

## **Planning Report Spring 2011 Newsletter**

There is so much to cover in this planning report that it is difficult to know where to start. As always, nothing at all could be achieved without the expertise and hours of time volunteered by Diana Eyre (trees), John Villiers (Chartered Surveyor) Stephen Higgins and our architects Virginia Newman, Robin Snell and Peter Ungar.

The planning committee has had a busy six months during which Westminster City Council has consulted us on 229 applications. Sometimes the complexity of large schemes makes it necessary to meet with the developers or architects but unfortunately we currently lack the time and resources to meet with applicants with smaller proposals. Similarly, although I always try to reply to all the letters and emails sent to me by residents and members, very occasionally this is not possible. I would like to assure you though that your comments are nonetheless circulated to all the committee members and recorded on the Society's database against the applicable property for posterity. This applies even if I am only copied in on a letter you may have sent to Westminster Council or to our ward councillors.

### **Marlborough Hill redevelopment**

Along with our hard working ward councillor Lindsey Hall, and impressively organised members of the Marlborough Hill, Loudoun Road and Carlton Hill Residents' Action Group, we have been looking very closely at the proposals for the redevelopment of Quintin Kynaston School, George Eliot Junior and Infant School and the new Alternative Provision Centre (APC).

We have written to our MP, Karen Buck, and Cllr Alastair Moss, Chairman of the Planning and City Development Committee, and requested that they give careful consideration to our grave concerns regarding the long term availability of funding for this ambitious project. The development will be phased and we are concerned that any additional cuts in funding will result in buildings which will be further compromised in terms of architecture and materials and that there will be inadequate community support to ensure that pupils and neighbours can coexist happily. There has already been a substantial £8m cut in funding for the scheme since the applications were first submitted last year.

The proposed development of an Alternative Provision Centre (APC) for fifty of the most disaffected teenagers residing in Westminster and beyond has been strongly opposed by local residents and concerns about a potential increase in anti social behaviour have been raised by our local police Sergeant Dennis O'Connor who is anticipating additional cuts to police funding.

The Marlborough Hill site is at the gateway into the Conservation Area and as such we believe that it deserves buildings of substantial architectural merit. Like ourselves, CABE( the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) has said that they remain unconvinced by the proposed design and that it "responds poorly to its surroundings and to the campus approach". We have also opposed the loss of 43 trees on the site.

### **Basements**

John Villiers and I attended a meeting at Chelsea Town Hall in January which had been arranged by the the King's Road Association of Chelsea Residents, the

Belgravia Residents Association, the Knightsbridge Association and the Ladbrooke Association. Its purpose was to establish the best way forward to successfully oppose basement developments which are not under the foot print of the building and therefore do not fall under permitted development. The meeting was also attended by MPs, councillors, and Rosemarie MacQueen, none of whom were left in any doubt that local residents will no longer suffer excessive basement developments in silence. The Town Hall was packed and at one point it seemed as if the chairman might have to close the meeting down as there were too many people standing. Representatives of John Lyons Charity also attended as did SJW residents who have been particularly badly afflicted by a number of excessive basement excavations on Hamilton Terrace.

### **Localism Bill**

In addition to the long hours he spends on the planning committee, John Villiers also represents the Society at Westminster Amenity Society Forums (WASF). Later in this newsletter you can read John's full report on the extremely important Localism Bill, which if adopted, will fundamentally change the way the planning system works by giving new rights and powers to community groups.

### **City Management Plan**

We would like you to comment on Westminster Council's City Management Plan Policy Options as this is an excellent, one off opportunity for us to try to shape future planning policies for Westminster.

The City Management Plan Policy Options can be viewed on the council's website at: [www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/ldf/cityplan.cfm](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/ldf/cityplan.cfm)

We are particularly interested in what you have to say about the proposed policies for basements, design, alterations and extensions and cycling.

The council has requested that comments are received by Friday 4th March 2011 and although I realise that you may not receive this newsletter until after that date, please do still send your comments to me at [stjohnswoodsoc@aol.com](mailto:stjohnswoodsoc@aol.com) and I will ensure they are included.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The Planning Minister Greg Clark has announced a review of planning policy, designed to consolidate policy statements, circulars and guidance documents into a single consolidated National Planning Policy Framework. The new Framework will be localist in its approach, handing power back to local communities to decide what is right for them. The Minister has invited organisations to offer their suggestions to the Department on what priorities and policies we might adopt to produce a shorter, more decentralised and less bureaucratic National Planning Policy Framework. We will have to look very carefully at this too before the closing date for suggestions on 28th February 2011.

### **Retrofitting of Historic buildings**

The Council is also consulting on a draft guide to retrofitting historic buildings, which aims to look at the likely costs, disruption and benefits in terms of carbon savings which might apply when making improvements to the environmental performance of historic buildings in Westminster. This guidance aims to clarify the Council's position particularly with regard to medium-high cost energy efficiency measures and low and zero carbon technologies in relation to buildings which are listed, or within a conservation area. This consultation is taking place from 14th January – 18th February 2011 and the Society will be making representations on this too.

Christine Cowdray  
Planning Chairman  
St John's Wood Society