

Pembridge Association *Newsletter*

Number Five: Winter 1975

Free!

The arrangements outlined at a Public Meeting last February for obtaining grass-roots views on a new Borough Development Plan are taking shape with the production of 'context papers' on various subjects. Those preparing the Plan want both individual reactions and also the opinions of societies such as this Association. Clearly there are factors which affect the whole of the conservation area and the Association's collective view is of special value.

The Executive Committee has been grateful for the views of members which have helped our thinking along.

We have replied to the questionnaires in three of the Papers, namely those entitled Movement, Hotels and Tourism, and Conservation and Development.

This Newsletter contains comments on each of these Context Papers following our discussion of them. The Secretary will however be pleased to send copies of the detailed replies submitted to the Borough to those who would like to have them.

DOUGLAS RICHARDSON

CHAIRMAN

CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

We have tried to answer the questions posed by the Kensington and Chelsea Council's context paper on Conservation and Development from the view of a Pembridge resident who is obviously very much affected by all the changes that go on in Kensington.

One cannot help but be in favour of conservation as defined in the Council context paper. Conservation, rather than mere preservation, is going to be of greater benefit in retaining the character of our area, but this should not rule out or prevent the preservation of those buildings considered as a work of art even when there is no longer any economic use for them - it is not possible to lay down hard and fast rules for this - each individual case must be considered on its own merit and the residents through their associations and public meetings must be given an opportunity to guide the decision makers.

Our own area, the Pembridge Estate, is almost entirely residential having been built about one hundred and twenty years ago. Originally the majority of the houses were intended for one family occupation - for larger families plus their resident domestic staffs. Gradually the houses have been adapted to the changing needs of this great city and most of the houses have undergone some kind of conversion

to flats, maisonettes, bed-sitters, boarding houses, hostels, hotels as well as schools etc.

These conversions, until the last two or three years, were carried out with no consideration of the effect they would have on the neighbourhood and in fact great harm was done to our area through the conversion of far too many houses into hotels, creating in Pembridge Square, Pembridge Gardens and Linden Gardens a completely new mixture in what had previously been an entirely residential neighbourhood.

At the same time, outside our immediate conversation area, but close enough to affect us, we have seen towering over us, creating wind tunnels, several tower projects like the Penta Hotel or the Notting Hill Gate tower, both of which dominate far more than their immediate vicinity and where obviously insufficient thought had been given when building consent was granted. (We wonder whether permission would be granted to today's climate of conservation and anti-pollution?)

More recently we have discussed the application to the council for the Arup Associates office complex which would have the Ballet Rambert Theatre in its basement. This project was discussed freely at a public meeting between representatives of the council, the architects, the ballet company and the residents associations. We understand that the scheme has now been withdrawn but believe nevertheless, that a lesson is to be learnt from the exercise. Whatever merits or de-

merits it had it became obvious that here once more was a much larger area which was ready for development, and not one part of it should be considered for piecemeal development without thinking of the area as a whole. The problems that worried the residents, too much traffic, inadequate parking, too many people coming into the area to work etc. could be solved if the corner were to be re-developed as a whole and not in independent parts. The Council should be given the power (if they do not already have it) to refuse permission for piecemeal development in the interests of the community at large.

Thus we agree with a 1973 Department of Environment circular that 'a more positive approach is required in development control' directed to preventing not only bad design and encouraging good, but also preventing piecemeal development of only one portion of an area which is in reality an integral part of a larger area.

The proposed designation of a Portobello Road Conservation Area (reported in this issue of the Newsletter) is a golden opportunity for a more positive approach to area planning and consultation, in an attempt to ensure that the essential character of the road is enhanced and nurtured.

Earlier consultation with amenity groups like ours and a stronger link between such groups and the council, forming a kind of partnership will become more vital if we wish to have a real say in the kind of area in which we wish to live.
JLH

HOTELS and TOURISM

The Pembridge Conservation Area has not been so hard hit as many other areas of the Borough by hotel development - at least so far. However, there are enough examples in our area of streets adversely affected by the impact of hotels - Pembridge Gardens being the worst case - to make us want to avert any further spread of hotel use. Unfortunately, as recent events in Pembridge Square and Pembridge Place show, it can be rather difficult to prevent "creeping hotel" use, despite the Borough's considerable powers.

The Borough has, to its credit, been taking a hard line on new hotel permissions for some years past. The Town Planning Committee decided in June 1971 "that all applications for hotel development in the Royal Borough will be viewed in the light of a Council policy to limit firmly any further expansion of hotels beyond the existing permitted level (June 1971) in all parts of the Borough". Furthermore, "any hotel proposal will be stringently examined in relation both to any possible loss of existing residential accommodation and to any resulting changes likely to occur in the local social and residential characteristics of the immediate area". (These quotations are from the Borough's Development Control Policy Note on Hotel Development, which, together with 26 other Development Control Notes, can be bought from the Enquiry Office, Chelsea Old Town Hall, Kings Road SW3, for the knock-down price of 25p.)

So much for the Borough's policy. Its powers were strengthened considerably by the passage through Parliament in 1972 of the Kensington and Chelsea Corporation Act. This Act requires the registration of buildings used for accommodating three or more persons for payment, when the length of stay is expected to be less than 22 days, or where a relationship of landlord and tenant is not created. The Council has the option to refuse the registration of a building coming into use since the Act was passed, on the grounds of loss of residential accommodation, and/or the use being inappropriate to the area. Up to now 546 buildings have been registered and 8 have been refused.

A further weapon in the Borough's armoury is the 1973 Greater London Council General Powers Act. This makes the use of residential accommodation as temporary sleeping accommodation (again less than

22 days) for payment a "material change of use", thus requiring planning permission. Hence some changes of use to short-stay accommodation will now require both registration and planning permission.

Despite all these powers it can be a difficult, and soul-destroying, business trying to prevent "creeping hotel" use. Enforcement notices can, of course, be served, but they are often subject to protracted legal wrangling. In a case in Pembridge Place, for example, the Council served enforcement notices against unauthorised hotel use in 1973, but an appeal was lodged to the Department of the Environment. There has been lengthy correspondence as to whether the appeal was lodged in the correct manner and in the time stipulated, and this cannot be resolved until the outcome of a High Court action is known. Meanwhile the Council can do nothing to prevent the continuation of the unauthorised use. In Pembridge Square, too, the Borough is engaged in what will no doubt be a long battle to prevent the spread of unauthorised hostel use.

While one section of the Council is involved in running battles with self-appointed hoteliers and "hostellers", another is formulating future strategy. A mammoth exercise is under way to produce the new Borough Development Plan, and although nobody knows what, if anything, will happen when it is published, the Association is nevertheless doing its participation bit. At this stage of the planning exercise we have been commenting on so-called "Context Papers" put out by the Borough, one of which is entitled "Hotels and Tourism". Here we have been very lucky, because Professor and Mrs Glynn wrote a detailed appraisal of the Context Paper, and, after discussion at two Committee meetings, this has now been sent to the Borough as the Association's comments on "Hotels and Tourism". (Copies both of the Context Paper and of the Association's comments are available from the Secretary on request).

Rightly or wrongly we did not feel that the author of the Context Paper was particularly sympathetic to the present Borough policy, and so we emphasised as strongly as possible "that this present 'freeze' policy is absolutely right and should be continued, since residential life in the Borough is already adversely affected by hotels and tourism".

We were asked to respond to various "issues" identified by the Context Paper's author as being particularly important. This was rather difficult to do since the issues tended to be posed in a way which was either too

vague or rather simplistic. However in fairness, the author's task of having to create questions for public participation purposes was unenviable! We did drum home the point in our replies that there were already too many hotels, that we therefore wanted no more hotels, nor, for that matter, any further facilities specifically for tourists. We also wanted no encroachment of tourist shopping into new areas.

Finally, on a positive note, in answer to the question, "should residential surveys be undertaken to gauge the amount of short let conversion that has taken place without consent?", we said we thought it was extremely important to do so, and offered to help the Borough with survey work in the Pembridge Conservation Area. If our bluff is called, and surveys are carried out, we shall be busy! Could any members interested in such survey work please notify the Secretary, so that we can be prepared if our offer of help is taken up by the Borough.

PSC

FROM THE BOROUGH

PORTOBELLO ROAD POSSIBLE CONSERVATION AREA

There is currently a proposal to consider the declaration of a new Conservation Area taking in Portobello Road from Westbourne Grove to Westway. The idea is to bring this area, of national interest, under the powers of planning control which are available to the Borough Council in Conservation Areas, before any new large scale redevelopments are put in hand which could irrevocably alter the present character of Portobello Road. There may well be a division of opinion as to whether such a step is one which will have general support.

NEW STREET LAMP DESIGN

The Borough Council have produced a design for a new street lamp of which a sample is expected to be installed shortly in Pembridge Square for inspection and comment. We expect to have details available for discussion at the Pembridge Association AGM in December.

35 PEMBRIDGE SQUARE

The Borough Council has served a Planning Enforcement Notice regarding the hostel mis-use at this address; this follows on from similar notices served over a year ago at Nos. 31 and 32 which are currently the subjects of an Appeal to the Minister of the Environment against the Council's action.

MOVEMENT

URBAN CLEARWAY AND PRECINCT FOR NOTTING HILL GATE?

Environmental improvements in Notting Hill Gate? Its just possible. Pembridge Road could become Kensington's only new precinct with one of the area's widest selection of shops. Kensington Park Road, little-used, might take some of the diverted traffic - buses, lorries, taxis and cars - and besides, more on-street parking and possibly off-street parking would certainly relieve pressures elsewhere.

What would this mean to you and your neighbours? Easier, safer, quieter shopping; a chance to drive and park near the shops, and if the idea worked then it could be extended. It also means you wouldn't get caught up in traffic jams - so that means you could drive into and out of the area more quickly. Exciting prospects.

All of us would probably agree to the above ideas, if we all lived and worked in the immediate area; but we don't. Our starting point is that we all live in the area but during the day most of us go elsewhere. And then we come across hundreds more people also moving about to and from home, to and from work - all using the various systems of TRANSPORT from footways to railways.

Transport has two components, movement and access; there are two types of journey characterised by whether the origin or destination is within the area, or neither is in the area. What we have to decide is whether in principle, and where in practice, access should be increased, restrained, or maintained at current levels in our area. For these are the questions which will help us to determine the quality of our environment, that is, how much we want some of the areas for ourselves and how much we are prepared to share them. It is not a question of balance - there are too many factors: how can one balance all the social, economic and environmental aspects? Firstly, we must know what we want. Secondly, can we achieve it? Thirdly, where do we compromise?

People come to live, work and play in the area for many reasons - are these reasons still unique enough today as they were yesterday, or are attitudes and expectations changing? If so, then the area is changing.

Back to the issue of transport. We said earlier that transport is movement and access. There is local and non-local or metropolitan movement. The latter is difficult to determine but access is easier. If access is made easier for us then it is going to be easier for commuters. This means more 'rat-runs' through our residential areas, more parked traffic, more congestion, more noise and increased dangers. Buses pass through the area more slowly and reliability of the services declines. So how do we define essential and non-essential traffic in our terms?

Car ownership is very low in the area so therefore more people rely on walking, and public transport. Why not start by making it easier to walk. Here are some ideas: widening footways along busier shopping frontages; squaring-off footways at junctions, making it easier to cross roads but more difficult for vehicles to travel quickly into side roads; widening central reservations; and, resisting one-way traffic schemes. Where possible, pedestrian ways should be created between new developments as these help to reduce shopping and walking distances. These are the essential trips.

Cycling is unlikely to be very safe in London. But this can be improved. Why not have wider kerbside traffic lanes so that cyclists can be overtaken without being pushed onto the footway or into the back of stationary vehicles. Even some pedestrian ways could be used by cyclists if specially designed. Cycle racks could be provided outside shops and libraries particularly in precinct areas. These are essential trips.

Private transport usually means cars. Despite the low ownership, parking for residents' vehicles is more important than for commuters. Nevertheless they might have to consider sacrificing spaces to essential community transport. For example, deliveries to local shops are frequent because storage is limited although supermarkets in new developments include elaborate service roads. Traffic capacity could be best determined by residents. After all, they do have the greatest concern since they have to suffer any disturbance or annoyance. Every street has a finite parking capacity, and usually this is nose-to-tail up and down both sides of the street. Does this finite capacity always coincide with the desired and environmental capacity of the street? We should, as a conservation and amenity group attempt to answer this question.

Transport is also of critical importance to business and industry. Business vehicles must be enabled

to get into and out of shops, garages, hotels etc., since all business generates movement and all business contributes to the area, whether its the local plumber's van or a petrol tanker. This local access must be retained - these are essential trips. However, the larger the operation, the nearer it must be to metropolitan lines of transport i.e. major roads and tube stations. This applies to larger hotels or concentrations of hotels - the scale becomes of metropolitan concern and therefore non-essential/undesirable in our terms. Any development must fit the area and fit the transport system.

Transport is a major part of all our lives: what we must ask ourselves is "what do we want?"

A precinct in Pembridge Road?
AS

FROM THE BOROUGH

BOROUGH ENVIRONMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

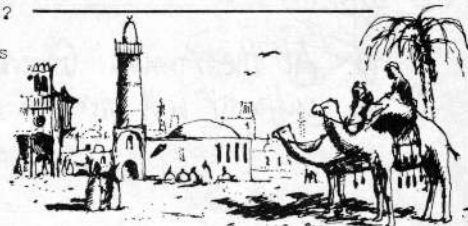
Cllr. David Campion, a member of the Pembridge Association Executive Committee, has become Chairman of the Borough Council's Environment Advisory Committee.

The terms of reference of this Committee are:-

- 1) To discuss long term development plans affecting the Borough.
- 2) To discuss the environmental implications of current Committee decisions with a view to making policy recommendations for their future guidance.

The Committee has set itself a programme for considering the following during the coming year :-

- 1) The Street Scene: items of street furniture, railings and pavements etc.
- 2) Tree Planting: new street trees.
- 3) Civic Trust type of Street Improvements.
- 4) Criteria for designation of Conservation Areas.
- 5) Devastation of Sites.



VIEWPOINT →

Extended parking hours?

In this column of the last issue we commented on the effectiveness of the Residents' Parking Scheme, and one of the problems highlighted was Portobello Road Market and the traffic it generates. We suggested in the article and elsewhere in the same Newsletter, that parking controls should be extended to the late afternoon on Saturdays in the region of Portobello Road. We also remarked on the apparent lack of enforcement of the Controls.

Our comments were forwarded to the Borough's Director of Engineering and Public Amenities, Mr E G Goldring, and the following paragraphs are part of his reply:

"The Works Committee of the Royal Borough have already approved a proposal to introduce controlled parking regulations for the period between 1.30 pm on Saturday to 6.30 pm on Saturday, this will then control the area 8.30 am to 6.30 pm Mondays to Saturdays inclusive to the area east of Ladbroke Grove.

This proposal hinges upon the pedestrianisation of the northern part of the market, to hopefully follow up with the remaining portion.

The enforcement of parking control regulations is delegated by the Commissioner of Police to Traffic Wardens whom he employs. The Commissioner is directed by Government only to recruit to a certain figure, far below what is considered necessary for effective control. Because of this two of the Royal Boroughs controlled zones, the south-west and Ladbroke, are administered by the "swoop-squad" a unit of Traffic Wardens based in Fulham. Using a vehicle to concentrate Wardens to particular areas when they then search for offending vehicles. This method is shared with the London Borough of Hammersmith. This situation must improve if controls are to remain effective."

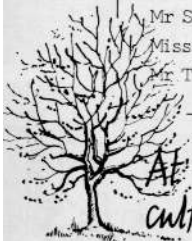
The area covered by these proposals is bounded by Westway to the North, Ladbroke Grove to the West, Holland Park Avenue and Notting Hill Gate to the South, and the Borough boundary to the east with the exception of Clanricarde and Linden Gardens.

We look forward to the commencement - and effective operation of these extended controls.

Executive Committee of the Association

The following members are currently on the Executive Committee:

Rev D Richardson	Chairman	48 Ladbroke Road
Mr P Pilkington	Treasurer	14 Denbigh Terrace
Mr P Chapman	Secretary	8 Chepstow Crescent
Miss E Aslin		Flat 1, 9 Pembridge Crescent
Mr D Campion		13 Rodney Ho. Pembridge Cres.
Mr R Evans		16 Chepstow Villas
Mr R Griffin		32 Portobello Road
Mr J Hillelson		34 Chepstow Place
Miss J Lawton		Flat 1, 9 Pembridge Crescent
Mr S Tanner		10 Dawson Place
Miss D Weatherhead		13 Clanricarde Gardens
Mr T de Zoete		33 Pembridge Villas



At the Annual General Meeting, Mr P Annett the Borough's Arboriculturist will give an illustrated talk entitled "Trees in the Borough."

Mr Peter Pilkington

Local links with the Middle East are being strengthened with the departure of the treasurer, Peter Pilkington, to Dubai to join our former secretary, Simon Linton. Peter, an architect, was one of the founders of the Pembridge Association and has been its treasurer, chairman of the planning committee and editor-cum-compiler of this Newsletter since we began over three years ago.

The drawings in our Newsletters illustrate his preoccupation with design and detail which has made him an indispensable member of this Association. His services to Pembridge have been noticed elsewhere and he has also been involved in publicity for, for example, the Save the Gaumont Campaign. Being meticulous, most able and willing and, incidentally, also a very nice chap, Peter is one of those persons on whom we have relied for a host of small jobs in addition. We shall not realise the extent of our loss until he has left us.

We hope Peter finds ample scope for his talents in the Middle East and promise him that when (as we are so often led to believe) the oil begins to flow nearer to home we shall have a place for him back in the Pembridge Association.

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ST PETER'S HALL 59A PORTOBELLO RD 8.00 PM
**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING
9 DEC '75**