

News from Ladbroke

April 1975

The Newsletter of the Ladbroke Association

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1 Planning

a 12/14 Lansdowne Walk

Following the refusal by the Council of planning permission for the infilling between 12 to 14 Lansdowne Walk, the Sheppard Trust, owners of the properties, appealed to the Department of the Environment. It is the view of the Council and the Ladbroke Association that much of the special interest of this part of the Ladbroke Estate resides in the open layout, with pairs of houses separated by open spaces through which vistas of further open spaces may be glimpsed.

The Inspector, in allowing the appeal, stated that "the proposals cannot reasonably be held to be contrary to the spirit of the Council's policy as declared in their formal notices of refusal and I hold that the "open" character of Lansdowne Walk is primarily dependant on the preservation of the attractive communal gardens which are situate on the north-western side of this highway rather than on the retention of the opening between numbers 12 and 14 which affords limited views of neighbouring rear gardens."

The Inspector, however, considered that "the circumstances attached to this particular proposal are sufficiently unique in the Conservation area as to negate their future value as a distinguishable precedent for any other infilling proposals elsewhere in the Ladbroke estate." He further rejected the Council's submission that consent for the new flats should be conditional upon their sole use for elderly ladies as such limitation would be unenforceable.

b 1/11 Ladbroke Road

There have long been plans for the development of this site into the new Ballet Rambert theatre and a new proposal has been recently put before the Council which would include, besides the theatre, 6,350 square feet of office space to be occupied by the architects of the scheme. The Association has written objecting to the plan on the grounds that the development would be too bulky, that office space should not be introduced into a residential street, that there is no provision for car parking and that there would be added congestion in an already crowded area. In addition numbers 9 and 11 are a handsome pair of semi-detached villas, while numbers 1 to 7 are a row of shops that fit well into the area.

IMPORTANT NOTICE A meeting has been arranged by the Council at 7.30pm on Monday the 14th April in St. Peter's Church Hall, Portobello Road, at which Ove Arup and Partners, architects to the scheme, will present their case. Anyone who is interested in this development should attend the meeting and make their views known.

2 Mr. Ashley Barker's Lecture

Mr. Ashley Barker, Surveyor of Historic Buildings to the Greater London Council, addressed the Association on November 18th on the subject of Restoration in Conservation Areas. He illustrated his talk with slides, and also with detailed drawings of work his Department had undertaken, and which the audience were able to inspect after the meeting. Mr. Barker argued that there was a considerable difference between the restoration of buildings, and that of other kinds of works of art. In the nineteenth century the word came to have a bad name since it all too often meant a reconstruction in the form and style then thought suitable. His department had started at that period with a new respect for the integrity of materials, which for example had led to the preservation on a new site of York House Water Gate. But his Department's approach today was illustrated by the renovation of the stone gateway with newly cut masonry, which preserved the architect's original intentions more realistically. Only the stone lions now remained of the original gate, an element whose artistic qualities could not be reliably reproduced. For the majority of London buildings, this attitude worked rather well. The stucco medium introduced in the eighteenth century had been a convenient and very flexible form of exterior decoration; it was also a medium which allowed of faithful reconstruction without destroying the integrity of the design.

Several instances of buildings which had successfully been reconstructed to their original appearance were shown: notably Marble Hill House, whose profile had been quite altered before the G.L.C. took it over. Sometimes it was possible to preserve the facades of buildings while renewing the interiors but unsympathetic alteration could quite upset the balance of a design, as in the country house at Hammersmith which had been converted into a bus station at the end of the last century.

As an example of a current project, Mr. Barker showed Kenwood House where the garden front is being decorated with low-relief designs taken from the original but unexecuted drawings of Robert Adam as part of the G.L.C. contribution to European Architectural Heritage Year.

Mr. Barker concluded by answering questions and was warmly thanked by the Chairman on behalf of an appreciative audience.

3 Traffic Report

At a special meeting arranged by the Association last autumn, members had an opportunity to hear and discuss with Borough Council representatives the Council's proposed amendments to the Clarendon Road/Lansdowne Road Traffic Management Scheme. At the same time local opinion was canvassed by the Borough on a range of options. Since then your Committee has discussed these and other proposals with the Borough in detail, in particular the measures:-

- (a) to close Clarendon Road at its junction with Elgin Crescent, and
- (b) to make Clarendon Road one-way north from St. John's Gardens to Clarendon Cross.

The Committee believes it is essential to introduce measures which will prevent through traffic using Lansdowne Walk or St. John's Gardens as a "rat-run". It is hoped that the proposal under (b) above will achieve this and that the suggested closure of Clarendon Road, which many

residents dislike, would then not be necessary. The matter is due to be reconsidered by the Council's Works Committee this month.

Two minor relaxations of the Scheme which have been made by the Council and agreed with the G.L.C. but not yet implemented are the restoration of the two way traffuc in Lansdowne Walk and Ladbroke Road between Lansdowne Road and Ladbroke Grove.

4 European Architectural Heritage Year

The Committee has successfully applied to the Department of the Environment to have the Ladbroke area accepted as being of "Outstanding Architectural or Historic Interest", and this designation means that it is now possible for the Association to apply for grants of money to help promote schemes of environmental enhancement and practical conservation. A fund of £1 million has been set aside by the Government to assist such schemes in areas which have been thus designated.

The Committee are at present considering the whole matter, and any suggestions from members would be very welcome.

5 Repairs to Stucco

A small sub-committee is actively engaged in preparing the long-promised pamphlet on stucco restoration, and the G.L.C. Historic Buildings Division has generously agreed to collaborate. The task is proving to be rather lengthy however, especially the production of suitable illustrations, and it is in this quarter that the help of the G.L.C. will be particularly welcome.

6 Ward Boundaries

The Committee very much regret that the opportunity has been missed of creating a Ladbroke Ward in the recent restructuring of the North Kensington Wards. The Ladbroke area itself is divided into three, part of it (east of Ladbroke Grove) being incorporated into the Pembridge Ward, part into the Norland Ward, and a small northern area into Avondale.

The completely unsatisfactory and unrealistic nature of this division has recently been highlighted at the local Ward meetings at which preliminary discussions were held on the Borough Development Plan. Few Ladbroke residents attended either the Pembridge or Avondale Ward meetings, and the matters that were discussed were almost entirely concerned with problems outside the actual Ladbroke area.

Your Committee has already written to the Town Clerk urging that the boundaries of the Wards should be more sensibly related to those of the Conservation Areas, and stating that it seems very undesirable that the name of one of the three important North Kensington Conservation Areas has unaccountably been overlooked, especially when the other two have so misleadingly been retained. It hopes that this state of affairs will be rectified at the first opportunity.

7 2-3 Ladbroke Square

These two houses, formerly the Ponsonby Hall Hotel, have now been completely rebuilt following their gutting by fire and converted into flats. The result which keeps all the former architectural details must be judged an unqualified success and shows what can be done if the Council is sufficiently insistent upon maintaining high standards. It is pleasant to report that the Association has written to the Council conveying its satisfaction and appreciation with the work.

8 Paper Salvage Scheme

The scheme described in the last issue whereby old newspapers and periodicals could be left at St. John's Church, Ladbroke Grove, for recycling has been suspended. Due to the economic recession, the price of paper has dropped making the high cost of recycled paper uncompetitive, a situation which must be regretted.

9 New Secretary

The Association's long search for a new secretary has been rewarded by the agreement of Miss Muriel Strode Cosh to fill the post. Miss Cosh has lived in Kensington Park Gardens for some twenty years and we all wish her well.

However the Editor is himself having to leave the Ladbroke area, and should any member wish to take over this enviable sinecure they should contact the Secretary at the address below.

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