



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity 27626

Spring Bulletin 2021



This Bulletin is printed and distributed to members twice a year, and electronic mailings are sent to members at approx. monthly intervals. For more detail, and to keep up to date with the activities of the Society, visit our website at www.chelseasociety.org.uk You can also follow The Chelsea Society on Instagram, where we now have 734 Followers

Please encourage your friends and neighbours to join the Society. They can join easily by visiting our website and clicking on **“Join Us.”**
They do not have to be resident in Chelsea.

A Message from the Chairman, Dr. James Thompson

Dear Member,

Despite all the restrictions on our activities, the Society has been kept very busy, because planning applications continue apace, with some worrying developments, and new policy consultations are under way, requiring us to pay attention to apparently innocuous proposals which may later come back to bite us. Developers are always pushing the boundaries of national legislation and local planning policies. Applicants apply for basements to be as large as possible, and are adroit at claiming that special circumstances require an exception to be made for their particular development. Sometimes exceptions are granted, thus chipping away at some of the few protections we have available. This is a slippery slope.



We continue to Zoom. Whilst it cannot be a substitute for meeting in person, it affords us a way of keeping in touch, even drawing in our members from the United States and elsewhere, so I am considering keeping it as an option for some of our activities. It is particularly useful for those who don't like being out late at night, but we hope to get our social events and visits going again, once the law allows. We are daring to dream of a Summer Party. We are also thinking of having a stand on Duke of York Square on some Saturdays, so that we can recruit new members. If you would like to help, please let us know.

Zero Carbon is a policy which arouses passions. For some it is the number one priority of our global civilisation, and must be pursued quickly, vigorously, and extensively to avert catastrophic global warming. For others it is a muddle of pious posturing about marginal matters, and colossal naivete which allows China to burn coal till 2060 while the West immediately hobbles itself with unreliable windmills and solar panels, stored in batteries which keep going flat. And that is just the range of opinions within our Council. It would be good to know what members think, so we will be coming to you for your opinions once we have produced a document which deals with Zero Carbon as it applies to Chelsea.

Whatever our views about national policy on de-carbonisation, our remit is to think about how these policies might impact Chelsea. Are we really going to give up gas central heating, which works well, and upon which we have relied for so long, or will we willingly install heat pumps, which will festoon our buildings with what are in effect air conditioning compressors? What will it mean for Chelsea if we give up our current internal combustion cars and have to take up electric ones? On the other hand, is the current level of traffic, and the associated pollution it brings something which we are willing to tolerate? And even if not, is there anything we can do about it, given that we abut the Thames, which people need to cross by the few bridges available, however much we may prefer peace and quiet on our streets. We would like to consult you on these matters also, once our report is ready.

Although reassurance is not part of our official objects as a society, as a member of almost 40 year's standing I have always found it reassuring that a thousand members are committed to defending the amenities of Chelsea, and do so through thick and thin, paying attention to the fine detail that influences the public realm, so that future residents have a heritage to enjoy.

LATEST NEWS



HRH Prince Philip

The Chelsea Society mourns the loss on 9th April 2021 of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Photo by Allan Warren



Remembrance Day

The Chelsea Society laid a wreath at the War Memorial in Sloane Square. November 2020

Cabmen's Shelter



Although RBKC served a statutory Notice on the owners in August 2020 to repair this building adjacent to the Albert Bridge, no repairs were done and the building has deteriorated further. We have stressed to the Council the urgency of the matter, and they have given the owners until August to take the necessary action. The owners have now put plastic sheeting on the roof, but we trust that RBKC will not see this as a reason to give them even more time to do the necessary repairs.

The owners have recently applied for planning permission to use it as a café or for exhibitions. The Society has applied to Historic England to list this shelter, and the one in Pont Street. The one opposite the V&A is already listed.

Residents' Parking

A Member of The Chelsea Society, Richard Lee, has commented as follows on the RBKC proposals for changing the Residents' Parking policy:

As a 50 year resident of RBKC, this is probably the nicest series of villages to live in in the whole of London. Many of the properties and streets were constructed at a time when the horse & carriage was prevalent and their proportions do not lend themselves to the use of motor vehicles. More recently, mews properties were converted from housing horses to housing horseless carriages but the escalating value of property has meant that it makes more economic sense to convert them into dwellings, which puts more pressure on residents having to park on the street. For more details see website.



The Surprise Pub



Good news! It seems that Cadogan have found a new tenant for The Surprise pub in Christchurch Terrace – so it won't be closing!

Annual General Meeting

The 2020 AGM of the Society was held by audio-visual link at 6.30pm on Monday 30th November 2020 and there were 79 attendees.

A short address was given by the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, Cllr. Gerard Hargreaves, and by the President of the Society, John Simpson CBE. The Treasurer, Chris Lenon, presented the Accounts for the year ended 30th June 2020, which were approved. Martyn Baker, Fleur de Villiers and Amalia Cebreiro retired from the Council by rotation and were re-elected.

The Chairman, Dr. James Thompson, gave a report on the Society's activities in the year 2020 which can be read in full on The Chelsea Society website. <https://chelseasociety.org.uk/2020-agm/>



LATEST NEWS



Sutton Estate – Flats To Be Refurbished

The owners of the Estate, Clarion Housing, have decided to refurbish many of the flats to modern standards and bring them back into use.

The Chelsea Society welcomes this decision, and requests that flats are made available for letting to key workers, and for affordable housing, as well as social housing.

Covid Vaccinations

All eligible residents were contacted by the NHS Central Booking service and offered a slot along with information about when to arrive and where to go.

The vast majority of people receive this information via a letter posted to their home, and others are receiving calls from their GP practice directly. There are a number of scams going around and it is crucial that residents know that the NHS will never request payment or invite people to click on links via messages sent to their phones.



New Post Office

The Royal Hospital is going to move its post office to the Soane Stable Block on Royal Hospital Road so it is more accessible for local people.

It will also be open at lunchtime. Well done them! The only problem is that it won't be until 2022 although we will try our best to persuade them to move it earlier.

Tower Blocks On Cromwell Road



Good news – the developers have withdrawn their planning application.

The Chelsea Society had supported the Kensington Society in objecting to this application.

An Accident Waiting To Happen



The Chelsea Society and the Cheyne Walk Trust have been campaigning for many years to persuade TfL to make it safer to cross the road at the junction between Beaufort St and the Embankment at Battersea Bridge. Tragically a pedestrian was killed there on 13th January.

Our campaign then became more urgent and we were joined by Greg Hands MP, Tony Devenish our GLA member, and RBKC.

We were informed on 8th March 2021 that TfL intend to build a new signalised pedestrian crossing on the north side of Battersea Bridge to improve safety for pedestrians crossing this busy junction.

The new crossing – which will be button-operated and feature a pedestrian countdown timer – will enable people to walk across the southern arm of the junction free from the dangers of vehicle traffic movements. TfL will provide more space on the pavement for people and add tactile paving to make it easier for people with accessibility needs.

You can view the plans at <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/battersea-bridge-safety>

LATEST NEWS

Sarah Farrugia



The Chelsea Society is very sad to hear of the death of Sarah Farrugia on 16th February 2021 at the Royal Marsden Hospital. She leaves a husband, and daughter (recently graduated from Edinburgh University) and will be much missed.

Dr James Thompson, Chairman of the Society, said "Sarah is very fondly remembered by Council members, for all she had done for the Society and for Chelsea as a whole. Many particularly recall the very large attendance at the Future of Chelsea meeting which she organised, which was one of the biggest which had ever come together to discuss a common strategy for Chelsea, and the impact Sarah made on Chelsea by engendering that debate. I particularly appreciated all the support she gave me when, as the incoming Chairman, I needed frequent help in working out how to use all the communication systems she had pioneered, and how kindly she guided me through

those same instructions when I inevitably phoned up again sometime later to be reminded of the steps once again. I also know that, outside the Society, she had worked with other Chelsea organisations, including retailers, to encourage Chelsea-wide approaches to public events. She was always able to engage people to discuss issues, to recruit volunteers to those common projects, and to bring them to fruition."

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee comprises: Sir Paul Lever (Chairman, and representative for Brompton-Hans Ward); Martyn Baker (Chelsea Riverside); Jules Turner (Royal Hospital), and Michael Parkes (Stanley)

Planning activities at both national and local level had taken place remotely until 7th May 2021. This has at one level hindered communication: planning officers are working from home and are less easy to contact; but, paradoxically, has also encouraged more ad hoc Zoom meetings. Some Councillors have, to their credit, made a point of being more accessible in this way.

National Planning Policy

Three potential changes have been sources of concern. Firstly the government is consulting on the introduction of an obligation on all local authorities to build a set number of new units of housing, calculated on the basis of a uniform algorithm, over the next five years. This would be impossible for RBKC to fulfil as there is simply no spare land available. Secondly orders have been introduced which grant Permitted Development Rights to extend existing purpose built blocks of flats upwards and to add up to two more storeys to existing detached, semidetached and terraced housing built between 1948 and 2018. And thirdly the government is contemplating easing the restrictions on change of use from retail/commercial to housing. This would also have damaging implications in Chelsea as it would limit the opportunities for social infrastructure.

Royal Brompton Hospital



The hospital's trust has confirmed its decision eventually to re-locate to a site south of the river, but without indicating a timeframe.

RBKC has published a Supplementary Planning Document for the site which makes the case for its retention in medical use. The Society has expressed support for this.

South Kensington Station

Transport for London's planning application for re-developing the station attracted over 800 objections, including from the Chelsea Society.

It subsequently revised its proposals, but only cosmetically. The building would dominate the surrounding area and its mass, style and size would be an eyesore. For more detail see the Chelsea Society website.



PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT



King's Road

The application to re-develop King's Walk, which the Chelsea Society broadly supported, was approved by RBKC's Planning Committee.

The Society has also been consulted about the proposed re-development of the Marks and Spencer building, and has made an objection to the planning application - see website.



Colebrook Court

No planning application has yet been submitted for Colebrook Court on Sloane Avenue.

But the developers have undertaken consultations about a revised design which would be significantly lower than the 16 – 26 storey range which they were originally contemplating and whose design would be more in keeping with the surrounding environment.



Refurbishment of Open Spaces

RBKC is planning to refurbish both Dovehouse Green and Chelsea Green.

The Society is involved in the planning in both cases. Both sites have become a bit run-down and it is good news that RBKC has found the resources to improve them.



Building Collapse

On the night of 2 November a house in Durham Place which was undergoing re-development collapsed.

Fortunately no-one was injured, but the ruin of this handsome Georgian building is a major heritage loss. The house next door was also being re-developed including the excavation of a basement. The Society's Chairman wrote to the leader of the Council asking for a moratorium on basements while it was established whether there was any connection to the collapse. Councillor Campbell replied that the council did not have the powers to do this.

Lots Road

The highly disruptive work at the Lots Road Power Station continues and the Council has refused to install CCTV cameras to monitor infringements of the Construction Traffic Management Plan. More worryingly the Council seems reluctant to fulfil some of its previous commitments about the future of the area.

Although the Council has recently produced a Statement of Community involvement, officers seem unwilling to treat local residents and businesses as the key stakeholders in weighing up residential development options as against improved business space and social infrastructure. Lots Village is a Conservation Area and includes Chelsea's only Employment Zone. But this did not prevent the Council referring in its recent Planning and Place Businesses Plan to "bringing forward new homes" in Lots Road west (CA10), so undermining the Employment Zone at a time when rebuilding London's economy and creating more jobs is crucial, particularly for the younger generation.

The Pound site (through which the borough boundary runs) was earmarked for 55 units of affordable extra care housing for the elderly and the then Leader of the Council said the £76M obtained from selling its Thamesbrook building should be available to fund these planned units.

EVENT UPDATES

Pollution And Congestion – What Can Chelsea Do?



The Chelsea Society organised a zoom meeting on 9 November 2020 to discuss Pollution and Congestion. Over 20 members participated plus Cllr Johnny Thalassites and Cllr Cem Kemahli.

Many residents are concerned about the level of congestion in Chelsea and the resultant pollution from standing or slow moving traffic which affects many streets. The meeting was called to assess workable solutions which will be acceptable to residents and local business. Chris Lenon set out the form of the meeting involving a brief summary of the issues and then a series of open questions to frame a discussion regarding parking permit policy (which is currently under review) and then roads.

Chelsea Through Adversity

The Chelsea community has faced many challenges over the last century – from the Spanish flu (which killed as many as WW1) and The Great Depression, to two World Wars. But troubles can be transformative.

Kira Charatan, Archivist at Cadogan, gave us an uplifting talk via zoom exploring how the people of Chelsea dealt with previous crises and how the unique, indomitable spirit and energy of the area made it the epicentre of rebirth – a flowering in creativity, ingenuity, new cultural movements and helping to inspire wider economic revival.

Traffic, Accidents And Net Zero Carbon In Chelsea



A discussion was held via zoom on Traffic, Accidents and Net Zero Carbon in Chelsea.

Traffic issues and Accidents. In the light of the accident at Battersea Bridge and continuing concerns about pedestrian safety at major junctions and traffic pollution, David Waddell updated members on developments and led a discussion.

Net Zero Carbon Chris Lenon discussed the concept of net zero carbon as it affects Chelsea and the specific issues in the RBKC consultation which affects residents and development.

Come Dine With Mr Pepys



Samuel Pepys prided himself on keeping a good table, especially after he set up home in Seething Lane in 1660, entertaining friends, relatives and patrons to repasts including 'botarga', roast swan, and at Christmas-time Elisabeth Pepys' mince-pies, which took an entire day to create.

Pepys was also an habitué of London's taverns and 'ordinaries', sampling and giving us his views on buttered ale, muscadet, and what we would know as Bristol cream sherry, as well as the latest crazes for coffee and 'tay'. Come dine with Mr Pepys – it's an invitation you won't want to miss.

JACKY COLLISS HARVEY gave us a fascinating talk on 15th April. Jacky worked in museum publishing for 20 years and is the author of the bestseller RED: A History of the Redhead and The Animal's Companion. Her most recent book is Walking Pepys's London. See <https://www.hauspublishing.com/travel-writing/walking-pepys-london-by-jacky-colliss-harvey/>

Portrait by John Hayls in 1666
[National Portrait Gallery]



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can follow The Chelsea Society on our website - chelseasociety.org.uk
and on Instagram @thechelseasociety where we now have 734 followers!

Our mailing address is: 30 Paradise Walk, London SW3 4JL

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