



Newsletter

December 2007

www.chra.info

Issue 36

Chairman's Message

The last 12 months have been very demanding for all Committee members as we have been engaged in our high profile Holland Park School Campaign. At the same time, the regular activities of the Committee have continued with normal Planning, Licensing and Police liaison being some of the major areas of concern.

If we are to continue as an effective organisation it is essential that we broaden the composition of the committee. The critical area where more resources are needed is planning. All residents benefit from active local participation in this function and if you feel you can help please let me know. Ideally the person or persons should have some knowledge of planning such as an architectural background but this is not essential.

The other key function that requires strengthening is the need for a full time treasurer. Again, you don't need to have been a senior partner of one of the major accounting firms - O level maths will suffice!

Finally, new committee members are needed to assist those with other specific responsibilities such as the Editor of the newsletter, membership etc. and also to bring some fresh thinking into our deliberations.

As Sir Winston Churchill once said "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

David White

Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group

Our northern neighbours, the Notting Hill Gate Improvements Group (NHGIG), are currently concerned about new development plans from Land Securities, who own around 60% of Notting Hill Gate. Land Securities have formed a joint venture with Delancey (also major property holders in the area) called Metro Shopping Fund (MSF), and they plan to redevelop a number of properties. Specifically, NHGIG believe there is a threat to Newcombe Piazza, the open space in front of Waterstone's Bookshop. MSF would like to relocate the Farmers' Market which is currently behind Newcombe House, though they won't say what they want to put in its place. NHGIG believe that MSF want to change the use of Newcombe House from office to residential, losing variety and adding to the mushrooming private housing in the area. NHGIG are also concerned that there is a threat to the small independent family-run local shops, like Olympic Electronics.

MSF stress that they are in the very early stages of planning discussions with RBKC and they are unwilling to offer us information about their plans at present. We will monitor developments.

Georgina Denison

Campden Hill Residents Association would like to thank Will Foot of Scooter Computer for setting up our Save Holland Park Forum website www.savehollandparkschool.org.uk and maintaining it for free. All help is greatly appreciated when assisting with our campaign for Holland Park School.

Website Designer required to create and maintain CHRA's website

CHRA are looking for a creative person who can design and maintain a dynamic site with information and resources for local residents. This will require light maintenance - possibly only once a month. To discuss, please contact David White on davidklwhite@hotmail.com

Membership

Total membership is 403
New Members 19
Paid 369
Honorary and Life 24
Unpaid 34

The CHRA relies on membership in order to promote our mutual interests, please complete the enclosed renewal letter and send to Anne Margaronis, 26 Aubrey Walk, London W8 (£10 per annum or £40 for five years). If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining the CHRA, please drop me a line and I will send out a membership form – pia@bethere.co.uk alternatively go to www.campdenhillra.org.uk.

Pia Østby DeCarlucci

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Church Services for December



St Georges

Sunday 2nd - Advent
Sunday

Evening Service, 6pm

Sunday 16th - Children's Christmas
Carol service, 4pm

Monday 24th - Christmas Carols
around the Crib, 4pm; Midnight
Mass, 11:30pm

Tuesday 25th - Christmas Day
Eucharist, 10am

Wednesday 26th - The Feast of St
Stephen the Martyr Eucharist, 10am

Thursday 27th Dec - The Feast of St
John the Evangelist Eucharist, 10am

Church of our Lady Mount Carmel

24 December - 6pm Mass
12am - Midnight Mass

25 December - 8:30am, 10am, 11am,
12:15pm - Mass

Dear Member,

WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR HELP TO RAISE £50,000

Thank you to all those members & supporters who have generously donated to our Save Holland Park School Campaign. As you are all aware the Councils' plans for Holland Park School have been "called in" and will be the subject of an independent Inquiry. We have now heard that this Inquiry will commence on the 5th February 2008 and is likely to last at least two weeks.

Until now it seems as if we have been playing in a football match against Chelsea with the referee being Chelsea! Now we are presenting our case to an independent referee! The Council have been suggesting that the "call in" is political but this is definitely *not* the case. There are serious planning issues involved - not least the sale of the playing fields. One could also argue that the Councils problems were self-inflicted and that their planning application was hurriedly and badly prepared.

If we are to present our case to the Inquiry in a professional manner we will need suitable professional help. We are continuing to employ Indigo Planning Consultants who are coordinating our presentation and providing guidance on the proof of evidence we have to submit. We have also appointed Counsel to present our case and cross examine the applicant's witnesses. We will also be using the services of specialist school architect Philip Tilbury who, as most of you know, has produced a very practical "Alternative Vision" for the school. Dependant on the advice we receive from our Barrister we may also be calling specialists in the area of Social Housing and Public Finance.

I am well aware that many of you have already given generously to our appeal for funds but more is desperately required. Unlike the Council, who have almost unlimited resources - ironically provided by you and me - we are not in this position. *See our insert for details of how you & your neighbours can donate to the fund.* Having got this far and with what we believe is a very strong case it would be a great pity if we were to fail simply because of a lack of financial resources. I am sure you are all familiar with the poem that starts, "For want of a nail" and ends "A kingdom was lost". Let us make sure that we have enough "nails" to ensure that our campaign is not lost!

Please note the enclosed petition which we ask you and your neighbours to sign. Should your neighbours be unaware of the Councils' plans, a *Save Holland Park School Campaign* information pack is available on www.savehollandparkschool.org.uk or by calling 020 7229 5684 or e-mailing davidklwhite@hotmail.com

David White, Chairman, CHRA

Police matters

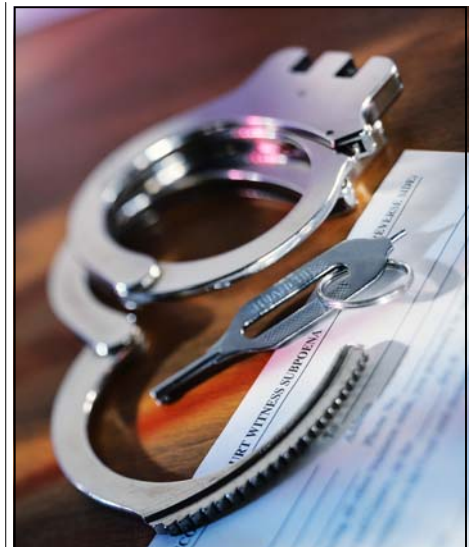
Some of you will recall that I have written before about Safer Neighbourhoods Teams. This is the change in police organisation in which we have dedicated teams covering the day to day policing of each ward, with the officers not available for 'abstraction' (secondment or temporary removal for other duties) to use the police jargon. The purpose is of course to have a dedicated local team not likely to vaporise whenever there is a bigger borough or London wide issue. These teams are typically one sergeant, two constables and three PCSOs per ward. We have now had a complete year of full Safer Neighbourhood (SN) teams and it is possible to begin making an assessment of their impact.

It has been a really positive step for policing in the Sector and indeed the borough, with very low figures for crime in all the categories of the basket of 10 key crimes. With increasing local knowledge and experience in the SN teams, this will, we hope, only get better.

As always there are areas which do not go as well as one might hope and in recent times there have been some increase in motor vehicle crime especially. Other than continuing to educate motorists not to leave valuables on display in their vehicles, with leaflets to residents and on windscreens, there is little that can be

done. If you walk down the street and just casually look at what people leave in their cars, you will soon see the cause of the problem! One of the hot favourites for thieves is of course expensive electronics like satellite navigators. These should always be removed, along with their windscreen brackets and ideally a cloth should be used to remove the sucker mark off the windscreen, as thieves will assume the device is hidden in the car. Recent sting operations have been carried out in which a satellite navigator was left in full view in a decoy car. Although the car was not locked, within a few minutes of setting up, the side window was smashed and in full view of the camera, the device was stolen. Of course there was then an instantaneous arrest and this sends a suitable message both to would be opportunists and to car owners. It is hoped to continue with these operations.

Each of our wards has its own individual issues which reflect its character. The problems in Holland Ward are related to theft of and from motor vehicles, both of residents and of visitors to Holland Park Opera over the summer. Cycling on the pavement has also been a local problem receiving attention. Campden ward has similar issues but also has historically to deal with the enormous daily flows of children to and from Holland Park School. While some problems inevitably remain, this issue seems much more under control than in the past and it will



continue to be a focus for the local SN team, who have worked hard to build a relationship with the school.

In Norland and Pembridge Wards there have been issues surrounding the security of multi-occupancy dwellings and in Pembridge in particular, Portobello Market has always attracted pickpockets. A very successful campaign of leafleting visitors arriving at Notting Hill Gate has hugely reduced the amount of pickpocketing to one or two cases a day. Similarly, the experimental introduction of crime prevention and anti burglary patrols in a small part of Pembridge has been so successful that it will be rolled out across the borough.

As a sector we have been investigating, as yet without any definitive conclusion., on how best to streamline the consultation between the police and the community. With the introduction of SN teams, with their related Ward Panels, we now have a veritable cornucopia of meetings for the police and community. In order of geographic scope but not necessarily of importance, we have Neighbourhood Watch, Ward Panels, Sector Working Groups and at the top the PCCG itself. The general feeling is that this is at least one layer too many. While I don't yet feel that we are about to be charged with 'Wasting Police Time' I am certainly conscious that the system will work better if we can reduce repetition while retaining both the local and overall view.

At the beginning of January, our Borough Commander, Dominic Clout, will be swapping post with the commander of Campden, Mark Heath. Campden is a large, difficult borough and I think Dominic's success here has earned him this slightly poisoned chalice. It will also be difficult for Chief Superintendent Heath who will have to try and maintain our excellent statistics. As Mr. Clout said at a recent meeting, while the performance statistic driven culture imposed by the government has resulted in excellent crime figures, it also has its down side. It pits one borough commander against his neighbours - indeed (I am putting words into his mouth here), if a borough commander manages to push crime into the adjacent areas he scores twice, his own crime statistics go down, while at the same time he looks better in relation to his neighbours because their figures go up! No incentive at all to co-operate.

The way crime is measured also means that the police tend to concentrate on the 'basket of 10' crimes on which they are assessed, and also on crimes which give easy successes. No great effort for example on theft of pedal cycles which is a very serious problem in London (see our Christmas Police Quiz below). It is important to not only lock a cycle and its wheels to a solid object but also to register the serial no. of the frame so that if it is lost and recovered it can be returned. The police end up with thousands of cycles every year which have to be sold at auction because they cannot trace the owner. The solution to this is simple: for cycles or any other valuable for that matter, go to the website www.immobilise.com and register the serial number. The police check this database for recovered goods to find the rightful owner. It works for mobile phones, expensive electronics - computers etc - and really for anything valuable that might be

stolen and recovered. You can even register photographs of items which have no serial numbers for a small annual fee.

Finally, one of the constant battles the police fight is the perception and fear of crime. So here is our Christmas Quiz for which the answers appear on the back page:

a) What is the average number of domestic burglaries per day in the whole borough?

b) How many street robberies were there in the last year per day in the borough?



c) How many bicycles were stolen in London last year?

Isidore Margaronis

Holland Park School

CHRA won a major breakthrough recently in its campaign to save the Holland Park School Playing Fields when the Council's planning application for the new school and associated luxury housing development was called-in for a Public Inquiry by the Government Office for London (GOL), acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Government and Communities, the Right Honourable Hazel Blears MP. Fortunately for CHRA this means that the Council is no longer empowered to act in its capacity as a planning authority and can no longer rubber-stamp its own plans. Rather, the Council will now be expected to make its case to the Secretary of State who will be guided in her decision whether or not to approve the planning application by the Inspector charged with overseeing the Public Inquiry. The entire decision-making process should take approximately 4/6 months with a final decision being made by the Secretary of State (who is free to accept or reject the recommendation of the Inspector in her discretion) by early summer of next year.

The scope of the Public Inquiry is not limited to strictly planning matters which means the overall context in which the application is being made can also be looked at by the Inspector. As many of you will be aware our campaign has focused on trying to persuade the Council that there is a much better way forward - keep the southern site, where the playing fields are located, and remodel the school largely on its existing footprint.

CHRA, frustrated by the Council's unwillingness to entertain any other

scheme but its own, commissioned leading school architect, Philip Tilbury, to demonstrate how a scheme predicated on retaining all the school land could be made to work. Despite CHRA having made repeated requests to the Council that it should commit resources toward further developing these ideas, known as the Alternative Vision, the Council has systematically refused to do so. This will not reflect well on the Council during the course of the Public Inquiry given that it has reputedly spent in excess of £5million on its own scheme. The Council can hardly maintain that it has taken a balanced approach in weighing up the options for the school's redevelopment; a crucial consideration given that the Council's main argument throughout the planning process has been that the educational benefits to be derived from its scheme outweigh all other planning considerations, including loss of vital public open space.

What is more the Council's other arguments - that the existing facilities are beyond repair and pose a long term threat to the school's academic progress - or that there are no other sources of funding available will not stand-up to public scrutiny either.

Let us not forget that the Council's original justification for embarking on its present course was that there was no alternative means of funding available which is patently no longer the case. The Council has been invited by Government to apply for Building Schools for Future funding as a so-called Wave 5 Borough with funding available as early as 2009 under the scheme. Over £30 million has been earmarked for Holland Park School; funds that will *not* be made available to other schools in the Borough should the Council choose to leave the funding on the table. The Council's argument for not wishing to take advantage of this funding - that they are opposed *in principle* to public, private, partnerships (PPP's) won't carry much weight with Government as such PPP schemes are at the heart of government educational policy.

In summary, it is very clear that this Government has sought during its period in office to afford better protection to school playing fields, both through the introduction of tighter regulation on the one hand and provision of funding on the other. It is to be hoped that these will be the guiding principles that will carry the day at the Public Inquiry as well as guide the Secretary of State when she comes to make her decision.

Sally Davies

Commonwealth Institute

That iconic green copper roof is safe, though the sights and sounds from all over the Commonwealth which once filled the building are long gone. Chelsfield Partners bought the site from the Commonwealth Institute in April, in a joint venture with the Ilchester Estate, historic landlords of a lot of Holland Park property. They have advertised the building in the *Estates Gazette* and received some thirty responses, seeking to use the building as offices, retail properties, a hotel, for religious purposes, or for the arts. It's a difficult building to adapt, with no natural light, and large interlinked spaces which would be difficult to subdivide. Chelsfield are concerned about the viability of the various offers, and are currently considering the options. They hope to appoint an architect shortly, and to continue discussions with English Heritage, RBKC, and other interested bodies. James Sutherland, the original engineer, has been appointed to advise on possible structural changes to the building.

RBKC have produced a draft planning brief which notes that in addition to the main building, the flagpole area to the south front of the Institute and the formal water feature are listed Grade II. They are further concerned that the principal roof of the Institute should retain its 'Tent in the Park' character, and to that end that any new building on the site should not come above the tree line in views from Holland Park.

Andrew Unterhalter of Chelsfield told me that Chelsfield were looking at the possibility of erecting a new small building in the flagpole area. While the main pavilion was safe, he hoped that they might be allowed to replace the administrative blocks to the west of the main building. The trees are also safe, but could be heavily pruned to improve the views of the Institute from Kensington High Street. Chelsfield are considering the possibility of replacing the existing wall which cuts off the Institute from Holland Park with a ha ha which would help to integrate the building with the park behind.

As the Odeon Cinema disappears underground, can we hope that a landmark arts venue opposite will rise to the occasion?

Georgina Gill

Answers to Police matters quiz:

a) 4, b) 3, c) 80,000.



Holland Park

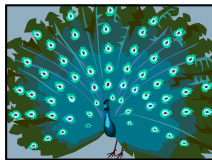
Survival of the fittest - and the smartest

It's not, I suppose, the most important development in the Park since your last Newsletter, but it appeals to me. I feel sure that it will appeal to you.

Over the years the foxes, native to this country and rightly proud of their position in Holland Park, have looked upon the immigrant peacocks as rightful prey. If a peacock couldn't fly, and fly quickly, then it was no more than a highly-coloured, legitimate meal. This code has meant that the foxes have prospered, whilst the stock of peacocks has needed to be constantly replenished.

I am happy to report that the current wave of immigrants is displaying brains as well as beauty. Previously, when hatching their young in nests amongst the shrubs and bushes, they have been offering the foxes a series of meals on a plate. No longer. This year the peacocks have tumbled to the fact that there is sanctuary on offer in the Park. A nest in a greenhouse is both secluded and weather-proof. A nest in a greenhouse is also fox-proof.

This year has seen several proud peahens emerging from the greenhouses with their young in tow - four young peacocks were hatched on the potting bench in the nursery and one in a hanging basket! Once able to fly, the youngsters will take up life in the Park where their burgeoning intelligence should ensure their presence for many seasons to come.



Other matters

The greenhouses, of course, play another vital function for the Park. This year Quadron was pleased to announce that a considerable contribution to this summer's bedding scheme had been grown in the Park's own nursery. This included all the Osteospermums and a large majority of the Fuchsias. Plans were being made to grow winter wall troughs and these should now be in evidence.

Anyone wishing to volunteer for the Volunteer Programme next year is encouraged to do so. Those already

participating in this scheme find it greatly satisfying - but their numbers are small.

At the summer meeting of the Holland Park Advisory Group, considerable time was given to a discussion about the possible restoration of Holland House. This subject will be re-considered when the Group meets again in the autumn.

And, finally, I am sure that members will wish to know that the Borehole is living up to all expectations. Fifteen thousand gallons of water had been pumped out when the figures were issued in June.

Mary Spain



Environment

The subject causing the greatest concern in the past few months has been the illegal fly-posting on letter-boxes. This, together with the general neglect of letter-boxes, has resulted in correspondence between members and the West London Mail Centre. If any member has a similar concern relating to a letter-box in their area, perhaps they would be kind enough to let me know.

Mary Spain



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CAMPDEN HILL RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION BREAKING NEWS

LOCAL OBJECTORS WELCOME THE DECISION BY RBKC TO WITHDRAW ITS CONTROVERSIAL DEMOLITION AND REBUILD PLANS FOR HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL

Kensington and Chelsea Council has announced that it intends to withdraw from the public inquiry into the redevelopment of Holland Park School. The inquiry – scheduled for February 2008 – follows on from the Council's controversial decision to grant planning permission for a redevelopment scheme that flouts its own guidelines for development in the borough and contravenes many aspects of national planning policy.

However, the Council have stated that they remain determined as ever to proceed with their contentious proposals for rebuilding the school based on selling off the school playing field for luxury housing. It is understood that a new application will be submitted for planning permission in the New Year.

RBKC has publicly assured objectors that this time all interested parties will be involved in the preparation of the revised plans but local objectors remain deeply sceptical. Given the Council has spent some £5million of tax payers money on its application to date and has shown no inclination to entertain any other proposals (than one selling off the playing field) there is little reason to believe the Council will be minded to change its position.

David White, Chairman of Campden Hill Residents' Association says, "Whilst we welcome the Council's decision to withdraw its controversial application, we are disappointed that as a result there will be no independent inquiry. A major issue in our campaign is that there is a conflict of interest between the Applicant, (Holland Park School) and the decision maker (RBKC). This means that the Council, acting in its capacity as a planning authority, can approve its own plans. Throughout our campaign we have been promoting an 'Alternative Vision' based on keeping ALL the school land for the benefit of the school and the wider community.

"We want to see a state-of-the-art sports facility on the land the Council has designated for sale. The Council maintains there is no other way forward as they need to sell the land to finance the redevelopment of the school – this is patently not the case as the Council has been earmarked for Government funding under its Building Schools for the Future Program in 2009. In short, there is no reason whatsoever for the sale of the playing fields in a borough with notoriously limited amounts of open space. We continue to be supportive of the school and welcome the opportunity of a genuine dialogue with RBKC over the future of this important educational resource."

26th November 2007