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Julian Lloyd Webber, our President, *writes*



A year ago, in my President's letter, I wrote that Covid 19 had changed the world we knew. Perhaps none of us realised just how fundamental that change would become. Even now that regulations have been relaxed, footfall on the streets remains significantly below pre-pandemic times and – although 'working from home' is no longer

obligatory – the number of people using public transport remains barely half what we knew as 'normal'.

This has had a profound effect on Central London including, of course, South Kensington: retail outlets have closed, never to re-open, and the museums are often half empty. To counteract these problems, Onslow Neighbourhood Association would warmly welcome our



Council establishing a working group to consider ways of improving the area for residents and businesses alike. A similar working group was set up to advise on Bute Street which – as a result – will soon be re-paved and permanently pedestrianised to the undoubted benefit of both shoppers and retailers: we need more such initiatives!

2021 brought together an unprecedented alliance of local Resident's Associations, individual residents, shopkeepers and local councillors – all united against the application by Native Land/TfL to redevelop South Kensington Station and the area surrounding it. This resulted in the unanimous rejection of the application by RBKC's planning committee. The

decision reflected many residents' concerns and protected the character and heritage of our much-loved and admired South Kensington neighbourhood. ONA continues to be supportive of a much needed, heritage-led redevelopment that respects the listed station as well as the long-awaited and long overdue Step Free Access. As regards the latter, there is no timing from TfL about the eventual start of the below ground Station Capacity Upgrade, approved four years ago in Jan 2018. ONA is therefore very supportive of RBKC's initiative in offering funds of up to £7.5m to bring Step Free Access forward. The ball is once again in the court of TfL and we can only keep our fingers crossed. We hope that Native Land/TfL will not appeal RBKC's decision but go back to the drawing board and develop a scheme that reflects the principles of the Development Brief 2016, which TfL developed in consultation with many Residents Associations, including ONA.

Sadly, we failed in our efforts to prevent Wellcome Trust from demolishing and re-building the office block at 63-81 Pelham Street. While not of outstanding quality, the ground and second floors of the building are of fine construction and could easily have been renovated. Now, we face years of major traffic disruption followed by the arrival of a much larger, characterless office block.

Lastly, I must mention our membership subscription. This has remained at £15 for many years but we have concluded that we must increase it to £20 in order to restore our reserves, which have been seriously depleted in retaining planning consultants to help us fight these applications. I am sure you will agree that this remains a small price to pay for the considerable efforts expended by ONA to preserve and enhance the character of this unique part of London.

Many thanks for your continued support.

ONA AGM 2022

After a two-year hiatus, we will hold an in-person AGM: **Thursday 28 April at the Institut Francais, 17 Queensberry Place, SW7 2DT.**

Come at 6pm for a drink and to chat with us and your neighbours.

The meeting will start at 6:30pm. We very much look forward to seeing members again, and please bring potential new members with you!

An agenda and further details will be posted on our website ona.org.uk.

SOUTH KENSINGTON PLANNING NEWS

A very busy year

Report by Susanna Trostdorf, ONA Trustee



Above: The existing view and photomontages or ‘verified views’ from Onslow Square looking north. These ‘verified views’ were commissioned by ONA, Pelham Residents’ Association and Thurloe Owners & Leaseholders Association and are based on 50mm lens pictures, following guidelines of the Landscape Institute, to show the real impact of the design, closest to what the human eye would see.

Around Station Development – South Kensington Station

Our community has a long track record of constructively participating in working groups and public consultations, hoping that our issues and concerns will be heard, understood and acknowledged by developers. Unfortunately, with the most recent Around Station Development proposals, we saw that some developers continue to believe that they can bulldoze over these concerns. It was left to ONA, fellow Resident Associations (RAs) and individuals to take up the challenge of protecting the heritage and unique village character of our South Kensington neighbourhood.

It took a united front of five RAs, working closely with councillors from several wards, our MP and SAVE Britain’s Heritage to wage an effective campaign against the Native Land/TfL proposals. Most surprising to us was the sheer number of individual objections – over 2,000 – filed with the RBKC. At the onset, we campaigners thought it would be hard to get the minimum 800 recommended by our MP. Little did we know how much people cared and how much they would support us.

RBKC’s planning committee’s unanimous rejection of this application, after an intense four-hour long discussion last 18 November, was a victory – especially as RBKC’s planning officer had recommended approval beforehand. The development would have destroyed the character and heritage of this iconic area, dwarfed the original station itself, blocked the protected views of Albertopolis, and materially impaired the public realm, specifically the plaza south of the Arcade entrance. The developer’s tactic of claiming that the much-needed and long promised Step Free Access (SFA) could only come with the harm of a disproportionate and inappropriate

development failed. We are thankful that the RBKC’s planning committee saw through this.

It remains very concerning that the RA volunteers needed to undertake such a labour-intensive and costly campaign, which included engaging eight different expert consultants over a two-year period. None of the applicant’s three versions of this proposal addressed the issues we raised. The amount of money that this area was able to spend helped, but what really drove the outcome of the planning committee meeting were the visuals (‘verified views’) shown and the sound line of arguments advanced by the RAs and effectively delivered by resident objectors, which included ONA’s President Julian Lloyd Webber.

The question now is whether Native Land/TfL will appeal. We can only wait for the six-month period that began on the decision date, 18 November. We hope that the reasoning and wording of the refusal will bring the developers back to the drawing board, ready to restart a constructive dialogue with residents. ONA continues to be open to and would welcome any opportunity to collaborate again.

In a more productive world, discussions and interaction between RAs and developers would take place at the pre-application stage, resulting in an application everyone could support. This happened with the Station Capacity Upgrade application, supported by RAs and residents, and approved in Jan 2018. These works, upgrading the Station below ground, were promised to begin at the end of 2018 (well before Covid) but never did, and the scheme was formally “paused” in 29 July 2021 for an indefinite period.



Above: This developer's visual of Pelham Street omits the existing flower stand as well as the proposed new cycle stands and loading bay.



Above: Site plan drawing – red lines mark the application changes to the public realm. About one third of the piazza would no longer be available for pedestrian use. Note that the outline of the flower stall is limited to the hut, omitting the space used on the pavement around it.

The visuals presented by the developers were based on photographs taken with a 24mm wide-angle lens that make the buildings look smaller than they would in reality.

ONA believes our Station must have standard 21st century amenities to serve the multitude of residents, commuters, workers, visitors and tourists. Specifically, this includes platform-to-street level Step Free Access as well as Changing Places toilets (CPt), required by law since 2020. ONA was extremely happy to learn about RBKC offering TfL up to £7.5 million in funding for SFA and CPt. We hope that TfL will take up this offer.

South Kensington is 'one of the world's most popular cultural destinations and home to an extraordinary cluster of world-leading organisations pioneering innovation and learning in science and the arts' to quote the Exhibition Road Cultural Group (ERCG). As such, it reflects poorly on London and the UK if the Station continues to lack standard amenities.

We continue to follow the developments.



Above: Verified view commissioned by ONA, PRA and TOLA uploaded 09.11.2021 onto RBKC's public planning website

40 and 63-81 Pelham Street

The Wellcome Trust filed applications for two Pelham Street sites in 2021. Discussions with relevant RAs already started at pre-application stage.

Regarding 40 Pelham Street, ONA and other RAs were able to raise concerns early on and this resulted in some improvements in the height and shape of the proposed office building.

Unfortunately, campaigners, including ONA, did not achieve a positive outcome with 63-81 Pelham Street. We advocated the refusal of the application as it meant replacing the existing office building with a new building double in size and six storeys tall. The existing four-storey building, and in particular the lovely historic façade, had not been well maintained over the last decades by the Wellcome Trust. Wellcome used this fact to argue that the façade could not be saved. The application was approved by RBKC, which will result in substantial overlooking and light pollution for the houses on South Terrace and Crompton Court apartments. The building's servicing will be moved onto the busy and narrow Pelham Street.

Sussex Mansions, Old Brompton Road – the former site of Christie's

The latest news about the ex-Christie's site is that its owners are considering the redevelopment of commercial sections. This would mean the demolition of the rear hangar and construction of residential units. ONA was contacted by a

representative of the owners but so far has been unable to assess the proposal as the plans shown remain at 'concept stage'. In the meantime, the owners are in the third round of pre-application advice discussions with RBKC. We have asked for the drawings and more concrete plans so we can provide feedback. We learned via third parties that 30+ units are planned and that a basement excavation is being considered. As the only access to these new units would be via a very narrow alley from the Old Brompton Road, ONA has raised concerns about servicing and fire & safety.

As RBKC's pre-application advice is bound by a confidentiality agreement, RAs will not be heard unless the applicant who pays for the advice agrees to this. Pre-advice meeting minutes, materials shown and RBKC's advice become public only when the application goes live. ONA does intend to be a regular part of pre-application discussion, but it is counterproductive and costly, as seen with the Around Station Development, if RAs can only provide feedback when plans are in their final stage.

Kensington Forum Hotel

The news about Kensington Forum Hotel, where RAs and Councillors avoided another monstrous proposed development, is that it changed hands recently. The new majority owners have closed the hotel and apparently intend to refurbish the existing building and continue to run it as a hotel. The new owners have initiated talks with RAs adjacent to the site, under the lead of Ashburn Courtfield Gardens Residents Association (ACGRA).

WE
need
HELP!

None of the work referenced above is possible without volunteers, and we need more of them. ONA remains severely understaffed. Our experience is that it is rewarding to be able to achieve something for our neighbourhood, but our current committee can't carry on indefinitely! There are a range of tasks and time commitments: **help contribute to or distribute this newsletter, organise our events, run a campaign for a specific application or compile and write commentaries on local planning policies.** We'd be glad to show you how. Please email us on onslowna@gmail.com if you would like to help.

Natural History Museum: *Urban Garden Update*

Image right: Laura Mosedale / far right: Natural History Museum



Far left: A rendering of the western view from the Darwin Centre, in front of the same view in January

Above: The skeleton of 'Dippy' the Diplodocus, which used to greet visitors in Hintze Hall as they entered the Museum, was replaced in 2018 by a blue whale skeleton. A full size replica of Dippy will be placed in the eastern end of the grounds, along with ferns and other ancient plants.

Left: Sunken walkways in the Wildlife Garden will make pond dipping a little easier for everyone.

Work has begun on the grounds of the Natural History Museum, to transform this invaluable site into a 'welcoming, accessible and biologically diverse green space in the heart of London.' The NHM invited ONA, other RAs and neighbours and supporters to a presentation of the plans in January, where museum staff showcased the outdoor galleries that will demonstrate how our planet has changed over time. The existing Wildlife Garden will be extended and will double the space for native plants and habitats within the grounds.

The transformation of the grounds, expected to be completed in 2023, is part of the Museum's ambitious 'Urban Nature Project' which is working with museums, schools and youth groups across the UK to provide the motivation and the tools to safeguard nature in towns and cities. 'The future of the natural world is in our hands and everyone can play a part in helping it,' the Museum's website states. The Museum is a good place to start: For more information, visit nhm.ac.uk/about-us/urban-nature-project.

Walk This Way: *Bute Street Pedestrianisation*

Image source: RBKC



Views of what Bute Street could look like after a pedestrianisation remodelling.

Left: Bute Street, from Old Brompton Road. *Below:* Bute Street from Harrington Road on Saturdays, with market stalls





Queen's Platinum Jubilee Party

2 June, Onslow Square

Get out your flags and finery on **Thursday 2 June, between 6pm and 8:30pm** for a free musical evening in Onslow Square to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen.

This event is sponsored by TLC Estate Agents, which provided the musical evenings in the Square in 2020 and 2021.



Last July's Musical Evening in Onslow Square

ONA Garden Party: Together Again!

23 June, Onslow Square

We look forward to welcoming members, friends and potential new members to Onslow Square on **Thursday 23 June for our annual garden party, from 6:30 to 8:30**. Invitations will be sent to all members and details will also be available on our website, ona.org.uk.

Puppy Appeal: *Back in Full Force*

The South Kensington Poppy Appeal ran for a full two weeks this autumn, and Tiny Ohan lured many station users to the stand. Local volunteer Tim Constantinou ran the volunteer schedule and staffed the volunteer recruitment stand. If you'd like to help next autumn, please email isabellaohan@yahoo.ca



New volunteers are always needed!



Image: Lucy Ward



useful contacts

To report building material or rubbish blocking the road or pavement:

STREETLINE 020 7361 3001

www.rbkc.gov.uk/global/report-it/waste-and-street-environment

To report noise and nuisance – late loud parties, out-of-hours construction work, etc:

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH 020 7361 3002 email: environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk

www.rbkc.gov.uk/global/report-it/noise-or-nuisance

To report anti-social behaviour – aggressive begging, disorderly or disruptive conduct:

MET POLICE 101 or www.met.police.uk and click on **REPORT**. Call **999** to report an emergency

Safer Neighbourhoods in Our Borough

Can a new App help?

By Caryl Harris
*Chair, South Kensington &
Queen's Gate Residents Association*

As the Ward Coordinator for RBKC's Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel, I attend the meetings of all 18 ward panels. This gives me the unique opportunity not only to see every ward's most recent statistics, but also to listen to the ward panel residents, who often report recent changes to their areas that are being experienced right across the borough but are not seen as a pattern by the police teams.

For example, in the early months of the Covid pandemic, I noticed a concern that the growing number of e-bikes and e-scooter riders were using the pavements rather than the allocated lanes in the road. Older residents and people with children and dogs felt very unsafe. This was happening all over the borough but it was not considered to be a priority. It is now. Cycling on pavements has become a replacement priority in 60 percent of the wards.

Similarly, more deserted streets and closed shops and cafes have made the streets feel unsafe to many women on darker winter afternoons and evenings. Concealing face masks and hoodies on young men on the street have added to this feeling. Again, this is now being addressed by the police by, for example, putting more police on the streets and improving lighting, but better shared intel would have brought this to everyone's attention much sooner.

To improve this situation, I have been looking for the past three years at developing an online device that would link the Ward Panel members more easily to their team members and the Dedicated Ward Officers (DWO). Currently, you have to be linked to a Twitter account to see a DWO's activity. And to be able to share information, ward panel members have to wait for the next quarterly meeting. Knowing from our research that 97 percent of the residents on the ward panels has access to an iPad, smart phone or laptop, we started to devise a method of communication that would link the DWOs and the ward members together. This platform or app would provide an opportunity to share intelligence about new safety and crime concerns for the Wards Teams to impart and share with Ward Officers and each other.

Thanks to Inspector Tom Sincock, we are about to trial our new app Better Borough in Dalgarno/St Helen's Wards. If it passes the trials and looks like it is serving the community well, we hope to roll it out across the whole borough as fast as we can.

I hope this simple-to-use app will be a great extra tool for the residents to keep in touch with their Dedicated Ward Officers, even if these residents do not sit on a Ward panel. It will also solve that endless question about 'Where are our local beat policemen?' as the app will have a Twitter feed which will update itself throughout the day and demonstrate exactly where your local Safer Neighbourhood Teams are currently policing.

It will also have the Ward statistics feeding directly into it, a message board for local Safer Neighbourhood Ward meetings, community announcements and messages to remind the neighbours to keep the windows locked in summer and not to leave valuables on display in their car, very much what OWL (Online Watch Service) used to provide. The app will also have photographs of Ward Police Team members and their contact details.

The app is not a device for reporting crime – for that, users will be directed to call 999 or 101. But it will be a place to raise or report a concern.

I have started to present the app at the Ward Panel meetings and to the Safety Team at RBKC and several of the senior officers and councillors. I am excited about this app and, from the reactions to my presentations, the police and members are too. It seems they are confident that this simple addition to the SNWP resources will be helpful.

I hope the app will be in wider use by early summer and we can begin the refining work to make it an all-round winner for the RBKC Wards.

Editor's Note: Most ONA members live in Courtfield Ward. If you are interested in joining the Courtfield Ward Panel, please email onslowna@gmail.com



Would you like to contribute to this newsletter or the ONA website?

Please email the editor Laura Mosedale lpmosedale@me.com

ONA President Julian Lloyd Webber

ONA Trustees Charles Lawton, Laura Mosedale, Susanna Trostdorf

Subscription: £20 per year

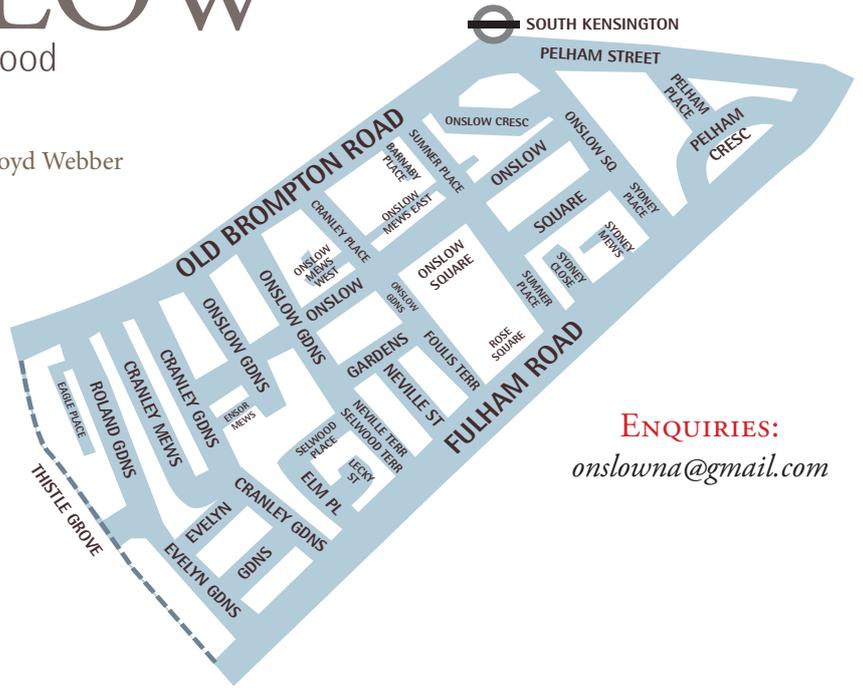
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ONSLOW

Neighbourhood Association

President Julian Lloyd Webber



The ONA was formed in 1973 to protect and enhance the residential and environmental quality of much of the western part of the Wellcome Trust estate in South Kensington (see map). We keep in touch with this annual newsletter and regular email updates. We host the only garden party permitted in Onslow Square – a unique opportunity to meet your neighbours, councillors and representatives of other local associations. Household membership is only £20 a year.

ENQUIRIES:
onslowna@gmail.com

The objectives of the ONA are:

- To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning
- To stimulate interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the neighbourhood
- To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest
- To take steps to protect and advance the interests of persons living within the neighbourhood

Join us!

1 Make your online payment of £20 to our bank account:
 Account name: Onslow Neighbourhood Association
 Account number: 61011723
 Sort code: 40-05-14
 Reference = your name

2 Set up a Standing Order for the payment of your annual membership fee on or before 5th January every year

3 Fill in and sign the form below and post to Susanna Trostdorf, ONA Hon Treasurer



I would like to join the ONA and I have paid my subscription fee of £20 into the ONA bank account

Your name

Home address

Email

Phone number (home/mobile)

By signing this form, you are confirming that you are consenting to ONA holding and processing your personal data in order to keep you informed about news, events and activities and to manage your membership and your annual subscription. ONA will never share your information with a third party.

I consent to ONA contacting me by post email telephone

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick this box:

Yes, I want the Onslow Neighbourhood Association to claim Gift Aid on my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

giftaid it

Please notify the charity if you:

want to cancel this declaration; change your name or home address; no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

PLEASE COMPLETE & SIGN THIS FORM & SEND TO:

Signature date ___ / ___ / ___



Susanna Trostdorf, Hon Treasurer, ONA, c/o 59 Onslow Square, London SW7 3LR

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