

THE

ISSUE 100 | SEPTEMBER 2023

BELGRAVIA SOCIETY MAGAZINE

THE ONLY INDEPENDENT
VOICE FOR BELGRAVIA



CELEBRATING OUR

100TH

EDITION



Registered Charity No: 1168619

Patron: Lord Fellows of West Stafford DL

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

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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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Front cover: Trafalgar Square

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



George Waite
Chairman of
The Belgravia Society
and ESRA

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

Consultation

This 100th edition of the **Belgravia Magazine** has given me the opportunity of looking back at our archive of magazines and recall some of our early activities involving 'consultation':

- Belgravia's Garden Squares and our efforts to enforce the London Squares 1931 Act of Parliament to protect them from commercialisation.
- Responding to numerous Public and Planning Consultations including:
- WCC's consultation on Growth and Tall Buildings.
- The Application for the development of Grosvenor's Eccleston Yards (which we supported).
- WCC's request for comments on the revisions to The City Plan.
- TFL's proposed road safety improvements at Grosvenor Place and Duke of Wellington Place Gyratory (due to this Society's involvement TFL received 600 responses).
- Belgrave Square's Licensing Application made by Grosvenor (which we did not support and managed to overturn).
- Grosvenor's Cundy Street Development (we did not support the height of the buildings, some of which are as high as the spire on St Barnabas' Church).
- Working with major stakeholders to enforce Planning Legislation, Listed Building Consent, Highways Licensing requirements, and the Belgravia Estate Management Scheme.
- Engaging with the Law Commission's proposals to reform the leasehold enfranchisement process.
- Application to 'list' Newson's Yard (Travis Perkins) (sadly, this was declined).
- Supporting the Belgravia Neighbourhood (Residential) Plan.
- Opposing the TFL Park Lane Cycle Lane (see Cllr Robathans' article in this month's edition).
- Opposing the closing of our local police station (the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) could not explain how closing our local police station provides us with an improved service).
- Attending numerous Resident Liaison Meetings for major developments including:
 - » The Peninsula Hotel (1-5 Grosvenor Place)
 - » Chelsea Barracks
 - » Forbes House
 - » The Berkeley Hotel (33-39 Knightsbridge)
 - » Cleveland Clinic (33 Grosvenor Place)
 - » The Meccano Building (123-156 Buckingham Palace Road)
 - » 55-91 Knightsbridge
 - » Queen Mother's Sport Centre, and
 - » CrossRail 2.

All of these activities have reinforced the importance of pre-consultation, and one of our key continuing objectives is to encourage and establish contact with new stakeholders and new projects as early as possible.

We all know that Belgravia is a great place to live and work. Our job is to help maintain the reputation for its quiet residential ambience, friendly village atmosphere, and its unique architecture.

We could not have achieved the results of our 'consultations' without the support of key stakeholders and, in particular, our local Councillors: Rachael Robathan, Elizabeth Hitchcock and Tony Devenish, our Member of Parliament, Nickie Aiken MP, and key members of Grosvenor's team: Simon Mantle and Paul O'Grady (we have not always agreed, but we all understand that that must not be an end to 'consultation').

Our works to date and their continuation have only been possible because of our Committee. Our Editor taught me a very early lesson about our Committee by explaining that the Chairman is only the first among equals. Our Committee, several of whom are lawyers who provide their services on a pro bono basis, many are professionals who provide a vast range of experience and knowledge, some of us just enjoy living here, all of us are totally committed, and we all work as a team with a common objective to protect Belgravia.

Finally, a word about our Editor (she has no equal): thank you for the first 100 editions. ▲

INVITATION TO THE NEXT SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING

We would be delighted for you to join our video meeting. Please let us know by email if you wish to be linked in info@thebelgraviasociety.com. We can only accept a limited number, so first come, first served.

Our next meeting is on
10th October 2023



Registered Charity No. 1168619

BUILDING A STRONG COMMUNITY

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

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

[www.thebelgraviasociety.com/
online-membership-form](http://www.thebelgraviasociety.com/online-membership-form)

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

Alternatively, print the application
form on page 23 and post your
completed form to

63 Belgravia Court
33 Ebury Street
London SW1W 0NY



LEASEHOLD AND CHAMPIONING GOOD LOCAL JOBS

NICKIE AIKEN MP

The leasehold system is out of date. Wholesale reform is needed to give leaseholders control of their homes, charges, and service providers.

That's why, since being elected as your Member of Parliament, I've worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the case with ministers and government advisers of the importance of leasehold reform, especially here in Belgravia and the Two Cities.

I'm hopeful that, following my conversations with the Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP, hope is on the horizon and we will find out about a possible Leasehold Reform Bill during the King's Speech in November.

But to ensure any future legislation reflects your views, concerns and lived experiences, I want to hear from you. Thank you to every reader who replied to my article in last month's magazine. I have put together a Leasehold Reform Survey and encourage you to spend a few minutes to complete it. Help shape future legislation and respond to my survey at [nickie.news/LeaseholdReform](https://www.nickie.news/LeaseholdReform).

Leasehold reform is, however, just one part of the puzzle of how we can make Belgravia and the Two Cities an even better place to live, work and visit. So, I'm leading calls in Parliament for the return of tax-free shopping.

International visitors are the lifeblood of so many businesses, and tax-free shopping previously supported over 55,000 good jobs across our neighbourhoods. It's a vital part of our international competitiveness and would rival similar offerings from other cities around the world, including neighbouring cities in Europe. It draws people into our neighbourhoods where they go on to spend in our fantastic local businesses in places like Elizabeth Street and Motcomb Street where, of course, they would continue to pay tax. In turn, supporting an increase in the creation of good local jobs supports our local schools, enables continued record NHS funding, and secures high streets with shops we want to visit. Find out more and watch what I said during a recent debate at [Nickie.News/TFS](https://www.nickie.news/TFS).

If I can be of any help on any issue, local, national or international, please get in touch. Send me an email at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk or write to me at Nickie Aiken MP, House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.

Keep up to date and be the first to know what I'm up to by following me on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube @TwoCitiesNickie, and sign up for my Community Newsletter to get the latest community news directly to your inbox at www.nickie.news/SignUp. ▲



OUR 100TH MAGAZINE

and still counting

Some of you will have noted from our cover that this magazine is the 100th edition of our monthly magazines. The idea was first put forward by our member Sara Oliver and we are grateful to her and for the work she put into it to get it going.

The Belgravia Society was founded in 2009 to provide an independent voice and Amenity Society for our residents and also for those who work here in Belgravia. Our motto is “to celebrate the past, to improve the present and engage the future”.

I think wherever you live there’s always change and, in this area, there is constant change. There is much development and so much of it is unwelcome, particularly those changes of use that enable restaurants to invade our streets with noise and antisocial behaviour. It will get worse as it is the intention of landlords to look for tenants who will keep the businesses open till late at night and try to “enliven the area” to the detriment of residents.

However, it is a great joy to us to be able to help local people, especially with planning problems, support activities here and highlight all the wonderful community and things about our village that we enjoy.

In our Magazine we also like to highlight some of the activities in other parts of London, and sometimes further away than that. We like our Magazine to be diverse in its content, giving local news, interests in wider issues, transport, skyscrapers and so much more.

Our readers tell us how much they enjoy the Magazine and it is very rewarding to know that.





NOW FOR THE BIG ASK

Members will know we do not charge a fee for membership of the Belgravia Society nor ask for a fee from our other readers. We want to ensure that everyone can enjoy our Magazine and be kept informed.

However, we do need to meet the costs of producing the Magazine, apart from our wonderful graphic designer, all our work on the Magazine is given voluntarily. So, we now need funds so we can carry on producing it monthly.

We are therefore asking you, our readers, to make a donation to The Belgravia Society so we can carry on our work. There are three ways of making a donation.

1. Pay direct into our Bank Account at Barclays Bank
Sort Code: 20-94-48
Account no: 73621812
2. Send a cheque made payable to "The Belgravia Society" to
63 Belgravia Court, 33 Ebury Street,
London, SW1W 0NY
3. If you have a CAF account you may donate through that.

giftaid it

See the Membership Application on page 23 for information about Gift Aid, as your donation will benefit from that. ▲



If you have a CAF account, It is an easy way to donate to the Society.

Please do help us to maintain our work for Belgravia and our community magazine.

PLANNING ADVICE

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

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 at info@belgraviasociety.com



QUEEN WILHELMINA OF THE NETHERLANDS

BY PETER WYETH

Queen Wilhelmina ascended the Dutch throne in 1890. Queen Victoria found her “very slight and graceful, with fine features, very intelligent and charming child with very pretty manners.” In 1898, Wilhelmina was sworn in by then a strong willed, forceful woman who spoke and acted her mind, “hated” politicians but “loved the people”.

Her marriage to a German prince in 1901 brought only brief happiness. He had numerous extramarital affairs, and at least one illegitimate offspring. Nine months into their marriage, Wilhelmina suffered a miscarriage, the next year a premature stillborn son, and another miscarriage in 1906. The birth of Princess Juliana on 30th April 1909 was met with great relief. Sadly, there were two further miscarriages.

Wilhelmina visited Emperor William II, who told her “my guests are 7 feet tall and yours are only shoulder height to them.” The Queen replied, “Quite true, your Majesty, your guards are 7 feet tall. But when we open our dikes, the water is 10 feet deep!”.

Wilhelmina became very popular for maintaining Dutch neutrality during the First World War. After the war, instead of violent revolution, Wilhelmina’s popularity helped restore confidence, riding alongside her daughter through the crowds in an open carriage to mass acclaim.

The Queen had shrewd understanding of business, using inherited wealth on wise investments in the United States made her the world’s richest woman, the first female billionaire. The Queen’s funds helped the Netherlands emerge into an industrial power. Engineers reclaimed vast amounts of land, improving flood protection, creating additional land for agriculture.

On 10th May 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands. The nearly 60 year old Queen boarded a destroyer sent by King George VI. She planned to return to the Netherlands as soon as possible, but her Armed Forces surrendered on 15th May.



She set up her home in Britain in Chester Square, here in Belgravia. She also set up a chain of command and sent messages of resistance to her people. Her experience and knowledge earned her respect and support among other leaders of the world. Her Prime Minister, however, believed the allies would not win the war and intended to open negotiations with Germany for a separate peace. Wilhelmina removed him from power.

Wilhelmina’s photograph became a sign of resistance against Germans, broadcasting to the Dutch people, calling Adolf Hitler “the arch enemy of mankind”. Churchill described her as “the only real man among the governments in exile” in London.

After liberation she was disappointed to see the same political factions taking power as before the war, while receiving rapturous welcome from the Dutch people.

She reigned for nearly 58 years, longer than any Dutch monarch, the only survivor of the 16 monarchs who were sitting on the throne is, at the time of her inauguration, one of only seven European royal houses still reigning.

Wilhelmina abdicated in favour of her daughter, and died in 1962, still a symbol of Dutch resistance during World War II. Her memoir, *‘Lonely but Not Alone’* is a wistful account of a life of service to her country. ▲



RESIDENTS DON'T COUNT AND POWERFUL ORGANISATIONS WILL NOT LISTEN

BY MARY REGNIER-LEIGH

We spend much time trying to help our residents and businesses. Most of this relates to decisions being made by big organisations who have their own agenda. Here I give examples of the lack of listening by those who have power and only want it their own way.

THE LONDON MAYOR

As readers, you will know that this Society has long opposed the permanence of the Park Lane Cycle Lane. Councillor Robathan has kindly shared with us the response from TfL to a Freedom of Information request.

As you know from previous comments in this Magazine that really helpful and specific information is not available. When the indications were that the majority of consultees did not agree with TfL / Sadiq Khan, the scheme went ahead anyway. I go from Victoria to Marble Arch at least once a week, often more. It is rare that I see more than four or five bicycles or less, and sometimes none. The Mayor will not listen.



WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

An application for CIL money (Community Infrastructure Levy) was made to WCC with intent to improve areas and public realm as the above. The Application was to replace the tarmac pavements not far away in Ebury Street which are in a shocking state (see above photo). WCC says it will only replace like for like and as it was tarmac, only tarmac could be used. This is because there would be an increased carbon footprint using flagstones although funds were available.

The original tarmac was put down temporarily in the 1990s as there was insufficient funds to replace the flagstones then and proper paving was promised. Residents think they have waited long enough for the replacement pavements promised, but WCC will not listen.

GROSVENOR

We have reported in our last two editions about the *Memories of China*. Just to remind you, the business was closed at the behest of Grosvenor in spite of its owner wishing to carry on business. We, in the community, together with our MP, begged Grosvenor to allow this internationally famous Chinese restaurant to remain. It closed. Grosvenor would not listen.

The demolition of the Cundy Steet flats and their replacement with unwanted high buildings the creation of a “destination” in peaceful residential Ebury Street falls into the same category as do other Grosvenor developments. They would not listen.

Despite this, we do enjoy being at the consultation table and whilst Cundy Street, etc., are examples where our observations did not change Grosvenor’s planning application, we will continue to consult and hope that we can convince Grosvenor that they can financially benefit from helping to maintain the exclusivity of Belgravia as a quiet residential area.

These are just a few examples of the helplessness of individuals and communities. Big, powerful organisations do their thing despite the objections of the communities or having their consent. They will not listen and our Communities are diminished by it. ▲





MARBLE ARCH RENOVATION

We are able to report this month the current position at Marble Arch. I have spoken to one of the employees of DBR Limited. I mentioned in my note last month that DBR Limited specialises in complete repair, conservation and regeneration of historic buildings, churches and scheduled monuments and the like. They use traditional and modern methods and have over the years dealt with restorations all over our city as well as many other places. They are, the “go to” organisation for the kind of work they do.

We understand that the work will be very detailed. It is not expected to be unveiled until November 2024. The work is being done on behalf of English Heritage and to help, if not



to cover, the costs the advertising covers are sponsored by companies who pay English Heritage for the extraordinary privilege of probably one of the best advertising sites in the country.

We understand the advertisements will probably change monthly and so far we have had Vodafone and presently have Gucci. We do not know what will be next.



[DBR] use traditional and modern methods and have, over the years, dealt with restorations all over our city as well as many other places.

I have been told that the dust has been removed from the whole of the Arch and it has been brushed down. Plants growing and bird invasions have been cleaned away. Steam cleaning will follow. At that stage conservationists will be replacing broken and damaged sculpture on the Arch. They will also be replacing marble parts of the structure where it has been previously damaged or replaced but the colour is not right. The conservationists are busy at the moment looking for the right marble to replace damaged areas.

We understand that English Heritage has prepared some history boards to display round the Arch for the public to look at. They need consent from Westminster City Council and English Heritage are still waiting for that. It does seem rather strange that the advertising hoardings have been able to be displayed, but not the information to the public. Let's hope that WCC get a move on!

The roof of the Arch is being inspected and any work required will be done. Some of you

may remember seeing lanterns underneath the archways. These are being removed and totally refurbished. It is hoped that they will be able to be repainted in the original colours including gold decoration on the lamps. Work will be done to make sure they will be lit up so we can enjoy seeing them after dark in the years to come.

The gates are also to be thoroughly inspected and restored. The spears are to be removed and upgraded and made thief-proof! Apparently, numbers of them have "disappeared" from time to time and the conservationists are anxious to make sure they do not again.

We have been promised some photographs from inside the covering and we hope to be able to present that to you next month.

In the meantime, we would congratulate English Heritage and their innovative method of financing the work using the advertising covers. We also applaud their choice of DBR to do the work. ▲



SAFETY IN THE CITY AND REPRESENTATION OF RESIDENTS

BY CLLR RACHAEL ROBATHAN

First may I congratulate the Belgravia Society on its 100th issue. A really interesting and informative magazine which provides such a brilliant commentary on the heritage, joys and challenges of this very special part of our City.

As readers of the Belgravia Society Magazine will know, my fellow Councillors have long held the position that we must do everything possible to make it safe and easy for people to walk around our great City. However, any schemes introduced to achieve this must be designed taking into account the views of local people and if they don't enjoy the support of the majority of Westminster residents they should be rethought. Only by taking on board the views of the people who actually live here and are affected can we deliver schemes which work for our City.

In June 2020, the Mayor of London introduced the Park Lane Cycle Lane with no engagement in advance with either residents of Westminster or the City Council – I should know as I was the Leader of the Council at the time – and we had long called for there to be a consultation so that Westminster residents could have their say. This finally occurred this year with almost half the responses coming from Westminster residents and businesses and the rest from wider London. Although the responses weren't separated, following a Freedom of Information request, I was told that of the 919 responses

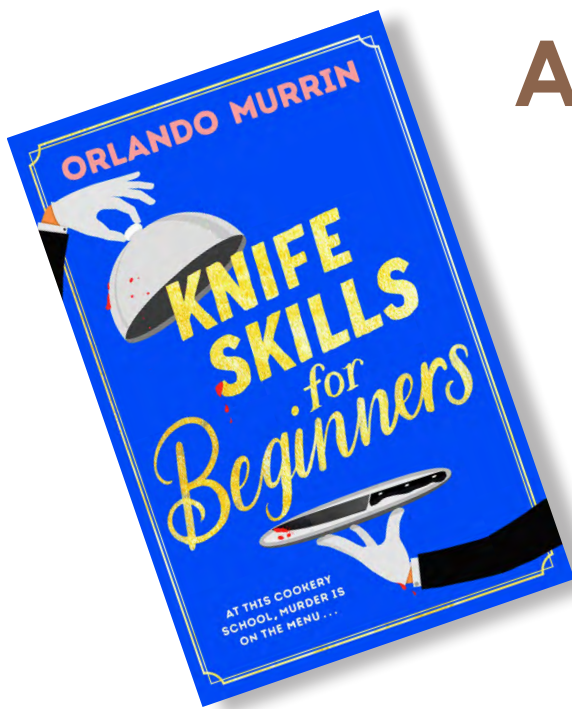
from people living in Westminster, 58% said that the scheme would do nothing to encourage people to cycle or actually do the reverse and the figure for walking was even more stark with only 28% thinking it would actually encourage people to walk. For Westminster businesses the views were even more negative towards the cycle lane.

On top of this, a whopping 947 people expressed concern about congestion and rat-running into surrounding streets.

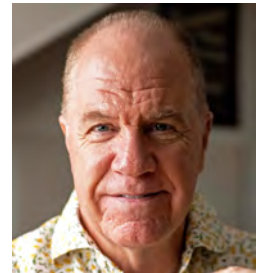
As a Westminster Councillor I believe strongly that we must represent the views of our residents and I was very disappointed that Westminster Council's new administration, in their response, chose to call for the scheme to be made permanent rather than listening to these views and calling on Sadiq Khan to rethink the scheme so that it works for local people.

With further cycle schemes – the C43 through Marylebone and Hyde Park, and the C51 through St John's Wood and Marylebone now being planned – I am calling on the new administration to work with local residents, prioritise their views and, as I did when Leader, commit that these wouldn't go ahead until they are supported by the majority of local people. So far, they have refused but I will continue to fight for this. Why should someone living in Hackney or Croydon decide what happens in Belgravia or Hyde Park? ▲

A BELGRAVIA MYSTERY



BY ORLANDO
MURRIN



In February, my first crime novel, *Knife Skills For Beginners*, will be published by Transworld. This is the Penguin imprint behind Jilly Cooper, Terry Pratchett and (don't mention the war) Prince Harry, and you can guarantee the book is receiving much fanfare.

The hero of my book, which is the start of a series, is a forty-something chef/food writer called Paul Delamare, who lives in Belgravia. I've not lived in Belgravia myself – though I've come pretty close, with several years in Sloane Street and a brief sojourn in Lincoln Street – so why did I choose it as a setting?

The main reason is that it's a social melting pot. Paul himself is not wealthy – he lives in a (fictional) property off Bourne Street called Jubilee Cottage, nicknamed 'the smallest house in Belgravia'. Through a legal oversight, he has only a life interest in his little house (usufruct) and his late partner's family (Olinda and her dastardly son Jonny) are constantly trying to lever him out; a source of ongoing rancour in his otherwise idyllic home life.

The story is set in Chester Square Cookery School, a slightly shabby four-storey mansion on the corner of Eccleston Street with echoes of Mary Shelley and Lord Byron. What was once a ballroom has been converted into a classroom, and Paul agrees at short notice to teach a residential course to a motley crew of students, including an insufferable divorcée from Bath and a Welshwoman with mauve hair.

In the best cosy crime tradition – and this is hardly a spoiler – things go rapidly wrong.

Like my hero, I'm fascinated by the contrast between the huge houses in the area – many of which appear somewhat ghostly, or at least unlivable – and the bustling streets that interconnect them. These locations are for real. In one scene, Paul is chased from Elizabeth Street – local residents will recognise every shop he passes – and considers claiming sanctuary in St Michael's Church. He gets his hair cut in Chester Row, and his walk home takes him past *The Duke of Boots*; his other favourite watering hole being *The Fox and Hounds* in Passmore Street. Observant readers will note that Belgravia Police Station, where Paul receives a grilling, has been closed since I wrote the book; a sad loss to the area.

The novel is set in the here and now, and early readers have declared they can imagine it being made into a TV mini-series. At a more modest level, I'd love to lead a Paul Delamare walk sometime – perhaps combine it with the ever-popular Lord Lucan walk and end up in one of Paul's favourite pubs or eateries.

I'm currently finishing the second story in the series (not out till 2025). Although Paul goes travelling – and how – be assured his roots remain very much in Belgravia. Please let me know if you enjoy the book, and visit my website – orlandomurrin.com – which opens with a sweeping view of Chester Square.

Knife Skills For Beginners will be available from Belgravia Books in Eccleston Street from 15th February 2024. ▲

THE THORNEY ISLAND SOCIETY

is kept in the Westminster Abbey muniments, as a “terrible place”. In the Spring of 893, Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great, forced invading Vikings to take refuge on Thorney Island. Despite hardships and more Viking raids over the following centuries, the monks tamed the island until, by the time of Edward the Confessor, it was “a delightful place, surrounded by fertile land and green fields”. The Abbey’s College Garden survives a thousand years later and may be the oldest garden in England.

Thorney Island is one of the places reputed to be the site of King Canute’s demonstration that he could not command the tides because he built a palace at Westminster.

The low-lying Thorney Island is now in the City of Westminster, and is still prone to flooding and, if it were not for the Embankment, would be under water half the time.



Here in Belgravia, we are able to talk about our history, back before the days of the five fields that came to be owned by Grosvenor. It was the habitual home of highwaymen and robbers for centuries.

We also know about Knightsbridge and its stone bridge over the river Westbourne. The bridge is reputed to be named after a duel held there between knights. It is recorded that in the year 1141, the citizens of London met Matilda, the daughter of Henry I, to claim her place as Queen. She did not succeed, but ultimately her son did become King. There are many other areas with histories greater than our own.

Roman London was a walled city built on twin gravel hills divided by a stream with many tributaries supplying it with clean water. This was a perfect site for a Roman fortress town. It had dry ground for building, good visibility of the surrounding countryside and a varied supply of clean water.

Thorney Island is described in a purported 8th century charter of King Offa of Mercia, which



We are neighbours to some of the most important buildings, events and people who have lived in our nation's history. Many of you will already be familiar with the Thorney Island Society. Like us, it is an amenity society and a charity.

Thorney Island is the home of Westminster Abbey. In 960 AD St Dunstan founded a monastery which became an Abbey Church and ultimately Westminster Abbey. Westminster Abbey was the first large building on Thorney Island but centuries after the Romans had departed.

The Society takes its name from an island of brambles once formed by the River Tyburn meeting the River Thames. The Thorney Island Society was founded in 1985 when

June Stubbs and local residents formed the Society to save from demolition London's first public library built in Great Smith Street. They succeeded although the building is now a restaurant. There are many other great buildings in the area including, of course, the Palace of Westminster.

The Thorney Island Society is very much like our own. It is a registered Charity, a recognised amenity society and has very similar aims to our own. I hope, with their help, to be able to provide some interesting historical facts from the Thorney Island Society and I highly recommend you to their website (www.thethorneyislandsociety.org.uk) so that you may read many of the documents and work they have and are doing. ▲

Belgravia Neighbourhood Forum

GET INVOLVED WITH THE BELGRAVIA NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Do you care about the future of Belgravia as a place to live and work? Do you want its unique appearance and character conserved? If so, it's time to learn about your Local Neighbourhood Plan and the upcoming Referendum!

WHAT IS THE BELGRAVIA PLAN?

The Belgravia Plan is a document which sets out a vision and a set of policies to guide planning issues in the Belgravia Neighbourhood Area to 2040. It is now nearly ready after a period of five years which have involved extensive consultation with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders, including paper and online questionnaire surveys, focus groups, open public meetings, pop-up events and two rounds of formal public consultation (summer 2022 and summer 2023) when comments were invited on the draft Plan.

Please visit WCC's website to see the draft plan and supporting documents [here](#).

WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?

The Plan's key objectives, which derive directly from the feedback from our extensive consultation, are to conserve the character of Belgravia's built environment and to ensure that the amenity of residents is protected. Major policy areas of the Plan include:

- building design (including Design Codes to ensure buildings are in harmony with their surroundings)

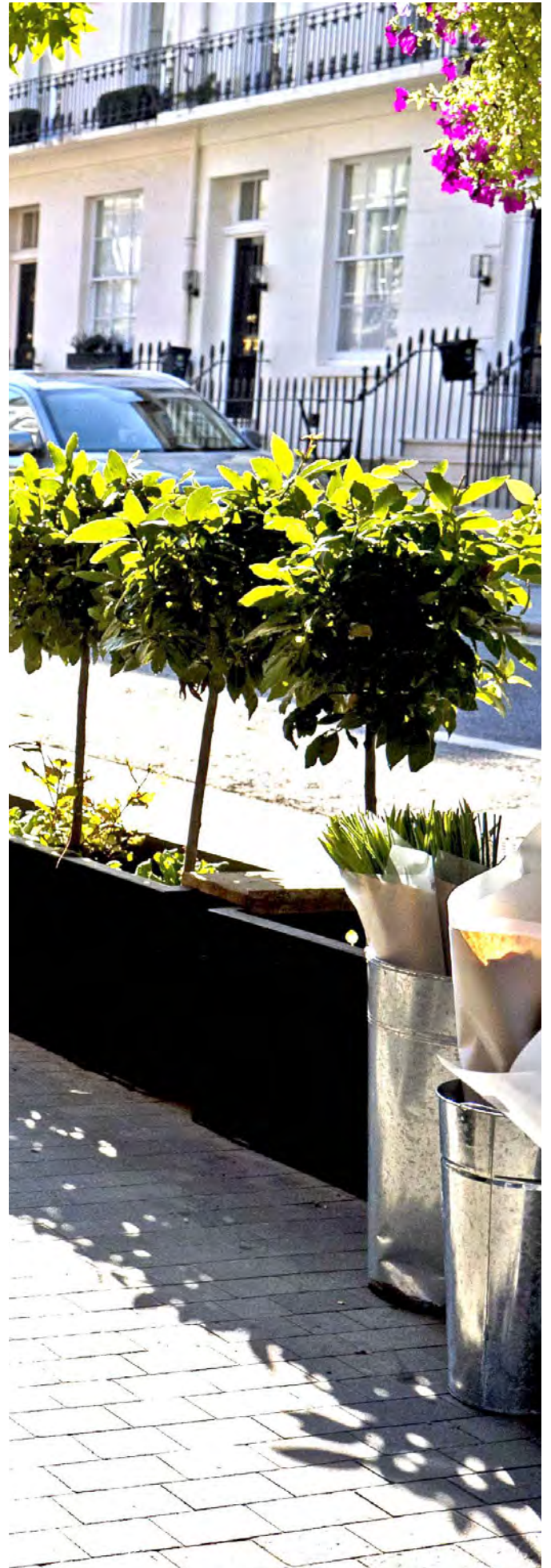
- protecting Belgravia's village feel and residential amenity
- reducing levels of through traffic
- guidelines for major development projects
- sustainable construction
- minimising the impact of building construction

WHY IS THE PLAN IMPORTANT?

It's not just a thick report which will sit on a shelf; once adopted by Westminster City Council it will have binding, statutory force. This means that any planning applications in the Belgravia Area will need to align with the policies in the Plan to gain approval. Knightsbridge, Mayfair and Pimlico already have their neighbourhood plans in force. Now it's our turn!

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The Plan is now in its final stages, undergoing independent examination to ensure that it complies with the necessary statutory and legal requirements. Thereafter, the Plan can be finalised and will be put to a vote in a Referendum of local electors to determine if it should be adopted. This is an important democratic process where the Belgravia community can demonstrate support for the Plan and get noticed by the Council.



VOTING IN THE REFERENDUM

If you are a registered voter, and live in the Belgravia Neighbourhood Area, you are eligible to vote in the Referendum. Once the date is set, you will receive polling cards or a postal vote, just as in any other election. We can't yet be sure of the Referendum date, as this will be set by Westminster City Council, but it is likely to be early in 2024. **Look out for more information about the Referendum and do tell your neighbours about it.**

THE BELGRAVIA NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

We need volunteers to help us spread the word in your street or block. If you can help, please get in touch by emailing chairman@thebelgraviaforum.org. ▲

SUMMER AND BUTTERFLIES

BY SARA OLIVER



I don't know about you, but I have quite enjoyed the cool and rainy summer, especially when hearing about the heatwaves abroad. However, I am now appreciating the Indian summer we are experiencing in early September. The sun shining on the landscape beautified by summer rain looks so lush and verdant. I am enjoying the 'last of the summer wine' without having to leave the country and hope you have too.

I love butterflies and am looking forward to the big reveal of the 2023 Big Butterfly Count coming soon. In 2022 the Gatekeeper took top spot.

Another winner was the Comma, a popular species often found in gardens. Good news for the blues, with an increase in Common Blue and Holly Blue. However, there appeared to be a general decline with fewer butterflies spotted overall.

For the 2023 Butterfly Count, I totted up seven Red Admirals fluttering around a large Buddleia bush on a park walk, six Brimstone and a couple of Peacocks. From early and definitive sightings, it looks as if it may be the year of the Red Admiral. A familiar and popular butterfly across the UK, it can be found in all habitats.



Cut-through image of WildPod

This small butterfly is a migrant species, traveling to the UK from North Africa and Europe. According to scientists, the changing climate may encourage an increasing number of these mighty butterflies to overwinter in the UK. The Big Butterfly Count (14th July-6th August) helps scientists understand the impact of climate change on our most-loved butterflies.

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Butterflies and moths are among the most threatened groups of wildlife in the UK. How can we help? By creating corridors. From balconies, terraces, patios with pots, tubs and window boxes, to urban gardens, squares, hotel concourses, office outdoor spaces and school grounds; do not underestimate the power to create a perfect place for butterflies to refuel and take refuge in built-up areas. The 'Mini Wildpod' (bioscapes.co.uk/product/wildpod: if you purchase a planter please mention Belgravia Society) is a case in point. It can provide a convenient, tidy solution for supporting nature and increasing biodiversity where space is limited.

Some ideas on how to provide corridors:

- **Create a 'nectar bar'** – where insects can stop off and refuel. Spread the word and encourage your neighbours to do the same; together you will then have a whole corridor of nectar plants, which will help butterflies and moths travel more easily between habitats.
- **Design a 'green roof'** – Encourage new buildings in Belgravia and beyond to design and build green roofs, increasing potential to grow plants for butterflies and moths.
- **Fast growing nectar plants** – Honeysuckle, Jasmine, Hop and Clematis, also good caterpillar foodplants.
- **Create 'green verges'** – Street planters and hanging baskets to add interest and fill gaps.
- **Variety of plants** – include herbs, such as Rosemary, Chives, Oregano and Sage.
- **Grow a pot of Comfrey** – great nectar plant and foodplant.

Do take time out time next year to count butterflies. ▲

Sources: butterfly-conservation.org, bioscapes.co.uk, www.islandecho.co.uk





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