planning Officer to discuss ways in which the Association could more effectively make its views known and heeded in the Council.

The following points emerged from their discussions:

- a. A re-organisation of the procedure for notifying local associations of planning applications is to take place. New applications will be listed in a notice placed fortnightly in the Kensington Post. Copies of this notice will be sent to associations which will have to note those of interest falling within their conservation areas. It is also proposed that Press notices should eventually include the Planning Committee's most recent decisions on previous applications. The Council hopes to speed up the rate of dealing with applications which presently may take 2/3 months to reach the Committee.
- b. Real weight appeared to be given to the comment of local associations. Detailed comments are of value and these may be telephoned in cases of urgency.
- c. The Council have formed an Environmental Advisory Committee which has an Environmental Group led by Mr. John Garrett, an architect planner in the Department. The Borough Planning Officer is producing reports and plans for consideration by the Committee. The Borough Engineer is making a transportation study related to Environmental area appraisals.
- d. There might be scope for the Ladbroke Association to share in the production of an area study or other publication.
- e. The Committee would be prepared to consider suggestions for changes in the boundaries of conservation areas where existing boundaries present anomalies.

- f. The Planning Committee has agreed to apply certain guide lines when considering applications for additional storeys to houses or flats. The Council especially recognises the need to have a stringent policy in this respect in Conservation areas, so as to ensure that existing roof-lines are not broken and that the design and character of any extension is in harmony with what has gone before. In due course, the Council hopes to prepare a policy statement for each street. In the meantime, members may like to consult the existing policy sheet which is available from the Planning Department Chelsea Town Hall (Tel: 352-8101)

Arising from this meeting, it does seem that a closer co-operation and understanding with the Borough Planning Committee has been established. Notices of applications are appearing in the Kensington Post.

3 Traffic

a. Introduction of Parking Scheme

As members will already know, the Association commented on the Parking Scheme which has at long last been introduced in North Kensington when the proposals were in draft form last year. Our principal concern was to ensure that adequate provision had been made for parking by those resident in the neighbourhood.

We shall review the situation now that the Scheme is in force, and, if necessary, comment on it in a few months time when it has been possible to evaluate its effectiveness.

b. Traffic Management Proposals

The Parking Scheme is closely linked with the measures which were to be simultaneously introduced by the Borough in Clarendon Road, Ladbroke Road, Lansdowne Road to control traffic in the south-west part of the Conservation Area. The proposals for this limited traffic scheme were made by the Borough at the same time that the Ladbroke Association published its own survey and recommendations for traffic management throughout the area. Both the Association's Report and the Borough's Scheme were discussed at a meeting for members last autumn. It was clear from this that members had strong reservations about the Borough Scheme - particularly in as much as it seems likely to turn Ladbroke Road into a one-way speed track - and also suggested a number of constructive alternatives to the Association's series of management proposals.

The view of the Committee is that the Borough's Scheme is to be welcomed in that it should successfully restrain heavy commercial traffic from using Clarendon Road. The Scheme is, however, too limited in scope and there must be pressure on the Borough to formulate traffic management for the northern part of the Borough, including Ladbroke, designed to prevent the use of local roads by large unwieldy commercial vehicles. The Borough Council is undertaking its own surveys at present and the Committee will maintain close contact and consultation with the Traffic Engineer.

In particular, we shall watch very carefully the effect of the Borough Council's Scheme if it is implemented for Clarendon/Lansdowne/Ladbroke Roads, and seek amendments to it if these are considered necessary. Please would members make their own views known both to the Council and to the Association.

4 Colville/Tavistock Study

It is in the context of traffic that we should like here to comment on certain recommendations contained in the recently published Consultation Report on the Colville/Tavistock area by the Royal Borough. This very interesting document deals with the life of an area which overlaps only marginally with Ladbroke, and it has an importance and scope far beyond the concerns of this Association. It does, however, make some proposals for traffic management in the streets immediately east of Ladbroke Grove, in the area bounded by Elgin Crescent, Kensington Park Gardens and Holland Park Avenue. It should be noted that any such scheme (which we have not as yet examined in detail) would almost certainly have an affect on traffic in the rest of Ladbroke, and especially on Ladbroke Grove itself.

It seems to be a feature of Borough thinking at present that Ladbroke Grove since it carries already a considerable weight of traffic, can readily be allowed to become the major feed road for traffic North - South in this part of the Borough. Apart from the conflict this assumption creates with the residential character of Ladbroke Grove, it cannot be ignored that such a policy in the long term would accept as permanent a division of the Ladbroke Conservation Area into two separate halves, with Ladbroke Grove as an inexorable barrier between them. The Committee consider that this conclusion would be damaging to the quality of life in the area as well as being directly opposed to the original concept of the Ladbroke Estate. Our proposals envisage the prevention of heavy commercial through traffic on any of the local roads, including Ladbroke Grove, and we shall continue to urge this course.

5 Trees and Gardens

Members of the Committee have urged the Borough to replace dead or dying trees. In National Tree Planting Year, we however, have a great opportunity to do more in a positive way to preserve existing trees and to get new ones planted in gardens and streets. This is a matter which vitally affects the Ladbroke Conservation Area, where green and open space was so sympathetically and deliberately used by the original developers as a major element in the townscape. The Committee hopes to set in train a comprehensive survey of trees in the area, and armed with the information this will provide, be in a better position to suggest where new planting would be an advantage. This is an area where the co-operation of the individual committees of square gardens can be most helpful. The Association has formed a sub-committee to consider such matters of mutual interest with representatives from each square garden committee.

The Committee intends to invite a specialist to give a talk to the members on the subject of town gardens and trees, during the autumn. Details will be announced as soon as possible.

6 Pembridge Association

We very much welcome the formation during the past year of the Pembridge Association. They have at once set standards of liveliness and effective action which are both a challenge and a stimulus to their neighbours. We look forward to co-operating with them whenever our interests can be shared.

7 Anti-Conservation

There is a continuing need for individual comment to build up pressure against what might be called "Anti-conservation". There is a deplorable increase in ugly street furniture in the form of railings, signs, fascias and so forth.

The Committee has on several occasions objected to these developments. One example is the introduction by the Council of hideous tarmac-cum-concrete strips at the corners and edges of pavements.

Individual criticism made to the Council, to the Association or to the local newspapers can be invaluable in combating the more unsightly Borough notions of conservation.

8 Membership

In the five years of its existence the Association has proved, with other Societies of a like purpose, that an organised voluntary body drawn from the local community can in some ways do more to safeguard the environment of that community than the elected municipal authorities; certainly it can act as a powerful influence on the authorities to take more effective conservation measures. But, the work is voluntary and, because of other demands on their time, the amount each person can do is inevitably restricted. The membership, after five years, is about 150, which we believe is much smaller than we should reasonably expect in relation to the area we cover.

The Committee is aware that to some extent the failure to increase the membership is attributable to a lack of reasonable communication with the members and residents who could become members. We have come to the conclusion that it is of paramount importance to increase the membership and the amount of direct participation by members in affairs of the Association, if it is to continue as an effective and vigorous society and above all, properly representative of the community it serves.

The higher the membership, the more representative and active the Association can become. It would enable us to try and tackle more vigorously such aspects as:

- a. Increased Press and Publicity for local work.
- b. Photography of the Area, exterior and interior.
- c. Advisory services to members on such subjects as architectural restoration, trees, colour of houses.

As a first step, we are asking over twenty people, living in different parts of the neighbourhood, to act as street or local representatives of the Association. The intention is that in this way we shall have one or two individuals keeping a watch on such things as alterations to buildings, destruction of architectural detail (a very frequent occurrence), ugly street furniture, dead or dying trees, the parking of juggernaut lorries and so on, in each street of the Ladbroke conservation area. They would also help to recruit new members, distribute literature and help in other ways, without anyone having to undertake more than they could easily manage.

It is hoped that as many members as possible will come to the Annual General Meeting on 10 July, the Notice of which is being sent out with this letter.

Wine and Cheese will be available at a modest cost and we hope it will be a convivial occasion.

The Committee intends to plan a series of evening talks on general subjects allied to conservation during the coming Autumn and Winter together with another and wider distribution of the current Association leaflet to non-members.

9 Subscriptions

A gentle reminder to those who do not pay by Bankers' Order. Annual subscription (£1) was due on 1st April. Payment by Bankers' Order is recommended and there is a considerable financial advantage to the Association if the payments are under a seven-year covenant.

Forms can be obtained from the Secretary at 21 Stanley Crescent.