



The Marylebone Association Newsletter October 2020

Dear Tim,

ASSOCIATION NEWS

This month the Association has lost two of its long standing members: Jean Jefferson and Sonia Anderson.

Jean sadly passed away after a long illness. She was one of our most active social members, she frequently attended events and will be remembered as a very lovely lady, who will be missed by many of us.

When the Scrabble Club does eventually reconvene, there will be one empty seat as Sonia, a loyal Club supporter and star player, died in mid-September. With previous appearances on Mastermind and Eggheads, she seemed to have a bottomless reservoir of little Scottish words that no one else had ever heard of but which ensured her victory in countless games! She will be greatly missed.

MARYLEBONE NEWS

Pointless Road Closures – Part 3



Following the road scheme follies on Park lane, Edgware Road and Euston Road inflicted on us by the London Mayor (reported on in previous Newsletters), this month we turn our attention to the activities of Westminster Council and ask - what exactly is the continuing closure of half of Portland Place seeking to achieve?

Whatever the original idea behind it - it is clearly not succeeding in doing anything other than increase pollution for the surrounding, businesses and residents. In addition there are four schools on or immediately adjacent (Queens College Prep, EIFA, Portland Place School and Abercorn School) so the impact on the air quality on around the 1000 children in the area is a very significant health concern.

One would think that with the multiple problems in central London -Covid itself; the decline in City centre activity; the risk that the West End may be hollowed out as retail closures escalate; the lack of viability of the public transport systems; and the potential death of Theatre Land - WCC might have better things to do than create ill thought out and chaotic complexes of cycle lanes and pedestrian areas that are not used.

These projects were encouraged by a £250 million grant from Grant Shapps (who almost single handedly is now busy bringing the travel industry to its knees). The establishment of cycle lanes and coned areas to allow the few pedestrians left to socially distance was rushed in as a "temporary" measure with very little consultation, but on the clearly agreed basis that if they were seen to be not working, they would be reviewed.

Now Portland Place is obviously not working, weekdays see it full of queuing traffic, whereas besides it lies a near empty cycle lane and even emptier

pedestrian special area - but where is the review?

While the pedestrian and cyclist lobbies are very vocal, it seems our less vociferous residents, businesses and schools increasingly resent the rapid and poorly thought out imposition of schemes, such as this, which merely aggravate, rather alleviate, pollution and congestion.

The pious hope that many thousands of cyclists and pedestrians would flock in to bolster London's damaged economy has failed to materialise. If they could not manage to come in even during our long, mediterranean, summer, it is most unlikely that will brave the British winter to do so.

Meanwhile it seems that we are to be left with a clogged and unusable main thoroughfare for the foreseeable future.

A White Paper on Planning

Last month we described some of the dramatic changes awaiting Marylebone in the Business and Planning Act, now in force. This introduced the temporary outside drinking and dining relaxations and the changes to the old planning uses classes which mean, for instance, that offices can now simply decide to change into restaurants without the need to apply for any change of use. This removes, at one fell swoop, one major leg of the local authorities ability to control the planning mix within our towns.

As though that wasn't enough, we now have a White Paper which will substantially change much of the remaining planning scene. The intention is to move to a rule based planning system; at present planning decisions are discretionary rather than rule-based, nearly all decisions to grant consent are undertaken on a case-by-case basis, rather than determined by clear rules for what can and cannot be done.

Now it is proposed that the whole country is to be divided into three zones. Two of these zones will rely heavily on permitted development: **Growth Areas** - here all-out growth will be permitted where these are zoned in the local plan and they will be basically the template for outline development; **Renewal Areas** - will encourage so called "gentle densification", aimed squarely at the low density suburbs. There would be a statutory presumption in favour of development being granted for the uses specified as being suitable in each area. Local authorities could continue to consider the case for resisting inappropriate development, say of residential gardens; **Protected Areas** - will roughly keep to the present system of most applications requiring to be decided on their individual merits, by a planning officer, or planning committee where large or controversial.

For Marylebone, a lot will depend on what zone we arrive in. It may be assumed, that as most of it is covered by conservation areas, we would be in a Protected Area and that most applications would still therefore have to be fully considered by a planning committee, as at present. However apparently there is a considerable doubt over even that and WCC are seeking clarification. As for the rest of Westminster, approximately one third is not at present covered by a conservation area and these parts can seemingly look forward to considerably more growth.

The approval of new development in growth zones will shift to the plan-making stage giving little opportunity for effective opposition, in effect bypassing the democratic system.

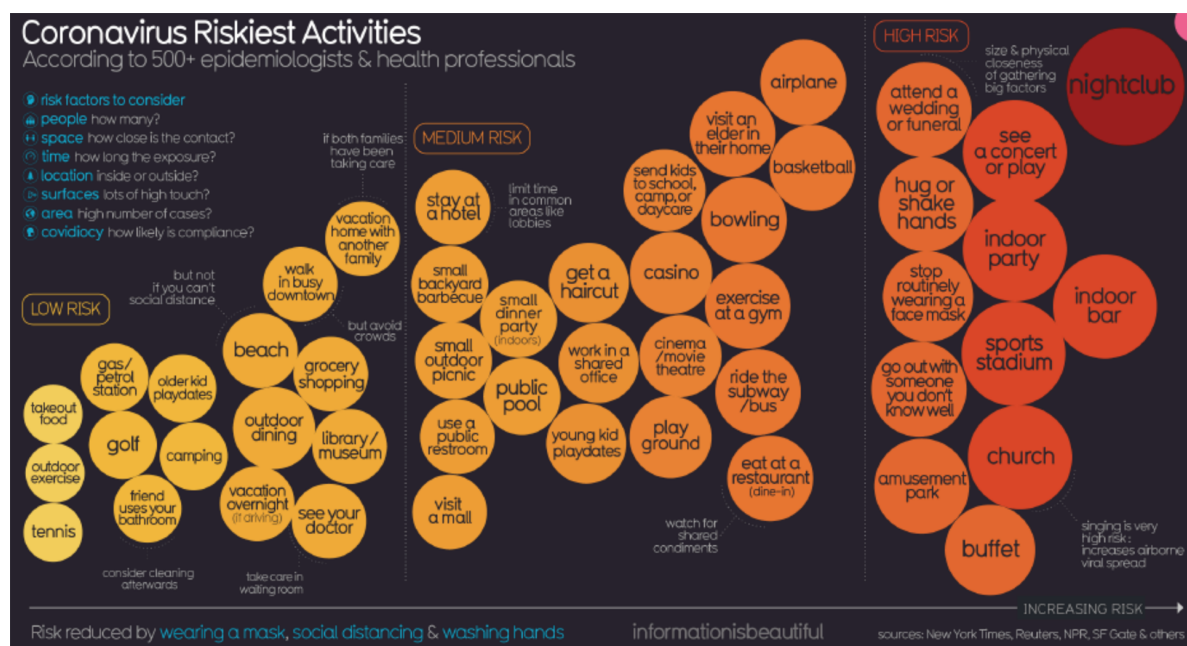
In addition, City Plans are to be massively paired down. The National Planning Policy Framework would become the primary source of policies for development management; there would be no provision for the inclusion of generic development management policies which simply repeat national policy within local plans, such as protections for listed buildings. The local plan would in effect become little other than a zoning and development document.

As well as removing many opportunities to object to individual applications, the White Paper does not appear to provide any new proposals for community participation or a single new opportunity for democratic participation in the plan making process. It rather reduces both rights and opportunities to participate. In addition it seems that it will go back to imposing central government quotas on the local council for housing numbers.

So where will all this leave neighbourhood forums? Over the last five years the previous localism agenda has encouraged many amenity societies, including our own, to put much work into the development of a neighbourhood plan. It is not however clear from the White Paper how they now fit into the new system.

There is a real risk that the current effort devoted to neighbourhood plans could be bypassed and that neighbourhood forums will become little more than design approval forums. It is therefore vital that the government makes clear what the future scope and power of neighbourhood plans is going to be.

MA Covid-19 Support Group



Riskiest Activities (Source: New York Times)

Information on infection rates in Marvlebone can be found [here](#).

Regular meetings with MP Nickie Aitkin have resumed providing an opportunity for residents' associations like the MA to share concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on everyday life. Key issues raised this week included: the negative impact of the new Congestion Charging regulations on the London economy; homelessness (and begging); Sunday trading; grants to help the Arts (to be distributed in October); homeworkers returning to the office (now reversed); feeling safe on public transport; new regulations on planning use class changes; long-term impact of new outdoor dining and drinking venues; testing for Covid-19 in Westminster.

Westminster City Council has established a Health Ambassador (HA) programme to maximise contact with the local community and ensure that people are well informed and aware of best practice with respect to Covid-19. It is also an opportunity for citizens to raise health-related issues and seek advice. To become a HA and participate in weekly meetings with WCC contact Christine Mead at cmead@westminster.gov.uk.

During the first meeting the new Test and Trace App was promoted and the importance of government messaging about washing hands, wearing a mask and keeping a 2-metre distance was stressed. The rule of six was emphasised but also the idea that we should assess our own personal risk when making lifestyle choices such as where to meet family and friends- see above diagram. There was also a strong message about staying positive over this difficult period and ensuring those who were feeling anxious knew where to find help. Vulnerable people (shielding list and 70+) will receive a letter from WCC in the near future explaining the services available to support them and offering new guidance.

Data showed that the percentage of people testing positive had increased from 2.9% to 3.9% over the past week following a long period of stability during the summer. The number of positive cases per 100,000 (w/e 26.09.20) was 20.8 but we were advised that testing capacity in Westminster is compromised at present so this figure is an under-estimate. All age groups are affected, and hospital admissions are rising. It is therefore likely that tougher control measures will be introduced over the coming weeks and months. If you have any questions, there are several Health Ambassadors within the MA so do get in touch.

Local Councillor Emily Payne (Bayswater Ward) launched an initiative to help voluntary organisations in the event of a second wave of Covid-19 and to encourage collaboration between them and with WCC. The topics explored covered the logistics of day-to-day service provision such as food deliveries, volunteer fatigue and the special needs of the most vulnerable sectors of society. We shared lessons learnt from the first wave and received new guidance on issues such as training volunteers and PPE. Food banks reported that they currently have sufficient resources to meet demand. WCC confirmed that it has received a grant for a hardship fund to help those most in need.

WCC continues to provide a high level of support for local residents on Covid-19 health and welfare issues (<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-residents>) with additional services such as financial advice available from the Citizens Advice Bureau (<https://www.westminstercab.org.uk/>).

Chandos House

Chandos House, 2 Queen Anne Street, Marylebone is a Grade I listed building and is currently empty after the Royal Society of Medicine vacated the property in June 2020. The owner has identified an opportunity to ensure long-term investment in Chandos House and has so far discussed these with Westminster City Council and Historic England.

Key to this will be the introduction of The John Collection, a collection of memorabilia relating to Battle of Britain aircrew which includes medals, logbooks and photographs. It is the leading such collection worldwide.

As is the case with so many museums, delivering this vision is reliant on cross-subsidy. They are therefore seeking to also house other activities at lower ground, second and third floors, which are the least sensitive parts of the building with respect to heritage. This will include office space at lower ground level and a cosmetic clinic to the second and third floors.

See the link below for the online consultation which involves a comprehensive website featuring the plans, exhibition boards and the opportunity for residents and stakeholders to provide feedback to the project team. You can view the website here: <https://yoursay.online/chandos-house>

Marylebone Strip Club Stopped



The battle to stop a strip club being opened in Marylebone opposite Selfridges has been won. The applicants wanted to convert an existing nightclub on Duke Street into a bar offering "full nudity" striptease and pole-dancing.

The company behind the proposed venue argued that it would be discreet - however, the Selfridges department store along with the police, local residents and the Association objected to the proposal.

and the Association objected to the proposal.

Philip Kolvin QC, for Selfridges, told the committee the store had been working to make the area more family orientated and a strip club would be out of place.

The Planning Committee said those who objected had *"serious concerns"* about the proposal *"as they all think that it will be seriously detrimental to the area that they live and work in."*

"This proposal for a new lap dancing club was inimical to the character of the area as it is now and as it is becoming... The grant of the licence would, therefore, be inappropriate," they said. The application for a licence was accordingly denied.

Crossing Works Resume



Crossing works to the junction of Edgware Road, George Street and Kendal Street recommenced this month and have now been completed.

The works had commenced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic but were subject to a 'safe stop' in March. Crossing and junction improvements had been completed at Seymour Street, Sussex Gardens and below the Marylebone Flyover at Harrow Road prior to the safe stop.

Noisy Sports Cars

Although a far worse problem in nearby areas such as Kensington and Chelsea - as we saw from last month's dramatic picture of a smashed


supercar, Marylebone does also get its fair share of over-revving and speeding supercars. A petition has now been launched, by amongst others, Labour West End Councillor Pancho Lewis, to lobby the Government for stricter limits on the noise that sports cars and other vehicles are allowed to produce:

“Many residents in Westminster (including areas like Mayfair and those living close by Edgware Road) are being forced to put up with very high levels of noise pollution as a result of the proliferation of noisy sports cars.

The noise that these vehicles produce is staggering and serves no purpose other than massaging the driver's ego, whilst making everyone else around the car feel very irritated. When the noise happens at night it wakes residents up who live on streets frequented by these cars. There is absolutely no need for vehicles to produce so much noise. Westminster Council should work with other councils to lobby the government to introduce stricter controls on the amount of noise vehicles can produce.”

You can sign the petition [here](#).

Marylebone Deals for Renters




£2,383 pcm
£550 pw

Price Change History	
22/09/2020	Price Changed: £3,012 pcm £2,383 pcm
16/09/2020	Price Changed: £750 pw £3,012 pcm
21/08/2020	Price Changed: £3,250 pcm £750 pw
19/08/2020	Price Changed: £3,575 pcm £3,250 pcm
30/07/2020	Price Changed: £3,878 pcm £3,575 pcm
04/06/2020	Initial entry found.

3 bedroom flat
Weymouth Street, Marylebone, London, W1W

A 3 bedroom apartment in Marylebone W1 A 3 bed flat to rent on Weymouth Street, in Marylebone. With 3 bedrooms, spacious reception room with marble fireplace, separate kitchen, bathroom and guest cloakroom. This flat benefits from

Reduced today by Knight Frank - Lettings, Marylebone

Knight Frank 020 8012 4939 Local call rate  Email agent

Hugh Graham writing in The Times reports that London renters are getting the best deals with falls of 7.9 per cent; as tourism dries up, flat owners are turning short lets into long lets. Marylebone is particular impacted with former AirBnBs boost stock by 50 per cent.

It does look like a good time to move to Marylebone. Daniel Farey-Jones tracks many of reductions on his twitter feed and some notable examples included: A 3-bed on Weymouth Street is down 39%. A 2-bed flat on Mansfield Street down 33%. A 3-bed flat on Marylebone High Street down 24%. A 2-bed flat on New Cavendish Street is down 22%. A 1-bed flat on Hallam Street is down 17%. A 1-bed flat on Chiltern Street is down 19%. More example of be found [here](#).

Howard de Walden Chief stepping down

Andrew Hynard is to step down from his role as chief executive of the Howard de Walden Estate early next year. The Estate chief operating officer, Mark Kilda has been appointed its interim chief executive.

Andrew Hynard joined the Estate in October 2016 after 30 years at Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated, the American commercial real estate services company.

Westminster News

Uber Wins Licence Appeal

Uber has won an appeal against having their licence to operate withdrawn in London. This followed TfL's shock decision not to issue a renewal, citing safety concerns and deeming Uber not "*fit and proper*" to hold a private hire operator licence.

In a judgment made a few days ago the court decided it was satisfied with process improvements made by the ride-hailing company, including those around its communication with the city's transport regulator.

The new licence comes with no less than 21 conditions, jointly suggested to the Magistrate by Uber and TfL. But the licence has only been renewed for 18 months — considerably shorter than the five-year renewal that it had applied for.

"Uber does not have a perfect record but it has been an improving picture," the judge said.

However Uber's troubles are not over yet. A decision is still pending from the Supreme Court to "*finally settle*" the question as to whether Uber's drivers are workers or self-employed. A decision that they are directly employed could still put the companies whole business model at risk.

Paddington Tower - Rejected Again

British Land's scheme for 5 Kingdom Street in Paddington is not having much luck - it has been rejected for a second time by Westminster Council. Initial plans were previously rejected in January on the basis that the scheme "*would harm the character and appearance*" of the surrounding area.

Although the Council's planning committee welcomed some of the revisions it still voiced concerns over the scheme's height and scale which could dominate the nearby local conservation areas.

New Council Renting Strategy

Westminster City Council has launched its draft private rented sector strategy 2020-2024.

Westminster has the largest private rented sector in England and is home to a diverse mix of people, families and communities: *"The impact of poor-quality housing on safety, health and wellbeing is significant. We want to do all we can to ensure every private rented home in Westminster is of good quality. Our new strategy aims to tackle poor conditions and practices and to support tenants, landlords and letting agents by working more closely together. It will make sure that all parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities".*

The online consultation will run until **Sunday 25 October**.

WCC encourage you to please [read the draft strategy](#) and let us know your thoughts and suggestions by [completing our online survey](#).

Virtual Leaseholder Conference

Westminster City Council are will hold their first leasehold conference on Saturday, 17 October 2020, with workshops from 10am until 3pm.

Designed for leaseholders - attendees will get to hear, have their say, and ask questions about services they receive. WCC will present on a range of housing and leasehold matters alongside independent organisations such as Lease and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

You are welcome to join for all or any of the following workshops of interest to you. You can submit questions on the day, to form part of the closing Q&A expert panel. All the details can be found [here](#).

Revised Busking Strategy

WCC, launched then withdrew their previous busking strategy after it failed to obtain sufficient support. They are now proposing a new licensing scheme for a much wider area. It seems that they have taken on board many of the submissions made, including those of the Association and other Westminster amenity societies. Particularly, and most importantly, their proposals are now West End wide with pitches for busking heavily restricted and amplification in the key pitches to be banned.

We urge members to participate in this consultation, even if it does not directly

we urge members to participate in this consultation, even if it does not directly affect you. There is understandably considerable resistance from the buskers, but more surprisingly, also from some councillors. We thought it was their job to represent the interests of residents, of whom there are a significant number severely distressed by daily exposure to over amplified music, often endlessly repeating the same few tunes for hours at a time. We assume that these councillors do not have first hand experience of this particular nuisance where they live.

The amenity of those residents affected by busking would be greatly improved by these proposals and they are more likely to be adopted if WCC see a positive endorsement from as many people as possible.

Have your say [here](#).

Covid-19 Update-Not good for UK, bad for London but worse for West End

With the government's announcement that the present newly introduced lockdown controls are expected to be in place for the next six months and with many areas being put back in to full lockdown the future is looking very uncertain.

Centre for Cities reported the impact that this is having on London's High Streets; footfall is down 69 per cent, the worst decline in the country. It appears the impact is being felt most in central London with the Chief Executive of Holland and Barrett saying the pandemic's impact on spending in the capital is like a Polo mint: a hollowed-out centre with strong demand at the edge. According to Centre for Cities spending on groceries and clothing has been 60 per down in central London but has risen above pre-virus levels in Southall and East Ham.

In addition, despite the governments now defunct campaign to encourage workers back to the office, working from home continues to be a reality for millions of employees. The Financial Times has warned that this will have significant consequences for the urban economy and particularly for the City of Westminster. Research from the Westminster Property Association shows that Westminster will suffer a 63 per cent drop in gross value added in 2020, reducing its economic activity by about £48bn.

The traditional mass return to the workplace failed to materialise in London in September. Transport for London Underground reported passenger numbers were still 72% below pre-Covid levels, while bus usage was 53% below 2019 levels.

Alongside this, the Financial Times reported that estate agents are using a new acronym - DFL, 'Down From London' to describe the number of Londoners who are seeking to move out of their flats and move into houses beyond the M25. In order to better understand the impact the Mayor has commissioned "*major new research into the future of central London*" to help City Hall understand the emerging trends that might affect London's city

centre economy.

My London reports that whilst property prices are seeing increases in parts of London since lockdown, Westminster appears to be bucking this trend, with prices sliding. Whilst some boroughs are experiencing increases of up to 25%, Westminster has seen the biggest annual and monthly decreases in prices, with a -6.8% monthly decrease and a substantial -8.3% annual downturn.

At City Hall, the Mayor as always is working hard to do his bit for business. He is not happy with the major rent declines brought about by covid as there is a danger they may bounce back. He has accordingly written to Robert Jenrick calling on the Government to give him powers to freeze private rents in London for two years. Research from the GLA shows that a quarter of London's 2.2 million privately renting adults have fallen behind on their rent, or say that they are likely to do so.

The Mayor said that freezing rent is not without precedent as earlier this year the Berlin federal government froze rents in the city until 2025. He failed to point out however that the rent freeze came in pre-covid to attempt to prevent a long standing exodus of renters from the capital.

Further, Berlin's left-leaning coalition government, has been strongly criticised by Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrat government for creating a huge disincentive to making any repairs or improvements to the housing stock.

Council Stays Al Fresco

Westminster's al fresco hospitality scheme is to be extended until the end of October: *"We have decided to allow the extension of the schemes that we have in place to support al fresco hospitality for all businesses that wish to continue using them until end of October. We will always put the health of our residents and visitors first whilst doing everything possible to support our city through these very challenging times."*

We can't see this doing much for the health of the residents in areas where they are living over or near such al fresco hospitality - but the 10.00pm closure now imposed by central government might.

Finally-one more new Regulation

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020, in case you missed it, now require restaurants bars etc to close for on sales at 10pm - but sales for takeaway food can continue after that time.

However the requirement is that takeaways are either delivered or collected - in a vehicle. You can still have your delivery by bike via a bike courier like Deliveroo, but you cannot collect it by bike. Something else to make the new cycle lanes redundant

Association Events

Lockdown, as we all know, has put a temporary rein on the Marylebone Association social events we had lined up but our 'virtual walks' have proved popular, with one on Florence Nightingale's Marylebone and another on the history of Kings Cross and the Canal. We hope to line up another one for the Autumn – which should prove especially popular once the nights draw in and it starts to get chillier.

Regular Association Events

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday 6 October 2020 at 6.30 pm

Members normally meet at The King's Head pub in Westmoreland Street – but since this is not possible right now meetings are via Zoom. Anyone who is interested in joining in should contact Liz Queenan. Meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 6.30 – but our Zoom meetings start at 5.

This month's book is: The Noise of Time by Julian Barnes.

All books read are available on paper and on e-readers. For more information contact Liz Queenan (liz.queenan@marylebone.org) or tel: 020 7486 3709.

PUB EVENING

Cancelled until further notice

SCRABBLE CLUB

Normally meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at The Natural Kitchen in Baker Street. This is not possible at the moment but we do hope to be able to get together again soon. For further information contact: Rosemary Forgan, tel 07887 891977, email: rosemary.forgan@marylebone.org

Member Announcements

Marylebone Families

Our supportive community at Marylebone Mums & Dads (search Facebook or

visit www.marylebonemums.com) has been very active helping each other with ideas for entertaining the kids as well as providing the ongoing support and assistance that our Mums & Dads community is known for.

During the past months, unfortunately activities and classes in the area for children have reduced but there are some providers who have restarted classes and you can find information on the Marylebone Mums & Dads Facebook page. Some of our group's volunteer parents are also arranging socially distanced outdoor meet ups with limited numbers, in line with current guidelines, particularly focussed on families with children under 1 year old who have suffered from having little opportunity to interact during what is a crucial phase of child development as well as a period when many parents need extra support and encouragement.

The group is active on all social media channels @Marylebone Mums, on Facebook at Marylebone Mums & Dads and we also have very active WhatsApp groups - our community of over 2500 members is a supportive and friendly place! You can find more information at [www. marylebonemums.com](http://www.marylebonemums.com) or contact tushna.ghadially@marylebone.org for