



Registered Charity No: 1168619

Patron: Lord Fellowes of West Stafford DL

The Belgravia Society Magazine

Number 57 | February 2020

The only independent voice for Belgravia



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Charles of Belgravia**

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THE BELGRAVIA SOCIETY

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Welcome to The Belgravia Society Magazine covering all aspects of village life in Belgravia and beyond.

Editor in Chief – Mary Regnier-Leigh

Chairman – George Waite

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This magazine has been independently produced by the Committee of The Belgravia Society on a voluntary basis with regular contributions from local residents and other authors in and around Belgravia.

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The Belgravia Society, 63 Belgravia Court, 33 Ebury Street, London SW1W 0NY, United Kingdom

www.thebelgraviasociety.org



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Chairman's Message



George Waite
Chairman of
The Belgravia Society
and ESRA

To celebrate the
past, improve
the present, and
engage the future

A Future Vision for Victoria

The Westminster Reporter is a free monthly magazine that is published by Westminster City Council (WCC), and is an excellent source of local government information. The February edition includes a news item under the heading 'A Future Vision for Victoria' explaining that a 'vision' is currently being formulated that will be good for growth in Victoria, support job creation, housing delivery and transformation of the station hub and surrounding area.

The news item explains that WCC is, 'working in partnership with Victoria Business Improvement District, the GLA, Network Rail and TfL on the Future Victoria project', and 'a team will compile a concept masterplan, underpinned by engagement with people who live, work and travel in Victoria, offering them the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the area'.

The item concludes by acknowledging that, 'Victoria is home to a vibrant residential and business community. However, the quality of the streets, public spaces and station environment is in need of fresh thinking to be equipped for the future'.

Whilst The Belgravia Society supports WCC, we believe that, as the largest recognised amenity society in Belgravia, we should be included in the partnership that is compiling

the conceptual plan and not be simply party to the local engagement process.

We do not accept the statement suggesting that the quality of our streets in Belgravia (within the area being considered) are in need of fresh thinking to be equipped for the future. To the extent change is needed, it should be for us to contribute to the plan and not left to those who have no knowledge of our community. This is particularly the case when the partnership is made up of institutions who have no intimate knowledge of Belgravia or, indeed, Pimlico. We do not want to see changes as part of a vanity scheme to "create a destination of Victoria" when none exists, cannot be artificially created and could damage the very strong existing communities.

This is a real chance to improve our community and, whilst we are well aware of the skills and resources available to the partnership, we are convinced that we can complement these with our unique local knowledge (many of our members have lived in Victoria all of their lives), and a real ability to engage with the people who live, work and travel in Victoria.

Members of our Committee will be attending the next public consultation to be held at the Park Plaza Hotel on 5th March. In the meantime, if you have any questions or require further information on the 'Future Victoria, please send us an email to info@belgraviasociety.org.uk. ■



Registered Charity No. 1168619

Bringing communities together Improve. Celebrate. Engage.

The more members we have, the louder our collective voice will be.

JOIN US TODAY!

Benefits include:

- Monthly magazine
- Opportunity to join us at any of our monthly meetings
- Have your say on local matters
- Advice where possible on planning issues
- Invitation to our AGM and opportunity to vote
- Community garden party and other social events

**[www.thebelgrviasociety.org/
online-membership-form](http://www.thebelgrviasociety.org/online-membership-form)**

Please fill in the online form by clicking on the link above link.

Alternatively, print the application form on page 19 and post your completed form to

63 Belgravia Court
London SW1W 0NY



Shop Local – Charles of Belgravia

By Mary Regnier-Leigh



Charles
(BELGRAVIA)

One of our constant complaints is that we do not have enough local shops. General stores are often spoken of as the most needed. Towards the end of Lower Belgravia Street, we have one such shop. *Charles of Belgravia* at number 27.

The shop is well stocked, with almost everything you could want in the grocery line: household utilities, cleaning products, candles and soap. There is also ice cream, wonderful fresh fruit and vegetables, sweets, nuts, sauces and many other items. As well as all this, the shop also stocks newspapers with free deliveries of orders available. It is more like a domestic Aladdin's Cave than a shop.

How long *Charles of Belgravia* has been there is not exactly known, but certainly 60 years or more. Its present proprietor is Bally Singh who came to *Charles* in 2017 and took over from the previous owner who was retiring. I asked Bally what changes he had made. He told me there is now a much greater choice of frozen and chilled goods, more organic produce including olive oils, and more sauces

than before. Also, Bally has added many more wines, including choices of champagne and a wider range of spirits. There are also other additions. Bally also sells a new type of cigarette: IQOS which is said to be 95% less bad for the health and, at only £5 per pack, if you want to cut down or stop, why not have a try? One thing that has not changed is the availability of fresh orange juice, and very fresh it is. The shop has a machine to turn oranges into juice. You can actually watch the orange transformed into juice if you catch a batch being prepared. It is the best absolutely pure orange juice that I know.

The shop is open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. Apart from having the convenience of the shop, the other good news for members of The Belgravia Society is that Bally will give you a 10% discount if you tell him that you are a member of the Society.

Do use the shop. If we do not use our local shops we will lose them, and this is one we need to keep. ■

The word has been spreading about Westminster Befriend a Family's Mothers' Support Group (MSG) and we're keen for it to spread even further. Since reviving the meetings last October, 15 women have attended the sessions with between eight to ten regularly attending each week.

Once lonely and isolated, several of the women now feel so much more confident that they also attend a free Zumba class together as a group to get some rigorous exercise before coming along to the support group for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Dee Hamilton, the group's session worker, said, "The Mothers' Support Group is a place for women to meet that offers a safe environment for them to talk and make new friends. Some mothers have been lonely and needed coaxing out of their houses for just a couple of hours a week. Now they look forward to coming here, to meet more women like themselves in their local community."

Before Christmas, the group came together bringing their cultural dishes with them to share. They had Fuul, a Middle Eastern dish made from fava beans; baba ghanoush, Lebanese flat bread, and Turkish tea. At the end of February they will begin a five week sewing workshop, provided by Westminster Adult Education, learning the skills of cross stitching, crocheting and knitting. The group is discussing taking a day trip to Kew Gardens when the weather gets better, and they're also keen to organise healthy cooking classes as the meeting room has a small kitchen attached.

"It's important to us that the women decide for themselves what they want to do," said Dee. "It builds their confidence and strengthens the bonds as real friendships develop. They know best what they need."



One of the members has a friend who did not like to leave the house other than to take her children to school. She persuaded her to attend and now her friend really looks forward to coming.

"I recognised she was just like me once. I didn't want to leave the house either; there was nowhere for me to go that I could afford and no one for me to go out with. Now, I attend the group and I go swimming, as the group showed me how to apply for an Active Westminster card, which gives residents discounts on fitness and activities in the local area. These days, I feel much more confident and certainly less alone."

The Mothers' Support Group is held at Derry Hall on the Church Street Estate every Wednesday 10am-12pm. The group is growing and we're keen to open a second group to support families in the South of Westminster.

Westminster Befriend a Family welcomes any contributions from The Belgravia Society and friends that will enable us to expand the service and support even more vulnerable and isolated mothers. We're a local charity that has been supporting families in the borough for over 30 years. We receive no statutory funding and rely entirely on charitable donations. You can donate to us online at www.befriendfamily.co.uk. Thank you for your kind support. ■

Grosvenor Place Traffic Scheme

TfL told our Councillors that, on 3rd February, they were commencing works to ban right turns into residential streets adjacent to Grosvenor Place. The project involved works to the carriageway and has been completed. The three streets affected are Chapel Street, Chester Street and Wilton Street.

Wilton Street was not initially part of the scheme but, following consultation with residents in 2017, they added Wilton Street to allay their concerns that traffic would rat-run if the turning was not also banned. Local residents and The Belgravia Society made sure the residents' voices were heard and we understand TfL received some 600 responses to their consultations.

At the same time, TfL will ban right turns into Grosvenor Place from these streets. TfL say that the purpose of the scheme is to reduce the potential for collisions between vehicles and ultimately eliminate death and serious injury on London's streets.

TfL have completed the scheme, not by signage, but by putting traffic islands in the centre of Grosvenor Place, placed so that they block access and making it impossible to turn right into the three streets. The traffic must continue south towards Victoria. By the same token, it is not possible to exit from the three streets to turn right towards Victoria, because the traffic islands prevent it. ■

Continuing the Battle Against Short Term Letting Abuse

By Nickie Aiken MP

As you will be aware, as Council Leader, and before that, as Cabinet Member for Public Protection, I campaigned to stop the ever growing abuse of short term letting. I persuaded London Councils to take up the issue as it is seriously affecting the overall private rental sector. Too many landlords now chose the Airbnb et al route rather than the traditional longer term 6/12 month tenancies. This is because, in places like Westminster, landlords can make so much more on rents.

This activity in turn is creating a supply-and-demand issue which has led to steep rises in rents. We really must tackle this issue once and for all. We must have a register for all short term landlords that is shared across all platforms, whether it is Airbnb, Booking.com, Trip Adviser, and the plethora of other sites. We must also ensure rogue landlords cannot just tweak an address and post the same property elsewhere. I would also like to see more information given to those living in blocks, mews, streets, etc, who can have their lives blighted by neighbouring properties turned into nothing more than mini hotels. Those in blocks are very much at the sharp end and may not realise that their building and contents insurance may be compromised if there is an incident in a short term let flat which could lead to any claim being void by an insurance company whose policy doesn't recognise short-term letting. I believe managing agents must do more to combat short term letting in the blocks they are responsible for.



I hope, as a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Short Term Letting, that my Labour colleague, Karen Buck MP, and I will be able to influence this type of work to ensure the right type of information is disseminated to give those living with the horrendous consequences of short term letting abuse the knowledge and confidence to stop it in their own blocks. ■

Editor's Note

A number of TBS members have raised the issue of the problems resulting from short term lettings. Our new MP has a special interest in the subject and tells of the efforts being made to deal with the issues that distort the market for ordinary tenants, and cause such problems to those who live in blocks used in this way. It will hopefully lead to changes in the Law.

Updates on Planning reports

Kilmuir House



We have reported on this before and the Plans have been updated and a good deal of our suggestions have been adopted and incorporated in the final design. We met the developers' representatives at the beginning of the month with two members who live near to the site.

There will be 54 residential units, four of them duplex. There will be electric charging units for cars. The planning application is expected to be submitted in the next few weeks. They hope to have consent by late summer. The present short term tenants will leave during the year and the developers hope to start on site in the summer of 2021. They expect to service the site from Ebury Street and Semley Place. The demolition will take about 3 months. It is hoped the building will be completed by 2023.

The computer generated pictures show you how the building will look. This seems very much more in keeping with the area than the present 1960s building. The really good news is that it will be no higher than the present Kilmuir House.

Chelsea Barracks



You will remember that the café/restaurant on the site was only open until the end of last year. We understand that there are ongoing discussions to identify a new operator with the hope that it will open by the summer, although they are hoping to have something ready for the Chelsea Flower Show. We are told that the internal fit out of properties is well underway (bathrooms and kitchens) and this should be completed by Easter time.

Phase 4 Marketing Suite will be at ground floor level. This will be converted to retail units which will overlook Garrison Square facing the Chapel. Scaffolding has been taken down.

As for the future of the development we are advised that the pace of build out of the development will depend on a number of factors including sales on the early phases. Phase 6 may begin before Phase 5. We have always known that the building in phases depended on sales and also changes in market conditions generally. In answering a question from a local resident, it was said that the public would have access through



the development, including use of the sports facilities and other amenities in Phase 6. The Sports Centre in Phase 4 and Spa in Phase 1 will be for private use only. The town houses from the early phases should be completed and handed over to the developers over the next couple of months.

The developers cannot say when the whole development will be completed, but probably before 2030. For those of us who remember, the earliest proposals for the site were being consulted on some 10 years ago. In 2009 there was a plan to replace the former garrison/barracks with a series of copper, glass and concrete pavilions with 448 homes, designed by Richard Rogers. We locals hated the plan as highly unsuitable for the area. There was nothing to commend it. Thankfully, we were supported by the Prince of Wales and the Richard Rogers (Baron Rogers of Riverside) design was abandoned.

By the time the development is complete it will have taken some 20 years to come to fruition. Whatever we think about the prices, the buildings are graceful and externally well finished. Some of the ironwork is most attractive. We have not seen inside.

We look forward to seeing what the next phase looks like.

Cleveland Clinic



A neighbourhood meeting took place on 17th February. Work was progressing well. Much of the exterior was being worked on and is encased in scaffolding, the wrap having been removed in late summer.

There will be solar panels on the building which are expected to provide about 12% of the heating. The gas supply to the building will be connected this month. There was a discussion relating to ultra fast broadband. The Clinic would only be using 10% of what the connection could power and it was questioned as to whether residents could use some of the remaining 90% of the bandwidth. It seemed this might be possible, but the logistics would have to be worked out.

It was expected that the project would reach practical completion in January 2021 and open early that year. The bus stop would be back in use in January 2021 as well. A hotline for problems is 0800 061 2126.

Planning Advice

If you get a notice of a planning application near you and you want advice, telephone our dedicated helpline: 07578 969509.

Money for the Community

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)



Since reporting on this some time ago, it has now become a fund with money available. You may recall that the money is raised from developers when they carry out larger developments. The amounts payable depend on what kind of property is being built. However, the usual kind of supporting infrastructure that the developers have to pay as part of the planning requirements is not the same as CIL money. There is approximately £200,000 in the Belgravia fund now; it will rise, especially with the Kilmuir House building and, ultimately, Cundy Street.

The regime for spending this money has changed since the idea was first instituted. Rather than the Neighbourhood Forum being the conduit to suggest the spending areas, now local organisations, like amenity societies,

can put forward their own ideas. Obviously, the views of the Neighbourhood Forum are very important. Until they complete their plan and it has been approved by the necessary referendum, it does not have the force of planning regulations. Even then, local views expressed through their representative societies must be taken into account.

The Belgravia Society will therefore consider schemes where it would be appropriate to invest CIL funds available to spend in Belgravia. We think these funds should be spent on projects where funding from other sources is not likely to be available. We have a couple of projects in mind and are anxious to hear any ideas you may have. They must comply with WCC's own list of types of scheme which include the following:



- Crime and anti-social behaviour infrastructure;
- Educational facilities;
- Health facilities;
- Parks and Open Space;
- Public Realm improvements;
- Social and community facilities;
- Sports and Leisure facilities;
- Transport and highways, but excluding works that are required as part of a development proposal to be secured through a Section 278 agreement, such as reinstatement of highways disturbed by development works;
- Utilities;
- Waste

What are your ideas?

Please be very specific. Email us to let us know on info@belgrviasociety.uk.



Invitation to the next Belgravia Society committee meeting

We would be delighted to see members at our meeting.

Please let us know by email if you would like to come:

info@belgrviasociety.uk

Space is limited and is available on a first come, first served basis.

Our next meeting is on
12th March 2020

Knightsbridge & Belgravia



Councillor Hitchcock follows our reports on Forbes House by welcoming an unusual but very welcome development in Belgravia. The piece of land promised by the owner of Forbes House was given to the City of Westminster.

You will recall that Forbes House is a Grade II listed property on West Halkin Street. The land originally comprised part of the garden of Forbes House and is located on Grosvenor Crescent. Although the image we publish is a concept design and the finished space may look very different once a consultation is undertaken with planning officers and other stakeholders, this is a wonderful outcome for the residents of Belgravia. There is very little open, green and public space in Belgravia (with the exception of Hyde Park), so we are very much looking forward to this piece of land being made available for everyone to enjoy.

In other news, following the election of Nickie Aiken, former Leader of Westminster Council, to be the MP for the Cities of London and Westminster, and with Knightsbridge & Belgravia ward councillor, Rachael Robathan having been named the new Leader of Westminster Council, there have been a few changes of cabinet members and deputy cabinet members.

Elizabeth Hitchcock was appointed Deputy Cabinet Member for Business and Planning with responsibility for relations with Neighbourhood Forum and amenity societies, neighbourhood plans and planning, and neighbourhood CIL.

Rachael, Tony and Elizabeth continue to be as dedicated as ever to Knightsbridge & Belgravia and want to hear from residents should there be an issue that they can be of help with. See their contact details on page 16.



Councillors Elizabeth Hitchcock, Tony Devenish and Rachael Robathan continue to be as dedicated as ever to Knightsbridge & Belgravia

News from Westminster City Council

Having looked through Westminster's own magazine and followed some of the links, we thought we should draw your attention to items you may have missed.

Council Tax

WCC is proposing to increase the Council Tax by 1.43%, £6.20 for Band D. While this is an increase, Westminster Council Tax is still one of the lowest.

Buskers

Street entertainment is a part of the city's activities contributing to the community, however, WCC receives 2,000 complaints a year. WCC are to license two streets where buskers can perform. However, they will be free to perform elsewhere without a license. Licensing seems a good idea. If it only covers two streets, it may well displace the problem elsewhere. There is to be a public consultation and, hopefully, WCC will be able to extend the licensing to other problem places quickly if necessary.

Oxford Street Design

WCC have appointed J Murphy & Sons and Carey Group as the design and build contractors for the area.

Housing

WCC is committed to expanding the numbers of affordable homes by 2023. There will be a huge range of housing creating mixed communities. The Ebury Bridge development presently in consultation is the largest of all delivering approximately 750 mixed new homes.

100 Years of Marriage

Marylebone Old Town Hall is a most famous registrar's office. It hosts around 2,000 marriages a year. It was opened on 27th March 1920 by Prince Albert (later George VI). It is a Grade II listed building and underwent a £60m refurbishment in 2016. There are seven ceremony rooms, seating from 15 to 100 guests.

Complaints to Westminster City Council

If you have a complaint for Westminster City Council, you can "Report it" at www.westminster.gov.uk.

Failing that, you should telephone 020 7641 6000 and ask to speak to the appropriate department.

Also, do contact your Councillor; they are always there to help (see page 16 for contact details). If you are not sure which Ward you are in, go to the WCC website and click on "Westminster's Councillors". Then either type in the relevant information or click on "Find the Ward you live in". Then put in your address for the result.

Councillors' Surgeries and Contact Details

Knightsbridge & Belgravia Ward

Cllr Rachel Robathan (Con)	leader@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Tony Devenish (Con)	tony.devenish@london.gov.uk
Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock (Con)	ehitchcock@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no for all	020 7641 3411

Surgery and appointment details are available. Please telephone 020 7641 3411.

Warwick Ward

Cllr Christabel Flight (Con)	cflight@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Nickie Aiken (Con)	nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk
Cllr Jacqui Wilkinson (Con)	jwilkinson@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no for Cllr Aiken	020 7641 3255
Tel no for Cllrs Flight and Wilkinson	020 7641 3411

The Warwick Ward Councillors meet with residents' groups, individual residents and businesses at your individual request. Please contact our Member Services Officer on 020 7641 4299.

Churchill Ward

Cllr Murad Gassanly (Con)	mgassanly@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no	020 7641 5377

If you require help and/or support with a problem, email Councillor Gassanly or call at the above telephone number. Councillor Gassanly holds monthly drop-in advice surgeries at City of Westminster Housing South Area Advice Centre, 137 Lupus Street, London SW1V 3HE, no appointment necessary. Dates for 2020 to be confirmed.

Cllr Andrea Mann (Lab)	amann@westminster.gov.uk
Cllr Shamim Talukder (Lab)	stalukder@westminster.gov.uk
Tel no	020 7641 4299

Surgeries are on the second Thursday of the month, 7-8pm (no appointment necessary).

Postal address for all Councillors:	Westminster City Hall 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP
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W E

Unison
Office: 01708 474 299
Mobile: 07817 585 616

RANELAGH GROVE SW1



The Belgravia Society Planning helpline

Do not forget our Planning telephone helpline, there to guide you if you receive a Notice of a Planning Application relating to a property near you.

Have the Planning Application number ready so we can easily check the application.

If you are a member of The Belgravia Society, then we can offer a service to forward to you all notices of planning applications we receive from Westminster City Council relating to Belgravia.

If you would like to receive them, please send us an email requesting this service.

Helpline tel no: 07578 969 509
Email: info@belgraviasociety.uk

Wanted!

Writers
Historians
Story tellers

Do you enjoy writing?

We would be delighted to receive articles and short stories about Belgravia/our neighbours/ London and beyond – all voluntary, of course.

Discuss your ideas with us –
info@belgraviasociety.uk



Registered Charity No: 1168619
An amenity society recognised by the City of Westminster

Membership Application

Membership is open to residents and non-residents and is free

Name email

Second name (if any) email

Address

Telephone: Home Work

Mobile Date

By signing this Application I CONSENT and AGREE to The Belgravia Society sending emails to me until I unsubscribe or resign from the Society.

Signature(s):

Please let us know if you have any special interests, concerns or queries:

PLEASE RETURN THIS APPLICATION FORM TO THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO YOU OR EMAIL TO:
info@belgraviasociety.uk
OR POST TO: **63 BELGRAVIA COURT 33 EBURY STREET LONDON SW1W 0NY**



giftaid it

Gift Aid declaration – for past, present and future

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts made:

- Today In the past 4 years In the future

Please tick all boxes you wish to apply.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2020 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2020.

SIGNATURE(s)

PRINT NAME Date

Please notify the charity or CASC 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.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

PLEASE RETURN THIS APPLICATION FORM TO THE SHOP WHERE YOU PICKED IT UP OR EMAIL TO: info@belgraviasociety.uk
OR POST TO: **63 BELGRAVIA COURT 33 EBURY STREET LONDON SW1W 0NY**



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