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**Local Amenity Societies - Participation and Power: A case study
on the St Marylebone Society 1948 - 2021**

Higgs, Gabrielle

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LOCAL AMENITY SOCIETIES - PARTICIPATION AND POWER

A case study on the St Marylebone Society 1948 - 2021

G. M. HIGGS

PhD

2021

LOCAL AMENITY SOCIETIES - PARTICIPATION AND POWER

A case study on the St Marylebone Society 1948 - 2021

GABRIELLE MARIE HIGGS

**A thesis submitted for fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Westminster
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**PhD
Nov 2021**

LOCAL AMENITY SOCIETIES - PARTICIPATION AND POWER

A case study on the St Marylebone Society 1948 - 2021

ABSTRACT

This research evidences the power and influence local amenity societies have had on planning policy, conservation and townscape since World War II. It is based on a single case study of the St Marylebone Society (SMS), an amenity society founded in 1948 to protect the townscape of Marylebone in central London. It describes how they established, increased membership and linked with organisations to increase their network power, evolving and adapting to operate effectively within changing planning policy frameworks over the ensuing decades to the present day.

Their involvement at four sites in Marylebone, considered at different time periods, assesses the outcomes to evidence their acquisition and use of both overt and covert power, as identified by Lukes (2005). The strategies and tactics they employed to exercise their power are considered in detailed historical narratives, with reference to Flyvbjerg's (1998) theories relating to power, rationality, rationalization and how long-standing personal relationships are instrumental to decision-making at local level.

Today amenity societies are embedded within the planning system and integral to political ambition to increase public participation and engender social capital, as legislated by Neighbourhood Planning. However, they are essentially self-elected volunteers, dominated by a homogenous demographic, raising issues of equity and representation in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse and politically divided society. The benefits of their long-term activism and knowledge risk being lost by declining membership and broken networks. This research identifies that amenity societies must protect their valuable cumulative phronetic knowledge, adapt to embrace technology and policies to encourage wider participation and optimise their network power for positive townscape, neighbourhood and community outcomes.

LOCAL AMENITY SOCIETIES - PARTICIPATION AND POWER

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City of Westminster Archives

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*I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work
Gabrielle Marie Higgs (30 November 2021)*

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND INITIALS

ADPA	Aylesbury & District Passengers Association
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
BIDS	Business Improvement Districts
BR	British Railways
BRB	British Railways Board
BTC	British Transport Commission
CAAC	Conservation Area Advisory Committees
CAZ	Central Activities Zone
CCCS	Central Council of Civic Societies
CEC	Crown Estate Commissioners
CEPC	Crown Estate Paving Commission
CPRE	Council for the Preservation of Rural England
CPS	Commons Preservation Society
DETR	Great Britain. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DOE	Great Britain. Department of the Environment
GLA	Greater London Assembly
GLC	Greater London Council
GMW	Gollins Melvin Ward & Partners, later GMW Partnership
HMCS	Her Majesty's Courts Service
JCNAS	Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies
LCC	London County Council
LRPC	London Region Passenger Committee
LRT	London Regional Transport
LT	London Transport
NBC	National Bus Company
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
PAG	Planning Advisory Group
PFTRA	Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations
RFAC	Royal Fine Arts Commission

RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RPCAAC	Regent's Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee
SAVE	Save Britain's Heritage
SMBC	St Marylebone Borough Council
SMS	St Marylebone Society
SPAB	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
SPNT	Society for the Protection of the Nash Terraces (Regent's Park)
TUCC	Transport Users Consultative Committee
WCA	Westminster City Archive
WCC	Westminster City Council

INTRODUCTION - PARTICIPATION AND POWER

Local amenity societies are grass-roots neighbourhood organisations that operate independently, with self-determined constitutions, self-elected committees and are self-funded by subscribing members. They are run by volunteers who engage with their neighbours and local businesses, lobby elected representatives and challenge their local authorities to influence planning decisions to protect two types of amenity:

- 'Beauty' or the visual aesthetic embodied in buildings of architectural or historical interest. Usually this involves campaigning for the preservation and conservation of buildings and townscape. This is a subjective concept dependent on personal values, influenced by culture, taste and contemporary fashion.
- Environmental issues, such as noise, pollution, traffic and loss of privacy which can have a negative or detrimental effect on places. These kinds of amenities are tangible, measurable and less value laden than the above.

These objectives are also the key tenets of the current UK National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) along with commitments to encourage sustainability and to involve as many people as possible in the planning decisions that affect their neighbourhoods. Today there are over 1,000 local amenity societies in England and Wales (Historic England, 2021) actively involved with conservation, environmental issues and the town planning and development process.

Local amenity societies have defined boundaries of interest, and for a group of people to establish their own society it is logical to assume that the place in question possesses 'amenity' that is pleasant or valuable to merit protection. For this reason, they tend to be connected with historic towns and cities across the country, and in London with historic villages centres or neighbourhoods with identifiable architectural or townscape characteristics. Amenity societies attract like-minded people with professional complementary skills, such as, architects, planners and historians. As well as technical knowledge and expertise, those undertaking voluntary work must make considerable personal

sacrifice in terms of time and money, hence most active amenity society members are often retired or financially stable to not need to work full time. This demographic was frequently labelled 'middle-class', but today identified by NRS Social Grade ABC1 based on their professional, managerial and administrative occupations. Amenity societies' claims that they represent and speak on behalf of the general public are frequently challenged because of this socio-economic characteristic.

Concern for local issues can lead to local amenity societies becoming involved in larger countrywide campaigns and supporting the work of national amenity societies, and vice versa with individuals often members of both types of organisations. They share common objectives, are mutually supportive, cooperate on campaigns and have grown and adapted in tandem over the past century to form an 'amenity society network'. There are six national amenity societies that campaign and lobby to protect the architectural heritage of the whole of England and Wales and collaborate as the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (JCNAS). Alongside Historic England (formerly English Heritage) these groups are 'statutory consultees' for planning developments involving sensitive historic sites and listed buildings, each with specific interests and expertise, representing different architectural typologies. In chronological order of their founding, they are: the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB 1877), the Ancient Monuments Society (1924), the Georgian Group (1937), the Council for British Archaeology (1944), the Victorian Society (1958) and the Twentieth Century Society (originally the Thirties Society, 1979).

Unlike these national organisations local amenity societies have no official status and are not statutory consultees, but in practice local authorities and property developers regularly consult with them on planning applications, planning policy, conservation and infrastructure changes within their specific area of interest. The activities of local amenity societies vary depending on their locality and membership interests such that,

Some groups may be active in changing planning policies, others may be more concerned in the design of new buildings or in resisting all

change by upholding preservation, whilst still others may quietly carry on with independent projects of their own. Active local groups serve to monitor, pressurise, prod and stimulate the planning authority. ... But interfere they will, as it is their purpose as consultees; and lobby too, much to the annoyance of planning officials and elected representatives who are jealous of their power (Dobby, 1978, p66).

Investigating the extent of this 'power' is the purpose of the current research, which will be structured as follows:

Chapter 1 explains the origins of national and local amenity societies, the people involved, their social status, aspirations and inherent networks. A historical narrative will explore the core themes behind the activities, strategies and tactics that allowed them to grow and increase their network power and influence. Government legislation and planning policies were introduced over the course of the second half of the twentieth century to encourage more people to take an active part in the planning process, which amenity societies capitalised on to increase their power. Criticisms relating to their motives, representativeness, equity and democracy were voiced from the outset, therefore attempts to redress these issues will also be discussed alongside the changing social and political climate in the UK at the time.

Chapter 2 will outline the societal benefits of increased public participation in planning matters, which are seen to engender 'social capital' and promote safer neighbourhoods and cohesive communities. I will consider how the policy changes brought opportunities for local amenity societies to formalise their role and conferred structural power, such that they became non-statutory consultees within the planning system. They were given the 'power to act'.

The theoretical framework underpinning this research is based on concepts relating to the different types of power that amenity societies possess. Most important is network power, the level of which correlates directly to the socio-economic make-up of its membership. Long-term participation, employing their own strategies and tactics served to nurture and extend this power through the prevailing political and governing structures of the institutions controlling

decision-making. Inherent professional skills, rational knowledge and rationalization utilised to argue with those in power are explored through detailed narratives of campaigns, with reference to Bent Flyvbjerg's (1998) theories on truth, reason and the significance of the '*longue durée*' in local decision-making (Braudel, 1958; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Alongside their practical and documented activities, covert power is also seen to be in operation, involving negotiations behind closed doors, the power not to act and nondecision-making. I will explore how amenity societies have the ability to utilise all 'three dimensions of power' (Lukes, 2005) to achieve their objectives.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology for this case study-based research which investigates the work of the St Marylebone Society (SMS), an established local amenity society based in central London. It will evidence and illustrate the exercise of their power through their activities to influence decision-making and ultimately shape the built environment in their neighbourhood. Within the wider London context, the SMS is considered as being typical of other local amenity societies based in what were historically separate villages, such as Blackheath, Camden, Chelsea, Hackney, Hampstead and Highgate; these are urban localities with long histories, fine grain townscapes and social structures shaped by land ownership of the Crown, Church and Great Estates.

This research has only been possible due to my personal engagement with the subject, professional knowledge and predisposition for activism. A traditional Christian education promoting equality, responsibility and individual agency to do good and help those less fortunate instilled volunteering and fundraising from an early age; honed by political and environmental involvement in the 1970s (Greenpeace, CND) led to conservation and squatting in the 1980s. Active civic, political and planning participation was aligned with my chosen career in architecture. I have worked as an architect in London for forty years, lived in Marylebone since 1990, and participated in the planning process with the SMS planning committee since 1997 and Chair of the society since 2008 to the present. This, along with my lived experiences, has given me a deep understanding of the city, the built environment and how a local amenity society operates within the planning system today.

Consequently, it has been a challenge throughout this research to remain critical and objective to my findings and observations. To create distance between myself and the case study subject, avoid potential bias and any conflict of interest, the research sites selected are historically based; beginning at the end of World War II, in 1948 when the SMS was founded, I assess their ambitions, role and influence over a time period of seventy years.

SMS involvement and campaigns at four sites in Marylebone will frame the research question and seek evidence through 'historical windows' at specific political time periods over the course of their continuous involvement at each site:

- Post-World War II through the 1960s and 1970s
- The Thatcher/Conservative Era (1979-1997)
- New Labour and the start of the twenty-first century

This illustrates how contemporaneous planning policy influenced the activities of the society and also how policy evolved over time such that today it embodies the core objectives of amenity societies. This approach allows for a distinctive contribution to discussions relating to the politics of conservation, civic participation, representation and the equity of the planning system, whereby amenity societies, as powerful elite organisations, are seen to be acting on behalf of the wider public.

Chapter 4 introduces the case study subject – the St Marylebone Society with a brief summary of its history, constitution, activities and people. The four campaign sites to be investigated are positioned geographically, historically and contextually with regard to the type of amenity being protected.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 contain detailed narratives and analysis of the four sites under investigation which are:

- Regent's Park Nash Terraces and St Marylebone Parish Church
- Castrol House (later Marathon House)
- Marylebone Station and the Great Central Hotel
- City of Westminster Magistrates Court

The conclusions in Chapter 9 reflect on the historic campaigns at each site and summarise their outcomes, both negative and positive. The ebb and flow of the SMS's influence in Marylebone, set within the changing architectural and political landscape, indicates how the society's capacity for power and influence changed with time and how their experiences were built upon for future action.

During the course of this part time research, London has undergone widespread urban renewal and development, population growth and social diversification, with policies introduced to promote more public participation through neighbourhood planning. Therefore, I will briefly consider the future for traditional local amenity societies in this evolving socio-political urban context from a personal perspective. It is the intention to use the research evidence, analysis and conclusions to provide ideas, suggestions and strategies for voluntary planning activists to improve their representativeness and further their connectivity and network power; to optimise their time, focus their activities and resources for positive townscape and neighbourhood outcomes.

CHAPTER 1

EVOLUTION OF AMENITY SOCIETIES AND PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” (Jane Jacobs, 1961, p252).

1.1 Philanthropic Protection of Amenity

Cities are living organisms, consisting of overlapping and layered invisible networks controlled by economics and power. The city’s physical and social networks, buildings and infrastructure, have been built and shaped by the city’s landowners, workers and inhabitants - by people, rich and poor. Local amenity societies work within these networks, connecting with like-minded individuals and organisations to generate power to influence urban development and protect environmental and townscape amenity.

Historians have traced the roots of voluntary amenity societies back to the eighteenth century when a proliferation of voluntary membership clubs and societies were active in British cities (Morris, 1983; Clark, 2000; Hewitt, 2014) which,

gave rise to special social networks, often transcending or at least blurring class boundaries, which served as the economic, political and cultural arteries of a particular urban world – networks that continued into the Victorian era (Clark, 2000, p460).

Rapid industrialisation and urban expansion throughout the nineteenth century led to over-crowding and deprivation in cities across Britain, and to address these issues individuals who had the means to help others formed local groups to voluntarily campaign for social reform and improved environmental amenity. Their incentive and ability to act was based on their personal wealth, education, political and religious convictions, such as helping the poor and having a sense of civic duty to the wider community. They included reformists and radicals who campaigned to change society for the better such as,

Friendly societies, the cooperative movement, trade unions, the Labour Party, [who] all to a greater or lesser extent grew out of non-conformist religious backgrounds” (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001, p174).

Acting independently and without financial support from the authorities, these pioneers of amenity protection tended to be the most privileged in society who sought to put their power to good use. Their campaigns to improve standards of living led the Public Health Act of 1848, legislating for the environmental amenities of clean water, fresh air, drainage and sanitation, which in turn led to consideration of the amenity embodied within the built environment.

The first national amenity societies were established as a reaction to the destruction of towns and countryside caused by the Industrial Revolution and called for conservation and preservation alongside social reform. Founded in 1865, the Commons Preservation Society (CPS) successfully campaigned to preserve the publicly accessible, historic green spaces around London.

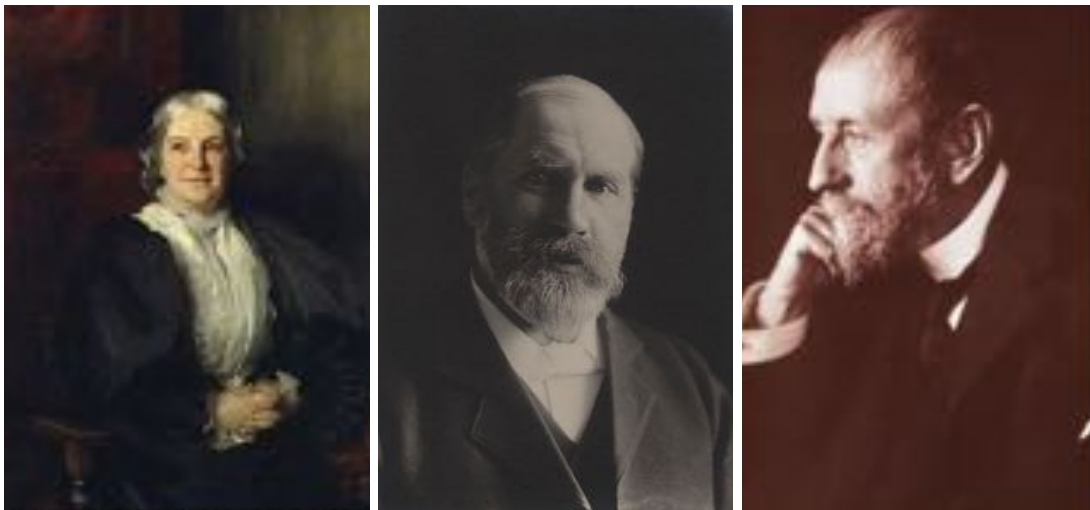


Fig. 1.1 Octavia Hill (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.2 Canon Rawnsley (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.3 Sir Robert Hunter (*Illustrated London News*, 1913, p786)

Its founders were wealthy philanthropists, with social housing campaigner Octavia Hill advocating that in an increasingly dense city, beauty, access to nature and recreational spaces were vital for all people’s well-being. It was the Secretary of the CPS, Sir Robert Hunter, who realised that one could take better control of conservation through actual ownership of land and buildings and following this suggestion, together with Octavia Hill and Canon Rawnsley,

the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty was established in 1895. Their campaigning activities, property acquisition and increased membership spread the message of the importance of heritage and conservation nationwide and paved the way for the growth of local amenity societies.

Also linking societal reform with conservation, William Morris and Phillip Webb founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877 with a manifesto that stood to preserve,

... anything which can be looked on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial: any work, in short, over which educated, artistic people would think it worthwhile to argue at all (Morris and Webb, 1877).



Fig. 1.4 William Morris (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.5 Philip Webb (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.6 SPAB Manifesto, 1877 (SPAB)

Morris thought that this would improve the lives of all social classes but that “Only the upper classes, ‘a small knot of cultivated people’” could implement their manifesto (Morris, 1892; Miele, 1995). This was clearly the opinion of an educated elite, with a sense of entitlement to dictate decisions on behalf of others and to demand and control the preservation of properties outside their ownership. Whilst Morris’s radical socialist politics had genuine concern for the ‘common man’ and promoted social equality, after his death the SPAB moved to a Conservative leadership who sought to use conservation to support the

prevailing social order and further their own cultural values and tastes, asserting that,

It was ridiculous to expect the working classes, or as Luxmoore [a long standing SPAB campaigner and Assistant Master at Eton] called them, ‘the lowest forms of human society’, to appreciate art” or benefit from their surroundings (Miele, 1995, p78).

Within their privileged networks, the SPAB founders’ polarised views could not engender cross-party political support and they made enemies within the establishment, the Church of England and architectural profession (who they looked down on as middle class). Without wide representation, consensus and capital, they did not have the power to prevent the demolition or alterations of many medieval churches and buildings in the way of industrial development across Victorian Britain (Miele, 1995; Delafons,1997).

1.2 Early Town Planning and Public Participation

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Town Planning Act of 1909 legislated to improve housing and living conditions. Radical planners such as Patrick Geddes advocated participation as a means for all people to improve their own environments as early as 1912, stating that a way of strengthening community connectivity to its government was, “by cultivating the habit of direct action instead of waiting upon representative agencies” (Turner and Fichter, 1972, cited in Ward, 1991, p112). In his urban survey, *Cities in evolution*, he noted,

[There] are gradually rising here and there mutually helpful and stimulating groups, which may be again [sic] the condition of progress, as so often in history of intellectual and social movement (Geddes, 1915, p317).

Geddes proposed three possibilities for citizen involvement which were aligned with his planning model: ‘Survey, Analysis and Plan’. He promoted education through public exhibitions and participation by communities collecting survey information together and ultimately suggesting alternative planning proposals to those of the authorities. However, Geddes noted that genuine public engagement,

... in practice [this] is seldom the case, because the educated classes everywhere tend to be specialised away from the life and labour of the people (Geddes, 1915, p319).

A century ago, when there were only a handful of local amenity societies, Geddes acknowledged that advocating wide public participation could result in, "... pandering to some of the particular causes of well-intentioned community groups" (Fagance, 1977, p102).

Geddes' contemporary Beatrice Webb, economist and social reformer, also advocated civic participation, specifically at a local level where she understood that influencing the actions of local authorities would have a greater positive impact on people's lives than lobbying national government (Abercrombie, 1920). Webb held a deep religious belief that benevolent philanthropy had a moral duty to not only improve the material lives of the poor but reform their character and make them better citizens. "She believed that citizens who were given benefits by the community ought to make an effort to improve themselves, or at least submit themselves to those who would improve them" (Muggeridge and Adams, 1967, p177).

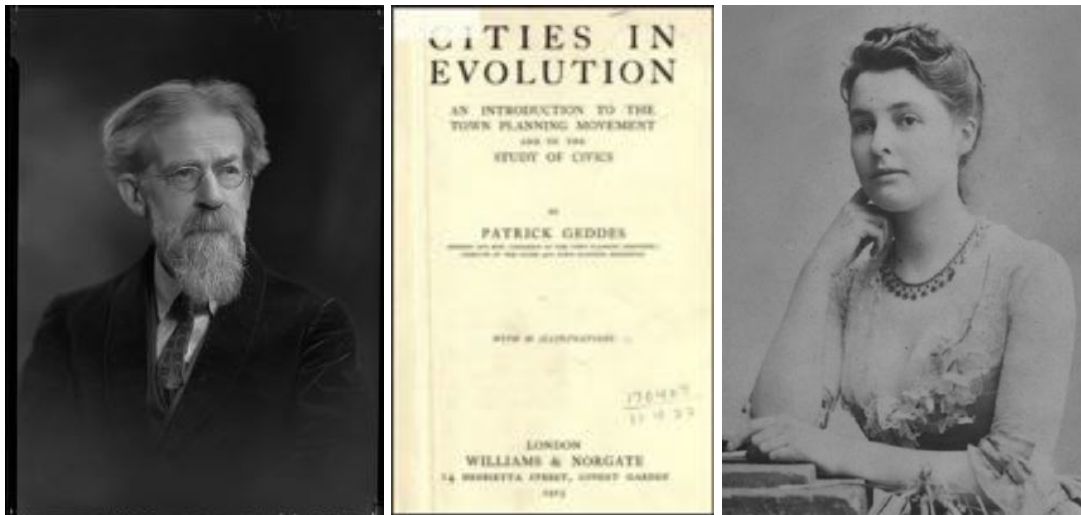


Fig. 1.7 Sir Patrick Geddes (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.8 *Cities in evolution* (1915)

Fig. 1.9 Beatrice Webb (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

A framework for public participation in local matters was suggested by Patrick Abercrombie in the *Town Planning Review* (1920) with an article entitled 'A

civic society, an outline of its scope, formation and functions', advocating the creation of local civic societies across the country and setting out their remit and approach. He noted that the Town and Country Planning Act of 1909 had three ambitions: providing proper sanitation, amenity and convenience, of which he suggested involvement with physical amenity might be the most appropriate basis of a civic society's work, complimenting rather than overlapping the work of the local authority. He also understood that civic societies,

... without the trammels of official status, are able to carry on a campaign of reconstruction propaganda, make general suggestions for improvement and, if necessary, indulge in constructive criticism (Abercrombie, 1920, p79).

The societies were to have clearly defined areas of interest, their members' own residential neighbourhood, of which they had deep knowledge and strong connections. This attribute and their potential for networking with their local authorities was set out by Abercrombie as being essential for the founding of a civic society and he envisaged, "... the whole country should be served by a series of contiguous associations each focusing at some natural centre the local interest" (Abercrombie, 1920, p81). Similarly advocating this governance structure at the time, Viscount James Bryce, (Liberal MP and academic) argued that,

An essential ingredient of a satisfactory democracy is that a considerable proportion should have the experience of active participation in small self-governing groups ... (Bryce, 1921; cited in Fagance, 1977, p28).

Thus, the definition of amenity, the need to protect it and the form and remit of local amenity societies to be voluntary and independent organisations was established a century ago.

Housing Acts of 1919 and 1930, together with the prevailing ideas of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement, continued to advanced housing improvements and the creation of new towns with access to the countryside and good amenity for all. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England

(CPRE) was founded by Abercrombie in 1926, and by the mid-twentieth century many local amenity societies started to appear, calling for the protection of rural amenity as a reaction to the continued destruction of the English landscape by development, vehicular transport and consequent suburbanisation around towns and cities.



Fig. 1.10 Patrick Abercrombie (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.11 Ebenezer Howard (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.12 *The preservation of rural England* (Manifesto, 1926, CPRE)

In 1937, Clough Williams-Ellis called for an 'Amenities Front' to campaign for the protection of the English countryside and townscape character in his polemic, *Britain and the beast*. Illustrated with evocative photographs, its contributors included a host of cultural elites, senior politicians and landowners who called for the preservation and protection of all that they believed made Britain great. Their manifestos reflected the prevailing concerns of the upper echelons of society who called for a radical re-think about how to prevent the on-going damage industrialisation was inflicting on both town and countryside, and they urged everyone to involve themselves in the campaign. In the 'Messages on the publication of this book' the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, President of the CPRE stated,

If a thousand readers of this book would submit themselves for election to public bodies, from the Parish Council onwards, the impact would be notable and progress would quickly ensue (William-Ellis, 1937, p vii).

His advice was quick to identify that becoming elected into the prevailing political system would increase amenity societies' power and influence to bring significant advantages to their organisations.

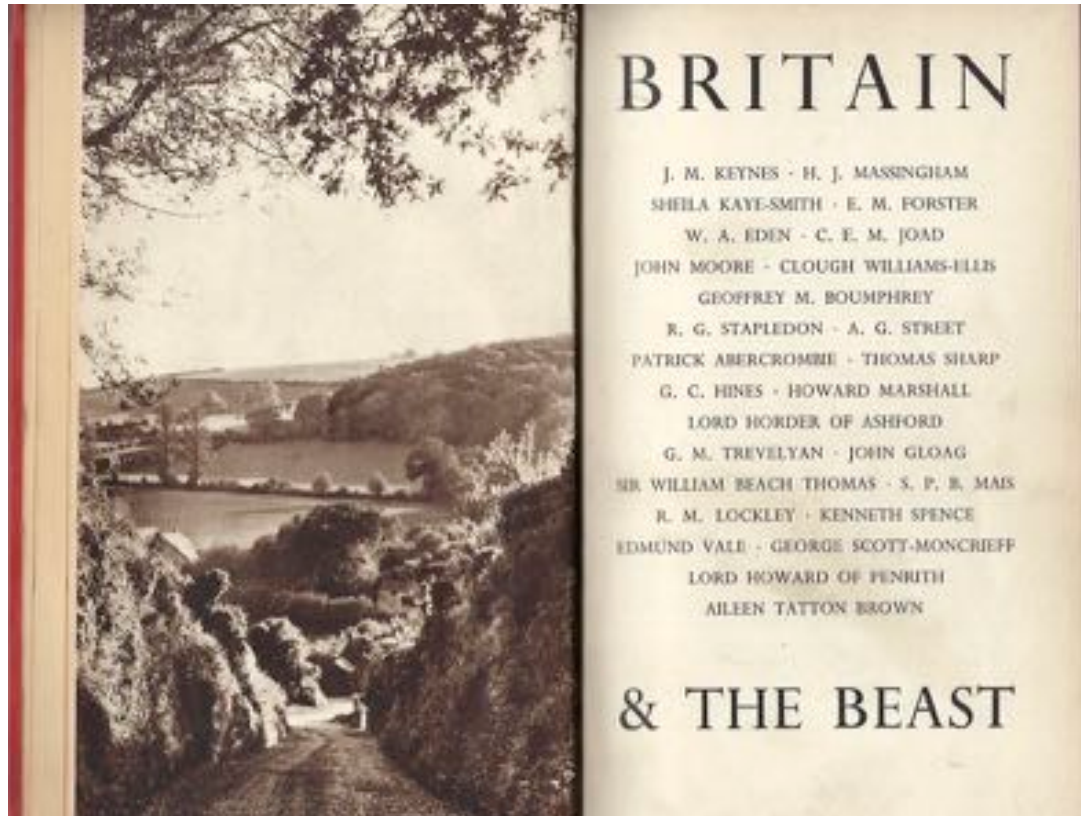


Fig. 1.13 *Britain and the beast*, Clough Williams-Ellis (ed.) (1937)

The Central Council of Civic Societies (CCCS) was founded in 1939 to encourage the formation of new local amenity societies and to better connect those already working to improve and preserve amenity. They aimed, “To preserve buildings and monuments of historic or artistic value and places of natural beauty,” and importantly to, “Cooperate with Local Authorities and with bodies with similar aims, both local and national.” Understanding the wider social benefits of such activities they conclude that such activities would, “encourage a sense of citizenship” (CCCS Constitution, F.J. Parsons Ltd., See Appendix A). By 1941 a further forty-four amenity societies had been founded (Barker, 1976, p21). The London Society (1912), the Chelsea Society (1927), the Bath Preservation Trust (1934) and the Blackheath Society (1937) are notable early local amenity societies with conservation objectives aligned to

the Georgian Group, itself formed in 1937 to protect buildings and townscape built between 1700 and 1840.



Fig. 1.14 The London Society (1912)



Fig. 1.15 The Georgian group (1937)

1.3 The Local Amenity Society Movement Post WWII (1945-1968)

Campaigning for preservation, conservation and amenity was overshadowed by the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the unprecedented destruction of British towns and cities. The hiatus of the war gave architects and town planners time to draw up plans for wholesale redevelopment of cities and in London, Forshaw and Abercrombie's *County of London plan* (1943) laid down proposals for roads, zoning of development and much needed housing. The extensive planned demolition and rebuilding that followed simultaneously generated a desire by many to preserve what was left of the past. Conservation became part of the 'national psyche' and amenity societies evolved and increased in numbers and activities to encompass not just protection of specific historic buildings but to try to preserve whole areas of towns and cities, such that by the end of the 1950s there were over 200 local amenity societies (Hewitt, 2014, p32).

Wider public interest in architecture and design was furthered by the 1951 Festival of Britain, which was centred on redevelopment of the South Bank in London but included associated smaller projects across Britain. However, despite the government encouraging everyone to join in with local projects to repair and rebuild their bomb-damaged neighbourhoods there was no real transfer of power to the people. Lewis Silkin, Labour Minister for Town and

Country Planning, summed up this attitude by asserting, “I think it is necessary to lead the citizen – guide him. The citizen does not always know exactly what is best” (Silkin, cited in Ward, 1994, p112).

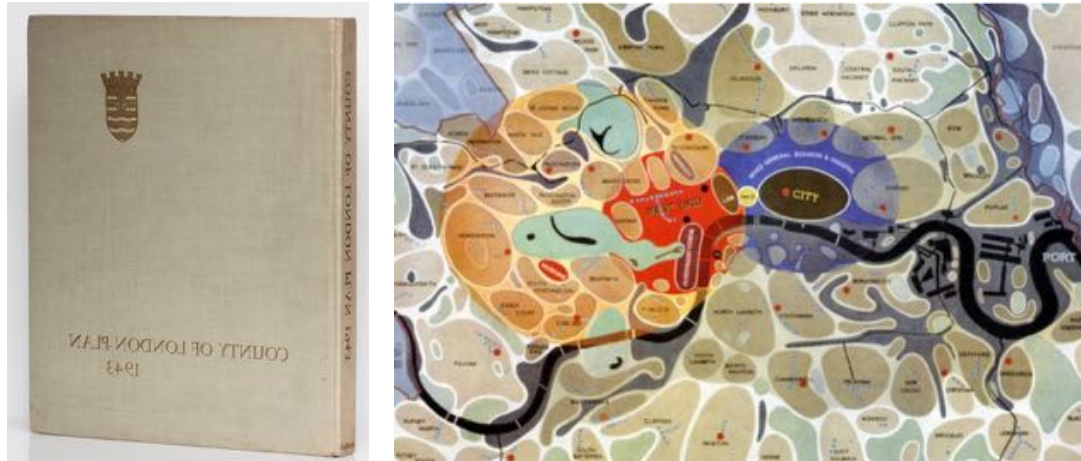


Fig. 1.16 *County of London plan*, Forshaw and Abercrombie (1943)

The Town & Country Planning Acts of 1947 and 1948 made provision for only consulting those directly affected by developments, immediate neighbours and landowners not local amenity societies. One organisation that was empowered by these acts was the Royal Fine Arts Commission (RFAC), established in 1924 as a non-statutory advisory body to the government on architecture and townscape. The RFAC could request information and was consulted on significant developments, such as, the reconstruction of urban centres. For the general public a top-down, hierarchical attitude to planning prevailed with minimal opportunities for participation. Whilst the majority deferred to authority and saw their historic neighbourhoods demolished and transformed, local amenity societies forged links with the national amenity societies and their local councillors and began to significantly increase in number, size and activities. Town planning as a discipline was, relatively speaking, in its infancy; whilst amenity societies had been actively engaged in environmental, conservation and planning matters, steadily acquiring network power and campaigning skills since the nineteenth century. Amenity societies' main concern throughout the 1940s and 1950s had been to prevent the demolition of bomb-damaged buildings and save historic buildings that stood in the way of the zoning designated by masterplans for post-war reconstruction. By the 1960s, with continuing demolition, clearance and redevelopment, primarily along strategic

economic, modernist architectural principles to provide mass housing, state intervention and town planning itself began to be seen as problematic. Material shortages and austerity meant that the majority of new building projects were prioritized for housing estates and schools, and the Labour Government, London County Council (LCC) and local authorities had to focus on this urgent need:

We desire as much as anyone to maintain diversity of design and scope for the individual talents of architects. But first things must come first. The houses must go up and nothing must stand in their way (Duncan Sandys, Minister of Works 1945; cited in Jenkins, 1975, p225).

In London the LCC could not control the private commercial building 'boom' which took advantage of loop-holes in the 1947 Planning Act. Coupled with the developers' ability to utilise pre-war planning approvals development profits were maximised without regard for conservation and many historic buildings were lost. This was a scenario repeated across Britain whereby local authorities'

inability to involve the wider urban community in its decisions and in its failure to control what was happening outside the confines of its own traditional sphere of activity, [it] sowed the seeds of public anger (Jenkins, 1975, p227).

In her seminal work, *The death and life of great American cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs had highlighted the need to preserve the fine grain of cities and the delicate social networks that sustained communities, and in London this was under constant threat by urban development. There was a growing public realisation that townscape character was being lost, skyscrapers were going up without consideration of context, alongside increasing environmental and social problems caused by dispersal of established communities. Specific events, such as the demolition of the Euston Arch (1961) and the threat of demolition at Covent Garden (1968) provided catalysts for community action. These single-interest campaigning groups form 'descriptive representation' and this type of spontaneous activity was seen as a motivator for true, widespread public participation (Fagance, 1977). They provided an impetus for involvement and compelled many people across the social and political

spectrum to collaborate to fight the politicians and planners which led to a 'new wave' of conservation activism paralleled by an increase in the number and size of amenity societies (Barker, 1976; Jenkins, 1975; Amery and Cruikshank, 1975).

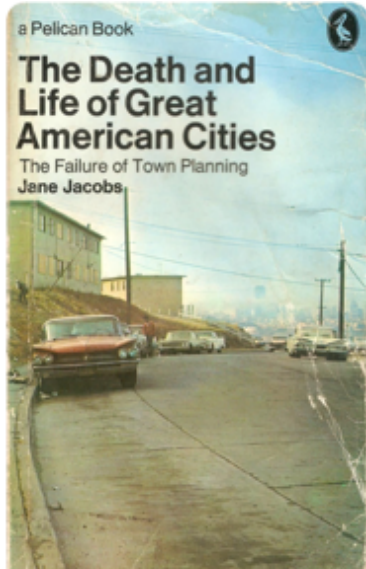


Fig. 1.17 *The death and life of great American cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961)
Fig. 1.18 Jane Jacobs (Copyright RIBA Collections)

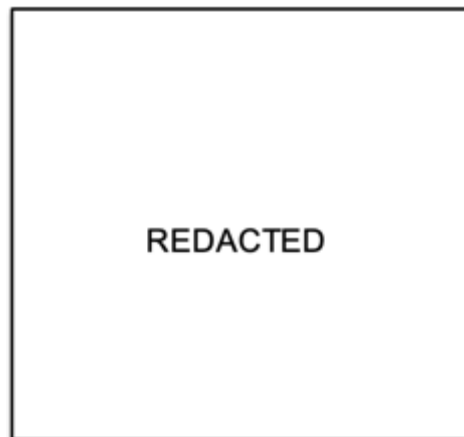


Fig. 1.19 Euston Arch demolition, 1962 (Copyright Ben Brooksbank, Geograph)
Fig. 1.20 Save Covent Garden. Protesters marching against the proposed closure of Covent Garden (*Evening Standard*, 01 May 1972. Copyright Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

The victory in saving Covent Garden (and other high-profile campaigns in England, such as those led by the Bath Preservation Society and York Civic Trust) was an important indicator that ordinary people could affect change. Some commentators have linked campaigning for amenity and conservation to wider political activism throughout the Western World in the 1960s

challenging social inequality and injustice, hence many of the seminal references on public participation and planning activism were written over half a century ago. Attracting the attention of the national press, and vividly conveyed by increasing television ownership, media coverage of protest raised the profile of public participation. It kept campaigns on the political agenda and people demanded greater power and participation in the planning decisions that affected their lives (Alinsky, 1971; Jacobs, 1961; Healey, 1997; Brindley, Rydin and Stoker, 1989; Taylor, 1998).

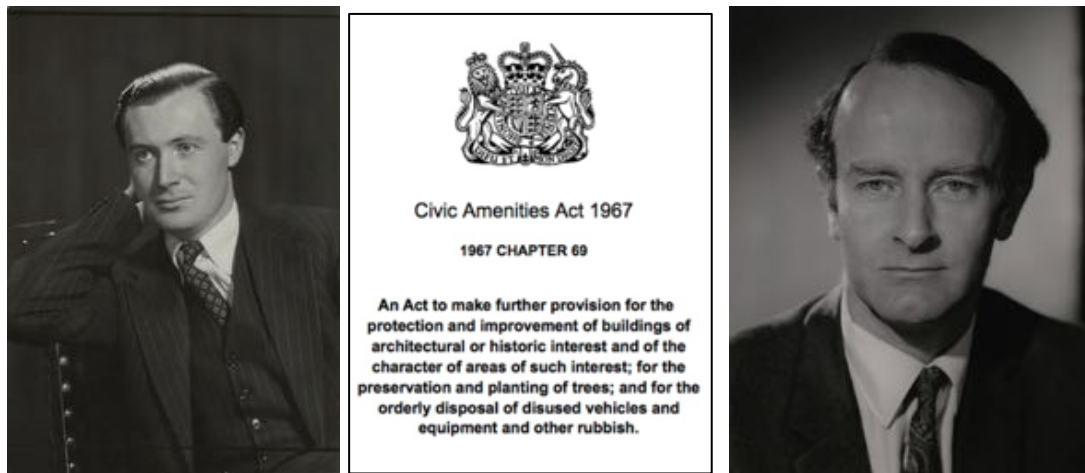


Fig. 1.21 Duncan Sandys, later Lord Duncan-Sandys (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

Fig. 1.22 The Civic Amenities Act (1967)

Fig. 1.23 Wayland Young, later Lord Kennet (Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London)

The growth of the amenity society movement had also gained pace following the establishment of the Civic Trust (from 2009 Civic Voice) in 1957 (by Duncan Sandys MP) and the Victorian Society in 1958 (founded by Lady Rosse, John Betjeman, Nikolaus Pevsner and others). In 1960 when the Civic Trust published their report, *Civic Trust: the first three years*, 298 local amenity societies were listed (Barker, 1976). This growing public interest in protecting local neighbourhoods and historic buildings was the subject of the Planning Advisory Group's Report of 1965, which aimed, "... for better and more effective planning at the local level and a greater degree of public participation in the process" (*Future of development plans*, 1965, p45). By 1968 there were over 600 amenity societies (Barr, 1969) and when the Civic Trust gathered together for a conference in York in 1968 the *Architectural Review* noted that,

Local societies will have to act at two levels. They will have to act in concert at regional and sub-regional levels in response to change which the reorganisation of local government is likely to make. And they must be able to tackle what Sir Keith Joseph has called 'the filigree' work. (Architectural Review, 1968, p 160)

Sir Keith Joseph, then Minister for Housing and Local Government, publicly encouraged amenity societies to take on the responsibility of being involved with the planning process at national, regional and local levels. Groups were encouraged to work together for the purpose of better planning outcomes and the amount and complexity of this collaboration served to generate 'fine-grain' networks of planning activists.

The decade between 1968 and 1978 witnessed a succession of planning policies which recognised the value of, and afforded protection to the historic built environment led by Duncan Sandys MP and Lord Kennet. Their campaign had been long-championed by *Country Life*, and Lord Kennet was anxious that local amenity societies should organise more actively, and be less apologetic.

"Why," he asked, "should 'preservationist' be a dirty word? ... you must counter-attack. Make 'demolitionist' a dirty word (*Country Life*, 28 July 1966, p200).

This cross-party action for conservation resulted in the Civic Amenities Act (1967) which included measures to establish Conservation Areas, introduced the need for Listed Building Consent and provided grants for listed buildings and local preservation societies, alongside a suggestion that local authorities should set up Conservation Area Advisory Committees (CAAC) to implement this legislation. These policies gave a definite role and framework for local amenity societies who were now invited to identify, research and lobby for historic buildings and whole areas of towns and cities to be protected. Concerns of their representation began to be voiced and this inequity, has long been used to criticize their activities:

... conservation is an activity undertaken by, and for the benefit of, a tiny but influential elite within society. Conservation thus poses considerable problems in terms of equity and social justice (Larkham, 1996, p85).

Conservation area and listed building designation gave local amenity societies a powerful basis on which they could enforce policy requirements for the aesthetic control of repairs, refurbishment and the design of new development in their neighbourhood. Works to listed buildings tend to require expensive materials and detailing, necessitating an architect and thus exclude those on lower incomes, so controlling and reinforcing the social homogeneity of an area. Gentrification follows as long-standing residents who cannot afford to maintain their historic properties are eventually forced to sell up and move out. This process is uncontested as community resistance is weak because the gradual, piecemeal nature of gentrification does not create an obvious catalyst for those disadvantaged to campaign together (Rydin, 1993, p239-240; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2007).

The 1968 Town & Country Planning Act went further by establishing two levels of planning: strategic structure plans and local plans with devolved decision-making to local authorities, many of which had recently been created through the restructuring of local government in 1965. This shift in decision-making from central government, and in London from the London County Council (LCC), later the Greater London Council (GLC), to local authorities increased the potential for local amenity groups to have their voices heard. They were now working within a political system where their members could stand for local election and put themselves forward to sit on local authority planning and CAAC committees. They could also benefit from closer social networks, with neighbours, local businesses and local ward councillors having personal connections with those in positions of power within their local authority, their MPs and through them Parliament. The Skeffington Report, which followed in 1969, considered the practical ways in which public participation could be achieved. It started with a definition of 'participation' as,

... the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals ... Participation involves doing as well as talking and there will be full participation only when the public are able to take an active part throughout the plan-making process (Great Britain. Committee on Public Participation in Planning, 1969, p1).



Fig. 1.24 *People and planning*, the 'Skeffington Report' (1969, HMSO)

However, rather than make radical changes, its' guidelines had to work within the existing planning decision-making system. Limitations included the need for the local authority to prepare plans, that these be done professionally, to technically complex specifications, be feasible and realistic etc. Therefore, in practice public participation was restricted to invited consultation and it was generally concluded that despite the Skeffington Report the, "ultimate power of decision resides with the authority" (Taylor, 1998, p8). What it did change was the assumption that town planning could solve problems based purely on scientific, technical or physical truths; rather,

it was acknowledged that [town planning] rests on value judgments about desirable futures, and that these value judgments, because they reflected or affected the interest of different social groups in different ways, were rightly matters of political debate (Taylor, 1998, p90).

1.4 Local Amenity Societies Post Skeffington (1968 - 1997)

Despite the failure of the Skeffington Report to transfer power to and activate the participation of the general public, the amenity society movement continued to thrive such that 1,250 amenity societies had registered with the Civic Trust by 1976 (Barker, 1976). The true number of local amenity societies was, and is, impossible to ascertain as many operate independent of the Civic Trust. However, as a guide their data revealed that "... in the late 1970s, the

number of local societies affiliated to the Civic Trust reached a peak of approximately 1,300” (Hewitt, 2014, p32) and it was reported,

... there is scarcely a locality in the country which does not have its society beavering away, trying to understand the local problems, formulating local environmental objectives, and questioning the actions of the local authority at every turn (Buchanan, 1972, p34).

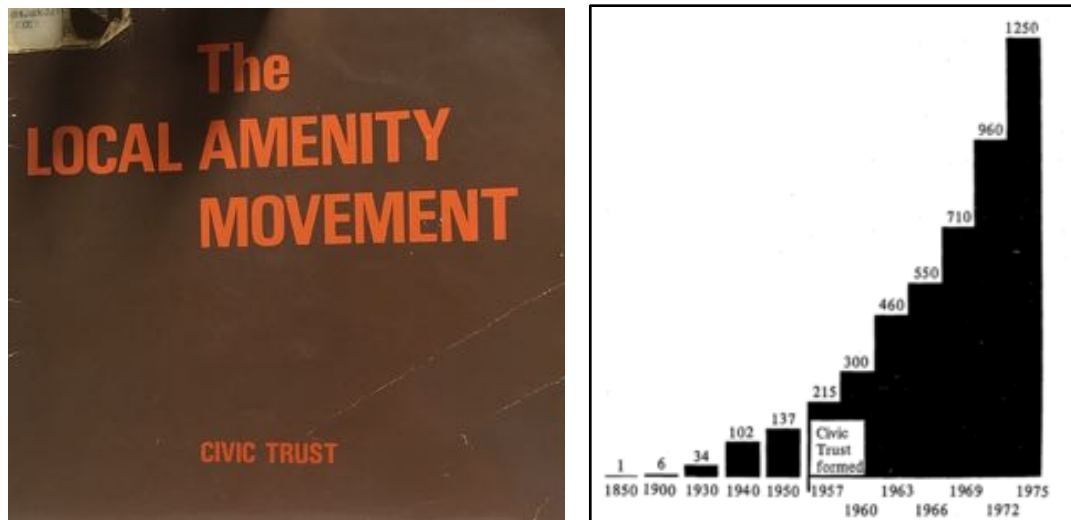


Fig. 1.25 *The local amenity movement* (Barker, Civic Trust, 1976)

Fig. 1.26 The growth of local amenity societies lecture slide (Civic Trust, 1975)

The Civic Trust carried out extensive research on the growing phenomenon of voluntary involvement in planning and conservation, sending a questionnaire to 1,135 amenity societies in 1974. Its findings were published in a book *The local amenity movement* (1976), which gave a detailed account of societies' membership profile, opinions and objectives. The most common two reasons given for starting their society were opposition to a major local development or the threat of a proposed traffic or road development. The third reason given was, "To see a counter-balance to the powers of the local planners and councillors" (Barker, 1976, p26), illustrating their position of conflict and a desire to challenge their elected representatives on planning and conservation matters.

Society members displayed attachment to their locality and civic pride, evidenced by their commitment to volunteering, and when asked what the objectives of their society were over 50% stated their purpose was,

To seek improvement in the quality of planning, architecture and design in the local area; the conservation of buildings and features of historic or architectural interest; and the general improvement of amenities (Barker, 1976, p23).

This professed altruistic stance continued to be challenged; that alongside an increased interest in history, conservation, architecture and environmental matters, the growth of the amenity society movement also reflected a rise in property ownership and therefore self-interest (Gregory, 1971; Larkham, 1996). The Civic Trust survey addressed this with a specific question that asked,

Some people say that a society such as yours really represents only a minority. What do you think of that comment? People also sometimes say that this minority uses arguments of 'amenity' to resist change and growth in the local area in a rather selfish manner. How do you respond to this criticism? (Barker, 1976, p30).

The answers were mixed but 43% of respondents whilst agreeing that they were a minority group, believed that they did not act selfishly but thought that 'preservation' and 'conservation' were for the wider public benefit. Despite their protestations, the view that amenity societies were self-interested, 'elite' voluntary community organisations remained widely held and supported by research over the latter part of the twentieth century (Johnson, 1978; Barker and Farmer, 1974; Larkham, 1996).

Studies of local amenity societies, admitted as representatives of the general public within the British planning system, show a vociferous, well-educated minority: another conservation elite. Whose heritage is being conserved, and for whom?

... These societies claim to represent public opinion, but it is clear that they are directly representative, in terms of number of members, of only a small proportion of the population. This is particularly true of local voluntary amenity groups (Larkham, 1996, p63 and p66).

The Civic Trust Survey of 1974 had confirmed that most amenity societies' members were professional or 'white collar'. Nationally, "43% of societies reported having members in professional 'relevant' professions such as

architecture, planning, law and design” (Barker, 1976, p26) and it was noted that in Greater London 70% of societies had such expertise. Most societies responded, “Very few of our members are council housing tenants” and “very few of our members are either students, nurses etc. or young unmarried” (Barker, 1976, p25). This illustrated that as well as technical knowledge those undertaking voluntary work had to devote large amounts of time, hence the most active members were those who didn’t need to work full time. The amenity society became seen to function as a social club, where members shared a passionate interest in planning, and participation was an enjoyable pastime undertaken with neighbours and friends, as conveyed by the leading traffic planner of the post-war years, who suffered the ire of such campaigners, Colin Buchanan:

... the public is asking questions ... Go to any cocktail party nowadays and half the conversation is about traffic ... and why this place or that is being ruined by new development (Buchanan, 1972, p33-34).

Throughout widespread urban re-development in the 1960s and 1970s amenity societies also had to contend with the rapid expansion of car ownership aligned with a powerful political road lobby led by the Conservative Government. In major cities and towns across Britain planned ring-roads indiscriminately cut through towns and neighbourhoods. The Town & Country Planning Act: Historic Towns and Roads (1971) included guidance that new road development should respect historic towns and was further amended in 1972 to extend demolition control to cover entire Conservation Areas. This was legislation that gave amenity societies additional strength for their arguments. The political mood for conservation continued with the Town and Country Amenities Act of 1974, reinforcing policy on the criteria for listed buildings and pressurising local authorities to designate more Conservation Areas. This Act stressed the duty of local authorities to ensure that adequate publicity notified the public on applications affecting listed buildings and their setting and criticised authorities for failing to set up the CAAC as stipulated in the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. This gave amenity societies an opportunity to win favour by assisting local authorities in their duties of consultation, offer themselves up to sit on design committees, and mutually supportive relationships began to

develop between amenity societies and especially conservation officers, effectively public servants dedicated to uphold the traditional views of an amenity society.

1975 was designated the *European Architectural Heritage Year* and its chairman was Duncan Sandys (founder of the Civic Trust). Following this in 1976 the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) was established as a UK charity, receiving government grants of £1m which were administered through the Civic Trust towards conservation projects (Larkham, 1996, p48). This was tangible evidence of the institutional power now conferred on an organisation representing local amenity societies. Since 1976, the AHF current website expounds that they have, "... awarded loans with a total value of £125m to over 890 projects across the UK and has disbursed more than 750 individual early project grants totalling over £10M" (AHF, 2021). SAVE (Save Britain's Heritage) was also founded in 1975, by journalists and architectural historians with a populist strategy to unlock mass support for conservation, claiming to speak for the general public. The creation of the Spitalfields Trust and its high-profile battle to save Georgian houses in the City of London in the mid-1970s set out to involve a wide cross section of society. However, in practice they sought out like-minded people to join their campaign, who were vetted for suitability to safeguard the restoration of the threatened houses. In her doctoral thesis *The politics of the past: redevelopment in London*, Jane M. Jacobs expands on SAVE's elite networking and the continuation of conservation being within the realm of the privileged, noting that

[The] active participants in SAVE fit all too readily into the image of the conservationists as middle and upper class professionals and they are often also closely involved in other, more conservative conservation societies (Jacobs, 1990, p79).

Despite growing support and recognition of the value of conservation, the reality was starkly evidenced in *The rape of Britain*, a book which illustrated the devastation taking place across Britain. Its authors urged local amenity societies to support the national amenity societies because they understood that,

The people on the ground know their buildings, know or can find out when threats arise, and are in the best position to influence local authorities to act (Amery and Cruickshank, 1975, p191).

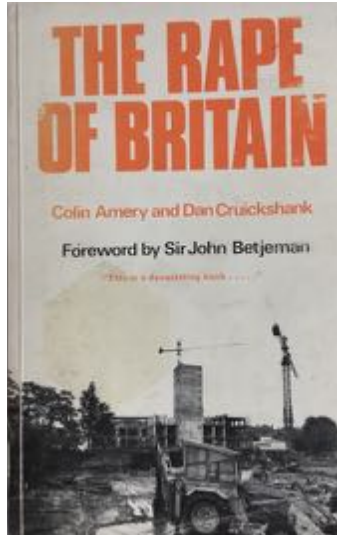


Fig. 1.27 *The rape of Britain* (1975)
Fig. 1.28 Colin Amery (by author)

Conservation became mainstream and local amenity societies further strengthened their position following endorsement of their activities by HRH Prince Charles, who became Patron of the Civic Trust and was supported by architect Rod Hackney, who would become a future President of the Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA). Together they promoted the benefits of grass-roots activism, 'people-power' and 'community architecture' and stood in opposition to planning and architecture along modernist principles. This contradicted much of the 1980s Conservative market-led development, funded by private-public partnerships, the establishment of Enterprise Zones and regeneration projects with relaxed planning rules. Public participants in these planning developments had to compete with large financial interests and work within a conflicting political ideology of citizen autonomy and rampant commercialisation.

Governments used the populist language of 'rolling back the frontiers of the State' and of 'setting people free', while at the same time pursuing politics of ruthless and pervasive central control ... Voluntary

organisations were manipulated into becoming the vehicles of government policy (Ward, 1991, p89).

Additionally, amenity societies tended to be excluded from consultations on large-scale urban initiatives for regeneration. Housing Action Trusts, Community Development Trusts, Estate Management Boards, City Challenge and other partnerships were orchestrated top-down, and although, "... linking with existing umbrella community organisations," (Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1996, p12) was seen to be a good way to extend participation, amenity societies were by-passed and are not mentioned in reports, guidance and documentation of the time. Perhaps because those organizing the 'public participation' understood that in co-opting established conservation groups, "...the imposition of the culture and objectives of the dominant partners remains a possibility," (Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1996, p7) and hence they would not have been able to control their left-of-centre 'collaborative planning' agendas. Amenity society activists were criticized on all sides: by the 'left' for reinforcing social division and by the 'right' for interfering with market forces and employment issues (Cook and Inman, 2012).

The Conservative Government's National Heritage Act (1983) established the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, a body that would be consulted on listed building matters and also could make grants for preservation or fund the acquisition of historic buildings by local authorities or the National Trust. Its first Chairman Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, thought the name clumsy and renamed it 'English Heritage'. With a large country estate to manage, he was personally well aware of the economic value of 'heritage' as a commodity which he had previously explored in his book *The gilt and the gingerbread* (1968). Amenity societies had become useful allies for landowners, local authorities and parish councils who could benefit by capitalising on their historic townscape amenity to attract grants and become tourist destinations. Since the end of World War II, the value of conservation, the protection of amenity and the work of amenity societies had been gradually integrated into the planning process. They were seen as non-statutory consultees, their objectives supported by policy and their connections and

network power were increasing, but consequently so was their physical voluntary workload.

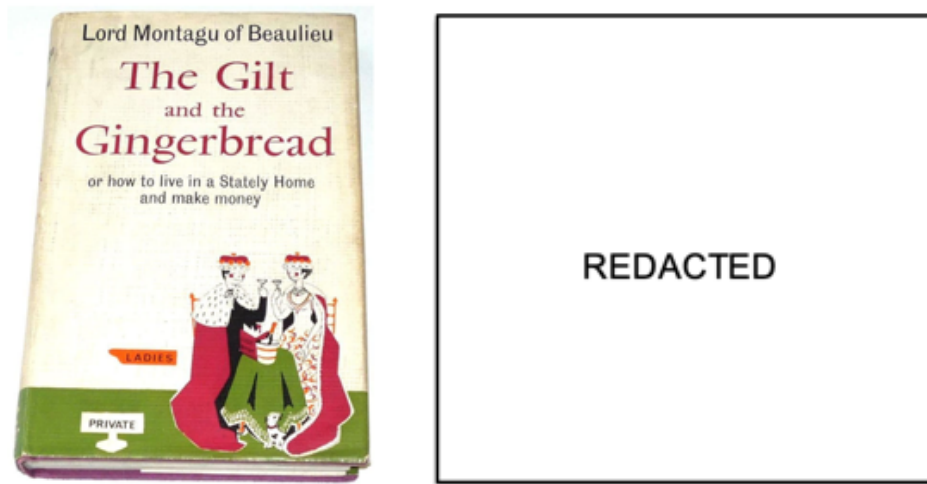


Fig. 1.29 *The gilt and the gingerbread* (Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, 1968)

Fig. 1.30 Lord Montagu of Beaulieu with Prince Charles (Bournemouth Echo)

Throughout the 1980s there was a decline in the number of amenity societies and in London the population was at its lowest ebb (at 6.8 million residents) as many of those who could afford it had moved out to the suburbs. The pioneers of the amenity society movement were forty years older, younger people and families could not afford to buy properties in the city centres or the gentrified conservation areas, with those who did needing to work full time to deal with rising costs and the economic volatility of the 1980s. Political and social unrest and alongside spending cuts and the retreat of the public sector led to an increase of campaigning voluntary groups and charities. The decline of amenity society activists has also been suggested as partly due to an increasing awareness and concern for environmental matters such that, "... civic associations now [took] their place amongst a much more crowded field of organized activity concerned with place" (Hewitt, 2014, p29).

1.5 Participation from New Labour to Localism (1997 – 2012)

Since the Labour Government came to power in 1997 much research has been undertaken on understanding and promoting participation in planning, with initiatives and regeneration programmes concentrating on trying to include

'hard to reach' actors, those who do not voluntarily engage in public consultations (Bailey, 2010; Brodie et al., 2011; Durose et al., 2011; Gallent and Robinson, 2012; Hamalainen and Jones, 2007; Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1996). The focus on increasing public participation has concentrated on disadvantaged communities rather than socially advantaged groups typified by amenity societies, who voluntarily participate, irrespective of political encouragement (Matthews and Hastings, 2012).

John Prescott's policy document *Modern local government: in touch with the people*, offered guidance on enhancing public participation to create 'listening' local councils, working in 'partnership' with their communities. The document stressed the aim that,

The Government wishes to see consultation and participation embedded into the culture of all councils (Great Britain, DETR 1998c, p30).

Local partnerships were encouraged between council and community groups, businesses, voluntary groups, private and public bodies, with an aim for 'joined-up' planning and cohesion between all stakeholders. This ideal collaborative approach is founded on the principle that in the democratic principle that, citizenship gives people equal rights but also equal responsibilities; ambitions stated in Labour MP David Blunkett's lecture, *Civil Renewal: A new Agenda* which concluded

We must aim to build strong, empowered and active communities, in which people increasingly do things for themselves and the state acts to facilitate, support and enable citizens to lead self-determined, fulfilled lives (Blunkett, 2003, p43).

Efforts to increase participation in planning have had to cope with an increasingly complex social and economic context where rising housing demand and property values continually polarise wealth and power. Concurrently there has been a move towards individualism and disengagement in volunteering and participation which is documented in Robert Putnam's survey of the disintegration of social and civic life, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000). Public disconnection with local politics had weakened the effectiveness of participation in planning, and governments tried to find

new forms of inclusion and more responsive governance. They hoped to encourage, “Citizens as ‘makers and shapers’ rather than ‘users and choosers’” (Hickey and Mohan, 2004, p29). A Joseph Rowntree Foundation Study (by Clarke and Stewart, 1998) concurred there was a,

... A need to build a new relationship between local government and local people. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with alienation and apathy. ... This is a symptom of lack or deeper malaise, the weakness or lack of public commitment to local democracy (Gaventa, 2004, p26).



Fig. 1.31 Bowling Alone, (Putnam, 2000)

Fig. 1.32 Localism Act 2011

Fig. 1.33 Beyond Consultation, Greater London Assembly (2012)

The Coalition Conservative Government of 2010 continued this ideology for transfer of power, claiming, “... we will end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals” (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2010b, p11). Introduced in April 2012, the Localism Act began with a quotation, “The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today” (DCLG, 2011). It aimed to empower communities to plan their own neighbourhoods by creating ‘Neighbourhood Forums’ and eventually ‘Neighbourhood Plans’, and effectively divided cities into defined local areas. Guidance for ‘communities’ (residents and businesses as stakeholders) to define their actual ‘Neighbourhood Area’ specifically asks them to identify themselves along physical (geographical and architectural)

and social (political) boundaries, that is, exactly like traditional local amenity societies. Neighbourhood planning initiatives, encouraging and motivating more people to become involved in their locality and to create a more representative voice harks back to the start of the twentieth century when radical planners and reformist politicians, such as Geddes and Abercrombie, called for direct community action, recognising that the shape of the built environment influenced public health, social wellbeing and opportunity for the disenfranchised in society.

However, the term 'neighbourhood' is hard to define and 'community' implies social closeness and shared values (Bailey and Pill, 2011; Durose, 2012). Local amenity societies fit this definition because they attract like-minded members and thrive with consensus on political, cultural and aesthetic principles. Whilst a strong, homogenous community or organisation is seen as ideal for cohesiveness, it can have a negative effect of isolating those who are different from the majority stakeholders or residents new to a locality. Further, economic and social changes frequently demand large infrastructure and housing projects, with participation in planning increasingly taking the negative stance of anti-development, described as NIMBYism. In the countryside this results in villages that refuse to grow and an increasing number of physically gated or separate neighbourhoods in cities, illustrating Castells' prophetic statement, "When people find themselves unable to control the world, they simply shrink the world to the size of their community" (Castells, 1983, p331).

Devolution and commitment to local decision-making was made evident in the change of name from the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister to the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2006 who pronounced:

A vibrant participatory democracy should strengthen our representative democracy. The third sector – through charities, volunteer organisations and social enterprises – has much to offer from its traditions of purposeful altruism and selfless volunteering (DCLG, 2008a, p1).

The idea of a 'Big Society' and 'Neighbourhood Planning' created renewed interest in the work the 'voluntary sector', such as amenity societies, with cross-party political ambitions to foster and link their work for social and

political reform because they realised that using volunteers brings, 'radical efficiencies' (Gillinson, Horne and Baeck, 2010; Bailey and Pill, 2011). Government directives described the social benefits and activities of participation using rhetoric and persuasive language, such as team-playing, capacity building, improving social and practical skills, and increasing social capital. This suggested a new role for amenity societies, with governments trying to combine or replace state activities with community action, effectively, "wrap[ing] traditional amateurism in the new cloak of professionalism", (Cook and Inman, 2012, p171). This would change the status of amenity societies and questions of accountability, self-governance and equity would need to be addressed because they might be able to attract significant public funding. At present, without formal, legal governance structures, voluntary community groups like local amenity societies are simply trusted to be accountable, honest and inclusive. Attempts to control these 'ad hoc' organisations would inevitably increase their internal bureaucracy and administrative workload, negating one of the inherent advantages that actually allows them to get things done quickly: the "lack of officialdom that is enabling on the ground" (Cook and Inman, 2012, p175).

In the future Neighbourhood Forums and Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) will establish planning briefs for specific local sites themselves, undertaking this complex, time-consuming and lengthy formative stage of the planning process which will require internal expertise. Once approved, development that complies with the agreed plans will not need to be determined through traditional planning methods and therefore the public will not be consulted prior to implementation. Alongside Neighbourhood Planning and to maximise efficiencies, on-going administrative and policy changes in planning departments aim to streamline the planning process, effectively offering people more consultation but on less, with up to 90% of planning decisions delegated to officers (Bedford, T., Clark, J.V. and Harrison, C.M., 2002). The government and local authorities are therefore setting the agenda; deciding upon which applications and at which stage of the planning process the public will be invited to comment. As a consequence of this changing planning policy, political context and ambitions, the role of the amenity society

must inevitably change. A local amenity society may decide to be one of a number of the 'twenty-one stakeholders' in a Neighbourhood Forum, perhaps representing 'conservation issues', they may wind-up and their members be displaced into the Neighbourhood Forum or be suspicious of the Government's motivations, regret their loss of autonomy and decide to continue as independent pressure groups.

Many activists who formed local amenity societies after World War II, through the 1960s and 1970s, and who have sustained their involvement for decades are coming to the ends of their lives. They have not been replaced by the intervening generations and amenity societies must face this challenge for their survival as they are totally dependent on volunteers. In 2021 Civic Voice had just over 332 registered members (Civic Voice, 2021) and in London 119 amenity societies were members of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies (London Forum, 2021). The London Forum coordinates and represents the work of individual societies in London and is headed by experienced town planners with direct links to the Greater London Assembly (GLA), City Hall and the Government, advising on city-wide consultations such as the London Plan, transport, housing and environmental policies; it has significant and highly respected expertise. Its regular surveys have raised concerns that numbers of active volunteers are falling within its organisation and in amenity societies across London. The 2012 London Forum Survey recorded that of the societies who responded,

39% have not filled all their committee places, nearly a quarter have at least one officer vacancy, and 45% said their activities were limited by shortages of skills/people (London Forum data, meeting handout September 2012).

This decline in membership is due to complex social, cultural and economic reasons, with experienced commentators noting that "... the difficulty of attracting new publics must not be underestimated" (Bailey and Peel, 2002, p174). However, the problem must be addressed and resolved because the initiatives and legislation introduced by successive governments over the past fifty years to promote public participation are meaningless if nobody takes part.

The next chapter will investigate the theories underpinning this research relating to:

- Why people participate and the benefits of participation for social capital and democracy
- The theoretical models created to provide frameworks and opportunities for public participation in the planning process and how the amenity society fits into these, and
- The types of power that frame the amenity societies' activities and influence.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PARTICIPATION AND POWER

As outlined in the preceding chapter, the public have been increasingly encouraged and afforded opportunities for active participation in planning. Local amenity societies capitalized on changing policy over the twentieth century to further their objectives, such that they began to work within the established planning framework, whilst also remaining independent and unconstrained by many of its regulations.

In this chapter analysis of the theoretical models devised to increase equity and representation from the perspective of an elite group, such as an amenity society, serves to identify how such systems could be exploited to acquire power and further their interests. Concepts related to evidencing network power, and the exercise of overt and covert power will provide the theoretical framework for investigating the amenity societies strategies, tactics and activities.

2.1 The Power to Act

“Power: The ability or capacity to do something or act. The ability to influence the behaviour of others or the course of events” (Oxford English Dictionary)

There is consensus that social cooperative behaviour, inherent in public participation, brings benefits to society and is intrinsic to the aims and ideology of representative democracy. Participation is presented as empowering communities to have control over their lives, as concluded by the Commonwealth Foundation in 1999:

‘Participatory democracy and responsive government’ ... the two are mutually reinforcing and supportive – ‘strong aware, responsible, active and engaged citizens along with strong, caring, inclusive, listening, open and responsive democratic governments’ ... (Gaventa, 2004, p27-28).

Having legislated public participation into the planning system as an indicator of democracy, governments and local authorities now need evidence of it to validate their decisions. The problem is that 'action' is a prerequisite for participation and can only take place if people are motivated to take part. Vociferous calls encouraging wider public participation continue to be seen as a way of equalising or redressing an existing power imbalance, but this can only be achieved when genuine collaboration takes place. Without actual transfer of power public participation is futile and failing to confer decision-making power creates disaffection and a reluctance to take part in future consultations (Arnstein, 1969; Fagance, 1977). Sue Goss has suggested this apathy is also caused by changes in government and governance, for example, where public agencies have supported and encouraged people to participate in a neighbourhood project that gets cancelled at short notice due to funding cuts. She notes that "... communities have long memories ... there will be a folk memory of previous attempts at community engagement" and that past failures will destroy morale and future engagement (Goss, 2001, p56).

Unfortunately for democracy, in most public participation exercises 'public' rarely means the general public but it is more likely to be the local amenity society, in planning circles often knowingly termed 'the usual suspects'. As previously defined, they are self-appointed and assume a position of representative authority, although openly existing to represent a narrow section of society, namely their subscribers. Furthermore, the majority of members do no more than pay their subscription and the organizational and campaigning work is undertaken by a handful of dedicated people fulfilling more than one role on various committees (Hewitt and Pendlebury, 2014). An individual is nominated as Chair and they take on the 'symbolic representation' of the group. Thus, within an amenity society with hundreds of members, the decision-making and power to act might be focused on one person. Whilst this has potential to be undemocratic, in practice it is useful for local authorities and the wider political establishment because it simplifies the consultation process and creates a conduit for an efficient and controllable two-way flow of information. Jane Jacobs also identified this benefit, noting that a neighbourhood group could best communicate directly with their local council

and national politicians through one well-connected individual (Jacobs, 1961, p135).

Despite advances in education and initiatives to break down inequity, the phenomenon of public non-participation appears to be increasing. This fundamental problem remains unresolved and academics have suggested that participation is in itself a pursuit which embodies 'middle-class values' and that it only increases with increasing social status; or as Alinsky put it, with the 'have a little, want more class' (Alinsky, 1972; Matthews and Hastings, 2012; Hewitt, 2011; Halpern, 2006). The result being that amongst the general population there is no real groundswell of aspiration for participating in planning matters and decision-making. The incentive to act and the personal value of participating to protect 'amenity' is highly subjective, value laden and dependent on context and an individual's priorities (Fagance, 1977; Larkham, 1996; Putnam, 2000). Amenity societies are seen to widen the inequities in society by their successful demands being met at a loss to poorer sections of the community who have different priorities (Arneil, 2006; Lowe, 1977).

'Bread before Beauty!' the Socialist call ... Many Conservationists can concern themselves with intangibles because they have already enough of everything else (Gregory, 1971, p303).

However, the criticism that amenity societies act only out of self-interest can be countered by their inherent positive attributes, such as being, "typically driven by commitment, belief and ideology" and, "motivated by altruism rather than economic gain" (Cook and Inman, 2012, p170). These qualities are forces for good in terms of creating safe, well-connected communities, almost village-like structures within cities. Barbara Arneil (2006) suggested that as 'social capitalist structures', amenity societies were based on conventional, conservative, white, Christian, middle-class attitudes; and it is true that religious edicts were embodied in the protection of amenity from the outset of the amenity society movement. Many of the objectives of amenity societies also dovetail with typical socialist values, even though their membership was, and continues to be, drawn from a social elite. The Marxist view of political activity as the duty of every citizen to participate with equal rights and to

challenge power structures sees participation as the way to effect change. It is interesting to consider that whilst left-wing commentators frequently criticise amenity societies for their inequity and self-interest, Marxist tactics are at work within traditionally Conservative amenity societies activities such as,

... the determination to elucidate the bureaucratic decision-making channels, the establishment of an organisational identity, the determination to overcome the vacillations of the bureaucracy and its political overlords, the adoption (or diligent development) of the skills necessary to prosecute an equally-balanced technical argument with the bureaucratic adversary, the use of media opportunities to expose, provoke and attract, and the employment of socio-economic sanctions to frustrate, harass and obstruct (Fagance, 1977, p33).

Amenity societies are trying to persuade capitalist, market-driven developers who hold all the economic power that amenity is worth protecting. A difficult task, when 'amenity' itself is hard to define and has no monetary value as an intangible financial asset.

The value of amenity was first evidenced by Jane Jacobs's, in her study of neighbourhoods in New York, as mutual 'trust' between strangers being the 'glue' that binds neighbourhoods together (Jacobs, 1961). More recently this trust has been widely acknowledged, investigated and redefined as 'social capital' where, "... social networks, norms and sanctions ... facilitate co-operative action among individuals and communities" (Halpern, 2005, p38-39). However, particularly in an urban setting, the informal rules of conduct and acceptable behaviour are in a continual changing, and whilst this has been the case throughout history today the speed, scale and diversity of change is much greater. The 'informal rules' that Jacobs saw connecting communities are continually affected by transient populations, often with different cultural values, experience and attitudes to participation in civic matters. Amenity societies' activities could unintentionally contribute to a growing separation and lack of community involvement in local politics and planning matters, for example, people deciding not to join a local amenity society because they feel they might not fit in. A further unspoken 'problem' with diverse demographics is that wide consultation and participation increases the possibility of

community conflict instead of consensus. This applies across the political spectrum, and could potentially restrict urban renewal and the size of affordable housing developments or thwart the conservation ambitions of an amenity society, with both positions slowing down the machinations of developers and local authorities.

Concerted efforts to find new forms of inclusion and methods to coerce people to join in have continually failed with proponents claiming that the existing structural systems in place discourage or make public participation difficult. To participate and have any influence also requires a deep understanding of the complexities of the planning process itself, knowledge of technical and legal constraints, the political workings of local government and the sequence of decision-making.

2.2 Power Hierarchy in the Planning Process

Research investigating the exercise of power in planning matters has sought to understand how decisions are made and which actors have the most influence in the planning process, to try to identify the 'locus' of power within the system (Dahl, 1961). Local authority town planning typically takes two forms, both of which a member of the public or a local amenity society can choose to become involved with:

- Policy and Plan formation - whereby the local authority's planning department formulates policy, which sets the framework for future urban changes and development. They must adhere to national planning policies and they establish the rules for urban design, conservation and development in a given area.
- Development control - where an individual or a developer, the 'applicant', submits their proposals for a specific site to the local authority. Planning officers consider this in respect of national and local planning policy and decide whether to recommend that the application be 'approved' or 'refused'. A small, uncontroversial project can be determined 'in-house' by the planning department but a large,

controversial or sensitive project is referred to a Town Planning Committee, composed of elected local councillors who make the final decision.

Thus, the town planning process is intrinsically linked to national and local party politics. It assumes a commitment to the democratic process and transparency of decision-making, which is validated by involving the general public. A local councillor must declare any interest in a project at the start of relevant discussions and all proceedings are recorded and made publicly accountable documents. These activities are all part of a statutory framework, an agreed decision-making continuum from start to finish, into which the public is invited to participate.

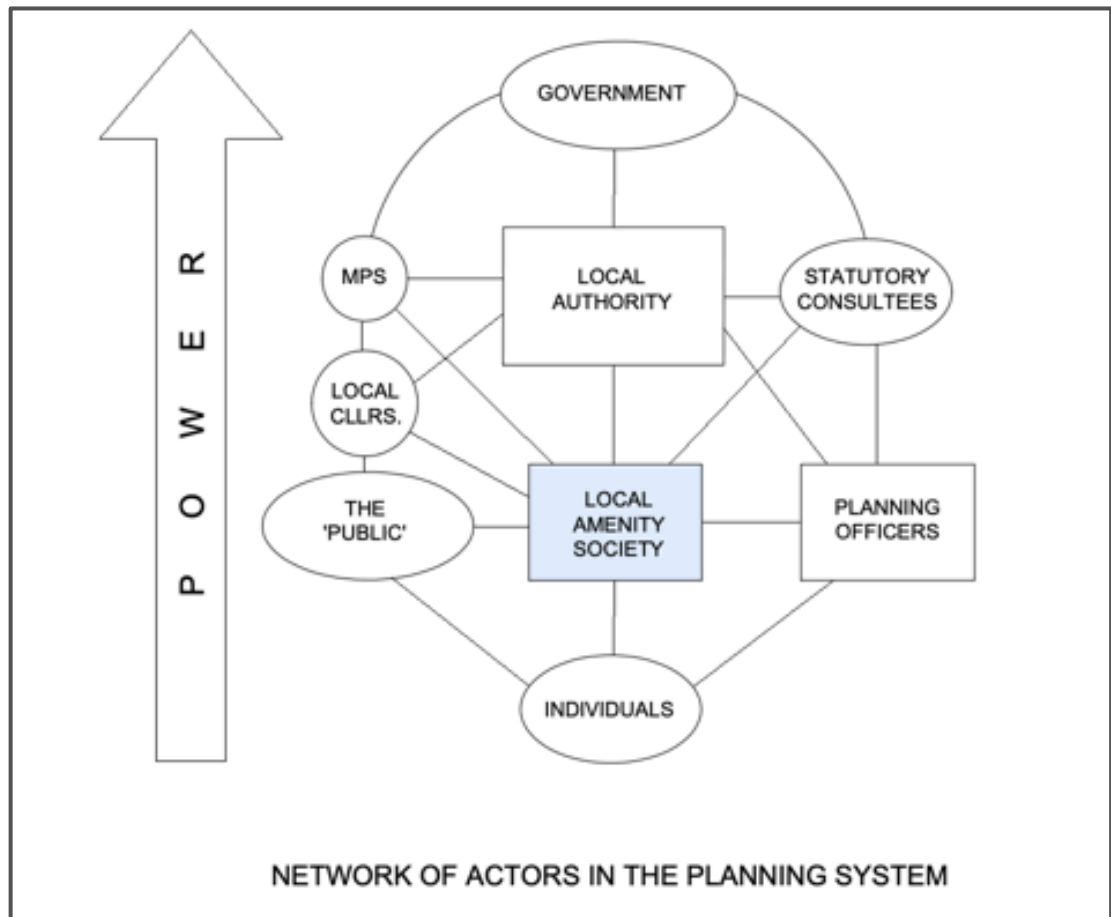


Fig. 2.1 Network of actors in the decision-making planning process

The diagram above (Fig. 2.1) illustrates the relationships between the actors involved in the planning system, the links between them and the prevailing

power hierarchy. With most power is the government who determine laws, policy and funding. Local authorities oversee implementation of policy and work with communities and political representatives, but as public servants must acquiesce to their masters. Likewise, elected local councillors are duty-bound to follow party political lines. Statutory consultees, such as national amenity societies, are government funded and so must adhere to a technically and legally agreed protocol and remit. Within the local authority there is a further internal bureaucratic hierarchy of power and decision-making where the power is controlled by committees. A local authority's power varies and fluctuates with external factors such as the prevailing political regime, economic climate at a given time. Structural or institutional reasons, for example in London the changing relationships between central and local government, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the other local authorities also affect their power as networks can be changed or broken at short notice at elections. What sets the local amenity society apart from all the other actors in the decision-making process is that in theory, as an independent organisation, it need not answer to anyone; neither the general public nor the more powerful organisations above. It is also important for an amenity society not to align itself with a political party but to present itself as 'apolitical' so it can gather cross-party political support for a cause or campaign. This stance also protects the amenity society's network from sudden rupture caused by political change.

The diagram below (Fig. 2.2) describes the typical network of local amenity societies in London, in which historical and ongoing allegiances, personal relationships and coalitions are important signifiers of power. Based in the capital, they may have an advantage over similar groups in provincial towns as geographically they are closer to the centre of political power in Westminster. It is also the case that being located in high value property areas confers planning decisions greater economic significance. Within the amenity society itself there is also an internal network of power with key positions, such as 'patron', 'president' and 'chair' and these posts create personal links up the establishment hierarchy. For example, if the patron is titled aristocracy or has a seat in the House of Lords, the society hopes that they might be able to

bypass political bureaucracy and have a direct line to the Government or the Crown. The influence conveyed to an amenity society by this type of link has diminished over time with changing class structures and peers themselves having less power and today the most useful patrons might be individuals linked to the national amenity societies, the media and press or celebrities.

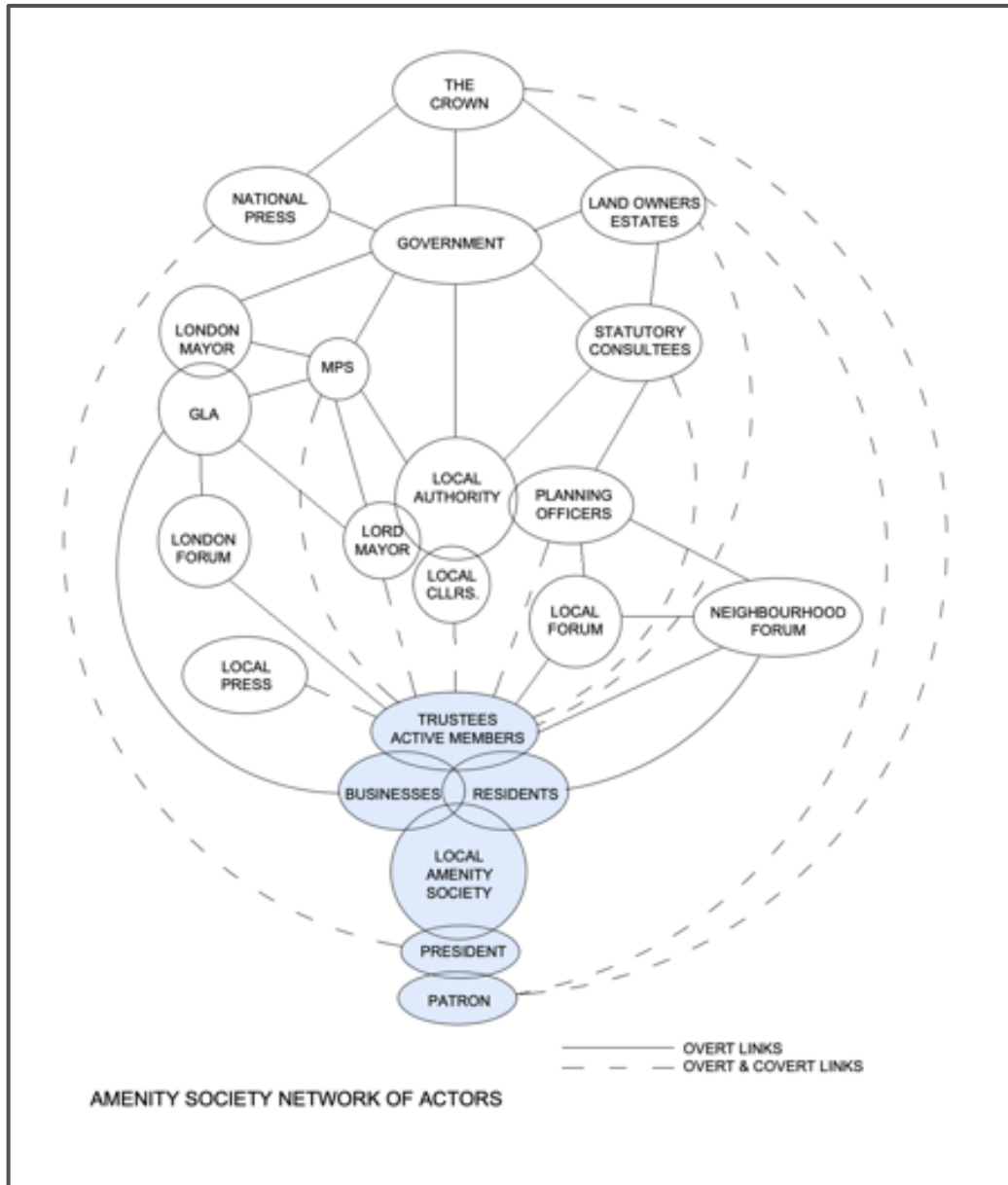


Fig. 2.2 Amenity society's typical network of actors in London

Within the network alliances between landowners, property developers and local authorities are inevitable as private finance contributes to the local economy and as a result this increases their combined power and influence on planning matters. This is evidenced today by, for example, the 'Great Estates'

extensive ownership and control on development in most of central London (City institutions, the Crown Estates, Portman Estate and Grosvenor Estate etc.). These personal and organizational relationships create opportunities for actors to bypass conventional routes within the planning system network and its structural hierarchy, increasing their connectivity to more powerful actors. Legislation has attempted to restrict or control these connections for reasons of transparency and to avoid conflicts of interest. For example, as outlined previously, local councillors were originally embedded within early amenity societies exerting significant influence on their local authority, but are today excluded from amenity society membership. However, interpersonal relationships can continue covertly, 'off the record' and are inevitable in neighbourhoods with stable residential communities and strong social connectivity such that,

... there is no telling how frequently it is the activities of local amenity societies, and their range of informal contacts, that help sway the decisions taken by local authorities (Gregory, 1971, p299).

As conservation has become increasingly enshrined in planning policy the amenity society's relationship with the local authority's planning and conservation officers has grown closer and they are usually fighting on the same side, supporting each other in protecting townscape. This too is strengthened in places where stability of local authority employment has persisted for many years and through the local amenity society personal friendships have been forged. The amenity society can use these contacts to influence decisions as Gregory concludes,

Left to fight on their own, it is probably true that very few amenity organisations carry sufficient fire-power to defeat powerful developers. But they certainly make for valuable auxiliaries. ... the pattern of interlocking affiliations that is characteristic of the amenity world makes it possible on occasions to mobilise formidable alliances (Gregory, 1971, p299).

When amenity societies became 'non-statutory consultees' in the planning process they were given an implicit 'contract' with the legislative and ruling bodies, which gave them quasi-juridical power or 'concrete power', defined as,

Power [is] taken to be a right, which one is able to possess like a commodity, and which one can in consequence transfer or alienate ... through a legal act ... such as takes place through cession or contract (Foucault, 1980, p88).

However, the extent of this consultative power is debatable, because the amenity society's most direct link is via local authority planning officers who do not actually possess much power themselves. Within internal local authority management, they are relatively low in the decision-making hierarchy and will exert little influence when faced with the economic and political ambitions of their superiors, developers and/or local politicians and central government. Planning departments, like amenity societies, cannot hope to compete with the 'raw power' of wealthy landowners, property developers and political actors and as a consequence may face ethical or moral dilemmas in determining planning decisions. Likewise, public servants, housing campaigners and planning officers may also be unable to bring their own personal political agendas (often left of centre) into the process, such as commitment to promoting collaborative planning, affordable housing, social justice and equity (Healey, 1993).

Even as councils and developers attempt to extend the role of public participation in the development process, the reality of structures of power limit how much impact on decision outcomes increased participation can achieve (Bedford, Clarke and Harrison, 2002, p 328).

It can be seen that the decision-making structure presents a complex system of information flows through dense bureaucratic and political webs. These networks make it difficult for members of the public to know how and when to participate, whereas an amenity society has a clear understanding of how to navigate the process effectively; it has the knowledge and power to act. Theoretical models attempting to explore how wide public participation could be better accommodated within the statutory planning process have been devised and explored by academics and planners over the twentieth century, with an intensification of interest evident after the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. In the following section, I will assess how the local amenity society fits into these models, considering each in relation to the current research question to

determine where there are opportunities for amenity societies to gain power and exert influence. I have amended the original models to illustrate the agency of an amenity societies to act as go-betweens and how power travels between contacts in the system and reinforces itself. This network power links local and central government and the organisations and institutions that frame the amenity society's activities, informing how 'the rules of the game' actually play out in the planning process.

2.3 Planning Models to Promote Public Participation

An early conceptual model by Patrick Geddes (1915) was based on a holistic approach which simplified planning into three stages: 'Survey - Analysis - Plan' (Fig. 2.3). The surveying stage included encouraging children taking part (in order to educate the next generation of planning activists), followed by discussion and debate. Alternative plans by the public were welcomed with the suggestion that the local authority should pay them for any of their ideas formally adopted (Geddes, 1915, p130). However, the use of untrained volunteers as surveyors came under criticism from professionals who argued that random survey and collection of information needed to be directed by experts, otherwise it would be a time-consuming and pointless exercise.

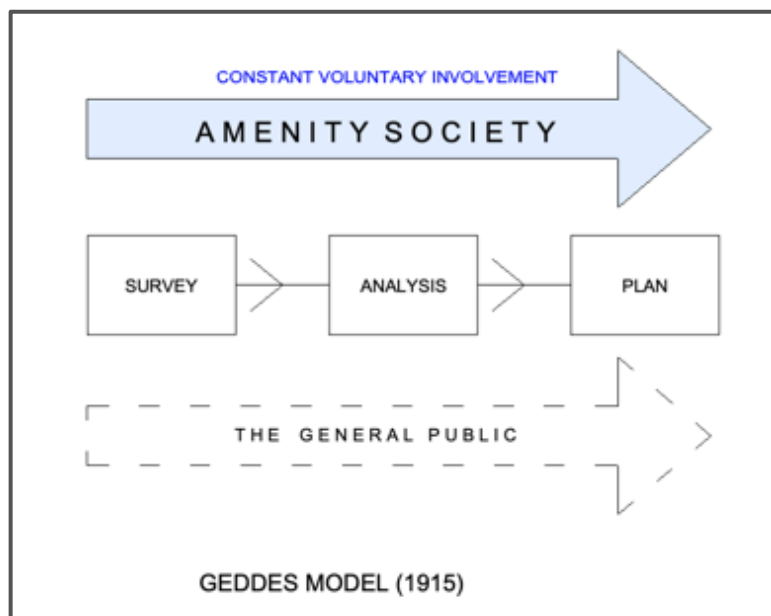


Fig. 2.3 Geddes model: Survey – Analysis - Plan (1915) with amenity society's potential role indicated in blue

Whilst leading town planners such as Abercrombie agreed with Geddes' participatory model in principle, throughout the first half of the twentieth century there was no mechanism for the public to participate and the entire decision-making process was undertaken without inviting public involvement. In practice individuals could only take part in the 'Geddesian Model' of decision-making if they were a landowner, a local councillor or a politician. The same would have applied indirectly to a local amenity society at the time due to the fact that their membership was typically composed of all the above.

After World War II and following the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act the idea of wider public involvement to foster social equality and unity gained momentum (Cowan, 2013). However, it was not until the 1970s, following the Skeffington Report, that academics began to devise models to adjust the planning framework and find practical ways of including people in the process. One of the first was Travis (1969), who saw planning as a problem-solving exercise in logic and developed a model which positioned the planner and public together in the nerve centre of decision-making - 'the brain' (Travis, 1969, cited in Fagance, 1977, p103). Activities including education, user research, public relations and participation were central to the planning process and informed all elements from concept, research, goals, and design to actual development. Whilst the model allows for feedback and intervention throughout the process, the actual planning and design was still undertaken by trained professionals. In Travis's model the power rested with whoever was in charge of 'the brain', as they facilitated the flow of information, determined what questions were asked and therefore what data went forward into the scope, design and development of any policy or plan. Thus, public participation was being controlled by the 'brain'.

For an individual member of the public this model could use their input to justify a decision if it was in line with professional opinion, but there was no way of proving if they could have any influence from a position of opposition. No identification of special interest groups was made in Travis's model but in practice, mid-twentieth century an amenity society had potential through its members to be embedded in 'the brain' by their elected office, social position

or personal connections. At local level this was far more likely to be the case because one of the key contributions an amenity society could input to the process was that of 'expert local knowledge'. Therefore, this model illustrates how a local amenity society could have had potential to participate covertly within the system (Fig. 2.4).

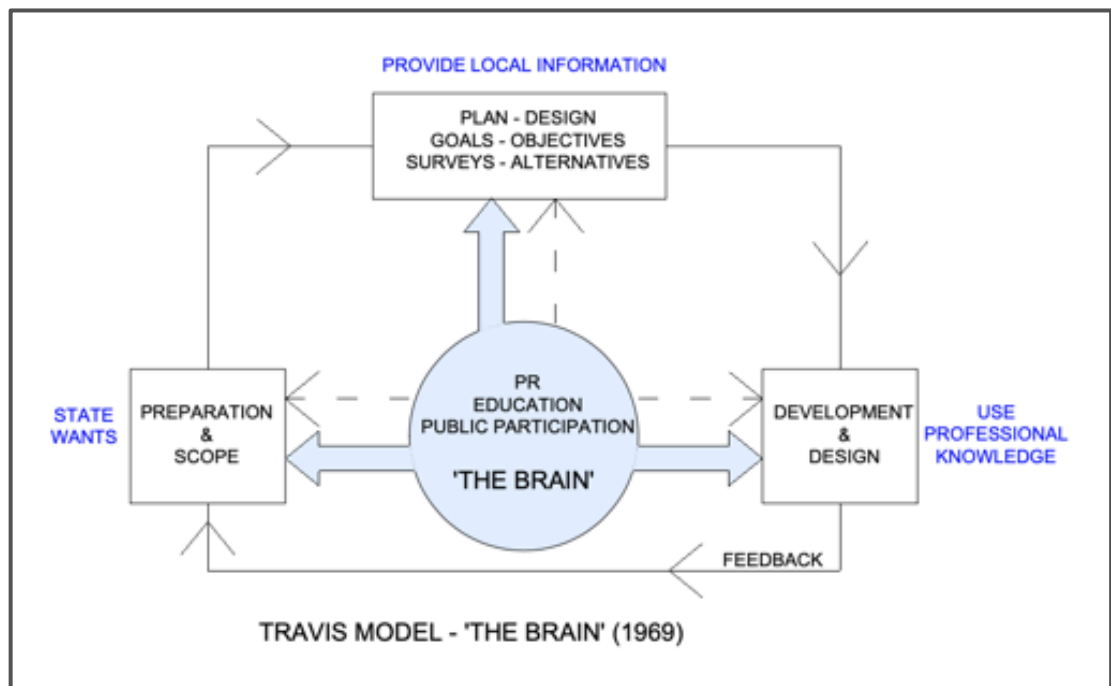


Fig. 2.4 The Travis model (1969) (cited in Fagance, 1977, p103) with amenity society's potential position and role indicated in blue

Contemporaneously, highly influential and still framing almost all research on public participation was Sherry Arnstein's 'A ladder of citizen participation' (1969). This placed actors in a decision-making process at varying levels on a diagrammatic ladder of influence, graded on a spectrum of power from citizen control at the top through consultation to manipulation at the bottom. Arnstein considered 'Rungs 1 to 4' as non-participation or tokenism, whereby the powerful claim "evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving 'those people'" (Arnstein, 1969). Participation was described as a power struggle between citizens and the ruling authorities with the goal being 'citizen control' and anything less deemed a failure. Arnstein's article provoked wide debate and is still relevant today because it recognised a basic truth that, "Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless" (Arnstein, 1969, p219).

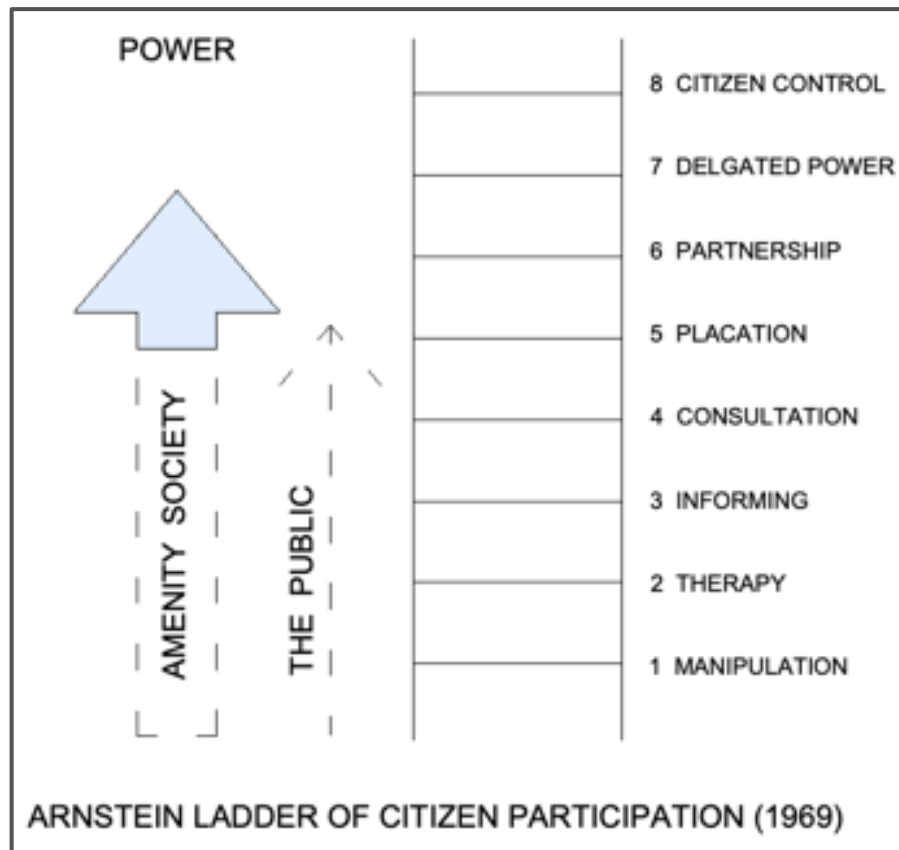


Fig. 2.5 Arnstein's 'A ladder of citizen participation' (1969) with amenity society's potential position and role indicated in blue

Mid-twentieth century local amenity societies operated openly alongside political elites and many influential individuals and organisations within their membership (Barker, 1976; Larkham, 1996). Journalist Henry Fairlie, captured the essence of how an amenity society worked the system in an article entitled, 'The idea of the Establishment' he explained that

Well connected, with intersecting social, political and financial circles, individuals could look after their own interests as well as those of their friends and colleagues, exercising power through 'subtle social relationships' (Fairlie, 1955; cited in Jones, 2014, p8).

This reflected the fact that amenity societies not only gained network power through official contacts with like-minded individuals and organisations but that they also nurtured private, covert networks. It was acknowledged that outside the established planning consultation process, "Informal contacts between societies, councillors and planners [was] high" (Larkham, 1996, p136; Barker, 1976). As such they would potentially have had the opportunity to be on 'Rung 6' of Arnstein's ladder, that is, operating in partnership with politicians at both

local and government level in making decisions. Arnstein describes the situation where a community group could best work effectively as,

when the citizens group has the financial resources to pay its leaders reasonable honoraria for their time-consuming efforts; and when the group has resources to hire (and fire) its own technicians, lawyers and community organizers. With these ingredients, citizens have some genuine bargaining influence over the outcome of plan (Arnstein, 1969, p221-222).

This accurately describes the attributes of an amenity society and if an amenity society included in its membership politicians or renowned experts it could rise even higher up the power scale to control decisions. For the early amenity societies there was no 'them' and 'us' as their power came from being within the establishment.

Arnstein's ladder acknowledged the differentiation between those who control the system and those who were 'invited' to take part, but only at certain stages and with controlled supply of information. The 'citizen control' imagined as the best possible outcome was not intended to be control by a single interest group such as an amenity society, but that of the wider population. Arnstein emphasised that if power is to be shared it "... [has] to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful" (Arnstein, 1969, p222). This utopian ideal would demand a population of activists, a groundswell of aligned opinion and consensus – a revolution!

The problems highlighted in Arnstein's ladder were addressed by the Planning Research Unit at Edinburgh University, where J. Kozlowski's model (1970, cited in Fagance, p107-108) enveloped the public within the whole planning process from start to end, to ensure meaningful public participation, anticipating and assessing outcomes of mass public involvement throughout the process. This required a significant commitment in terms of time and resources from the general public, which might only be realistic for a single-issue project that particularly affected them and with a finite end date. It also needed to be supported by tangible recording and measuring any success or

impact of public involvement to sustain people's long-term interest (Burke, 1968).

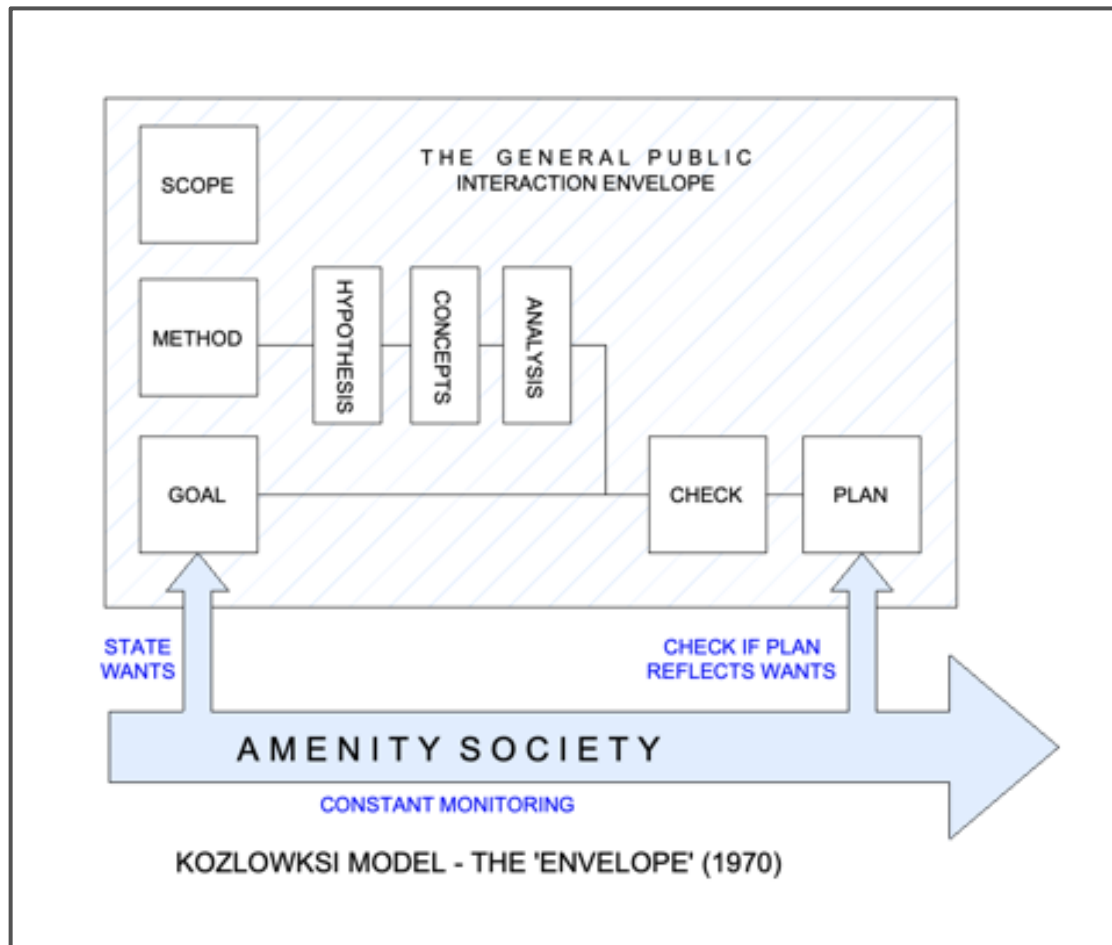


Fig. 2.6 The Kozlowski model (1970) (cited in Fagance, 1977, p108) with amenity society's potential position and role indicated in blue

Whilst this model might at first sight look attractive to an amenity society, continuous involvement might not be possible or desirable. Typically, it would be most interested in setting the goals; stating what it wanted and then leaving the detailed design and planning work to the professionals at the local authority. It would then return at a later date to participate by supporting or criticising the plan or development when it had a tangible form, depending on if it had or hadn't taken the society's views on board. In this way an amenity society would assume a managerial stance; it wants to be involved and have influence but it doesn't necessarily want to, or indeed have the resources, to do the work itself (Fig. 2.6). Kozlowski's model is similar to Arnstein's 'ladder' in assuming that more control is better but in reality, some groups or

communities might not be able to take complete control over decision-making without considerable support.

Critics of Arnstein (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, 1994; Wilcox, 1996; Lane and McDonald, 2005; Collins and Ison, 2006) have further argued that the division into distinct stages, and the 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up' dichotomy was too simplistic. They pointed out that within each division on the ladder there would be wide variation of amount and quality of information, and overlapping of the stages in the process. Additionally, activities and opportunities for influence would vary with context, personalities involved and specific project typologies, such that an actor's position on the ladder would not be constant, but change on a case-by-case basis. Taking these criticisms on board, an updated 'Ladder of Citizen Empowerment' (Burns, Hambleton, and Hoggett, 1994) presented an amended model which broke down the categories of involvement and attributed practical methods of participation with suggested qualities or values (Fig. 2.7). This approach saw citizens as 'consumers or customers' but still assumed they would be self-motivated to take on more personal responsibility as they moved up the ladder, also to make the right choices for themselves and importantly for others. However, this model is deceptive because it presents power as the ability to choose from prescribed alternatives: information presented, rational knowledge, 'storyboards' etc. rather than invite people to think radically for themselves. Participation and information are controlled in stages 5 to 10 by those in power. Cynically, participation at the lower levels is seen as marketing, or 'box ticking', to rationalise decisions already made by those who retain absolute authority. This model at least acknowledged non-participation as an issue, but did not quantify the desirable amount of 'citizen participation' nor allow for the measuring of its success. It was also idealistic in assuming that the inherent values and attributes of amenity society members (as special interest groups) would be adopted by diverse communities as a whole.

An established amenity society could interact with this model in the 'participation stage', in concert with those in institutional power or those proposing a development, by volunteering to collect and present evidence

based on their local knowledge. If they had mutual benefits then they could support and have meaningful collaboration throughout a project. They could also act as an adversary, for example, at the start of a project they could disrupt the flow of power at precisely the stage where a powerful actor, for example a property owner or developer, would least welcome their participation. They could also frustrate the process by undertaking their own research and exposing facts or data that challenged the official version of information.

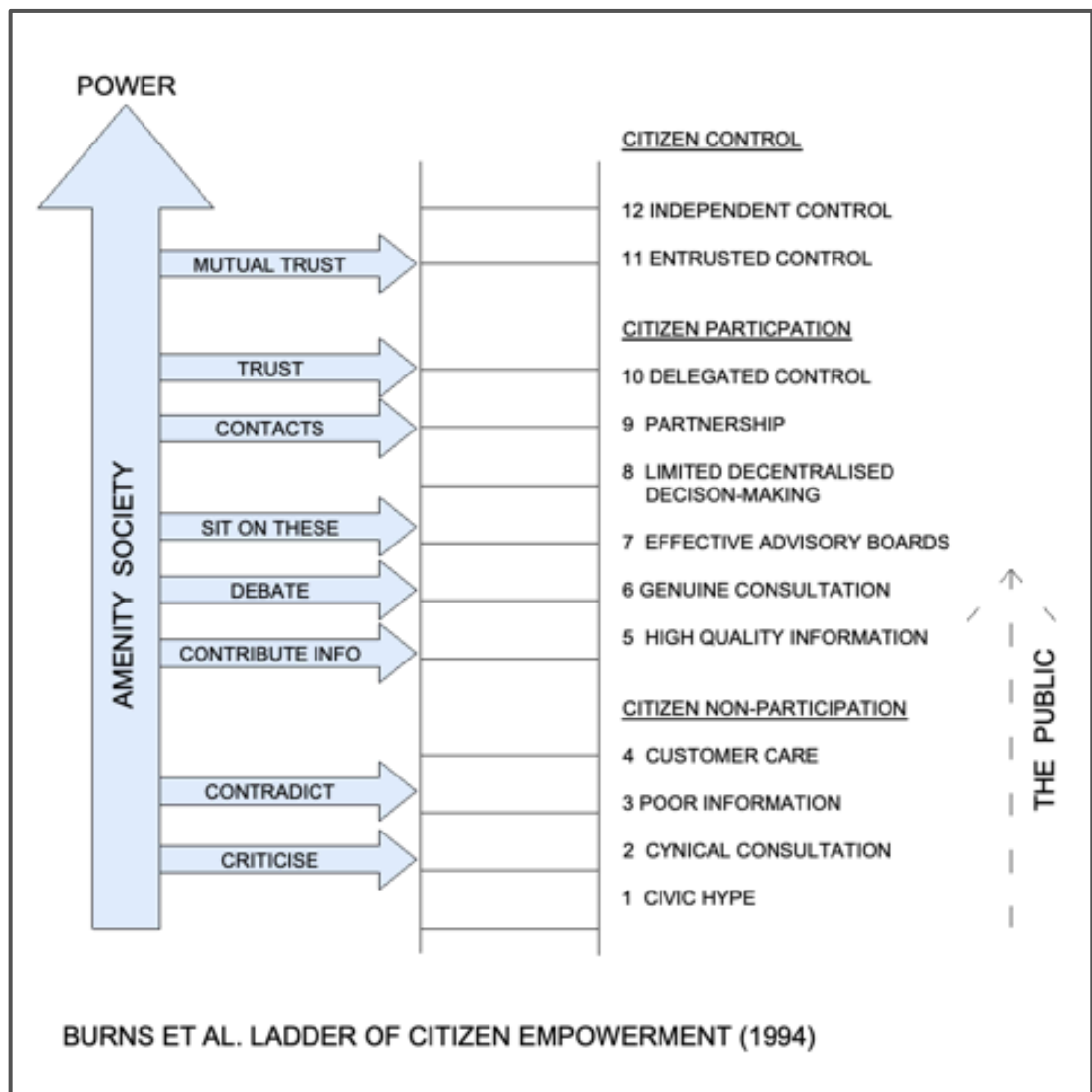


Fig. 2.7 Ladder of Citizen Empowerment (Burns, Hambleton & Hoggett, 1994) with amenity society's potential position and role indicated in blue

Simplifying the ladder diagram further and in a more socially inclusive manner, Wilcox (1996) identified five stages of successful community participation: information, consultation, deciding together, acting together, and supporting

individual community initiatives. Wilcox recognised that the act of collaboration could bring benefits to a community without necessarily transfer of power or economic gain, that is, by creating ‘social capital’ (Wilcox, 1994). This approach highlighted that whatever the project, location or community involved, the key to meaningful participation is transparency at all stages. Fair and open debate is a precondition of democracy, according with Jurgen Habermas’s theory that genuine communication can only take place if discourse is comprehensible, true, sincere and legitimate (Taylor, 2003, p124).

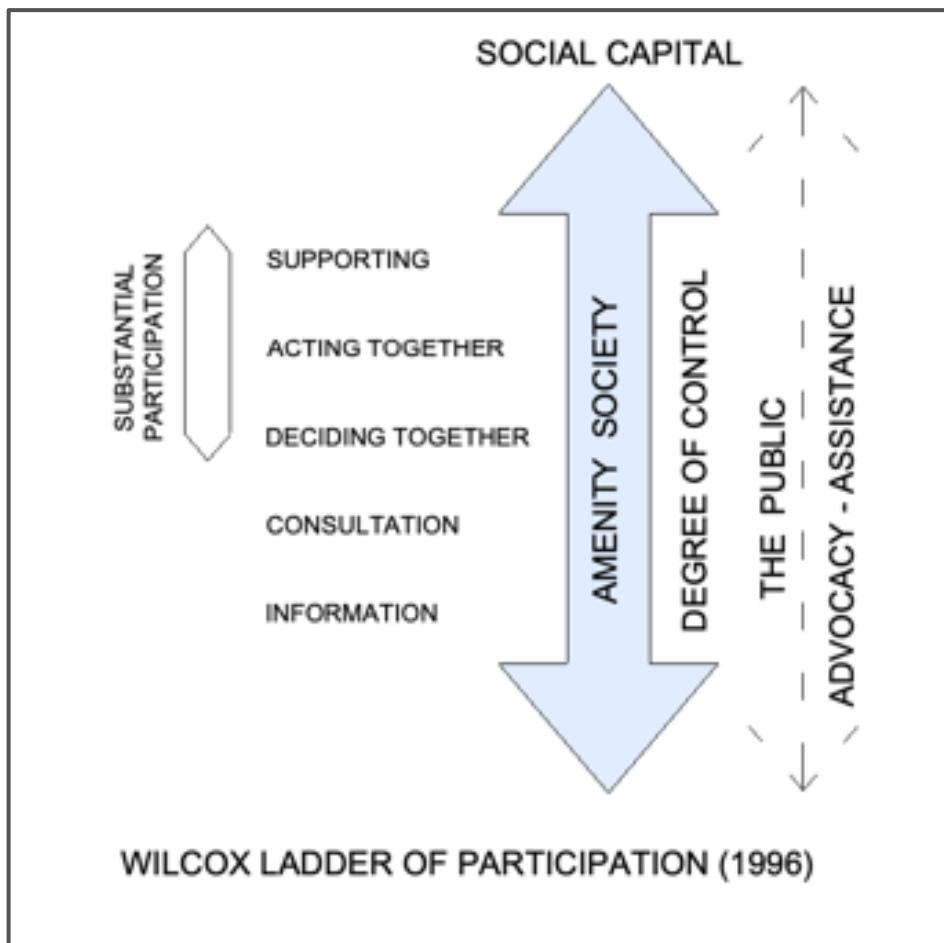


Fig. 2.8 Ladder of Participation (Wilcox, 1994) with amenity society’s potential position and role indicated in blue

Wilcox’s model of community collaboration was developed without reference to any role for established amenity societies but they could have enjoyed collaboration in principle alongside the general public. However, participation with transfer of power to a community without expertise, experience or networks demands support or ‘advocacy’, to provide the communication skills

required, by or funded by their local authority or other publicly funded organisation. Economics may dictate that this is not feasible and in a vacuum of 'advocacy' an amenity society could take on the role of an 'authority' and in doing so it could use this model to good effect by garnering local support, outside its membership, from a wide range of people for its cause. For example, an amenity society could identify a threat to the local environment that would affect not just its members but everyone else. Using its resources, knowledge and skill it could inform the community (with information it chooses) and consult (to its own agenda), in practice reinforcing the established hierarchical structure already in place for decision-making at local level. Using Wilcox's model, when an amenity society becomes an 'umbrella organisation' it can fight actors with much greater power, because it has harnessed large public representative support. This can be even more influential if it unites cross-political parties and openly or surreptitiously includes national amenity societies, politicians, local councillors and planning/conservation officers. In adopting this position, the local authority might also be grateful, as they could save money and use the amenity society to fill the consultative gap, which ought to have been plugged by themselves.

One of the few planning theorists that directly considered the amenity society's position in the planning process was McDonald, whose model identified opportunities for well-informed activists (McDonald, 1969; Fagance, 1977, p110). The 'informed public' (the amenity society) were involved from the start of the planning process with shared information gathering and collaboration. This model illustrated that early involvement was thought likely to lead to more influence on a final decision. Amenity societies had long campaigned for this situation and not just for development control but also for plan and policy formation. McDonald had a separate box for 'voluntary involvement' and this action feeds information into the process, for example, making surveys and contributing information. Having a small, distinct area of interest ensures the amenity society's deep understanding of its physical and psychological geography and power through unique local knowledge. McDonald's also model gives elected representatives a definite role, and whilst they are now not permitted to be members of amenity societies many have close links

politically or socially and the transparent connections as noted in the model below (Fig. 2.9) can continue covertly.

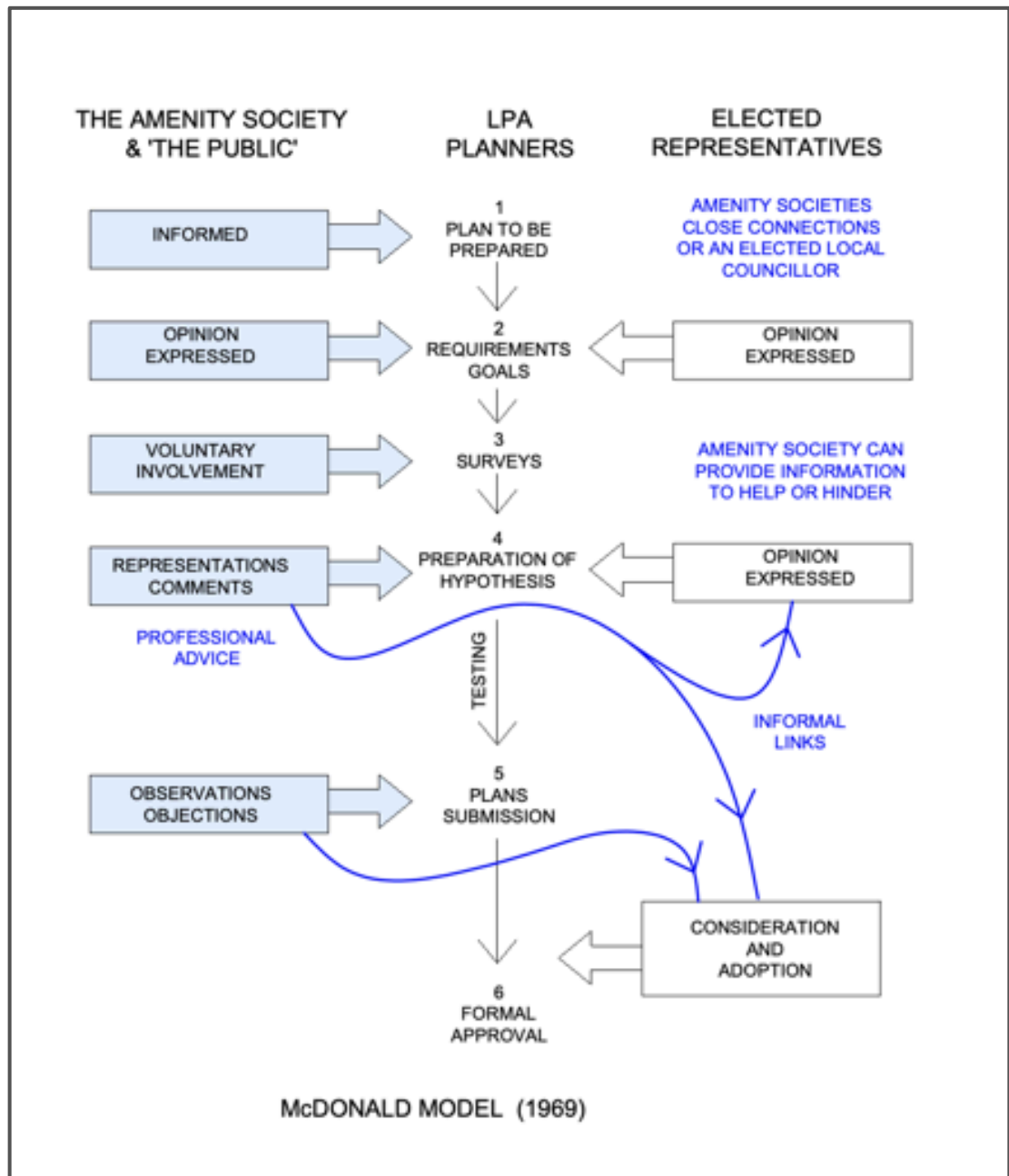


Fig. 2.9 The McDonald model (1969) (cited in Fagance, 1977, p110) with amenity society's potential position and role indicated blue

In all these twentieth-century models the amenity society has or can take an advantage over individual members of the public to enter the decision-making process at a higher level or sooner in the project. Fifty years after Arnstein's 'ladder', many agree that meaningful participation is still limited by existing

institutional power structures, which continue to “constitute and reproduce power relations that privilege property owners and powerful economic interests.” (Bedford, Clark and Harrison, 2002, p329; Chandler, 2001; Daniels, 2010). A further factor is that unlike members of the public, or single interest groups, amenity societies and their members have the advantage of being involved in participatory planning for the long-term. They are able to see each individual campaign as a ‘battle’ in a bigger ‘war’ to further their shared interests and achieve their objectives. They can gain strength from past success and learn lessons from any losses to consolidate and move forward. They are using the act of participation, carried out over many years, to develop expertise and knowledge learnt through their collective experiences. Understanding this as ‘social learning’ Collins and Ison’s model (2006) proposed a new, non-hierarchical approach to better participation (Fig. 2.10).

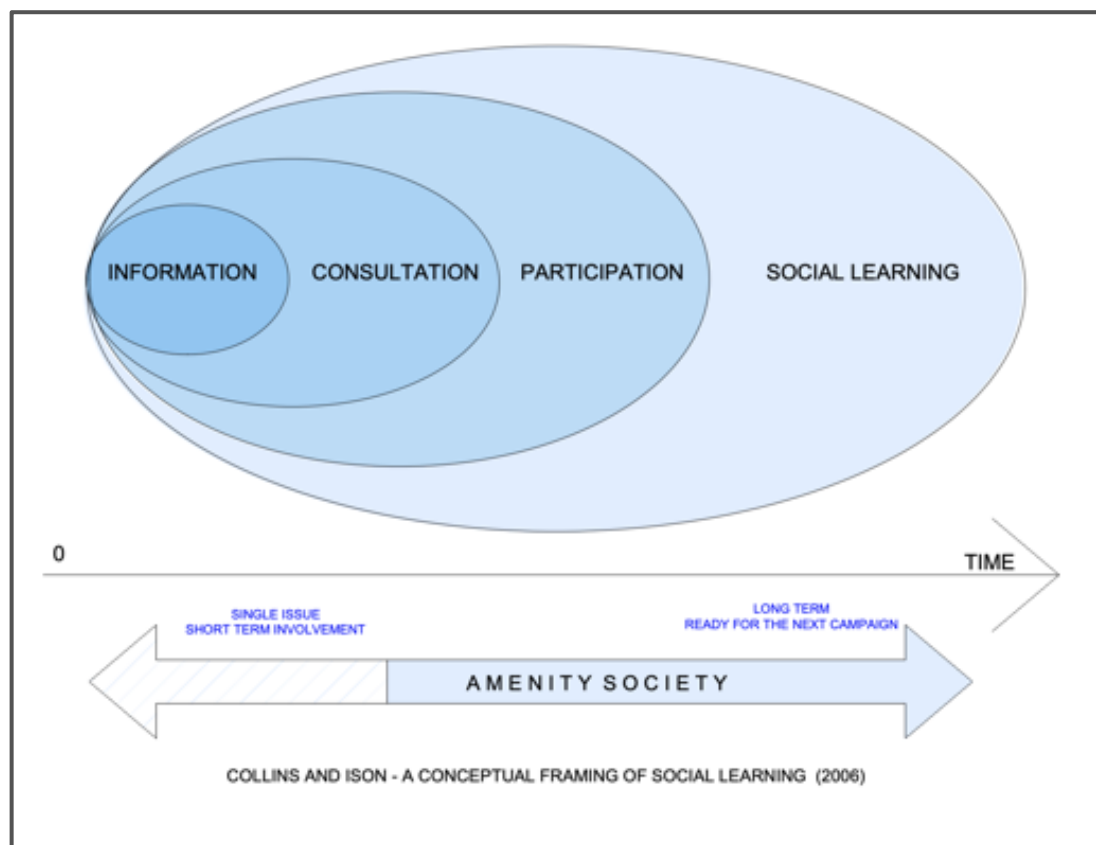


Fig. 2.10 A conceptual framing of social learning (Collins and Ison, 2006, p12) with amenity society’s potential position and role indicated in blue

This was represented diagrammatically as overlapping ellipses rather than as a progressive ladder and it assumed high levels of voluntary public

involvement. It graphically illustrates an amenity society's activities, practice and development, whereby it is continually learning through action and experience and collecting contacts and precedents along the way to further its' ambitions. Planning policy changes can themselves present opportunities for shifting power and permit new allegiances to be formed. Collins and Ison's criticism of Arnstein's 'ladder' and the reoccurring problem with many academic models postulated is that they did not address the largest social group: the disinterested, passive or those non-participating by choice. Opportunities for the general public to intervene remain of a passive nature whereby they are informed of a development by 'public notice' or invited to visit an exhibition where they can ask questions, make comments and complete a questionnaire.

The recommendations of the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) identified as long ago as 1968, that public involvement should begin alongside the formative stages of any plan or development so that ideas and input could have a chance of being accommodated in any proposal. Recent planning changes, such as the Town & Country Planning Act (2008), have introduced and encouraged developers to make a 'pre-application', whereby the applicant can test policy and get informal guidance from the planning department before making a full planning application. These are becoming increasingly common and for large-scale developments are seen to be obligatory. The pre-application meeting is an ideal opportunity for the planning brief to be set, for developers to gauge the local authority's likely support and, perhaps most importantly, for deals to be struck at the outset. For example, if the developer and local authority have aligned interests for economic regeneration funded by private finance. The result is that at the very conception of a project a powerful alliance may be established between developer and senior planner, long before any public consultation, or collaborative planning, takes place (Hiller, 2000; Bedford, Clark and Harrison, 2002).

Just as an amenity society makes links to increase its network power, by combining forces with 'the community', a developer acknowledges that 'public consultation' is economically and politically expedient and it will further

increase their own power and chance of getting a scheme approved. 'Statements of Community Involvement' are now required planning documents, and if an applicant can get the local community 'on board' at an early stage it will streamline and speed up the planning process later on. It gives credibility to the planning process, regardless of whether they eventually incorporate the public's comments and objections. It follows that public participation can be seen to have a tangible economic and political value. In a case study based on a London riverside development, researchers investigated how inviting amenity societies onto consultative panels brought benefits to the developer,

Several amenity societies and special interest groups sat on these partnerships so that membership provided the developers with access to informal networking opportunities not normally anticipated (Bedford Clark and Harrison, 2002, p321).

The developer, through his PR consultants, effectively infiltrated and procured the amenity society's network power.

Today amenity societies have the option to be involved in all stages of the planning process if they so choose, but they are not always successful and what they actually achieve may be intangible and difficult to quantify. Success in any campaign depends on whether they are in a position of agreement or disagreement with more powerful actors. If they are in opposition to a proposal their leverage on decisions is restricted and, "They have few sanctions that they could bring to bear on a recalcitrant planning authority, save for the possible stirring-up of adverse publicity" (Larkham, 1996, p136). However, one tactic an amenity society can employ is to remove themselves from the planning consultation exercise and their absence can weaken the credibility of the planning process and local authority decisions. Their involvement is neither proscribed nor enforceable and can be intensive, negligible or completely absent based on case-by-case projects of interest to the amenity society. Natalie Daniels' research into the influence of amenity societies suggested that their influence was, "passive, and that the legacy of this was public disengagement from political processes and a loss of confidence in the planning system" (Daniels, 2010, p2). This statement can be contradicted

when the history, activities and tactics (often covert) of long-established amenity societies are considered. Additionally, one could argue that public civic disengagement is a problem for politicians to resolve not amenity societies.

2.4 Power - Theoretical Concepts

Bent Flyvbjerg's detailed case study of urban planning in the Danish town of Aalborg (1998) illustrates how power is exercised by the various actors in the planning system through their relationships, strategies and tactics. Investigating the small minutiae of decision-making in a specific context, Flyvbjerg extrapolates the political, technical and social complexities of participatory planning. The current research also seeks empirical evidence of power play and influence in the fine grain detail of planning campaigns but focuses specifically on the power of one actor: the local amenity society. Working at the lower levels of the current prevailing hierarchy of power (see Fig. 2.1) these voluntary planning activists undertake detailed and constant small-scale actions and interventions to maintain their position as non-statutory consultees in the planning process; by their activities they generate and accumulate network power. How they exercise their power needs to be considered broadly, to include overt, covert and latent power which Steven Lukes conceptualised in *Power: A Radical View* as the 'three dimensions of power' (1974).

One-dimensional Overt Power

The participatory planning process is part of the pluralist democratic system that sees power distributed evenly and decision-making balanced by acknowledging different interests, engaging in open debate and reaching observable outcomes. Theoretical literature and research traditionally sought to identify the locus and evidence of power through analysis of this method of observable behaviour and decision-making (Dahl, 1961; Polsby, 1968) and this approach would seem to suit analysis of the work of an amenity society. As explained in the preceding analysis of the statutory planning framework, all written and spoken participation is recorded and made available for public

scrutiny; it necessarily involves dealing with conflicting interests and opinions with winners and losers depending on the final outcome. However, Lukes considers this too simplistic, inadequate view of power as being 'one-dimensional' and advocates for a more complex and deeper understanding of power relationships, because

... concentrating on the most visible aspects of power ... results in an incomplete and biased picture of power relations (Lukes, 2005, p102).

In practice the most powerful actors can undertake both overt and covert discussions and actions. Outwardly they can demonstrate they are working within the proscribed framework and rules but they can also conduct decision-making 'behind closed doors', without evidence or trace other than the decision itself. This has been termed 'the second face of power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962) and it is covert, contextual and value laden, such that this type of power can be used by the elite to privilege their objectives over others.

Two-dimensional Covert Power

Two-dimensional power is that evidenced in the ability of an actor to avoid conflict and suppress issues from public debate and decision-making. This serves to maintain the status quo of the established system to the benefit of those with vested interests. Lukes describes this power as 'nondecision-making' where those in authority have the ability to control the agenda such that

demands for change ... can be suffocated before they are even voiced; or kept covert; or killed before they gain access to the relevant decision-making arena (Lukes, 2005, p22).

In the existing planning system this power could be evidenced by a government or local authority creating policies or planning briefs that would allow their own nascent plans (or those of commercial developers) to comply at a later date. In the consultation process two-dimensional power could be exercised, for example, by orchestrating a public consultation exercise to limit its scope and information and by phrasing questions to control the answers or simply excluding actors from discussions and meetings. This type of covert power could also be utilised by an amenity society who, by their compliance to work within the prevailing power hierarchy, coupled with a desire to move up

'the ladder', reinforce the system. Flyvbjerg evidenced this kind of covert power by conducting participant interviews and 'reading between the lines' of official documentation revealed that,

Institutions that were supposed to represent what they themselves call the 'public interest' were revealed to be deeply embedded in the hidden exercise of power and the protection of special interests (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p225).

Power is also revealed by the ability of an actor 'not to act', which can be seen to be more powerful than any open display of power (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Lukes, 2005). Another way of looking at this is to suggest, "The persuasive power and status of any group is a function of the size of the problem it would create by its non-cooperation" (Moodie and Studdert-Kennedy, 1970, p65). For an amenity society this is an option that could be exerted as a last resort, within a system that has been democratically instigated such that not consulting the public is not an option for those in charge, especially when public funds are being spent.

Three-dimensional Ideological Power

Lukes states that "Power is at its most effective when it is least observable," (Lukes, 2005, p1). All individual citizens have power to act alone and have potential to influence others by using

... that concrete power which every individual holds, and whose partial or total cession enables political power or sovereignty to be established (Foucault, 1980, p88).

People cede their power to institutions and governments empowering them to act on their behalf by giving them their vote. This is done consensually within liberal democracies, where coercion or force is not necessary to maintain discipline, because social control is in place by the use of hidden, ideological power which Lukes identifies as the third dimension of power (Foucault, 1980; Lukes, 2005). It represents a devious form of power, which subconsciously influences people's perceptions and shapes their preferences (Foucault, 1977). Through indoctrination, information control and social structures, people accept the status quo of the prevailing establishment or system and no conflicts arise. Lukes sums this up as "... the ability to have another or others

in your power, by constraining their choices, thereby securing their compliance” (Lukes, 2005, p74). In practical terms this allows those with power to suppress ‘latent conflict’ and enforce their own opinions and interests without question, even though these might be different or opposed to those they exclude.

Network power

When a campaigning group attracts like-minded people to join it their individual power combines to become collective power and all their individual networks connect. This benefits a campaigning group because,

Change comes from power, and power comes from organization. In order to act, people must come together (Alinsky, 1972, p113).

The participatory planning system also encourages people to work together; for the purpose of better planning outcomes and democracy. This civic engagement is voluntarily undertaken by amenity society members in the genuine belief that they are contributing positively and altruistically to the process. Extensive participation and collaboration generates many contacts and creates fine-grain network power, which is revealed in the ways actors behave, speak or act, to achieve their objectives within their complex network of alliances. What Foucault terms, “the mechanics of power” is evidenced “... at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power” (Foucault, 1980, p116). The informal mechanisms which any actor can utilise to achieve their aims depends on their position in the network at the specific time of any conflict or ‘planning battle’ and,

Power is neither given, nor exchanged or recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action ... Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power (Foucault, 1980, p89).

This makes power intangible and difficult to measure as its’ source and constant transfer in the decision-making process is hard to locate or track within the multi-layered network of communications and activities. The way the actors operate and interact is always in a state of flux as priorities, personnel

and partnerships change, along with the evolving explicit and implicit ‘rules of the game’. We have seen that conformation and a common ethos dominated the ruling elite of post-war Britain, but today the ‘rules’ are far more nuanced and fluid and they can change quickly due to instantaneous communication within networks. Organizational factors such as pro-active social networking and building on proven practice can increase an actor’s power, but to do this they need to stay ahead of ‘the game’ and on top of technology. The same tactics can also be used to frustrate and delay processes, or to maintain and perpetuate the status quo;

While [public participation] has the potential to challenge patterns of dominance, [it] may also be the means through which existing power relations are entrenched and reproduced (White, 1996, p154).

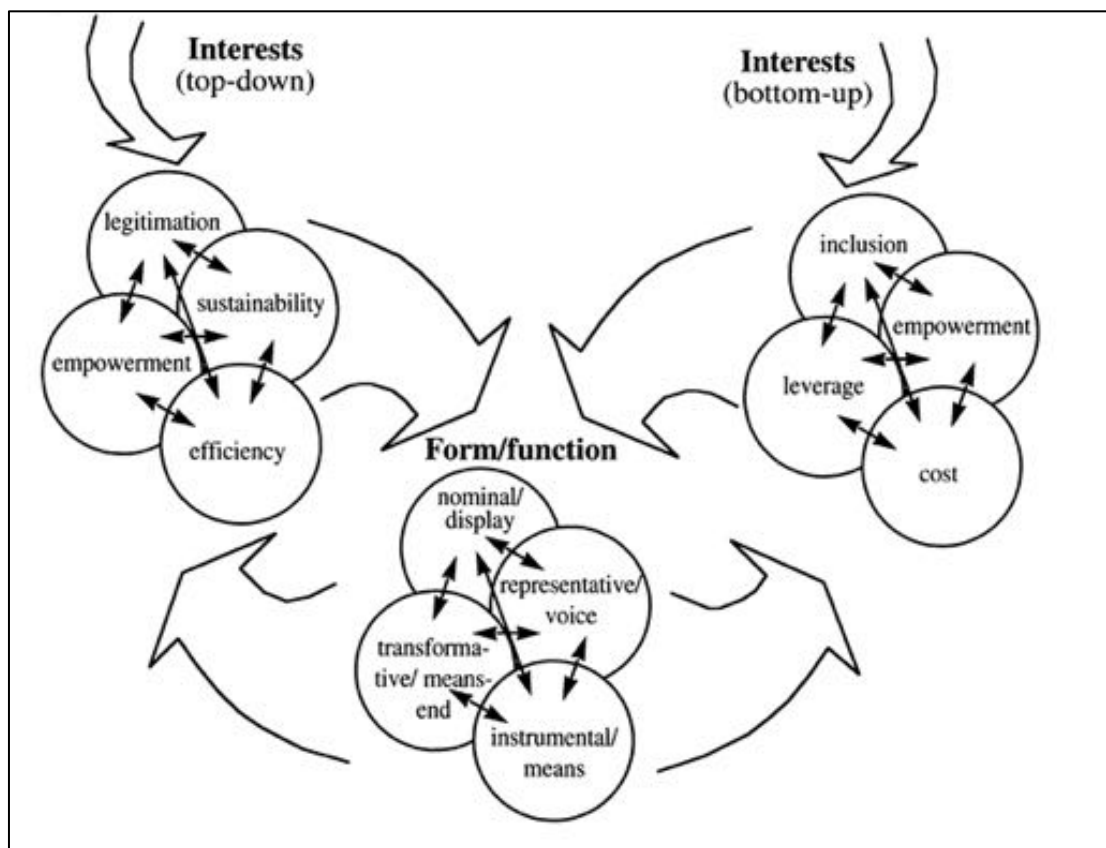


Fig. 2.11 The politics of participation (White, 1996, p148)

This is described in White’s diagram (Fig. 2.11), which illustrates the inter-relationships between network actors, their interests, activities and the symbiotic nature of power flowing between them. Vital to nurturing this mutually beneficial relationship the amenity society must be diplomatically adept and

able to cooperate effectively with those in power, whilst staying true to their objectives and simultaneously campaigning for additional support to rally against those in power. Throughout long-running campaigns they also need an ability to adapt to change, mediate between rival factions and sustain the interest of their group in order not to lose their place within the power hierarchy at work. Thus, in a decision-making network it is evident that, "Power relations are constantly changing. They demand constant maintenance, cultivation, and reproduction" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p231).

The ability for a group of planning activists to command the attention of those in power can be equated with the number of people seen to be acting in the 'public interest'; therefore, amenity societies need to convince the authorities that they represent a diverse membership base. They also have to present a professionally balanced view of the issues under consideration, that is, to reflect public opinion rather than concentrate only on issues of self-interest. Whether or not the number of members actually signify equity is not as relevant as the need to present themselves as acting in the public interest and for this to be believed,

Many amenity societies have been able to create an image of an essentially disinterested commitment to good planning, which has helped to establish their legitimacy and authority in the eyes of the general public, the local press, officials and councillors (Lowe, 1977, p39).

Their homogenous and privileged demographic is criticised as being unrepresentative but, as explored at the start of this chapter, being frequently the *only* participants assisting in evidencing the transparency of the planning process, it does not necessarily affect their power relationship with those in authority. In *Rules for radicals* (1972) Alinsky went further, promoting harnessing the power of the privileged classes and accepting their motivation may be one of self-interest. He argued that their extensive network power had capacity to draw more people to participate in civic life which would eventually bring positive change for the powerless as well as for themselves. Alinsky noted that self-interest is part of human-nature, true for all members of society, rich and poor, but that for the privileged classes

It appears shameful to admit that we operate on the basis of naked self-interest, so we desperately try to reconcile every shift of circumstances that is to our self interest in terms of broad moral justification or rationalization (Alinsky, 1972, p55).

Power and Conflict

When an amenity society decides to involve itself in a planning campaign, as a reaction against demolition and/or proposed development, it inevitably involves an active 'fight' or 'struggle' with those in authority. Foucault asserted that network power can be best witnessed through 'actions'

The problem is at once to distinguish among events, to differentiate the networks and levels to which they belong, and to reconstitute the lines along which they are connected and engender one another... I believe one's point of reference should not be the great model of language (*langue*) and signs, but to that of war and battle (Foucault, 1980, p114)

Arnstein (1969) also saw participation as being situated within a situation of conflict, categorizing public involvement by levels of citizen 'power' and acknowledging that actors had to operate within parameters or structures imposed from above. Participants were 'invited' to act within a rigid framework where they 'spared' with each other through the distinct planning stages identified as:

- a) the 'debate', which is characterized by the exercise of reason, expertise, persuasion, leading to consensus formation if not general agreement;
- b) the 'game', in which the protagonists develop 'campaigns' to resolve differences by quantitative support, not shying from overt bargaining, from the threat of sanctions, and similar means of persuasion;
- c) the 'fight', which is an exercise in which only one protagonist can prevail (Fagance, 1977, p120-121).

These adversarial participatory activities highlight that in democratic debate and decision-making, battle with visible conflict and compromise are essential ingredients for evidencing the exercise of power. Niccolo Machiavelli's analysis

of war and conquest in *The Prince* (1532) provided advice for the powerful to maintain and extend their kingdoms by framing power in a situation of conflict. His ideas, formulated through the study of ancient history and his own lived experiences, remain relevant to studying the role of power in today's democratic decision-making process because they illustrate that human nature, people's ambitions, strategies and tactics prevail. Importantly, he analysed what actually took place in political and social power play rather than what was supposed to be done.

A one-dimensional view of power assumes that those with the greatest structural or economic and legal power will ultimately win their battles by force. Machiavelli, like Foucault and Flyvbjerg considered a more subtle, nuanced exercise of power through strategies and tactics. In practical terms strategies are plans or ambitions and tactics are the steps one takes to achieve the desired result. Social theorist Michel De Certeau considers 'strategies' to be the remit of those in power, for example institutions and authorities, and 'tactics' to be the actions freely undertaken by individuals, for or against the established systems, and specifically in his influential work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) to inhabit and affect the urban environments established and maintained by the powerful.

Amenity societies operate within networks of power and on both these levels. As constituted institutions they can support the ambitions of higher organisations whilst at the same time are able to formulate their own grass-roots strategies for change. Additionally, they are composed of individuals legally unconstrained to freely challenge and act against their superiors from both inside and outside the system. The same is true of every actor whatever their position in a decision-making network, which creates complex and overlapping, overt and covert, sub-networks of strategies and tactics. For an amenity society being integrated into the establishment's network is important because its relatively weak power is connected and circulating to everyone in the network, thus its tactical activities have greater potential for influence than an individual's tactics seeking to disrupt or make radical changes external to the network. Understanding the system and monitoring local planning matters

affords them the ability to identify opportunities to manipulate the process. That their relatively minor interventions, requests and activities may be ignored or go unnoticed, is because they have,

... insinuated themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combined in accord with unreadable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities... (De Certeau, 1988, p96).

Ultimately, an amenity society's tactics in pursuit of their own, perhaps unspoken, strategies may only come to fruition years hence.

The practical opportunities for an amenity society to strategically infiltrate, create conflict and disrupt the planning decision-making system was explored earlier in this chapter. However, tactically avoiding conflict has advantages, especially for the powerful. Flyvbjerg observes that whilst open conflict does indicate 'raw power' of one actor over another, in practice the powerful can eliminate conflict by making use of 'stroking tactics' as an effective strategy for control:

In attempts to avoid confrontations, we have already seen the "stroking strategy", in which the Technical Department [of the local authority] avoids or plays down criticisms of its opponents even when it is directly attacked. ... We have also seen the "strategy of technical rationality", in which questions are depoliticized and made less controversial by formulating them, rationally or rationalized, in technical, objective terms rather than in terms of political interests. Finally, we have seen the "strategy of surrender", which is used where no other strategy can prevent confrontation (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p161).

These 'stroking tactics' are conducive to decision-making when maintaining good relations and perpetuating the status quo is strategically important. As previously discussed, relationships within the power hierarchy of the actors in the planning system are frequently historically engrained, especially in stable communities where past collaborations and alliances carry weight in contemporary decision making; over what is termed the '*longue durée*' (Braudel, 1908; Flyvbjerg, 1998). It is in the interests of all, but especially so for the weaker actors, to maintain their networks and avoid open confrontation

ahead of future projects and collaborations. In this way when a group of actors is long-standing in a shared locality, such as amenity society members, local politicians and local authority officers, they have potential to grow together and generate collaborative power that is self-fuelling. Trust and mutual respect can create situations where commonalities rather than differences are focused on and built upon for shared goals. Power is redistributed amicably by informal negotiation and the status quo is maintained, at least by the groups of actors operating at the lower levels of the power hierarchy: the amenity society, the planners and the local councillors. In this scenario, where the local amenity society is fully integrated into the collaborative process, they may still have little influence, but rather be facilitating a 'charade of public participation'. The most powerful actors, the developers, land owners and politicians, could be observing the process from above and surreptitiously directing the outcome to suit themselves. If this is the case, what hope for the individual citizen if,

Sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power. ... The 'mainstreaming' of participation has imposed its price ... the original movement was one of protest against the existing orthodoxy. Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control (White, 1996, p142).

One advantage an amenity society has is that it can capitalise on the ability to collaborate within the establishment framework if it suits their objectives, but is not bound by legal or financial constraints and obligations in negotiations. Political neutrality and financial autonomy are therefore vital for an amenity society to maintain their independence of thoughts and deeds which ensures that,

Special interest groups have substantially more freedom to use and to benefit from the full gamut of instruments in naked power play than do democratically elected governments" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p233).

Rationality and Rationalization

Trust between actors is crucial if genuine collaborative planning and meaningful public participation is to take place. By examining both open and covert activities, Flyvbjerg evidences the fact that power,

...procures the knowledge which supports its purposes, while it ignores or suppresses the knowledge that does not serve it (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p226)

This allows those with the most power the ability to manipulate knowledge, or present information to frame a debate, in such a way as to persuade those making decisions to agree and those objecting to comply. Machiavelli (1532) evidenced that rational argument is not absolute, but is context dependant. Flyvbjerg reinforces the importance of this theory when he expounds that, "Rationalisation presented as rationality is a principal strategy in the exercise of power" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p2).

The amenity society's professional membership with relevant technical expertise gives them some intellectual leverage in negotiations and they have the means to undertake or pay for their own research and data gathering to support their specific campaigns. They also have the advantage over other less established community groups that their combined skills are transferable; they have potential to adapt quickly and efficiently to meet the changing context, be it analytical (political, policy) or subjective (trends, style, fashion). However, how far their reason or knowledge influences decisions remains debatable, as Flyvbjerg observes that "... rational argument is one of the few forms of power that those without much influence still possess; rationality is part of the power of the weak" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p37), or in the words of Machiavelli,

We must distinguish between ... those who can force the issue and those who must use persuasion. In the second case, they always come to grief. (Machiavelli, 1532).

To level up with their opponents, rationality is also within the gift of an amenity society and they also have the ability to construct arguments, set the agenda and the option to only provide information that is in their favour. Their power is self-professed and therefore can be considered 'illusory', but they have learned over time from their superiors and from their mistakes how to use rational knowledge and rationality to their advantage. Additionally, they have

strengths that cannot be bought or manufactured and these are their deep, local knowledge, ingrained commitment and accumulated tactical skills.

As illustrated in the typical hierarchy of actors in the current planning process (Fig. 2.1), and nurtured by conservation policy, the amenity society's closest network allies are often the local authority planning officers. The planners have little power acting as 'mediators' in the system and although they have grown close to their local amenity societies, they themselves may be subjected to a higher authority within their own institution and be complicit in the distortion of communication by

The misuse of survey information, control of information, deliberate limits on the amount and scope of participation, back-room deals, departmental in-fighting, political trade-offs and the influence of powerful commercial interests ... planning is about politics not some objective rational process (Allmendinger, 2002, p171).

This describes two-dimensional power at work within just one of the many actors framing the consultation process. In theory every organisation involved could be similarly exercising their power to set the agenda and define reality. The same principle applies with local and national politics and 'realpolitik'; that is, the difference between what actually happens rather than what is supposed to happen in a modern participatory democracy. Flyvbjerg describes this situation as where in 'up front' decision-making,

Rationality dominates, frequently as rationalization presented as rationality ... Backstage, hidden from view, it is power and rationalization that dominate" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p228).

Rationality and Information Technology

An increasingly influential and powerful 'actor' in public debate and the decision-making process is digital media with rapid advancement of information and communication technology. Today the Internet has escalated the possibilities for better networking and knowledge gathering. The competence disparity between the planners and the planned is further reduced as all actors become increasingly efficient using opportunities for extending

networking, knowledge and information through shared media and virtual platforms via the Internet. However, mis-information, fake news and conspiracy theories get equal exposure and can be presented as expert opinion, research and facts. What constitutes truth and reality is continually reported and contested on a global scale and whilst some might argue this just the same as the pluralist way of balancing of opinions and therefore eventually democratic, the information is controlled by a power much greater than perhaps governments and monarchies - the Tech Giants (Amazon Apple, Google, Facebook and Microsoft). Conventional media, such as radio and television originally controlled by the state, in the UK by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), had potential to educate and inform the general public as well as reinforce cultural and social issues. Filmed and recorded interviews could be edited to convey a specific message and indoctrinate the audience; with subjective or emotive stories relating to protest or discontent making for more interesting viewing than dry factual planning information. Further, Eversley (1973) noted that TV interviews with public protestors, possibly angry or over enthusiastic, allowed extreme allegations to be nationally transmitted unchecked. The same is true today but rolling news reporting, social media, hand-held and constant, exacerbates the situation. Unchecked outbursts on the Internet are not fleeting like they were when made on TV in the 1960s, they are permanent and liable to manipulation by anyone in the world.

The media has always proved to be a useful weapon in planning activists' armoury and using the local press to embarrass or expose elected representatives is one of the tangible weapons an amenity society possesses. However, the weaker actor should use the media sparingly and timely, often as a last resort, for exposing those in power can damage trust and the delicate network of alliances and consequently be detrimental to future campaigns. Likewise, virtual activism leaves permanent digital traces and trails of evidence which may work against those organisations and individuals who thrive when decisions are made quietly, expediently and covertly.

The next chapter explains the methodology used to evidence the amenity society's power. Acknowledging the potential for all types of power to exist in all three-dimensions, this research also investigates power in a fourth dimension, that of 'time'. In the decision-making planning process the individual actor's 'power to act' is constantly changing. The possession of power and its value also vary with time, which in this case study is considered over a period of over seventy years of constant participation in planning matters. For the local amenity society, which operates at the lower levels of the power hierarchy, hard-won statutory and network power requires constant attention and nurturing by activity and action to maintain and increase its potency. Conversely, if network power is neglected it can be easily lost or taken away.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Justification for the Research

The Case Study Subject – the St Marylebone Society

Local amenity societies are influential actors with network power and lobbying capacity which has been neglected in participatory planning research. Investigating their activities over time will provide useful insights into the changing nature of planning policy and urban power relations. To do this I have set up a framework of investigation based on a case study methodology of the work of the St Marylebone Society (SMS), a local amenity society based in Westminster, central London.

The essence of a case study ... is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm, 1971; cited in Yin, 2009, p17).

This research is concerned with public participation by an established local amenity society rather than a resident's association, single-issue organisation or informal group. For the purposes of this research, I am defining a local amenity society as one that has the following attributes:

- Has a written legal constitution with clearly defined objects
- Is a voluntary organisation and independent of any other agency
- Is well established and actively participated in planning
- Is recognised as a non-statutory consultee by the local authority

The SMS fulfils all the above criteria and its members have been actively participating in the local authority's planning system for the past seventy years. Their activities will be analysed with reference to four specific sites which they have been sporadically involved with since the foundation of the society in 1948 to the present day. The sites have been chosen strategically and the choice has been informed by location, society involvement and type of amenity being protected. Further, each is considered at different historical periods over

the period in question. Hence, this research will be multi-layered, cross-referenced and considered over time.

Investigation and analysis of SMS actions, strategies and tactics provides the primary research element and is used to identify evidence of their network power, influence on planning policy, decision-making and built outcome. As outlined in the theoretical chapters, power can take different forms and based on Luke's concept of 'three dimensions of power' (Lukes, 2005) I have identified these different types of power and discussed how they were used by the SMS to try to influence outcomes in each of the building project case studies.

There are pragmatic reasons which make the SMS suitable for the current research:

- Whilst there are hundreds of local amenity societies across the UK this research sets out to specifically consider the role of an amenity society in an urban context. The SMS is based in central London and allows examination of large-scale campaigns on sites that have national as well as local significance.
- With over 200 local amenity societies in London involved with planning matters, studying the SMS has advantages for research in that it is one of the oldest groups in the capital. Therefore, it can provide a long historic view of participation.
- The SMS also has intact archival records and accessible 'actors' still living in the locality. Human nature and individuals' decisions and actions are instrumental in unravelling and explaining the narratives of each campaign. Interviews with actors involved at the time explores 'covert power' and undocumented past actions.
- This research must be transferable and relevant to other amenity societies; hence it is vital that in choosing the SMS as a case study, the society is proved to be typical and not exceptional in its characteristics. Close association with other amenity societies in Westminster, through the Westminster Amenity Societies Forum (WASF), shows that there is parity between groups and a regular survey of amenity societies

undertaken by Westminster City Council (WCC) is also available to evidence this.

- A wider analysis of amenity societies in central London can be made by access to the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies (The London Forum) database and through networking with these groups. If the SMS is seen to be atypical or have differences which affect its power or influence then these can be extrapolated and identified as attributes which other groups might seek, or indeed reveal activities and strategies that the SMS could add to its remit to further its influence on local planning matters.

3.2 Subjective and Ethical Considerations

A further reason that the SMS has been chosen as the subject for this research is because I am personally embedded in the society and integrated into the local authority planning process under study. I have been involved with planning discussions and decisions since 1997 as a member of the SMS Planning Committee and then Chair of the society since 2008. This position brings benefits of privileged access to files and personnel. Close proximity to the issues under study presents the ability of actual continued experience to feed back into the theoretical questions and issues raised; this makes the opportunity to undertake this research unique. However, because of my relationships and position, careful attention needs to be paid to impartiality and confidentiality. The research must be objective, transparent, balanced and truthful. It will be crucial to keep an unbiased, professional stance throughout my research, consciously avoiding taking sides or trying to justify the value of local amenity societies.

Since I joined the SMS, I have participated in all planning matters and latterly as Chair of the society I have tried to manage the society democratically and professionally. I am a political realist and follow the view that one should start from where the world is, not where one would like it to be. The reason I joined the SMS was because a neighbour asked me to join the planning committee for two reasons. Firstly, to assist with the increasing number of drawings and

technical reports attached to large commercial developments and secondly, to bring balance to the society's comments and objections on local developments. At the time the committee were basing decisions on personal stylistic preferences and doctrinaire attitudes to conservation; specifically neglecting twentieth century architecture and objecting to good modern design in favour of pastiche. Whilst my personal views and aesthetics might differ from those of traditional local amenity society members, the SMS Trustees along with WCC planning department and local councillors are fully aware of my architectural and political beliefs and despite these being often different to theirs, continue to support me as Chair of the society. At times of planning conflict WCC senior planning officers have written letters of support for my stance and impartiality in maintaining the democratic process. I am also committed to involving WCC in this research and my approach is one of transparency and mutual respect to increase participation and collaboration, because I believe that self-government is essential for democracy and

Citizen participation is the animating spirit and force in a society predicated on voluntarism (Alinsky, 1971, p xxv).

My position in the SMS makes possible additional research through other networks involved with participatory planning. The London Forum provides an 'umbrella' for London-wide amenity organisations to meet, discuss, share information and support each other. Periodically the London Forum surveys their membership and are mapping the prevalence of amenity societies in London, to identify where they are most active and areas that are under-represented. This aims for better communications, increased representation and understanding why amenity societies thrive or fail in different parts of the city. The trustees of the London Forum have given their permission for me to access their surveys on amenity societies in central London which helps position the SMS into a wider network of voluntary groups involved in the participatory planning system.

As an architect practicing in London for over forty years the research is also informed by detailed, long-standing knowledge of the city, architecture and planning which allows me to place the case study sites in a wider historical and

urban context. However, I am conscious that this might influence my own values and judgement. Architects are trained to develop tacit skills, through participation, practical experience and reflective practice and regularly make instinctive, context dependent decisions based on what they feel is the 'right' solution to a given problem. Aristotle called this 'phronetic knowledge' which, "guides practitioners to make choices and find solutions 'good for man'" (Kirkeby, 2011, p9). Therefore, I must check any subjective interpretations throughout the study to ensure the validity of the conclusions.

In summary, as Chair of the SMS I have inside knowledge of the workings of the group and access to many contacts in the planning and political system which I would otherwise not have. I have inherent network power through my personal connections and also the information and data I can access. This provides valuable empirical evidence and information to support my research into the different types of power the St Marylebone Society has possessed and utilised in its past campaigns.

3.3 Evidencing Power

Within much research and literature relating to the study of power, the terms 'power' and 'influence' are often considered interchangeable, a stance taken by pluralists to validate and justify democratic due process, but who base their conclusions only on visible, concrete decision-making.

One can conceive of 'power' – 'influence' and 'control' are serviceable synonyms – as the capacity of an actor to do something affecting another actor, which changes the probable pattern of specified future events. This can be envisaged most easily in a decision-making situation (Polsby, 1963; cited in Lukes, 2005, p 19).

This is what Lukes identifies as one-dimensional power and in case study research this is the most obvious type of power to be found. It is overt and evidence by a straightforward analysis of factual information,

The researcher should study actual behavior, either at first hand, or by reconstructing behavior from documents, informants, newspapers and other appropriate sources (Polsby, 1963, p121).

The work of an amenity society and how it operates within an established system of structured, open debate concerning local government policy and planning decisions provides a sound basis for such investigation to seek tangible evidence of decision-making power for the following reasons:

- Public participation in planning is an active phenomenon. Individuals act within the planning system on their own, within groups and organisations (such as amenity societies) and are part of a network of actors. Therefore, alongside theoretical concepts, analysis of real projects and events, of practicalities, can illustrate actions and consequences.
- Participatory planning takes place in a specific context, place and time, therefore individual projects as case studies can provide a structured framework for investigation over time.
- The planning system is organised statutorily and public involvement leaves a 'paper-trail' of evidence for each planning project. This recorded information is valuable data for research purposes and allows a factual foundation for a case study approach.

This research focuses on the behaviour of amenity society members. It explains their subjective, special interests and political allegiances, identifying observable situations of conflict and the tactics that led to success or failure in achieving their objectives. This is a similar approach taken by Dahl (1961) in *Who governs?* where community actions and their outcomes were tabulated to determine which participant's ideas were vetoed and which had the most successes. There is an assumption in this type of analysis that there needs to be observable conflicts of interests and opinions to evidence who wins and who loses. In effect, these types of results establish where an amenity society is positioned on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of influence. However, the planning process is complex, the conflicting interests of actors are multi-faceted and all decisions are influenced by economics and politics. This research also investigates power that is much more difficult to evidence because it is hidden or invisible.

Critics of the pluralist approach identified a 'second face of power' and introduced the influence of bias and the ability of a privileged actor to prevent or control public debate. In *Power and poverty* (1970), Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz define the prevailing criticism of amenity societies who have, ... a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of other persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests. More often than not, the 'status quo defenders' are a minority or elite group within the population in question (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p43-44).

Amenity societies are frequently considered elite voluntary associations and involved in planning matters for selfish reasons, to protect their members' property interests, and often referred to as NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard). Within the narratives I have sought examples where the SMS had promoted some issues and avoided others that might create problems or damage their ambitions. This may have been done sub-consciously therefore 'reading between the lines' and drawing on alternative sources for corroboration is necessary.

Within the wider group of actors making local decisions it is also necessary to look for situations where the amenity society has been excluded or directed by those with more power than themselves into roles or positions to suit a greater elite, such as a political party, a developer or the establishment. Where the society fits into established power hierarchies is important to acknowledge and understand as this creates and reinforces their network power, which in turn influences covert decision-making 'behind closed doors'. Off the record meetings, operating outside the formal local authority structure, the ability to set the agenda and the option of not participating are all part of the amenity society's strategies and tactics. My research investigates this through interviews with actors and access to informal documentation which is only possible due to my position within the St Marylebone Society. Researching unseen power is much more difficult than simply analysing the cause and effect of one actor's power over another. It entails looking for latent conflict, covert

operations and political links which might lead to control of the agenda in community participation. This power might operate without any observable conflict and indeed avoiding conflict is in itself evidence of power. Lukes notes that, “The most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent conflict arising in the first place” (Lukes, 2005, p27).

As explained in the preceding chapters, amenity society activists have commonly held character traits; they are politicised and have an inherent sense of civic duty evidenced by their decision to participate voluntarily long-term. The case study narratives seek to understand how they built on their actual experiences, learning through practical, physical involvement and intuitively questioning rather than being led by policy, procedures and theoretical concepts. Considering their activities over a sustained time period elucidates patterns and relationships that have become embedded in society and institutions. This represents the *longue durée* (Braudel, Flyvbjerg), which creates an unspoken advantage for an amenity society. Power relationships are reinforced by long-standing cooperation with actors who share objectives and a tacit understanding of local issues, such that their aligned views inform outcomes.

Public participation is an iterative, learning activity which takes time and requires determination and patience. I am conscious that there is much detail, including quotes and explanations throughout the case study. This is done intentionally to give voice to the actors, to convey their feelings and the processes they had to go through, leading to the decisions they made for actions. It is people who have acted voluntarily to protect and influence the character of their cities; their words, strategic and tactical activities reveal how they generated and exercised power throughout the various stages of their campaigns to do this.

3.4 Synthesis of Evidence and Knowledge

The case study site narratives are built up with information from different sources. Case studies involve many variables and therefore a rigorous

methodological framework will be established to cope with using, “Multiple sources for evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion,” (Yip, 2009, p2). To investigate the influence of the SMS I utilised complimentary research methodologies to integrate and analyse the data and information collected. The research considers three types of knowledge (as expounded by Aristotle):

- ‘Episteme’ or analytical, rational, invariable knowledge - “know why”
- ‘Techne’ or technical knowledge - “know how”
- ‘Phronesis’ or tacit, value-based knowledge - ‘just know’

(After Kirkeby, 2011, p9).

Episteme - Archival Evidence

Each investigation begins with documentary analysis to establish factual historic events through written and spoken discourse relating to the case study. Publicly available WCC Town Planning case files were consulted alongside private SMS archives to build up a holistic and logical narrative. Additionally, understanding the prevailing politics, planning policy, economic and social climate explains how the various actors in each case study were constrained by the social, legal and technical rules of the time. Alongside this detailed and substantive factual information, and to make sense of decisions made in the past, background context is needed to understand the prevailing conditions that influenced those involved at the time. This includes:

- The SMS profile at that time, membership, size, role, responsibilities. It will evaluate to what extent the SMS opinions and attitudes were representative of the wider community.
- SMS connections to established institutions, for example, St Marylebone/Westminster City Council and the ‘Great Estates’ (Portman, Howard de Walden, Crown). Institutional relationships and personal connections between organisations can be extrapolated from membership records.
- Photographic evidence from the files and images taken by the author today. Consideration of the communication technologies available at the time.

Techne – Rational and Technical Knowledge

The level of SMS influence is affected by changing planning policy, technical advancements, commercial developments and attitudes to architectural style. The SMS needed to increase its professional and technical understanding of the mechanisations within the planning system and to maintain debate on an equal professional footing, for example with,

- Planning policy, politics and local councillor changes
- London plans, Town & Country Planning Acts, reports and political initiatives
- Specific information relating to the development under consideration

Exploring the relationship between the SMS, the local authority and the project's stakeholders identifies where the amenity society's views conflicted with the local authority and where they were aligned with the local authority against a developer. Their relative rational power, connections and aspirations are analysed to understand and explain how decisions were made "...maintaining a 'chain of evidence,' and investigating and testing 'rival explanations'" (Yin, 2009, p3).

Phronesis – Intuitive or Tacit Knowledge

The rationalist model assumes that if you have the right methods ... then you arrive at the right answers. But this is a mistake (Kirkeby, 2011, p11).

Reflecting on the above I have sought evidence in-between the facts, looking for answers to the 'phronetic questions' (which architects ask themselves every day in practice) such as the following suggested by Flyvbjerg of: "Who gains and who loses?', 'By which mechanisms of power?', 'Is this development desirable?', and 'What should we do about it, if anything?'" Also, 'Who is doing what to whom and with what consequences" (Kirkeby, 2011, p10,12).

This research also investigates other possible motives for the Society's involvement in the way they operated. I needed to, "look at what people actually do, not only what they say they do nor their stated reason for doing it" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p8). Interrogative analysis aims to evidence the concealed

power relationships and subconscious assumptions actors make which influence outcomes off the record or even unspoken.

Qualitative Research – Interviews and Focus Groups

This research commenced with interviews with residents and long-standing SMS members, which is used to corroborate or substantiate and add to archival information. Marylebone has a stable population and some members who joined the SMS in the 1950s and 1960s and still alive and active today. My access to individuals was made possible through my position in the SMS and their memories and voices are important in building accurate narratives of what happened in the past. I interviewed five founder/early members, three of whom agreed to be recorded; Ruth Eldridge, Leonard Jacobs and Ann Saunders, all sadly now deceased. Their input elucidated the reasons for the foundation of the society and their role in saving the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park (see Chapter 5). Participants often also had their own private records which illuminated their individual activities and made an important contribution to the SMS archive. As an oral history researcher, it was vital for me to understand the ethics associated with talking to often elderly people and be aware of the emotional consequences of awakening long-forgotten memories of their lives. Permission to digitally record the interviews was given and an assurance that their anonymity would be ensured if requested. It was a learning curve for me to approach the meetings with an open mind and whilst I usually began with a list of relevant questions in front of me, the discussions were much freer and I acknowledged that the story being told was theirs and not mine.

Interviewees were selected based on their involvement with the society and also included others who had experience in shaping post-war architecture and planning in Marylebone, for example architects, who provided background knowledge. These included SMS members Roger Button (architect and son of George Adie, Adie & Button Architects), Antony Cleminson (consultant on architectural conservation) and Festival of Britain architects Gordon & Ursula Bowyer. Journalists, writers and key figures in the conservation movement were also useful sources and over twenty informal unrecorded meetings and

interesting discussions included those with Lord Montagu of Beaulieu (SMS Patron), Colin Amery (Journalist/writer) and Richard Bowden (former SMS Secretary and Vice-Chair, Marylebone archivist and writer). Westminster City Council local councillors and its planning department have a number of officers with a long involvement in Marylebone who have been involved in this research and presented different perspectives on the case studies and research question. Informal discussions relating to the case studies were possible with seven WCC planning officers and local councillors. Professional companies involved with PR and public participation also agreed to be interviewed and elucidated the changing role, mechanisms and value of public consultation via amenity societies. These interviews needed very careful considerations of anonymity and discretion with some people still working within the organisations involved.

Qualitative case study research adds evidence in the form of observation and questioning those involved in both past and present-day projects. Making allowances for human error and memory, interviews can add information not on official record and in some cases, when dealing with the democratic processes of local government, it is what is not officially recorded that might speak volumes. A symposium was organised for the Marylebone Station site case study which took place at Westminster City Hall and involved a short presentation followed by group discussion with eleven actors participating, who all agreed to being recorded. Preliminary questionnaires were sent to key participants to allow them to prepare considered responses, who included representatives from British Rail (the authors of the report on the closure of the station), Westminster City Council planning officers and local councillors, along with SMS and other planning activists of the time. The event concluded with a meal in a local restaurant where informal discussions could test the theories of covert power and 'off the record' reflections could be made in confidence (See full list of participants in Primary Sources/References at the end of this document, page 345).

Public lectures and meetings with questions and answers sessions presented opportunities or forums to talk to SMS members and for opinions to be sought

on the research question of the society's power and influence. Open debate for each case study acted as a check for archival accuracy, synthesised information and illuminated decision-making at the time.

Transferable Knowledge

That this research is based on single case study could be criticised as being too specific to draw general conclusions. It is also evident that the building sub-case study sites are historical, rooted at a specific time and place. However, it is important that this context-dependent knowledge is transferable and illustrates the concepts and situations that concern all stakeholders and actors involved with planning, conservation and participation across the UK. Looking at this with the perspective of a seventy-year time frame allows patterns to be identified and reveal actions that may not have had immediate influence but that have come to fruition with time.

Bent Flyvbjerg's *Rationality and power* uses a detailed narrative case study of planning in the Danish city Aalborg to explore the relationships between actors in a major urban development but stated that, "Aalborg is offered as a reference point against which rationality, power and democracy elsewhere can be compared" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p5). Similarly, events in post-war Marylebone to the present day illustrate the workings of an amenity society which can be found in towns and cities across the UK. Whilst this research comprises an in-depth single case study, it contributes to a body of other similar case study-based research projects which in the future can be considered alongside each other. Further, the conclusions will help others to understand their role within the current planning system and work out ways to improve their effectiveness and increase their power to influence decisions.

Transferability of knowledge from my research will be possible because:

- The SMS is one of hundreds of similar voluntary organisations in London (and the UK)
- In scale its population and building stock is similar to that of a provincial town or city rather than a 'neighbourhood'. Whilst commonalities of scale and architectural setting may be extrapolated, the location of

Marylebone in central London is context specific and may be in some respects a special case.

- A National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been introduced across the UK. Marylebone is a typical inner city historical location, and has similar planning policies in place as other urban Conservation Areas in the UK.
- Human nature prevails independent of time and place. Political ambition drives certain individuals to take responsibility and take part in civic life and the attitude that, 'the Englishman's home is his castle' impels individuals instinctively to protect their homes and neighbourhoods.

The research is intended to be circular and can feed back into the system, as it is part of a continuum of activists' planning knowledge. The knowledge learnt undertaking this study will practically influence my activities within the St Marylebone Society and on a wider basis through connection with the London Forum of Amenity Societies and eventually the Marylebone Neighbourhood Forum. It is the intention that this research will make a positive contribution to effective public participation in conservation and planning, that is in effect a work of direct action itself.

3.5 The Case Study Sites and Time Periods under Investigation

Marylebone is in the City of Westminster, central London, and therefore its geographical location dictates that the scale and economic value of the buildings and sites considered in this research is high. Whilst the SMS is a typical local campaigning group, the projects they involved themselves with were not typical 'community' or 'neighbourhood' interventions in planning but large-scale developments, which had potential to evolve into national campaigns. It is important to note that the most controversial case studies are likely to generate much more archival information for research, but could be atypical of an amenity societies' usual involvement and influence.



Fig.3.1 Case Study Location: London - Westminster City Council (indicated in red)

Influencing planning decisions in this location is more difficult than in back streets or peripheral locations because there are higher commercial values and more actors (and more senior actors) involved in planning and decision-making. It is logical to assume that if an amenity society can influence decisions here then they can do so more easily in less prominent locations, outside the business district with fewer actors and lower financial stakes. This will challenge bias or assumptions of positive influence and aim to increase the credibility or value of the research.

Investigation of four specific sites in Marylebone form the primary research element to answer the research question and evidence the power and influence of the SMS, an established, urban local amenity society. The sites were chosen for the following reasons:

- There was significant involvement by the SMS
- There was known archival evidence or key actors accessible
- The SMS involvement was sustained over time

- The specific site could allow investigation of influence over a different or particular amenity, for example, conservation, transport, environment and design or stylistic considerations

The time frame for the research is from mid-twentieth century to the present day, representing SMS continuous involvement for over seventy years. Assessed chronologically their campaigns on all sites reflect prevailing politics and structural changes in planning policy for increased public participation at three periods:

- 1948-1967. Immediately post-World War II there was little opportunity for public participation in planning decisions. Despite this the SMS, as a grass-roots organisation of privileged, elite activists, involved themselves in the *Greater London plan* consultation and national conservation campaigns. At the forefront of planning participation, they were operating independently without any legislation or policies supporting their work.
- 1967-1997. After the Civic Amenities Act political change and widespread outrage at demolition drew in many people to become involved with conservation and planning matters. The SMS position was strengthened by policy and political will to increase participation and protect heritage. The SMS argued against commercial development throughout the 1980s and 1990s Thatcher/Conservative era of market led liberal democracy.
- 1997-2021. From New Labour to the recent Neighbourhood Planning initiatives, with ambitions for increased voluntary sector involvement and neighbourhood autonomy. The SMS have become embedded within the establishment and operate collaboratively with those in power: developers, the local authority and politicians. However, in doing this they risk losing their autonomy.

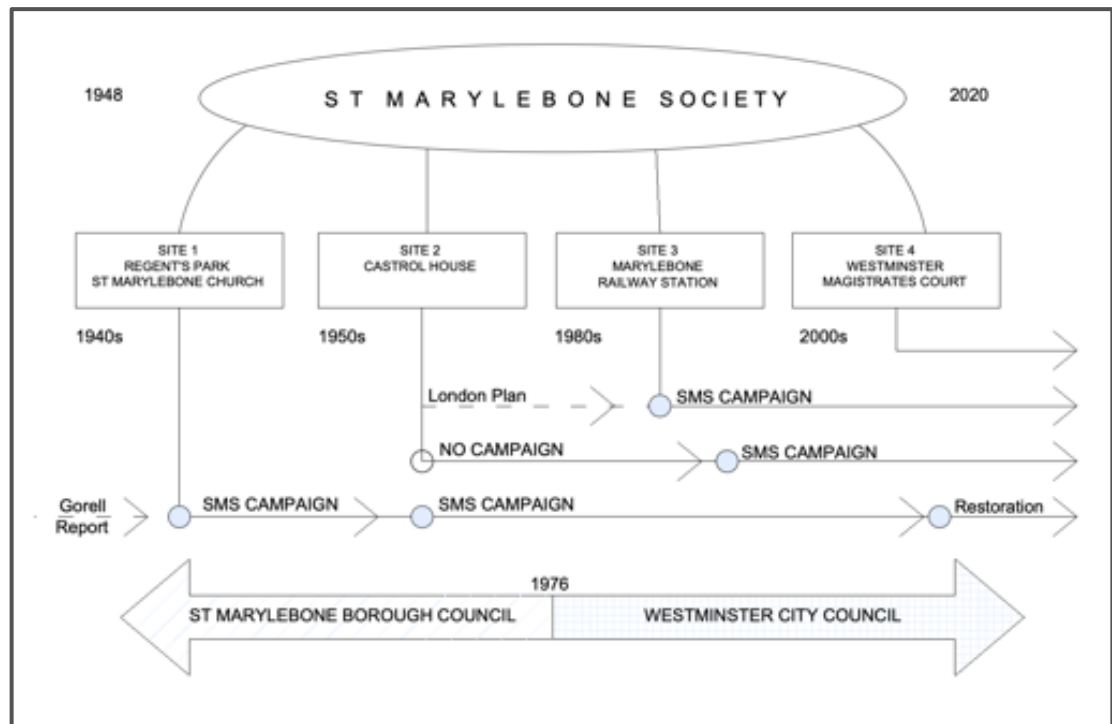


Fig. 3.2 Structure of the St Marylebone Society Case Study Research

For each individual building site there is a concise introduction outlining the location, network of actors involved, typology of amenity being protected and scope of study explaining how it fits into the overall research case study. Written from the perspective of the SMS, events at each site are described as a narrative divided into separate stages of the campaigns. The SMS actions, strategies and tactics are analysed along with issues raised, relevant concepts, types of power utilised and outcomes.

The conclusions for each site highlight physical or actual evidence of the three dimensions of power. They assess success in decision-making, the tactics that directed the process, cross-party political consensus, network building and control of the agenda. I have also sought evidence of non-participation and avoidance of conflict to direct outcome, that is, covert influence. The four separate site studies study are reassessed in the conclusion (Chapter 9) to explore commonalities, themes and highlight long-term implications for the future work of an amenity society and also look towards the future of public participation in planning, in light of significant societal changes over the course of the current research.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE STUDY SUBJECT - THE ST MARYLEBONE SOCIETY

4.1 History and Background

The St Marylebone Society (SMS) is the oldest local amenity society in Westminster and when it was founded in 1948 was one of the first in central London. The idea of starting a local history society had germinated in Marylebone Library with Borough Librarian Geoffrey Stephens distributing an open invitation for residents to form a St Marylebone Antiquarian Society.

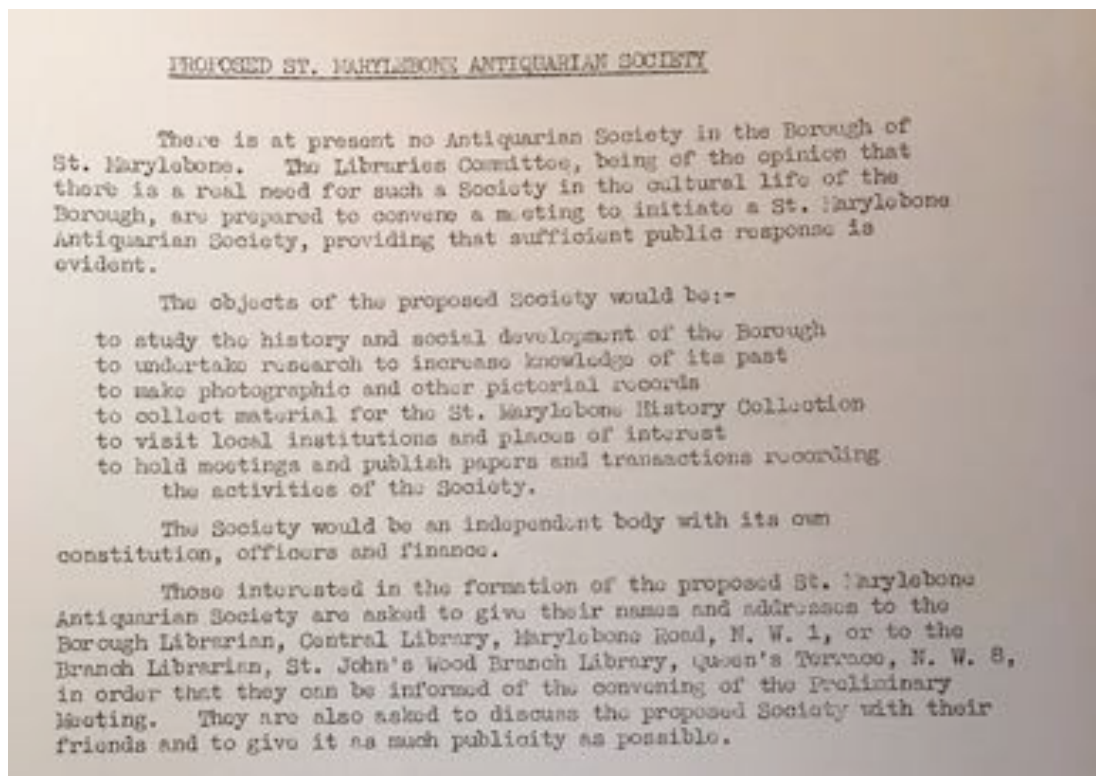


Fig. 4.1 Flyer distributed for the St Marylebone Antiquarian Society (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

This set out the objects of the proposed society and noted that, “The Society would be an independent body with its own constitution, officers and finance.” At the ensuing public meeting over eighty people attended to join but at this meeting it was decided that something more than an antiquarian society was wanted;

...a Civic Society concerned not only with the past, but also with the present and future of St Marylebone, and able to present a considered

public opinion on planning matters under the 1947 Planning Act (SMS archive, minutes, July 1948).

The motion was carried unanimously and a working committee was appointed to draft a constitution and rules ahead of a further meeting in September 1948.



Fig. 4.2 St Marylebone Town Hall and Public Library (Copyright RIBA Collections)
Fig. 4.3 Library Reading Room - site of the inaugural SMS meeting (Copyright RIBA Collections)



Fig. 4.4 Librarians, (from left) Mr Stonebridge and Geoffrey Stephens with founding members (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)



SMS FOUNDERS & STEERING COMMITTEE 1948

His worship the Mayor Reneson Coucher
Mrs Reneson Coucher
Cllr. Miss E Bright Ashford (Barrister & SMBC Councillor)
Cllr. Lt. Col. P. Pettit (Army Officer and SMBC Councillor)
Cllr. M. Whine (SMBC Councillor)
Mr. P. Wayne (Headmaster St Marylebone Grammar School)
The Rev. HJ. Matthews (Parish Priest)
Mr & Mrs J Dovaston
Miss M. Eldridge (Lawyer)
M. RS. Fisher
Mrs. M Mitchell-Dawson
Mr D. Bower
Dr. T.J.Derry
Lady Victor Paget
Captain N. Smith
Mafame M. Thiery

Fig. 4.5 St Marylebone Society 1948 founding steering committee members

The steering committee formed to establish the society's objects and constitution had political, local and national connections. It included professionals, landowners, aristocrats, clergy, members of the armed forces alongside the mayor and other St Marylebone Borough Councillors. The list illustrates the elite social make-up of the fledgling society and the latent power they possessed, individually and collectively. The founders were motivated, self-reliant, highly educated and well connected. Their direct personal connections with the Portman Estate and the Howard de Walden Estate, the St Marylebone Parish Church and both Conservative and Labour local councillors allowed them to solicit many local residents to join the SMS and within a year they had over 200 paid up members. Their network power was succinctly summed up by a founder member who reminisced in conversation

that, “We were only one phone call away from Attlee!” (Interview with Ruth Eldridge, 30 April 2013).

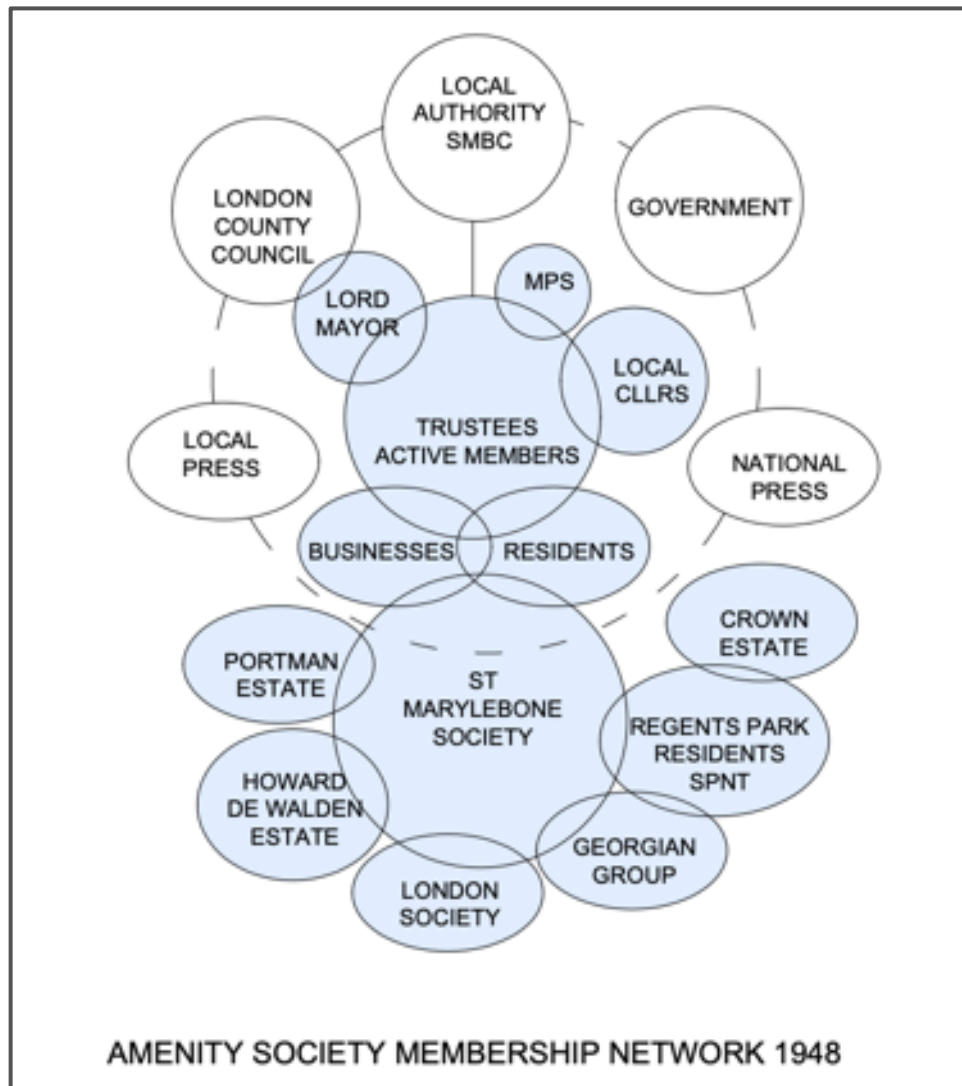


Fig. 4.6 St Marylebone Society network in 1948 (membership in blue)

Most powerful was His Worship the Mayor Reneson Coucher FRICS, FAI, LCC. As an Air Raid Warden, he had witnessed the scale of townscape destruction and made colour cine films of Marylebone during and after World War II which have left a poignant insight into the mood of the early society. A local St Marylebone Borough Conservative Councillor (elected 1937), Deputy Chair of the London County Council Councillor (1952-1955) and from 1947 Lord Mayor, he was committed to civic duty and his charisma, energy and enthusiasm brought all on board with his vision of the SMS as a voluntary group with the ability to protect Marylebone.



Fig. 4.7 His Worship the Mayor Reneson Coucher (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

Fig. 4.8 Ruth Eldridge the first Honorary Secretary (SMS Archive)

Councillor (later Alderman) Coucher became the first of a number of mayoral chairmen and presidents of the SMS. St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) Librarian Geoffrey Stephens became Honorary General Secretary and Mr Stonebridge Honorary Treasurer, with support from the SMBC Libraries Committee, who made office facilities available. The SMBC General Purposes Committee gave permission for the society to use the town hall for meetings and the society were also granted permission to use the St Marylebone Coat of Arms, a powerful symbol that conferred gravitas to the organisation.

Also instrumental in shaping the SMS was Elizabeth Bright Ashford, one of the first female barristers in the UK and also a St Marylebone Borough Councillor. At the time she was also Honorary Secretary of the Central Council of Civic Societies (CCCS), founded in 1939 with a list of objects including “To encourage the formation of new Civic Societies” and, “To stimulate interest in the improvement of urban amenities.” The CCCS’s stated purpose exactly describes (almost verbatim) the constitutional intentions and early activities of the SMS, which were

- To increase and develop public amenities

- To preserve buildings and monuments of historic or artistic value and places of natural beauty
- To encourage and co-ordinate activities relating to architecture, music, drama and the other arts
- To co-operate for these purposes with local authorities and with bodies with similar aims, both local and national
- To stimulate interest in these matters – to encourage a sense of citizenship.

Her knowledge of established amenity and civic societies, legal matters, sharp intellect and passion for public health and history made her an ideal candidate for the SMS steering committee, and she devised the society's original constitution, which had one over-riding purpose:

The objects of the Society shall be to further the following *for the benefit of the public*: The stimulation of public interest in and the care for the beauty, history and character of St Marylebone (my emphasis).

The stability and consistency of the SMS is illustrated by the fact that this constitution has changed only twice since 1948; firstly, to gain charitable status in 1977, and in 2013 when the constitution was amended to allow meetings to be quorate with less attendees, necessitated by the decline in membership (Appendix A: original CCCS constitution, 1939; Appendix B: SMS constitution).

The society settled down to work with various sub-committees for history, architecture, planning, photography and record keeping. A programme of lectures, visits and later photographic and art exhibitions were arranged which served to recruit new members, spread their message and increase their network power. The first SMS lecture by Mr (later Sir) John Summerson on *Architecture in St Marylebone* was followed by many other speakers, all eminent in their fields. The SMS organisation, structure and activities were in place and its membership was active, motivated and growing. Connections with aristocracy, academics, the Government, Crown and Great Estates were established and the SMS were self-appointed as a consultative body for planning matters to both SMBC and the LCC.

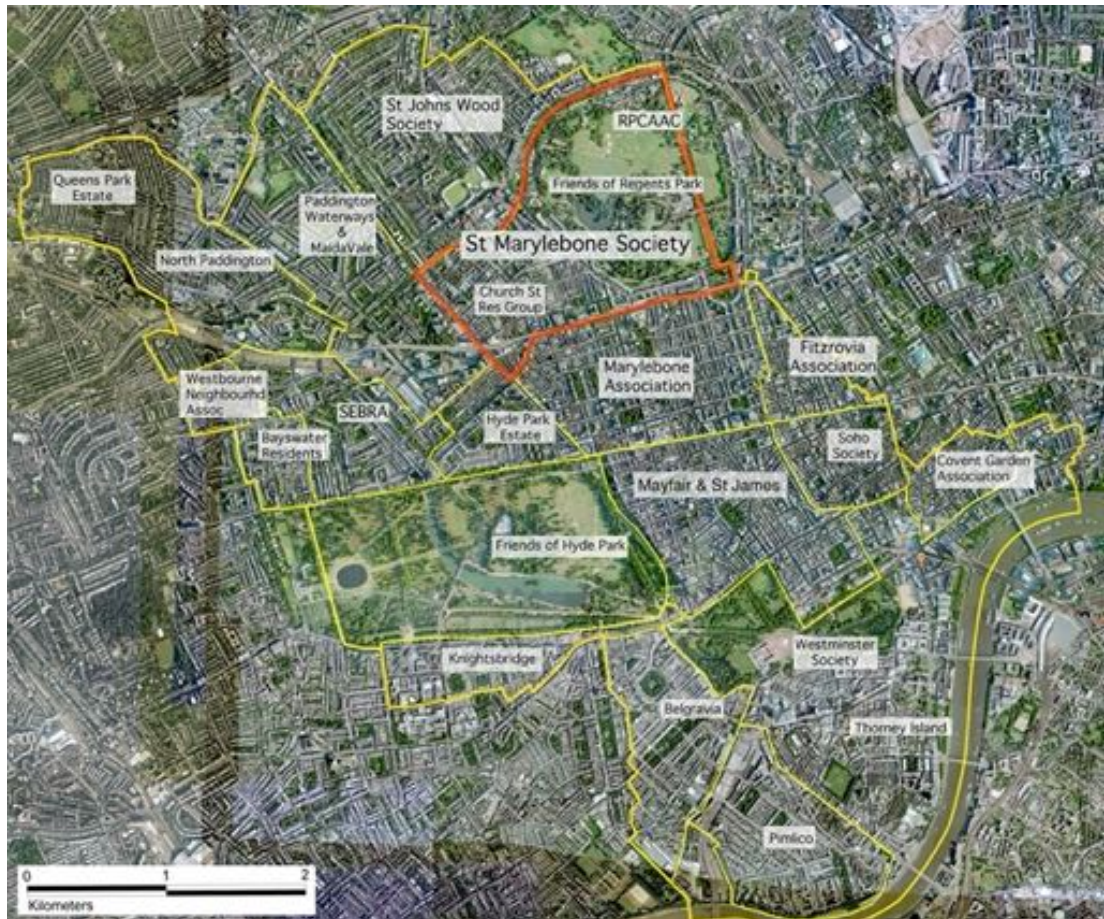


Fig. 4.9 Local amenity societies in Westminster (google maps) (SMS Archive, 2020)

Marylebone's population gradually increased and the SMS diligently continued their work upholding the founding constitution over the course of the twentieth century. Following the 1965 restructuring of local government and the establishment of Westminster City Council (WCC) ward boundaries were adjusted and also those of local amenity societies. The St John's Wood Society had formed in 1963, but many residents continued to be members of the SMS as well as their immediate local society. In 1986 WCC agreed with the Blandford Baker Residents Association to designate the southern part of Marylebone (W1 post code and south of the Marylebone Road) as a separate consultative amenity society, the Marylebone Association (MA). These residents also remained members of both organisations and in this way an overlapping of networks developed which continues today. The SMS membership grew slowly and steadily, today standing at approximately 400 resident members and with 50 corporate or not-for profit organisations affiliated to the society. Whilst numbers of SMS members increased with the

founding of more local societies, their geographical area of planning consultancy shrank and with this the ability to recruit new active members. Much of Regent's Park has properties that belong to highly influential people, yet for many it is not their primary residence and they have no need or desire to connect with the SMS. Church Street ward to the West, has a culturally and ethnically diverse population which have proved difficult to recruit as members to the SMS, despite a decade of initiatives to do so for the socio-economic reasons outlined in Chapter 2.

This situation has caused the society's membership, active volunteers and social and campaigning activities to gradually reduce in number. The result of demographic change in Marylebone is shown in the diagram below (Fig. 4.10) which names and states the professions of the SMS trustees in 1948 and 2014.

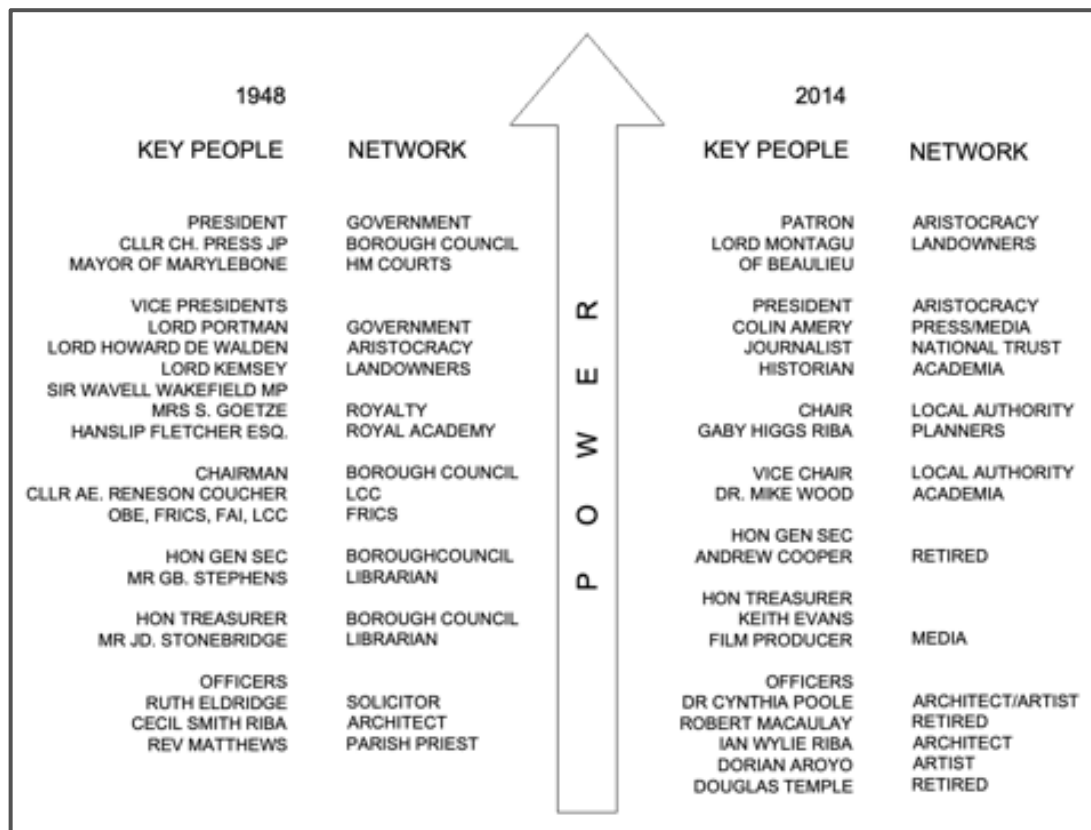


Fig. 4.10 Comparison of SMS key people's roles and networks 1948 - 2014

One can see that the potential for network connections and power has been reduced. The titled Presidents and Patrons are aligned in status, although act

as figureheads rather than being practically involved as they were in the mid-century. The Chair in 2014 has very much reduced network power compared to that of the Chair in 1948, the ubiquitous Alderman Coucher. Whilst the SMS retains the benefit of professionals with knowledge and expertise, their direct links with aristocracy, church, politicians and upper echelons of the establishment, and hence their network power, is diminished.

One constant however, is the demographic characteristics of the membership and this is typical of all amenity societies though difficult to survey. Political allegiance is not known, although the society has always had strong connections with the Conservative Party, through its links with local councillors and due to the Conservatives being in power locally throughout its existence. No record of personal details is included on membership records but archival photographs contain socio-economic evidence of the homogenous nature of members; white, middle-aged (or older) and middle-class.

The following photographs serve to illustrate some of the people active within the society and at social and planning events.



Fig. 4.11 Architect Cecil Smith talking to SMS members in Portman Square July 1949 (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*)

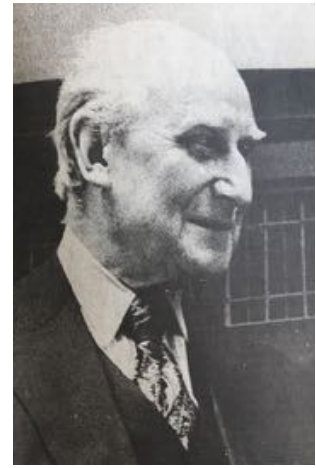


Fig. 4.12 SMS member Mrs Carless meeting Princess Alexandra in the 1950s (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

Fig. 4.13 Sir Brinsley Ford, past SMS Chairman (*The Independent*, Obituary, 9 May 1999)



Fig. 4.14 Dr Ann Saunders, SMBC Librarian in the 1960s and past SMS Chair (SMS Archive)

Fig. 4.15 Garden Party with SMS Patron Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, July 1992 (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, Summer 1988)

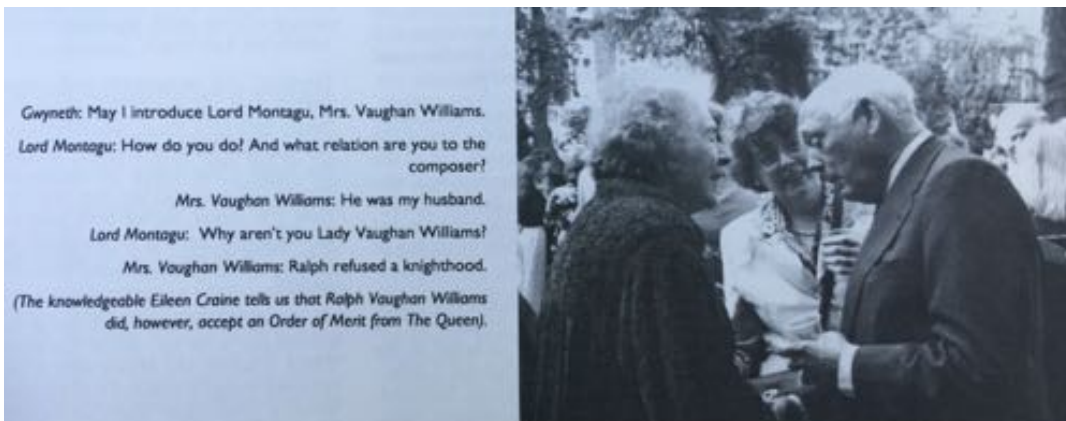


Fig. 4.16 Mrs Ursula Vaughan Williams in conversation with Lord Montagu



Fig. 4.17 SMS Garden Party 50th Anniversary, July 1998

Back row, from left to right: Patron, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, Cllr Jenny Bianco, the Deputy Lord mayor, Cllr Jan Predergast, her husband and escort, Peter Prendergast. Front row: Founder members, Mrs Ursula Vaughan Williams, Miss Mollie and Miss Ruth Eldridge (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter Summer 1998*, photographs by past Chair John Falding)



Fig. 4.18 Carolyn Keen, Jean Keen and Andrew Keen (Past SMS Chairs and descendants of founder Alderman Reneson Coucher) (SMS Archive)

Fig. 4.19 President Colin Amery talking after dinner at the SMS 60th Anniversary Celebration, July 2008 (SMS Archive)

One of the objects of the SMS constitution is to provide a record of local history and all their publications are deposited not just with Westminster City Archives but with the British Library. The SMS activities are well-documented and recorded in their regular newsletters and the photographs illustrate that the

membership demographic has not changed since the 1940s despite the dramatic changes in the wider Marylebone locale. In the photographs of the SMS 50th Anniversary Garden Party (shown in figs. 4.15 to 4.17) we see founder members in attendance alongside the Lord Mayor and WCC local ward councillors. This level of loyalty to the society, a deep-seated personal sense of civic duty alongside population stability is integral to the long-term relationships established by the SMS within the local democratic framework contributing benefits of the *'longue durée'*. This is how network power has been, perhaps sub-consciously and for well-intended, genuine good-neighbourly and sociable reasons, nurtured and increased over the decades, and conferred to the society today.



Fig. 4.20 WCC Planning officers and local councillors attending a SMS Public Meeting to discuss the Baker Street Two Way Project, 2016 (SMS Archive)

WCC began reviewing the local amenity societies working within the local authority in 1998 with an ambition to regularly repeat its survey to ensure that they were, “wholly representative in reflecting the views of their members, the local community and other groups within their areas” (WCC Cabinet Member Report, 05 November 2008). WCC acknowledged in their findings that amenity

societies were representative, professional and useful in contributing to the democratic consultative and decision-making process. They noted the legal and economic value of having seventeen amenity societies voluntary participation with their statement that,

Certainly in respect of planning, if the amenity societies didn't exist then the Council would have to consider establishing advisory committees for all its 53 conservation areas (WCC Report, 5 November 2008).



Fig. 4.21 Annual SMS planning walk with WCC officers and local councillors, 2018
(*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, Autumn 2018)

4.2 The Sites to be Investigated

The historic Borough of St Marylebone still represents the constitutional remit and area of planning interest for the SMS. However, to allow an in-depth, detailed investigation, the geographical scope of the research will be limited, and all four sites under consideration are adjacent to the Marylebone Road. This area represents the 'civic' heart of Marylebone with the Parish Church, Town Hall, Library, University, Magistrates Court and Railway Station located along its length and in 1948 this was also the administrative centre of the local authority.



Fig. 4.22 Aerial view showing location of four sites to be investigated (google maps)



Fig. 4.23 Locations of four sites to be investigated within the case study (shown within the context of the SMS constitutional area of interest) (SMS Archive)

The Marylebone Road is a main arterial route through London, described as Ring Road 'A' in the 1943 *County of London plan*. Planning decisions for buildings here make reference to transportation and access, adding an interesting dimension and additional stakeholders at each site.

Site 1 – Regent’s Park & St Marylebone Parish Church

This case study is concerned with a group of buildings centred on the St Marylebone Parish Church. The church is in a prominent feature in Marylebone, at the top of the Marylebone High Street, facing the Marylebone Road and the compositional focus of John Nash’s York Gate entrance to Regent’s Park. SMS involvement was during the post-war period 1948 -1968, campaigning to save the Nash Terraces in Regent’s Park, the Old Parish Church and Charles Dickens House at 1, Devonshire Place. The amenity being protected was conservation and townscape. The SMS created the Memorial Garden as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and initiated consultation and discussions on the design of Heron House, a commercial development adjacent to the parish church.

Site 2 – Castrol House (now Marathon House)

Castrol House, completed in 1961, was a major commercial development in a highly sensitive location, directly opposite St Marylebone Bourgh Council House. It was a controversial building however, there was no involvement by the SMS during the 1950s, save recording of the bomb-damaged buildings on the site. In the 1990s, an era of post-modern commercial development, the SMS successfully campaigned to prevent the demolition of Castrol House.

Site 3 – Marylebone Station & the Great Central Hotel

Marylebone Station (and the associated Great Central Hotel) are situated to the north of the Marylebone Road. This was the last main line station to be built in London and an important transport hub, connected by a glazed porte-cochere the station hotel. Throughout the 1960s demolition and massive reconstruction on the site was resisted and plans to close the station in the 1970s became a reality when official closure notices were posted by BR in 1983. The amenity being protected was transport infrastructure, conservation and environmental air quality. SMS involvement began in 1952 with involvement in the London Plan for zoning and policy decisions. Between 1984

and 1986 the SMS led a two year long intensive campaign, successfully saving the station and hotel and preventing its conversion to a coach terminus.

Site 4 – City of Westminster Magistrates Courts

The City of Westminster Magistrates Court is at the corner of the Marylebone Road and Seymour Place. The original 1750s courthouse on the corner had been extended into two historic public bath houses, the Georgian Tuscan Baths and the Victorian Public Baths. In a complicated land deal three other court buildings in Westminster were sold off for conversion to private residential development with this site retained and developed to become one combined City of Westminster Magistrates Court. To offset the planning requirement associated with the wider development a large block of flats, designated as affordable social housing, was proposed to the rear of the courts. The amenity being protected was conservation and townscape. The SMS involvement was between 2006 and 2008 with unsuccessful attempts to prevent demolition and influence the design of the replacement buildings.

The planning and development history of these four sites will follow. The narrative will be chronological, focused on the SMS's role and actions with critical discussion at each stage of their specific campaign or time period. Analysis will explain and evidence their power, its type and exercise as evidenced through the amenity societies' tactics and strategies to influence decision-making and built outcome.

CHAPTER 5

SITE 1 – REGENT’S PARK & ST MARYLEBONE PARISH CHURCH

Introduction

This chapter investigates the St Marylebone Society’s (SMS) activities from the time of its foundation in 1948 through the 1950s period of post-war reconstruction and assess its power in preventing the demolition of buildings at the historic core of Marylebone and also its pro-active participation in the planning process to influence the design of contemporary development. Centred on the St Marylebone Parish Church, this site represents an important civic townscape, reflecting 200 years of architectural and urban development.

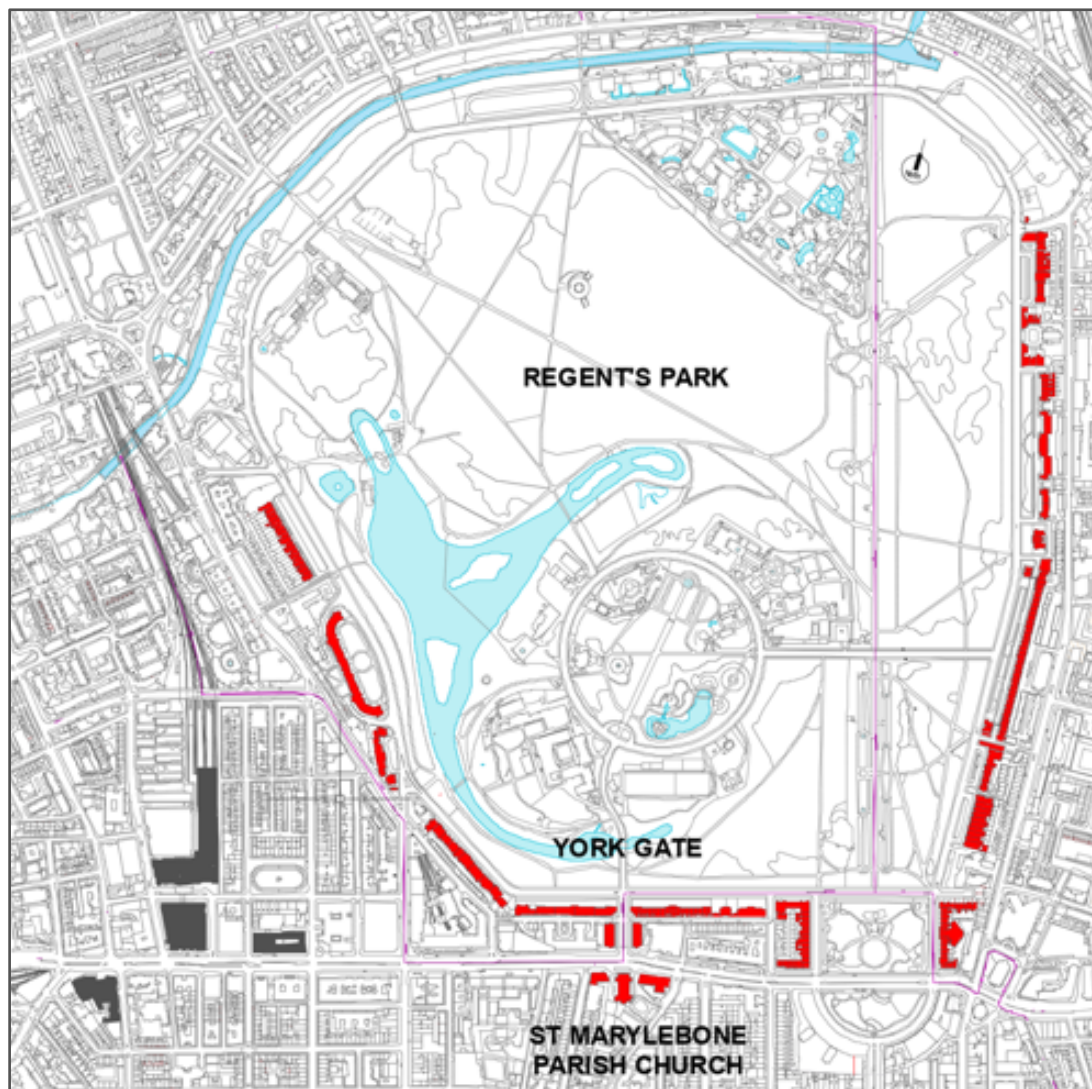


Fig. 5.1 Site Location of Regent’s Park Nash Terraces, York Gate and St Marylebone Parish Church (OS Digimap, map date Dec 2020, Site 1 buildings indicated in red)

The buildings involved are:

- The Nash Terraces, Regent's Park (1820-1840),
- The St Marylebone Old Parish Church 1742 (rebuilt on the site of the original c1400 St Mary's Church beside the River Tyburn)
- No. 1 Devonshire Place (Charles Dickens' house, 1788-1800)



Fig. 5.2 *County of London Plan*, Road 'A' (Abercrombie, 1943)

These buildings faced demolition due to bomb-damage, the ensuing austerity measures, economic constraints and housing need. The society also had to contest with the ambitions of Abercrombie's *County of London Plan* for radical road changes in the area, as the Marylebone Road cuts between this urban group. This was a time when there were no opportunities within the planning system nor policy for local amenity societies to participate. Therefore, their preservation was a formidable challenge to the newly founded SMS and

analysis of their campaign strategies and tactics will evidence the following key issues:

- Their inherent power at the foundation of the society
- Their strategies and actions to increase their network power
- The tactics used to exercise their power in the campaigns
- The legacy they laid for future conservation battles

There was common purpose amongst the actors in these campaigns, with local and national politicians, landowners, architects and historians sharing the view that Regent's Park and the Georgian architecture of Marylebone must be saved. Marylebone was run-down and sparsely populated at the time; the relatively few residents who had determined to stay in the city throughout the war had developed a comradeship and the fledgling SMS membership was aligned, connected, motivated and ready for action.



Fig. 5.3 Harley Street by night, by founder member Margaret Gunst
Winner of the first SMS Photographic Competition in 1949 (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)



Fig. 5.4 Baker Street/Blandford Street, Bomb Damage 1941 (City of Westminster Archive)

With the loss of so many Georgian buildings in Marylebone, and many more damaged beyond repair and scheduled for demolition, emotions ran high in the overwhelmingly Conservative Borough of St Marylebone. Ann Saunders, St Marylebone Librarian and SMS member, recalled a plot with her colleague, Mr Stonebridge (SMS Hon. Secretary) that,

If it really came to an attempt at demolition in Regent's Park, we would break in to one of the terraces ... Mr. Stonebridge still had his war-time rifle ... and we would shoot over the heads of anyone attempting demolition. We were prepared to go to jail by making a hell of a fuss. Yes, we were going to be an absolute, bloody nuisance! (Interview with Ann Saunders, 26 March 2016).

5.1 The Nash Terraces, Regent's Park

The SMS has always claimed that the society was highly influential in the final decision to retain and restore the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park. However, consideration of the timeframe of the public enquiry chaired by Lord Gorell suggests otherwise. The decision to save the terraces, as published in the

H.M.S.O. *Report of the Committee on the Regent's Park Terraces* was dated 21 January 1947, while the SMS was not founded until over a year later on 7 September 1948. This misinformation could be seen as an example of innocent 'folk memory' propagating the story *ad hoc*, or it could have been tactically reported as fact by the SMS and oft repeated in their self-published reports and newsletters to evidence their power, improve their profile locally and draw in more members.

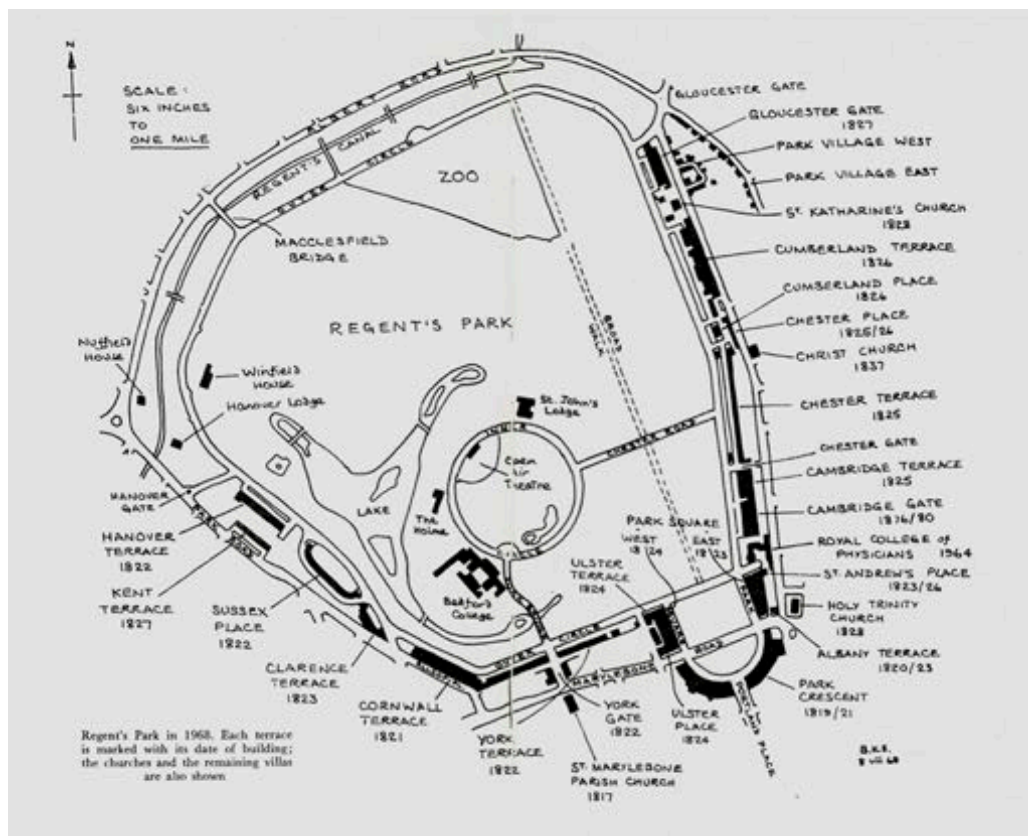


Fig. 5.5 Plan of the Nash Terraces (Saunders, 1969, p170)

The public enquiry which informed the '*Gorell Report*' had been appointed by the Prime Minister, C.R. Attlee, on 12 January 1946,

To consider the future of the Terraces adjoining Regent's Park from all aspects, architectural, town-planning and financial, and to make recommendations as to their future adaptation or replacement to meet modern requirements (Gorell, 1947, p27).

Lord Gorell considered seventy written memoranda and heard verbal statements from forty-seven witnesses at seventeen meetings over the year.

It was a campaign of national interest as the buildings and their setting were of high architectural importance not just to local residents but also to architectural and historical societies across Britain (Saunders, 1969).



Fig. 5.6 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, 1930 (Copyright Crown Estates)



Fig. 5.7 Sussex Place, Regent's Park, condition in the 1950s (Copyright Crown Estates)

The Nash Terraces comprised 374 houses, the majority of which held leases from the Crown Estate Commissioners (CEC) due to expire in the 1960s and 1970s. Surveyed in 1942, many were semi-derelict and the CEC received and accepted 'Notices of Disclaimer' of the leases of 128 of the houses. The surveyors noted that "eighty-three further houses had leases which had expired, been surrendered or forfeited, and many other lessees abandoned occupation" (Gorell, 1947). By 1945 "Two-thirds of the houses were empty; few remained undamaged from blast or bombing; many were no longer weather-proof" (Saunders, 1969, p165).

The condition of many of the buildings was extremely poor not only due to bomb damage but through lack of maintenance such that the Gorell Report concluded, "There are few more lugubrious experiences than that to be obtained from a general survey of the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park" (Gorell, 1947, p10). The committee debated whether to demolish, renovate or adapt and the final decision was only to partially preserve the Nash Terraces, and only those of greatest importance and most feasible (economic) for repair. Gorell concluded,

We are unanimously of the opinion that the Nash Terraces are of national interest and importance and that ... they should be preserved as far as is practicable and without strict regard to the economics of 'prudent' estate management (Gorell, 1947, p21).

Whilst the buildings survey and ensuing debate began some six years preceding the formation of the SMS, it was an extremely high-profile public enquiry, taking place in Marylebone, which many residents followed with close attention. This research evidences that the campaign to save the Nash Terraces was indeed the catalyst for the foundation of the SMS and that the society played an essential role in their restoration.

Two local people involved in the Gorell Report would go on to become founder members of the society: Alderman C.S. Steel (Mayor of St Marylebone Borough Council, 1946-47) and Cllr Ethel Bright Ashford who, as described in Chapter 4, was Honorary Secretary of the Central Council of Civic Societies (CCCS). She was at the forefront of the amenity society movement and was well-connected to the establishment, conferring inherent personal network

power that she could use to influence decision-making in the Regent's Park campaign. Through Bright Ashford the SMS could forge links with the Chair of the CCCS, the 3rd Viscount Esher (peer and politician linked to the National Trust, SPAB, RIBA and other cultural organisations) who also spoke at the Gorell Enquiry and championed the British conservation movement.

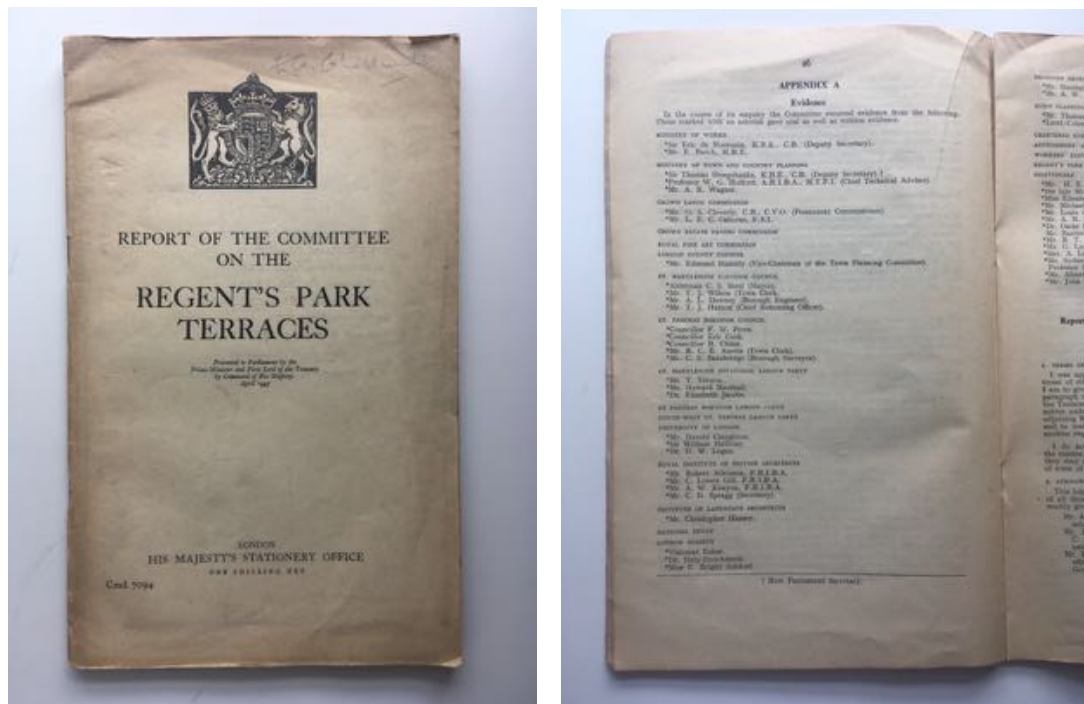


Fig. 5.8 Report of the committee on the Regent's Park Terraces (the Gorell Report, 1947) and Appendix A, listing those giving evidence (London: HMSO)

As a local ward councillor, she had close working relationships with the Mayor, Alderman Steel, public officers and politicians at St Marylebone Borough Council, including Alderman Reneson Coucher, the first Chairman of the SMS. With her close friend Ruth Eldridge (fellow lawyer and later SMS Hon Secretary) they even had the potential for informal connections with the PM Clement Atlee (Interview with Ruth Eldridge, 30 April 2013). Cllr Bright Ashford and Alderman Coucher complimented each other; they had wealthy, educated upper-middle-class families, both were driven and dedicated to civic duty and public service, evident by their long-standing roles within St Marylebone Borough Council. They possessed passionate interest in local politics, history and architecture coupled with an energy and work ethic which allowed them to forge links with many organisations and so collect considerable personal

network power. They were the driving force behind the SMS being more than just a historical society, and the SMS benefited from their knowledge, organisational and political skills and network power from the outset (Interview with Ruth Eldridge, 30 April 2013). The diagram below (Fig.5.9) illustrates Bright Ashford's connectivity and potential for personal network power.

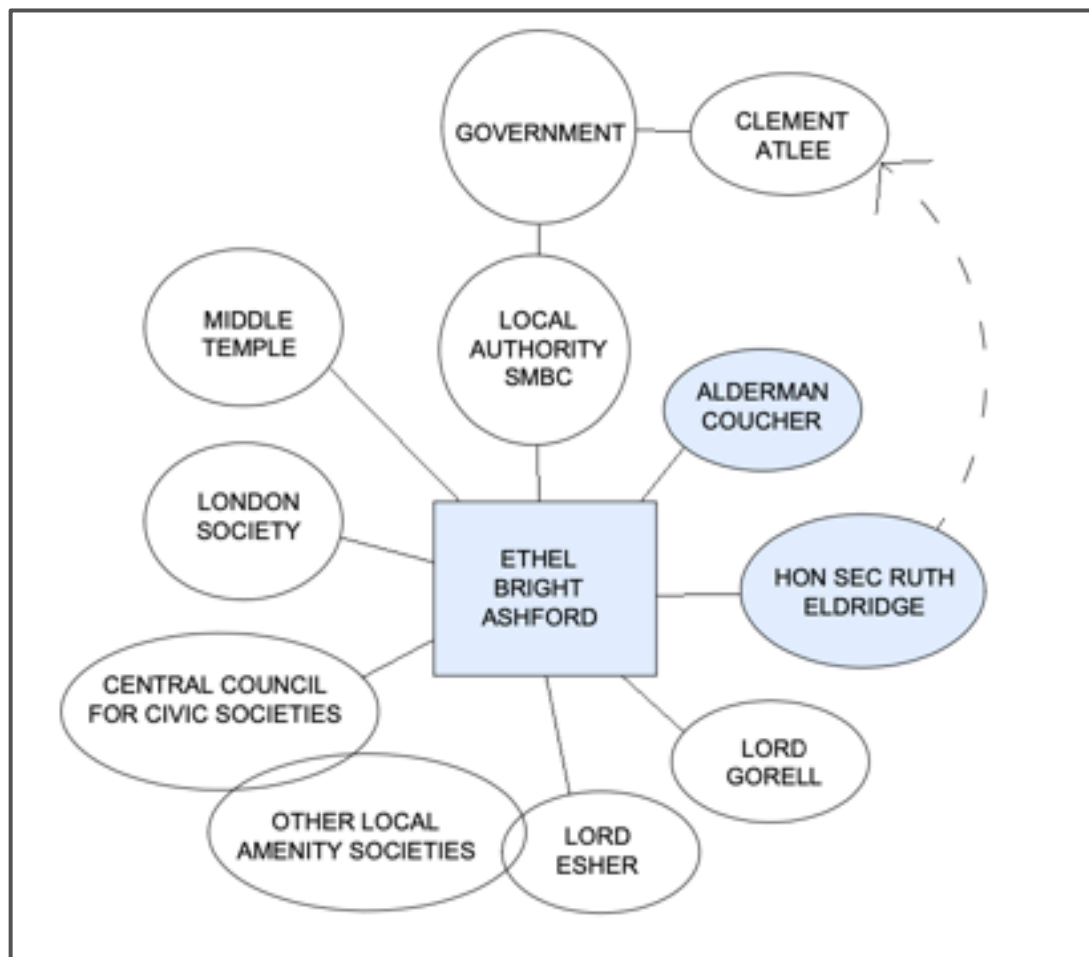


Fig. 5.9 Cllr Ethel Bright Ashford's Personal Network 1948

The start of the Campaign - SMS Collaborate with the Georgian Group and Crown Estate Commissioners

Regent's Park was owned and governed by the Crown Estate Commissioners (CEC) and the Crown Estate Paving Commission (CEPC). The relationship between these bodies and the SMS was one that grew closer as they realised there would be mutual benefits in collaborating on the conservation of Regent's Park. Founder SMS Hon. Secretary Ruth Eldridge recalled that,

One of the burning issues I was involved with was the preservation of the Regency terraces. But the Nash constructions were pretty flimsy. They were in a terrible condition and even the Crown Commissioners agreed they might just be patched up, might last not more than twenty years and then be pulled down. Reneson Coucher almost foamed at the mouth at their suggestion. The fight was to preserve the terraces ... Sir Osmond Cleverly [Commissioner CEC] said, "We don't expect them to last." Reneson Coucher replied, "No they must be preserved at all costs" (Interview with Ruth Eldridge, 30 April 2013).

Even with the legal protection offered by the conclusions of the 1947 Gorell Report, the Nash Terraces were not completely safe. Gorell had identified only the most important buildings, the least damaged and the most feasible for conversion, "...as far as is practicable" (Gorell, 1947). The SMS wanted the whole group preserved and campaigned throughout the 1950s and 1960s for their full retention and restoration; they understood that the Gorell Report was just the starting point. On 11 January 1951 SMS representatives attended a meeting with the CEC at which they outlined their concerns, reinforced personal connections and began a dialogue which would continue for a decade. As reported in the *SMS Newsletter*,

Our representatives were most cordially received and were assured of the Commissioners' full sympathy with our views. The Commissioners stated that the painting of the facades would be completed by early spring but they regretted that the complete restoration of all details was quite impossible for the Festival [1951 Festival of Britain] in view of difficulties of labour and materials and the immense amount of individual moulding required. Our representatives were shown some of the work completed and in progress and appreciated the formidable nature of the task. They were pleased to report that the policy of the Commissioners includes the restoration of the roof-line and glazing-bars of the original Nash design (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, Spring 1951).

They had quickly realised that to have any influence they needed powerful allies and in this case it would be the property owners, the CEC, who would

ultimately make decisions on the buildings. The SMS sympathised with the extent and cost of the works but did not allow this to be an excuse for poor quality restoration. They specified the detail of the restoration and highlighting this in print had two objectives: to publicly record that the CEC had agreed to implement this detail properly, making it difficult for them to change their minds, and also to tacitly remind the CEC that they would be keeping a careful watch on any future work. To nurture the relationship, they invited the CEC to give a talk to the SMS as part of their winter 1951 lecture series. Entitled '*Crown Commission on Regent's Terraces*' this gave the CEC an opportunity to meet the amenity society members and present their case. Over an innocuous glass of wine, this gave the SMS valuable personal contacts and opportunities to discover common ground off record (SMS Archive, Winter Lectures 1951 – Crown Commission on Regent's Terraces, lecture by Mr Entwistle).

The SMS was vigilant at spotting opportunities to connect with other influential actors and their educated and privileged backgrounds gave them the confidence to network and initiate introductions. For example, in a letter dated 13 August 1957, SMS Hon. Secretary Mr Stonebridge wrote to Lady Keeling, making reference to a letter she had written to *The Daily Telegraph* in defence of the Nash Terraces, stating:

The real battle is not joined but the Georgian Group, the London Society, our own society and other bodies, will have to fight hard for the preservation of these lovely terraces. It is good to know where our friends can be found (SMS Archive, letter, 13 August 1957).

This letter reinforced their connections between the above groups and in mentioning themselves within a list of well-known organisations the SMS gained credibility by association, deftly putting themselves on a par with national campaigners. Writing to Lady Keeling and assuming friendship illustrates they considered themselves as social equals who could support and benefit each other.

Links to the Georgian Group were further exploited with a letter from the SMS (dated 4 October 1957) asking for help preserving the Nash Terraces, to which Lord Rosse (the Earl of Rosse, Chairman of the Georgian Group) replied

enclosing two 'Confidential' Memos for the SMS's 'private information'. The first detailed a conversation with Mr Harris, the Chief Permanent Commissioner for Crown Lands, who specifically referred to the potential role of the amenity society. He began by praising the Georgian Group and amenity societies for, "not entering into uninformed discussions in certain newspapers on the subject of the Regent's Park Terraces." He gave "categorical assurance" that any decision on the terraces would be open to discussion from invited "responsible bodies" (SMS Archive, letters, 16 October 1957 and 29 October 1957).

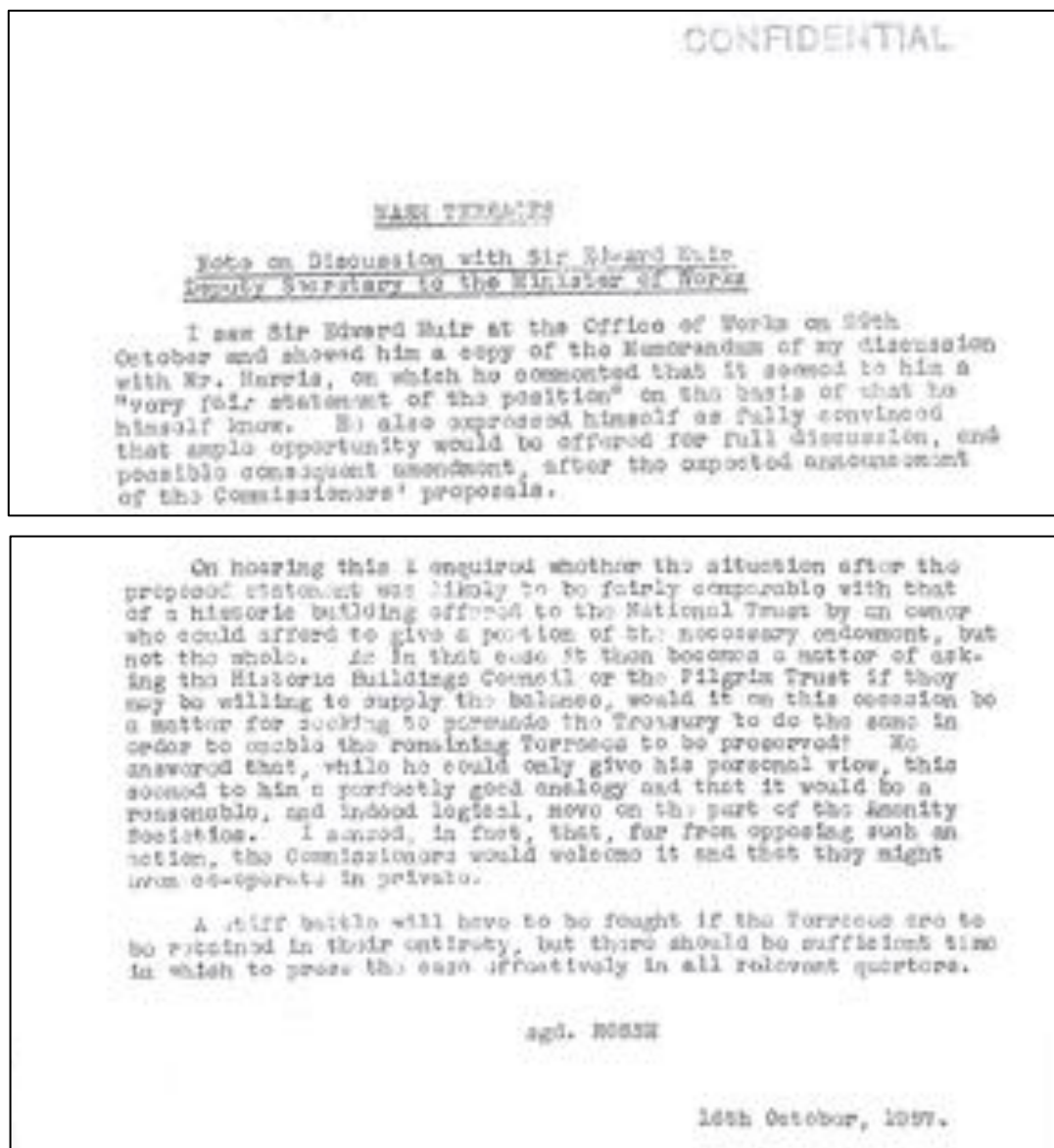


Fig. 5.10 Extracts from confidential note shared with SMS, 16 October 1957 (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

In a time of economic and material shortages the CEC could not realistically commit to retaining all the buildings around Regent's Park. Hence, when the Georgian Group suggested the idea of the buildings becoming similar to National Trust properties, with repairs being subsidised by the Treasury and other charitable trusts, Mr Harris agreed. He suggested that getting the buildings to be considered thus, would be a reasonable, logical, move on the part of the amenity societies. Lord Rosse sums up his letter to the SMS saying,

I sensed that, far from opposing such an action, the Commissioners would welcome it and that they might even cooperate in private (SMS Archive, Confidential Memorandum, 16 October 1957).

A week later Lord Rosse met with Sir Edward Muir, Deputy Secretary to the Minister of Works, and began by showing him the "confidential memorandum of his previous meeting." Sharing confidential information was being used to engender trust and solicit information. Lord Rosse reported back to the SMS that, "Sir Edward assured me that they [the CEC] are intent on preserving the amenities of the area to the greatest possible degree" (SMS Archive, Confidential Memorandum, 16 October 1957).

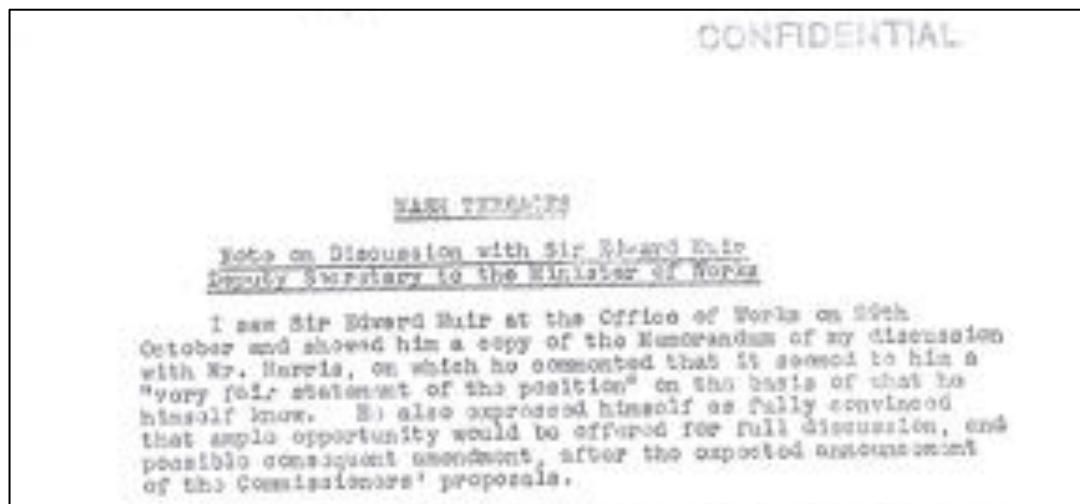


Fig. 5.11 Extract from confidential note shared with SMS, 29 October 1957 (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

From this exchange of letters, detailing off the record conversations between senior CEC executives and government ministers, it is clear that the SMS was a trusted ally. They had not caused a fuss and taken their campaign to the press which would have caused the CEC embarrassment, rather they had kept

the lines of internal covert communication open and maintained cordial relationships because they recognised that they would be more influential avoiding conflict and working from within the establishment.

SMS Extend their Network Power with Local Residents and Councillors

Also opposing the demolition of the Nash Terraces were the residents who remained living in the dilapidated and bombed-out houses; leaseholders and tenants campaigning to keep their homes. Together with journalists, artists and architectural historians they created the Society for the Protection of the Nash Terraces (Regent’s Park) (SPNT) and allied themselves with the SMS for mutual support.

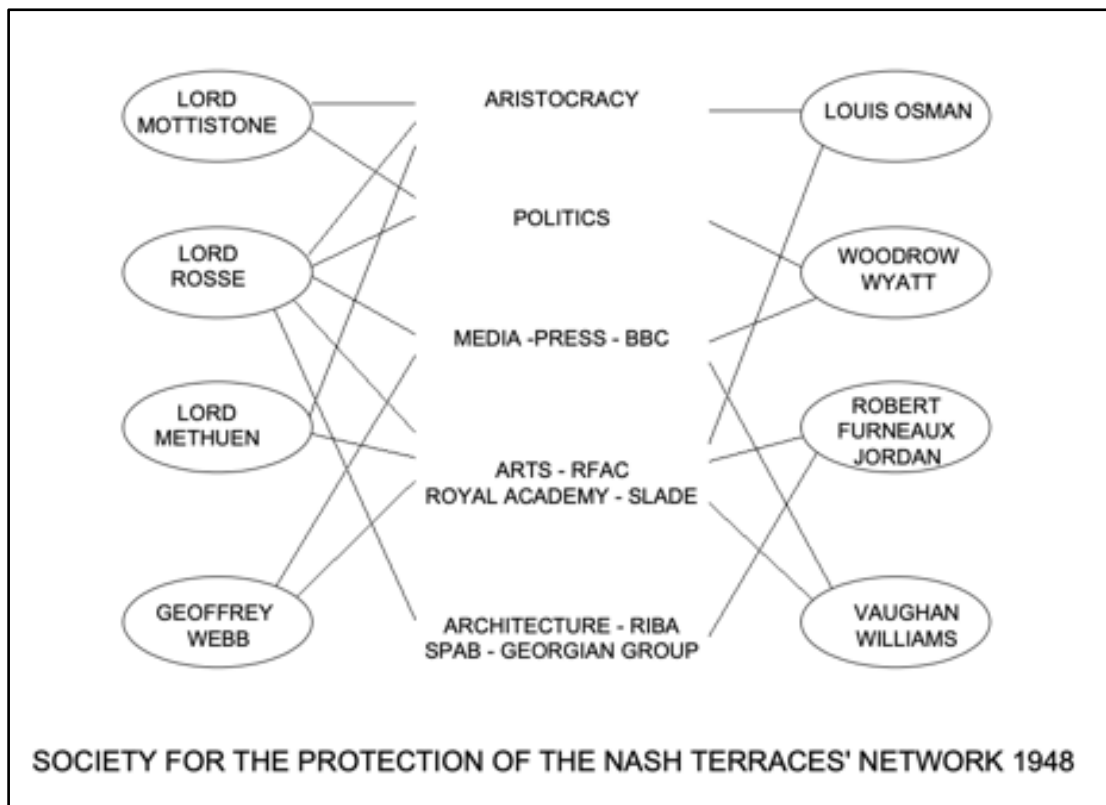


Fig. 5.12 Society for the protection of the Nash Terraces network to the establishment

Whilst small in size, their membership and contacts represented a very influential group. Mrs Audrey Harris Hon. Secretary (no. 8 Hanover Terrace) was spokesperson with celebrated musician Dr R. Vaughan Williams (at no. 10 Hanover Terrace) as Chairman, and the rest of the group included:

- Robert Furneaux Jordan (Architect, critic and broadcaster)
- Louis Osman (Artist, architect, goldsmith, notable for the gold crown he designed and made for the investiture in 1969 of Prince Charles)
- Lord Methuen (Artist, zoologist and landowner)
- Lord Mottistone (Architect)
- Lord Rosse (Chairman of the Georgian Group, who had disclosed the above 'confidential information' to the SMS)
- Prof. Geoffrey Webb (Slade professor and Secretary to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and member of the Royal Fine Arts Commission)
- Woodrow Wyatt (Politician and newspaper owner)

Alongside their considerable connections, knowledge and skills they also had professional expertise from F.B. Cockburn (Solicitor) providing advice on constitutional and legal matters *pro bono*. These affluent Regent's Park residents were concerned that not being freeholders would hinder their claims to save their properties from demolition, asking the SMS for planning advice. The SMS reassured them that,

Our [SMS] council was of the opinion that you overestimate the 'delicacy' of your position as tenants. A year or two ago in this Borough, the Carlton-Clifton Hill Tenants Association conducted on their own behalf a vigorous and successful campaign against certain planning intentions. Their right to do so was never questioned and their fight for their own future was respected on all sides. The SMS was strongly in support of their actions (SMS Archive, letter from Mr Stonebridge, 5 November 1957).

This communication illustrates that the SMS was beginning to collect and record precedents for future negotiations with the local authority on legal and planning matters. In connecting with the SPNT the SMS significantly extended their network power, with direct links to the aristocracy, government and the media. The two groups had an aligned agenda and whilst for the SMS founder members this was altruistic, for the SPNT residents there was obvious self-interest alongside the desire to protect the amenity of the park and conserve its architecture for posterity.

However, there was a common adversary that the SPNT and the SMS needed to rally against - the St Marylebone Labour Party, who had also given evidence at the Gorell Enquiry. In the confidential memorandum handed to the SMS, the Ministry of Works had also highlighted an obstacle to their renewing the leases that they held for buildings in Regent's Park: this was that Marylebone Borough Council had made a decision to zone the whole area of the park for residential purposes only. When originally built in the 1820s the Nash Terraces were totally residential use but during World War II the Government had requisitioned and used many of the buildings for various ministries and offices. Post-war housing shortages had influenced town planners across London and in Marylebone the local Labour Party had identified Regent's Park as an ideal location to be cleared for the construction of large blocks of modern council flats.

Tom Vernon, a Labour activist had started a series of articles considering the future of the Nash Terraces in *Labour Life* explaining in detail the rationale for demolition to provide workers' flats instead of restoring the Georgian terraced houses. His initial involvement had begun in April 1946 when he wrote, "The St Marylebone Labour Party has been invited to give oral evidence before Lord Gorell's Committee considering the future of the Regent's Park Terraces" (Private Archive, Dr L. Jacobs, *Labour Life*, April 1946). At the St Marylebone Borough Council meeting on 28 February 1946 the main item on the agenda was the Regent's Park Terraces and the proceedings were vividly summarised in *Labour Life*:

Councillor Ken Creamer [Labour] followed with a vigorous assertion that Marylebone's working class must have a big share of the accommodation fringing Regent's Park...The Tories quickly dragged the debate down to their usual low level. Ignored Labour's proof it is a myth that that high ground rents is a "must" and will prevent working class flats; that these sites give Marylebone a wonderful chance to get going in a big way on re-housing without the usual problem of finding accommodation for persons displaced by the demolition of old properties. In his maiden speech, Councillor Robert McCullagh [Labour] dealt effectively with the Tory arguments and pulverised Councillor

Coucher [Conservative] on his revealing plea that £2,000 a year people suffer more acutely from housing discomforts than the poor who are more habituated to such things! (Private Archive, Dr L. Jacobs, *Labour Life*, 1946).

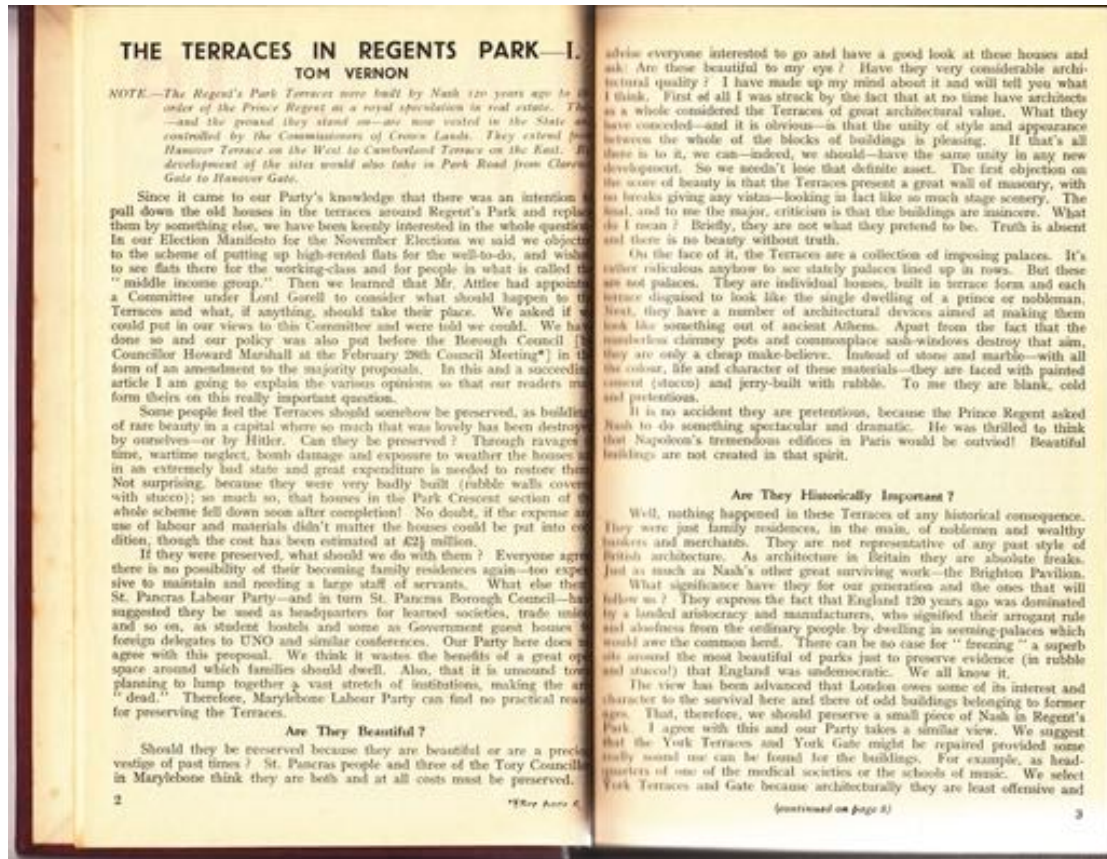


Fig. 5.13 *Labour Life: Magazine of the St Marylebone Labour Party*, April 1946, p2-3

The ‘pulverised’ councillor was Alderman Coucher, who in two years’ time was to become the instigator of the St Marylebone Society. However, at the meeting the Conservatives voted solidly against Labour’s effort to secure three-quarters of the proposed new flats for working-class families. The only concession the Labour Party achieved was as a response to a suggestion by Prime Minister C.R. Attlee, dated 21 January 1946, where the committee noted that “Due regard should be paid, in fixing any rents, to the desirability that occupation of the magnificent sites should not be the privilege of any particular income group” (Gorell Report, 1947, para 65). Labour Councillor Tom Vernon was also a member of the SMS, perhaps for no other reason than being interested in local politics and planning but more likely to allow him to be party

to their discussions on local matters and present a voice of balanced opposition. The long-standing majority control of St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) by the Conservative Party represents a raw power that could not be defeated by the any of the other political parties' votes combined. With Alderman Coucher at the head of the SMS, the society effectively acquired his power and through him they could directly influence local decision-making via his many contacts at St Marylebone Borough Council and later on at the London County Council (LCC) (Interview with Dr Leonard Jacobs, 25 November 2013).

SMS Strategies and Tactics – Covert Power

The actors had different but aligned ambitions and so collaborated to support each other and maximise their network power. The SMS had forged early links with the CEC and SPNT to work together against the demolition of the Nash Terraces and the Labour Party's desire for working class housing in their place. The SPNT residents wanted to keep their low rent, well placed London homes and have the renovation done by the CEC. The CEC wanted to retain and increase the values of their properties and needed to secure Treasury funding for their restoration. The CEC would later argue against the *County of London Plan* and St Marylebone Borough Council's intention for residential zoning by supporting commercial uses as acceptable, for example, the London Business School, Royal College of Physicians and office developments at York Gate. This was advantageous because such wealthy commercial organisations not only increased everyone's network power, they could also self-fund the restoration of their premises whilst the CEC retained the freehold of the properties.

The SMS and SPNT with clearly identified common purpose met and agreed, that in view of the pressure already being brought to bear on the Crown Estate Commissioners and the financial problems of R.A. Butler, they would hold on any direct action involving the press until the Commissioner's announcement was made public. This delaying tactic was possible because having seen the 'confidential memo' they already knew what the announcement was likely to say and also what their future role would be in collaborating with the CEC. The

amenity societies held back from antagonising and embarrassing the CEC publicly and devised a strategy where they could work together covertly for a common aim. The SMS wanted to ensure that *all* the terraces were retained and repaired properly and understood that financial assistance from the Treasury was necessary to enable that restoration. The waiting paid off and on 23 December 1957 the SMS Council “Welcomed the decisions of the Crown Estate Commissioners as set out in their report” to restore the Nash Terraces. However, they noted a need for members to keep an eye on developments. In an undated ‘Any Other Business’ memo they state that they have noticed that the recently rebuilt Park Crescent terrace appears to have a roofline not corresponding to the original and called for a meeting with the CEC to investigate this. Vigilance and dogged determination were key attributes of the SMS. The SMS members knew their locality in great detail, noticing even minor changes to buildings and with plenty of spare time to challenge and pursue matters with those in authority (SMS Archive, Council minutes, 23 December 1957). Simultaneous with campaigning in Regent’s Park the SMS turned their attention to a key architectural landmark that is the focus of the Nash Terraces at York Gate – St Marylebone Parish Church.

5.2 St Marylebone Parish Church and the Old Parish Church



Fig. 5.14 St Marylebone Parish Church, York Gate
(Copyright St Marylebone Parish Church)

St Marylebone Parish Church stands directly opposite York Gate, terminating Nash's architectural composition and vista from Regent's Park on the south side of the Marylebone Road. In the *County of London Plan* the Marylebone Road was zoned for widening and increased commercial development along either side. This policy threatened the setting of the parish church and demolition of significant buildings in its proposed path, including the St Marylebone Old Parish Church and Charles Dickens' house at no. 1 Devonshire Terrace. The importance of the car and vehicular traffic flow was paramount in post-war planning and in the 1950s road planning proposed destruction in Marylebone, similar to that executed in the neighbouring boroughs of Paddington and Notting Hill with the construction of the Westway flyover. The 'Inner Ring Road A' only became a reality up to the Edgware Road/Harrow Road junction and its completion through Marylebone and around Regent's Park was never realised. However, anticipation of its route did affect development around the parish church and its environs with a zone for future road straightening and widening designated as a no-build area.

At one of the earliest SMS council meetings, on 4 April 1949, the Chairman, Alderman Coucher, reported that the St Marylebone Old Parish Church had been scheduled as a dangerous structure and that unless funds were forthcoming it would be demolished. He urged everyone to think of a possible use for the building in order to help the appeal that had been launched to fund its restoration. The old church had become unused following the construction of the new St Marylebone Parish Church in 1817, but it was historically significant as the birthplace of Marylebone, being rebuilt on the site of the first St Mary's Church (c1400) beside the River Tyburn (SMS Archive, Council meeting, 4 April 1949). At the time, the SMS was focused on saving the Nash Terraces, inexperienced as a society and too slow to campaign, with the result that at the SMS Council meeting on 9 September later that year the Chairman gave a summary of the "Sad happening in the sudden demolition of this ancient building". Following this, architect Cecil Smith chaired a meeting of the newly formed 'Architectural Section' of the SMS to discuss suggestions as to what they might do following the demolition (SMS archive, Council meetings, 23 October 1949 and 1 May 1950).



Fig. 5.15 St Marylebone Old Parish Church 1742
(Copyright St Marylebone Parish Church)

At the next SMS Council meeting the main topic of discussion was the unannounced demolition of the Old Parish Church and members reflected on the situation. It was felt that had they taken advantage of the powers of the Ministry of Town & Country Planning Act to make a Preservation Order in respect of buildings of 'architectural or historic interest' the church might have been saved. It was hoped that in future there might be greater coordination between the departments of the London County Council (LCC), concerned on the one hand with protecting the public from dangerous buildings and on the other with protecting old and historic buildings. SMS members felt that St Marylebone's loss might serve as a warning to other parts of the country where similar circumstances might be occurring. With this aim, measures to prevent the unnecessary destruction of old and/or historic buildings were put forward, beginning with the Architectural Section's preparation of a list of the buildings in the borough, which should be scheduled for preservation (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 13 October 1949 and article in St Marylebone Society Newsletters no. 12, 1 November 1949 and no. 13, 1 December 1949).

Damage Limitation, Networking and Negotiation Tactics

A proactive stance had arisen from the demolition of the Old Parish Church and it would serve the SMS well in the future. They knew the provisions available in the recent Town & Country Planning Act, had the expertise to undertake the scheduling task with architects and historians amongst their membership and their own 'Local List' with photographs and sketches, would form the scope of their conservation work and provide evidence, immediately available, for future campaigns.

Having a chairman who was also a St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) councillor was extremely useful to the SMS because he had access to inside information on decisions and activities taking place in the town hall. He had been alerted to the threatened demolition but this information came too late to save the old parish church. One of the reasons why the demolition had taken place so quickly and took the SMS by surprise was possibly because decisions at LCC level had already been made which saw the straightening of Marylebone High Street as essential for traffic planning. The road had an awkward bend in it, following the original line of the chapel (and River Tyburn), and as a feeder road onto the proposed *County of London Plan* 'Inner Ring Road A' scheme it would function more efficiently if straightened, and to enable this the chapel needed to be removed. Challenging the traffic proposals of Patrick Abercrombie and the LCC would have been difficult, so when the 'straightening of Marylebone High Street' was discussed by the SMS instead of opposing it they began to think up 'compensation' tactics. The idea of a Memorial Garden, creating a public open space in the church yard, was raised by SMS Hon. Secretary Mr A.J. Stonebridge and agreed a good idea by all (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 5 June 1950). This resulted in a meeting (9 February 1951) of a new SMS sub-committee including:

- Ethel Bright Ashford (Barrister Inner Temple, SMBC Councillor)
- Alderman Reneson Coucher (SMS Chair, Cllr later Mayor of SMBC)
- Cecil Smith RIBA (Architect)
- John Summerson (Historian)
- Minister of Hinde St Methodist Church
- Hubert Matthews (Rector of St Marylebone Church)

- Chairman of SMBC Works Committee
- SMBC Engineer

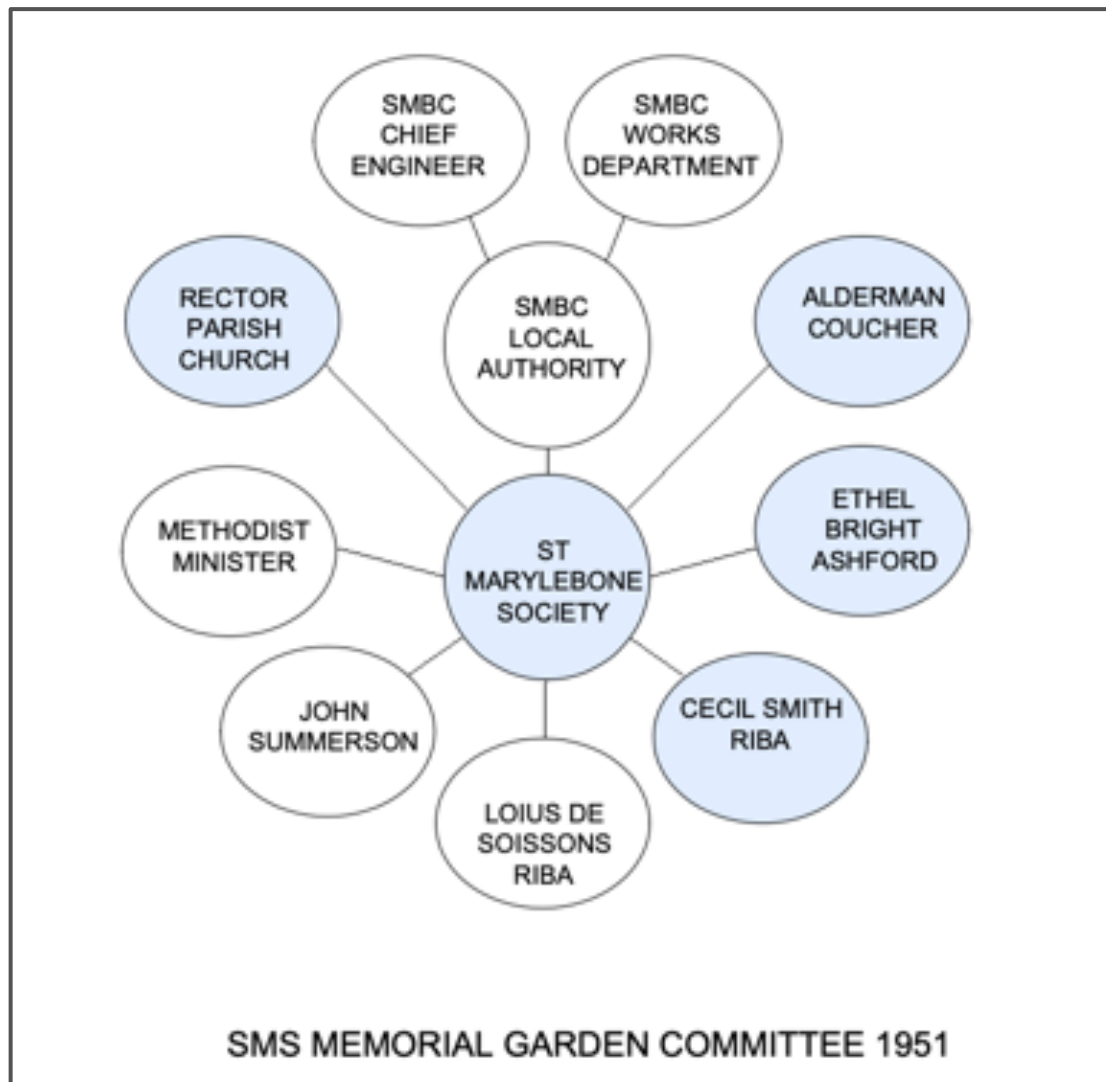


Fig. 5.16 The Memorial Garden Committee Members Network Power 1951

These sub-committee members had local and professional knowledge and extended networks into the establishment from the Church, Borough Council and legal profession to academia. The outcome of this meeting was that SMBC agreed to the SMS idea of creating a public garden and initiated the fundraising by contributing £500 towards the project. The Methodist Society also supported the idea (Charles Wesley was buried in the churchyard) and gave a £500 donation. Alderman Coucher had already approached architect Louis de Soissons (who was at the time working restoring Regent's Park for the CEC) who agreed to prepare a more elaborate scheme than that submitted by the

Borough Engineer and Cecil Smith *pro bono*. The total cost of the garden works was estimated at £3,000 and an appeal was launched which provided the SMS with an ideal opportunity to increase their membership and involve many sections of the community. It was a scheme that would benefit everyone and ideas were invited for the name of the new garden. By May 1951 Louis de Soissons had completed the designs and they had been publicly displayed and approved. John Summerson had agreed to write the introduction for a booklet about the garden, the sales of which would raise the profile of the project and garner further funds. By now there were estimated increased construction costs of £4,250 - £4,750 and the SMS successfully persuaded the Works Committee of SMBC to raise their contribution to £1,650 (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 6 July 1951).

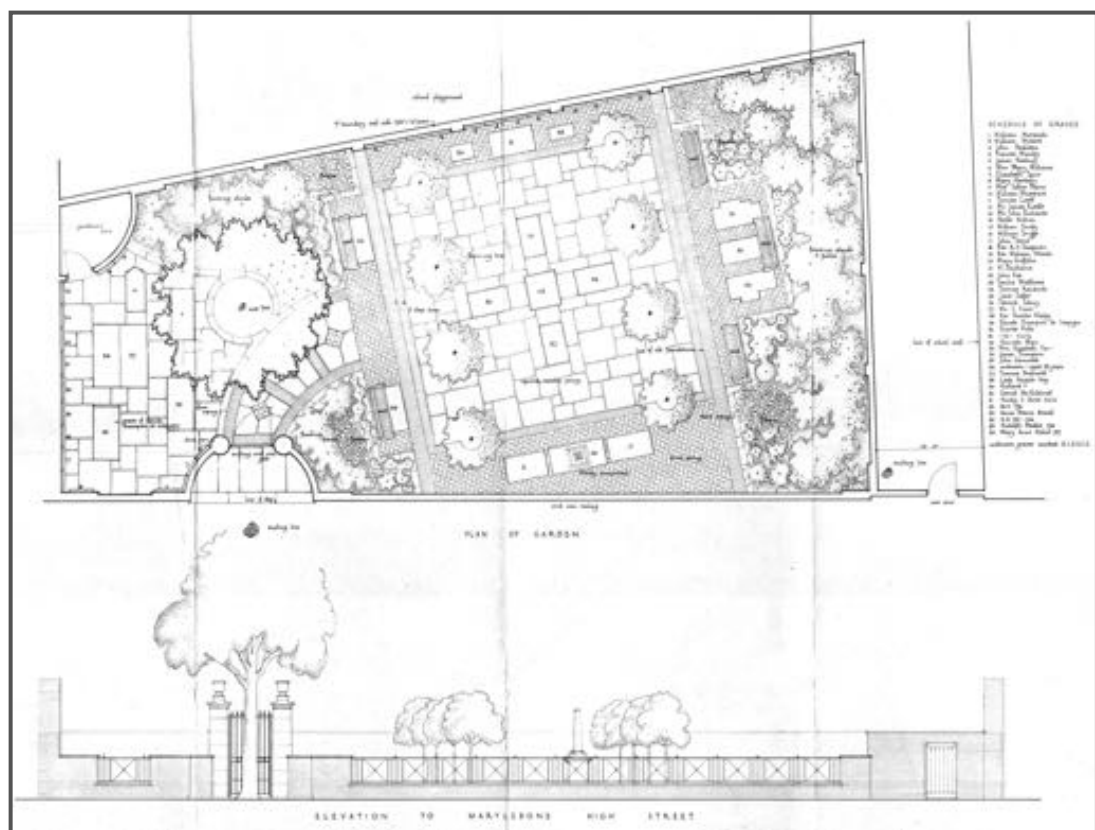


Fig. 5.17 Plan of the Memorial Garden by Louis de Soissons (SMS Archive)

The SMS members had good social connections to potential benefactors and also had the benefit of free professional services, from architectural to estimating and construction work. John Summerson had impeccable credentials in the academic community and his name on the book would

bolster sales and add authority and credibility to the project. The book promoted the project listing supporters who could all benefit by association. It was excellent publicity for landowners, politicians and the clergy to be seen to be involved in a community project and the SMS could capitalise on being at the helm of this important group. Added to the SMS's growing network power was the personal wealth of SMS Chairman Alderman Coucher, who had personally donated £500 (a significant sum in 1948) to get the project started. Indeed, the combined economic power of the early society members contributed to their ability to 'get things done' as they could cover the costs of initiating projects, hosting meetings, administration and printed publicity.



Fig. 5.18 The Memorial Garden Completed 1952 (SMS Archive)

The road straightening of Marylebone High Street commenced in September 1951 and with funds in place the landscaping of the Memorial Garden grew alongside. The garden was officially opened on 29 March 1952 by the Rt Hon. Viscount Portman and reported in *The Times*,

Accompanied by an Alderman in his bright red robes and the Rector of St Marylebone, a six year old girl made her way through a blinding snowstorm to the deserted Old Church Garden on Saturday afternoon.

There she knelt beside the tomb of Charles Wesley and placed at its foot a laurel wreath (*The Times*, 31 March 1952, p8).



Fig. 5.19 The Memorial Garden (*The Times*, 28 March 1952, p12)

Having achieved the successful realisation of the Memorial Garden, a project that by its beneficial community use could have no objectors, the SMS put together a group of impressive Trustees to safeguard the garden's future:

- Rt Hon. Viscount Kemsley
- Rt Hon. Viscount Portman
- Rt Hon. Lord Howard de Walden
- Sir Wavell Wakefield MP
- Ven. Hubert J. Matthews MA (Rector of St Marylebone Parish Church)
- Alderman A.E. Reneseon Coucher OBE LCC (SMS Chairman, LCC Deputy Chairman)

They included the surrounding landowners, the local MP and the Church of England; upper echelons of the establishment who would bring along all the inherent benefits of network power and who were all keen to be associated with the garden and consequently the SMS. This project created strong

personal relationships, many friendships, and once built it presented a visual, persuasive example of the benefits and influence of the SMS to all. The SMS had a tangible outcome to utilise for furthering their cause, denoting their importance and reputation as well as increased membership to be seen to be representative of the wider public. They had effectively taken ownership of a small patch of land in central London and deemed themselves its caretakers in perpetuity.

There is a tangible, self-fuelling collective power in a community when it assumes control of public shared spaces. Whilst not understood at the time this is now recognised as 'social capital' or 'community power' which creates strong bonds and cohesive neighbourhoods. This power can be stored, built upon over many years and called upon and utilised in times of adversity or need. However, despite the success of the Memorial Garden, a concurrent project on an adjacent site proved much more difficult for the SMS to have any influence over.

5.3 Charles Dickens' House and the Heron House Development

In 1954 the SMS learned that a commercial development, later named Heron House, was proposed either side of the St Marylebone Parish Church, which involved demolition of a row of Georgian houses on Devonshire Place, adjacent to the church, one of which had been the former home of Charles Dickens. The SMS campaign was to prevent the demolition and commercial development in order to preserve the townscape setting of the parish church. What began as a local campaign spread to become a national debate with strong support from the press, literary, musical and aristocratic circles. Yet despite this the SMS and their network of allies were powerless to prevent the demolition of the Georgian buildings and modern commercial blocks built in their place.

Diverted by events in Regent's Park and the Memorial Garden project the SMS were slow to be involved with the campaign for 1-3 Devonshire Place and their actions indicate that they realised their chances of preventing demolition and

development was futile. Instead, they changed tactics to ensure that the development did as little harm as possible to the parish church setting.



Fig. 5.20 St Marylebone Parish Church from York Gate, 1954 (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

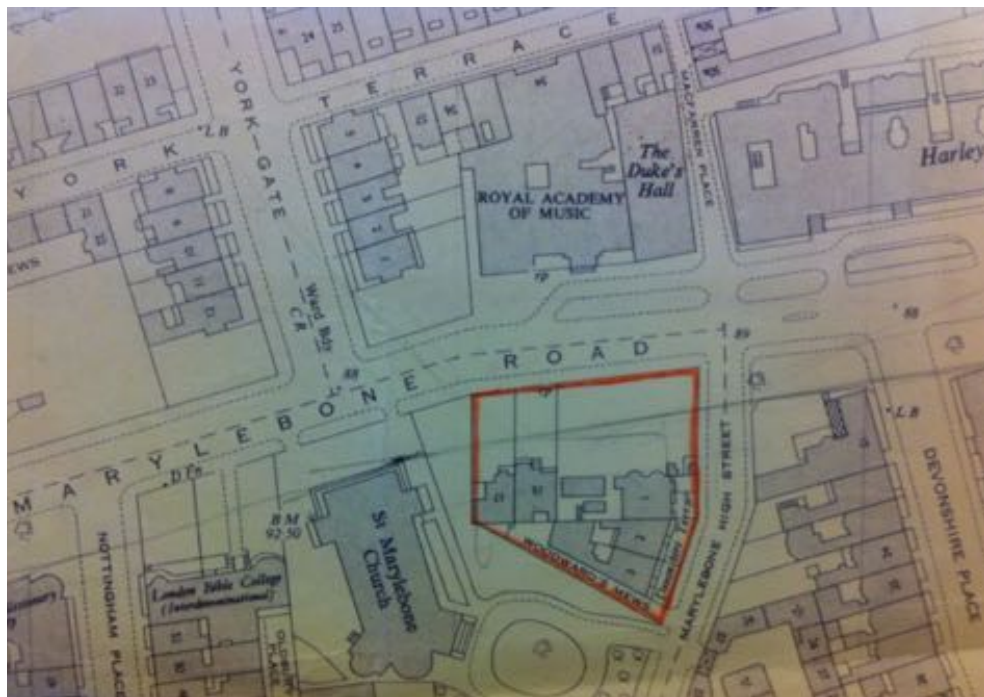


Fig. 5.21 Site scheduled for demolition for road widening and commercial development (WCC TP files)

The economic situation and post-war austerity meant that getting any project built was inevitably a long, difficult process and work on this site only started a decade after the commercial blocks originally receiving planning permission. To understand how the offices gained approval and why the SMS was resigned to their realisation one needs to trace back the planning history. Before the war the two sites either side of the parish church had been bought by John Laing & Son Ltd and they had secured outline planning consent (TPSC 17.3 (64) case 19518) and subsequent planning permission (TPC 30.8 (31) case 19518) for office buildings adjacent to the church. The war had interrupted the development, which the architects, Clifford Culpin & Partners, described as

... two imposing buildings in Portland Stone of a dignified character, which would be a worthy addition to the district and would be of considerable architectural merit... [it] would be in harmony with the church ... [and] we feel sure would make a very attractive group, and would add to the value of the present beautiful gardens behind the church (WCC TP files, letter, 25 June 1947).

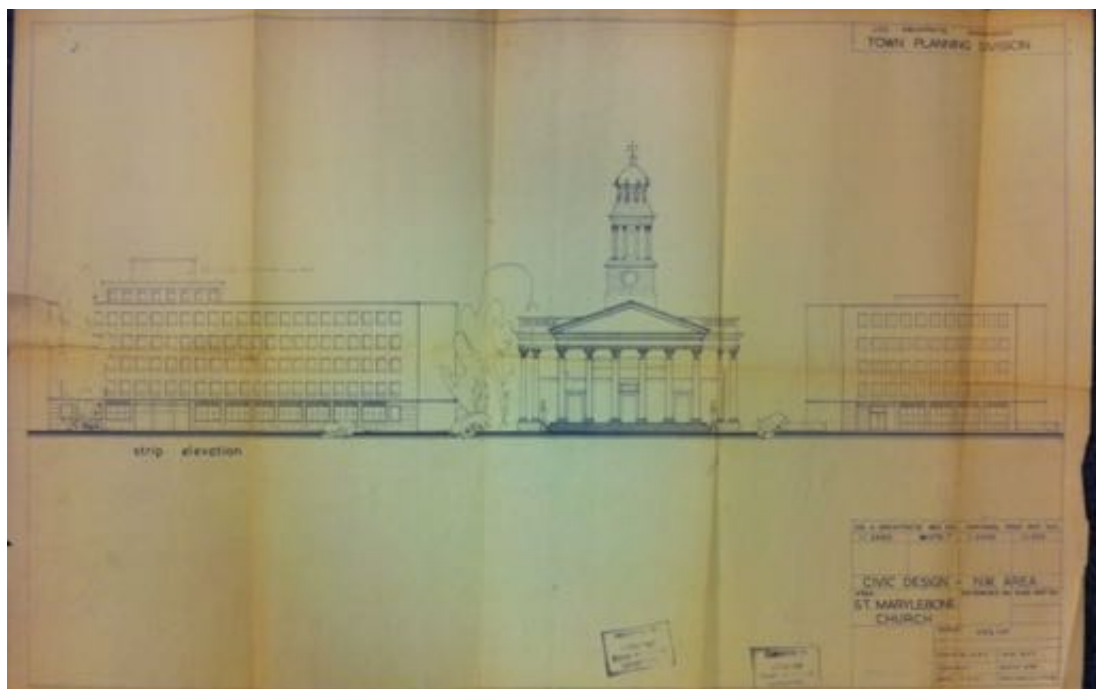


Fig. 5.22 Proposed Elevation by Clifford Culpin & Partners, (WCC, TP files)

It was not until 1951 that the Georgian Group wrote to the LCC enquiring if the house at no. 1 Devonshire Place was likely to be demolished for the proposed

development; to which the LCC replied that the previous approvals had exceeded their limit and become invalid. The LCC added that they would notify the Georgian Group of any proposals so that they would have an opportunity give their views. The buildings were not listed but on the LCC's list of buildings of architectural and historical interest with the most important where Dickens had lived from 1839-1850. All three eighteenth-century houses had been converted into the Dinely Rehearsal Studios in the 1930s and whilst the buildings were in good order and well-used by the community, internally they had been much altered.



Fig. 5.23 View of Devonshire Terrace from the churchyard (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

It was not until 1954, some three years after the Georgian Group's concerns had alerted them to the threatened buildings, that the SMS began their campaign to try to save the Dickens' House and preserve the setting of the parish church. The proposals to build office buildings, as approved and in accord with the *County of London Plan*, at either side of the church were met with outcry. In a letter to *The Times*, SMS Chairman stated,

The St. Marylebone Society seeks, inter alia, to maintain the architectural beauty and amenity of our Borough by keeping in touch with current developments ... The would-be guardians of architectural dignity and good-taste, such as my Society aspires to be, have virtually no opportunity of raising objections or even of expressing a view ... Rumour says that a handsome London Parish Church which at present stands as a proud landmark may find itself in the not so distant future flanked on both sides and in close juxtaposition by tall office buildings. This will result in it becoming a mere gap in a cliff of brick and stone (SMS Archive, letter, 6 April 1954).

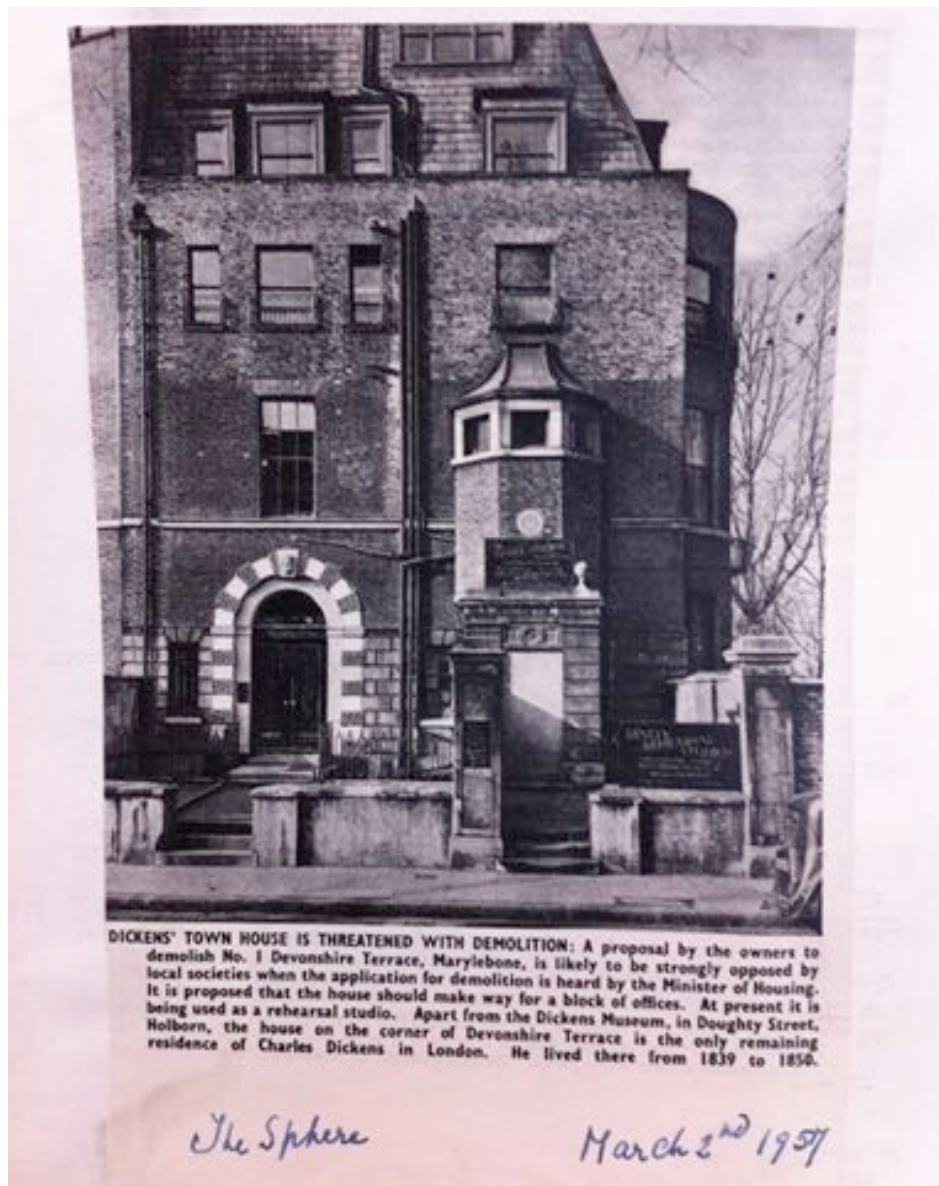


Fig. 5.24 Dickens' House (SMS Archive, *The Sphere*, 2 March 1957)

St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) however, had no qualms about the development or the demolition of the buildings on Devonshire Place as long as the proposed office buildings were set back to allow road widening along the Marylebone Road and Marylebone High Street and that,

the whole of the private land in front of the Improvement Line being surrendered and dedicated to the public, without payment (SMS Archives, SMBC letter to LCC, 28 September 1954).

SMBC clearly saw this as an opportunity to gain financial benefits to implement their road improvements and indeed all their subsequent comments on the proposed project related to access, traffic flows, junctions and parking. Clearly, designing for motor transport was driving the post-war economic agenda in London and heritage and townscape taking a back seat, as the LCC also agreed that despite the local listing their Town Planning Committee decided to take no steps to preserve the buildings (WCC TP file, letter, 20 September 1954) and on this basis the architects submitted revised designs for the offices.

The SMS wrote letters to the LCC questioning their knowledge of the proposed damaging plans and highlighting their lack of communication with SMBC. Criticising two public and political organisations openly against each other is a tactic that the SMS utilised to create a conflict or power struggle between actors, whilst allying themselves independently to both organisations. The SMS Chairman, Alderman Coucher, could also utilise the SMS for leverage of his own position locally at the SMBC. At a SMS Council meeting of 8 June 1954, it was agreed that

The Society should immediately make a vigorous protest to the London County Council, requesting permission to inspect the plans of the proposed new building, and asking if a deputation from the Society might wait upon the Chairman of the Town Planning Committee to present the views of the Society (SMS Archive, letter 6 April 1954).

The SMS formed an executive committee comprising Alderman Coucher, Ethel Bright Ashford and Cecil Smith (politician, lawyer and architect respectively) so that they could act and make decisions quickly without needing to call a full SMS Council meeting. This group were invited to meet

the LCC at County Hall to put forward their views and their combined skills allowed them to explain their case persuasively.

One particular ‘weapon’ the SMS used to great advantage was photography. The SMS had extensively photographed St Marylebone Parish Church as part of their post-war recording of the condition of Regent’s Park and other architecturally significant buildings. Many of the founder SMS members were also members of the Camera Club and Royal Photographic Society. Their affluence meant that they could afford professional cameras and film and had access to printing at large formats. To further this activity, and build up a useful photographic reference library, an annual photography competition and exhibition began in 1949 and continued for over a decade. The publication of photographic images in newspapers and magazines had become prevalent in the 1950s due to advances in printing techniques, therefore with their own good quality images and strong personal contacts to the local press, *The Marylebone Mercury*, this was something the SMS could capitalise on.



Fig. 5.25 St Marylebone Parish Church setting 1954
(SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

In a time before computer-generated images, good photographs could explain to laypeople the importance of townscape setting and the SMS photographs

were useful in explaining how the development would harm St Marylebone Parish Church. As seen in the 1954 images (Fig.5.25) the parish church is a significant landmark on the Marylebone Road when viewed from both directions. Following their meeting with the LCC, Alderman Reneson Coucher reported back to his members, "... the views of the Society ... had been most courteously received ... As a result, modified plans were to be considered ... to ensure that the Church would not lose its prominence" (SMS Archive, file memo, 10 December 1954).



Fig. 5.26 Sight-lines splay sketch (WCC TP files)

When the scheme eventually went to planning committee in December 1954 the LCC planning report recommended conditional approval. The St Marylebone Society and the St Marylebone Parish Church were aligned in their objection to the building line, asking for the new building to be set further back to allow the church more prominence. Debate ensued with the SMS Chairman reporting that,

The Chairman [of the LCC Planning Committee] referred to the Society's recommendations regarding the building of offices in the vicinity of St Marylebone Parish Church. ... the new buildings would be

‘splayed’ in such a way as to leave the church in a frame. ... it appeared that the alteration from the original plans received general approval (SMS Archive, Council minutes, 10 December 1954).

The result of SMS involvement was that the eventual buildings were set back and had splayed sides to open up and preserve the views of the church. However, more far-reaching than this physical design change was the initiation of direct communications between the LCC, SMBC and the society, demanding that public consultation be built into the planning process,

The Church ... may no way suffer by such architectural imprisonment; on the other hand, it may virtually disappear – and the public will have had no opportunity of expressing any sort of opinion until too late ... The St Marylebone Society would like the plans of all major developments to be exhibited for public inspection at least 14 days before formal Borough and County Council consents are given. Is this not feasible? It is certainly most desirable (SMS Archive, letter, 6 April 1954).

This request led to the SMS being invited to meet the LCC at County Hall to discuss how “some regular machinery might be devised for informing the society of proposals affecting general amenity before consent is given.” The LCC gave the matter careful consideration but decided that involving the SMS would complicate and create more work for officers as well as delay the planning process. They advised the SMS that they would need to rely on the “vigilance of [the] society” to submit views on proposed developments (SMS archive, letter from LCC, 15 September 1954).

As the SMS had pointed out to the LCC one of the problems with the relatively recent Town & Country Planning Act’s consultation system was that unless one was directly involved, an immediate neighbour or a vigilant volunteer, the first that most people know about any project was when the bulldozers moved in and work began on site. The SMS wrote to the LCC urging that they revisit the site and make a Preservation Order on the Dickens’ House. In this view they were supported by the Arts Council (WCC, TP files, letter, 21 February 1957) and a local and national press campaign began to save the buildings.

This included many articles including one from John Betjeman who noted a 'casualty list' of nos. 1, 2 & 3 Devonshire Terrace, Marylebone (*The Spectator*, 12 April 1957). The articles continued throughout 1957 and *The Marylebone Mercury* headlined the authorities' view, 'Dickens House of no Merit', (*Marylebone Mercury*, 3 May 1957).

In the House of Commons, Kenneth Robinson (MP St Pancras, Labour) asked the Minister to take steps to preserve the house. However, Mr Brooke (MP Hampstead, Minister for Housing, Conservative) had considered the matter carefully and agreed with the LCC in favour of demolition. Mr Robinson replied that the demolition would bring "acute disappointment to large numbers of people". He noted that the terrace had already been scheduled as of special architectural and historic interest as recently as October 1954, adding, "Was this decision-making absolute nonsense of town planning legislation?" Mr Brooke explained that he agreed with the LCC decision, which was based on the fact that the buildings were much altered and that other buildings existed to commemorate the life of Dickens (*The Times*, 24 May 1957). This parliamentary discussion was cited in a letter from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government to the LCC and was copied to the SMS, which illustrates they were in the information 'loop' of those making top-level decisions (SMS Archive).

This wide-spread campaigning came to nought as *The Times* reported on 24 May 1957 that the Dickens' House was to be demolished. The SMS and other objectors had the challenge of trying to influence conservation over the greater power of commerce. At a time of national economic recovery, with the development conforming to the *County of London Plan* for zoning and having secured planning permission before the war, they had little leverage against their opposition. Post-war austerity, material shortages left both SMBC and the LCC under pressure to rebuild and the planning rules were flexible. For example, having secured planning permission for Portland Stone office buildings, which would give "a dignified setting to the church", the architect Clifford Culpin wrote to the LCC immediately after receiving the approval saying, "It has now been found that Portland Stone is very difficult to obtain at

the present time and we would like your approval to use artificial Portland Stone instead” (WCC, TP files, letter, 20 October 1954).

The Application for Demolition was signed by Hubert Bennett for the LCC on 1 March 1957 (Ref/ AR/TP/5092/NW) and the fate of the buildings was sealed. John Laing & Son had developed Heron House by 1960. By way of apology to the local community, John Laing & Son commissioned Mr Estcourt James Clack to carve a panel commemorating the characters in Dickens’ books which remains on the office block today.



Fig. 5.27 The Dickens plaque on Heron House, 15 Marylebone Road (by Author)

5.4 Conclusions Site 1

Network Power and Legacy of SMS Campaigns 1947-1957

The people who founded the SMS had significant personal power, as did the early membership base of residents who lived in Marylebone and Regent’s Park. Together they created considerable network power which increased throughout their early campaigns, attracting like-minded collaborators and organisations. It was especially advantageous to include as members of the establishment as alongside conferring network power this raised the society’s

profile and encouraged others to join. Nurturing friendships through social activities strengthened bonds, increased knowledge and developed their practical and political skills. The SMS could also claim to represent their community through wide resident and corporate membership. Networking and simultaneously being inside and outside the establishment also gave scope for the amenity society to collect information, be party to discussions off the record and ensure their demands and opinions were heard. This gave the SMS covert power, which they also exercised with discretion and non-action, for example, not contacting the press to cause embarrassment to the CEC.

The activities of the SMS sent out strong signals to the LCC, SMBC and private developers that any development the society considered inappropriate or unwanted would be challenged, encounter difficulties and possibly be opposed outright. They had shown their mettle in the campaign for the Regent's Park Terraces, membership had grown and the society was buoyed by their own success. However, positive campaigning outcome by the amenity society is seen to have only been possible on projects that carried no negative financial implications to the property owners. In Regent's Park collaboration with the SMS helped the CEC secure financial assistance from the Treasury to support the restoration. With the commercial development adjacent to the parish church, it proved much more difficult at a time when private capital was required by the authorities to invest in buildings and infrastructure. The SMS knew that the developer had outline planning permission, that the plan would facilitate road improvements and that the LCC and SMBC made no objections to their demolition but rather concentrated on trying to change the design proposals for the offices (SMS Archive, box 8, file 5). By the time the national campaign to save the buildings was started all the legal decisions had been made by the authorities and with persuasion the only weapon left to use, the objectors were bound to fail (Machiavelli, 1532).

One strategy that served the SMS throughout the decade was their inadvertent delaying tactics. By objecting to many developments all along the Marylebone Road the extension of the Westway through Marylebone was curtailed at the Harrow Road flyover. The consequence of their persistent activities was that it

gave time for political change and shifting of public opinion. When the GLC eventually undertook the widening of the Marylebone Road at Park Crescent between 1965-1970, they were forced into rebuilding the Nash Lodges in replica along with the repair and re-erection of the original railings. At the same time new venting shafts for the underground were built in the gardens in a style that 'harmonise with Park Crescent' (*GLC Architecture 1965/70*, GLC Publication No. 7168 0319-4). This insistence on detail and townscape setting represented a typical outcome of SMS campaigning, which started in Regent's Park in 1948 and continues to the present day.

The Memorial Garden in Marylebone High Street remains today as a physical reminder of the post-war SMS success and the society maintains control of the garden. In 2006, when the adjacent St Marylebone School used the garden for parking and access, harming its character, the SMS could reconnect with some of the influential contacts made in the 1950s to ensure its restoration. Funds were also raised by SMS members, the local churches and Westminster City Council, who ring-fenced Section 106 funds of £45,000 for the project. Linking back with the ancestors or predecessors of the original Memorial Garden trustees afforded financial and political benefits to the SMS, who could once again take the credit for leading the community project. This is an example of the benefit of '*the longue durée*', with power embedded in established connections between actors with long-standing, tacit and mutually beneficial relationships. This project portrayed all involved as altruistic because the garden genuinely benefits everyone, but the highest credit remained with the SMS as perceived 'owners' because they controlled the space and the stakeholders. However, this represented 'illusory power' as everyone in the stakeholder team conformed or deferred to the SMS even though their role was self-instigated. It is also the case that the SMS had time and expertise to take on the work *gratis* and others, for example, WCC and the Church Diocese might have been secretly happy to delegate activities and decisions to save their own time and expense; that is, the SMS were useful allies. Perhaps the amenity society was naive in an assumption of equality as on balance the association was in the favour of the authorities. Within a constitutional democracy, Machiavelli elucidated that,

The people are more honest in their intentions than the nobles are, because the latter want to oppress people, whereas they want only not to be oppressed (Machiavelli, 2004, p. 41).



Fig. 5.28 Restoration of the Memorial Garden, inauguration ceremony 2013.

In attendance, right to left, Rev. Sue Keegan Von Allmen, Rev. Michael Persson (Swedish Church), Lord Mayor Cllr Angela Harvey, Rev. Stephen Evans (Parish Priest), Gaby Higgs (SMS Chair), John Hicks (Hinde Street Methodist Church), Viscount Portman, WCC Cllr Robert Davis, (Copyright St Marylebone Parish Church/ SMS Archive, 2013).

Following the successful restoration, the Portman Estate donated £3,000 which was decided to be used to revise and publish John Summerson's original book about the garden and thus in a cyclical way Lord Portman can commemorate his forebears' good deeds and the society can increase membership, its reputation and funds.

The Nash Terraces, the Memorial Garden and the design of Heron House are concrete examples of what the SMS achieved through determined networking and strategic campaigning. They continue to be useful reminders of their connections, purpose and power. The demand for public consultation and

participation in planning matters was initiated by the St Marylebone Society in the 1950s but would not become actual planning policy until over a decade later following the Skeffington Report, *People and Planning. Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning* (1969).

The next chapter investigates the SMS role with the planning and development of a sixteen-storey office tower, Castrol House, also situated on the Marylebone Road and concurrent with the SMS campaigns in Regent's Park and the environs of the St Marylebone Parish Church. It presented a very different challenge for the SMS; a large commercial building, privately developed with high economic stakes and cutting-edge modernist design.

CHAPTER 6

SITE 2 - CASTROL HOUSE – LATER MARATHON HOUSE



Fig. 6.1 Castrol House 1959 (Copyright RIBA Collections)

Introduction

Castrol House (later renamed Marathon House) was one of the first glass curtain-wall towers in London, designed by architects Gollins Melvin Ward & Partners (GMW) and completed in 1961. Situated directly opposite St Marylebone Council House and Library on the Marylebone Road, this sixteen-

storey, modernist development was in a prominent and highly sensitive location in the Borough of St Marylebone.

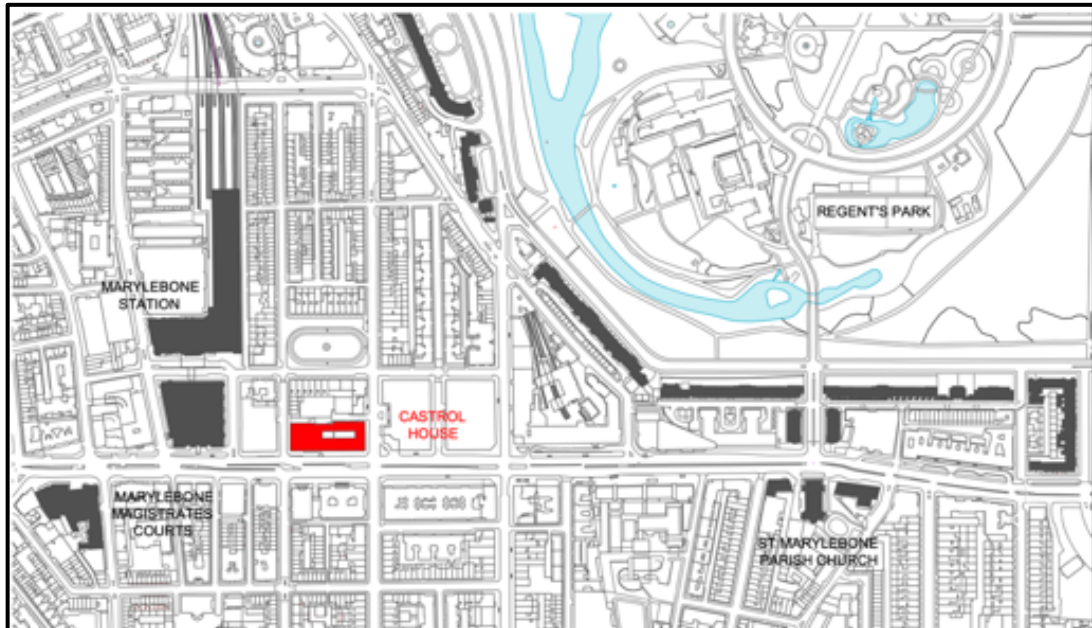


Fig. 6.2 Site Location of Castrol House (Base: OS Digimap license, map date 2020)

Castrol House's radical design was the antithesis of the objectives of the St Marylebone Society's constitution because as well as affecting the setting of the civic buildings, it necessitated the demolition of a row of Georgian houses and a public house. One might logically assume that the society would have been outraged by the proposals and mounted a significant local campaign to prevent them being built, but this was not the case. There is nothing relating to the society in Westminster City Council (WCC) or SMS files, therefore research at this site has been a case of looking for absence of actors, missing information and non-action as evidence of covert power. Why weren't the SMS involved?

Castrol House was the epitome of progressive, modern design and post-war optimism, very much of its time. However, the building required numerous planning applications over a period of seventeen years to become a reality. The history of the site and the reasons for this long gestation are essential to understanding the decision-making process that shaped it. Due to the complexity of the planning process and long time-frame, analysis and evidence of activities and power relations will be discussed alongside the chronological

narrative. I will revisit the site in the 1990s when proposals were submitted to demolish and make alterations to the building. At this time the SMS collaborated openly with the local authority and successfully campaigned to prevent its demolition. In conclusion I will reflect on how the introduction of planning policies to embrace public participation and also rules to dictate amenity society membership, to avoid conflict of interest, affected the power of the SMS some thirty years later.

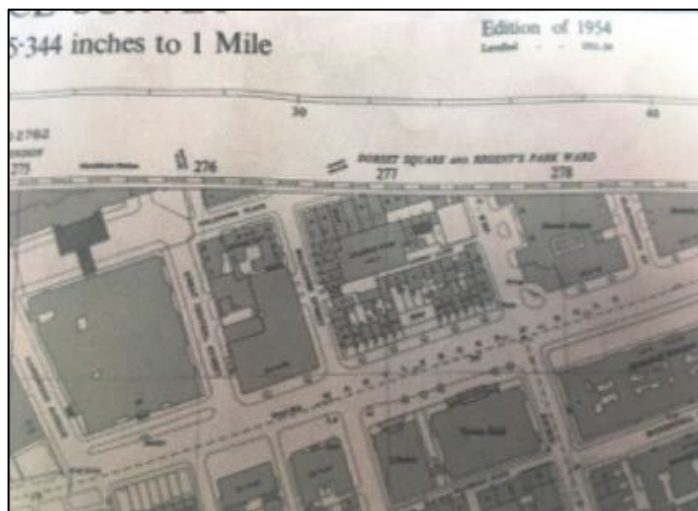


Fig. 6.3 Existing site post-World War II (OS1954, WCC TP files)

Aerial bombardment in 1941 missed St Marylebone's Council House but left parts of the Castrol House site opposite badly damaged. The LCC Bomb Damage Map indicated where bombs had fallen and which houses had been damaged, and whilst the 1954 OS map indicated 'Ruins' on part of the site most of the original Georgian buildings remained. The key actors involved in the development of Castrol House were:

- The applicants (private property developers)
- The developer's Architects
- The site owner – The Portman Estate
- London County Council (LCC)
- St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC)
- Royal Fine Arts Commission (RFAC)
- St Marylebone Society (SMS)
- Local residents

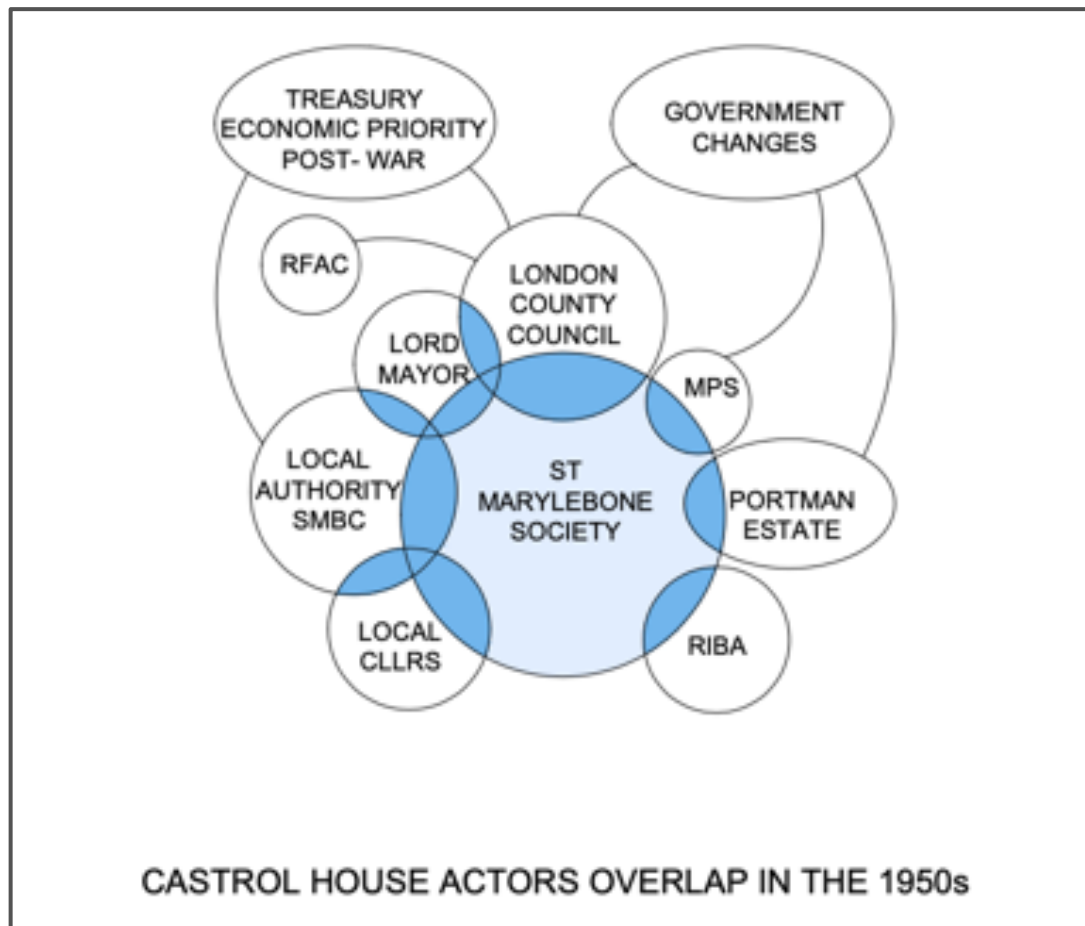


Fig. 6.4 Overlapping Networks of Actors connected to the SMS in the 1950s

Whilst all these actors had their own network power to varying degrees, it is important to understand that they also had overlapping networks, with many individuals being connected to more than one organisation (Fig 6.4). The SMS had considerable local membership and network power at this time, as evidenced in the previous case study for the Regents Park Nash Terraces and St Marylebone Parish Church. Additionally, Lord Portman, local councillors and MPs were embedded in the SMS organisation as members, with some actively serving on various committees directing the society's activities. Therefore, the preservation and conservation primary objectives of the society had potential to be challenged by internal power dynamics.

London was trying to rebuild its urban fabric and economy under austerity measures and the Castrol House development was one with high financial implications. As discussed in the theoretical framework analysis (Chapter 2), in any confrontation economic or 'raw power' always prevails. Despite the

SMS's extensive network of powerful people, investigation of this site demonstrates the limitations of their overt power and how covert power could be exercised internally. The actors had different but aligned agendas to get the scheme realised. The London County Council (LCC) were committed to uphold post-war planning policy. The St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) pressed for implementation as it would privately fund the provision of offices, road improvements and car parking. As freeholders of the site, the Portman Estate needed to maximise land value. Architects Casson & Conder and later, GMW, along with their clients hoped to seize the chance to create innovative modern design, whilst only the Royal Fine Arts Commission (RFAC) tried to protect the character of the prevailing townscape. The SMS, though silent throughout the entire planning and construction process was closely linked to all these much more powerful actors.

6.1 Early Designs on the site – Approved Not Built (1944-1954)

Abercrombie's *County of London Plan* (1943) and the subsequent *Greater London Plan* (1944) identified the Marylebone Road as a suitable zone for offices, alongside an ambitious ring road proposal to accommodate the increase in vehicular traffic. Hence, from the outset the LCC Chief Engineer noted that the boundaries of any development on the site must allow for future road widening. A number of large commercial buildings had already been built along the Marylebone Road before the war and this set the precedent for eight-storey blocks, which led Stanley Beard & Bennett Architects to write to the LCC in February 1944 asking for clarification defining the site boundary and to agree heights and building lines, making reference to the fact that development will commence, "after the end of the present emergency". This illustrates that the decisions on suitable uses and the acceptable building footprint and massing for the site were clearly established in accordance with contemporary planning policy.

The initial consultation on the site was only between the architects, the LCC and SMBC. The SMBC argued the case for the developer, stating they were

anxious to see a building of “architectural merit” on the site as early as possible due to the prominent civic setting opposite St Marylebone Council House. Five years were spent debating road widths, freeholder matters (with the Portman Estate) and whether any buildings scheduled for demolition were of architectural or historical interest. This resulted in Stanley Beard & Bennett Architects submitting a revised design for a seven-storey block of conventional design which was approved by the LCC (under Chief Architect & Planning Officer Robert Matthew) in June 1949. In 1952 the site was sold and in 1954 Leo Hannen & John Markham Architects submitted a new application for mixed use, offices and part residential. No objections were raised and it was approved just two months later with Leslie Martin, now Chief Architect at the LCC, making conditions that the heights needed adjusting to the east and west and that more parking provision was necessary.



Fig. 6.5 Marylebone Road at the corner of Gloucester Place, with terraced houses and public house, 1930s (City of Westminster Archive)

The SMS had been founded in 1948 and throughout six years of debate there is nothing on record of any involvement with the planning process. Interviews

with founder SMS members had no recollection at all of discussing Castrol House and the SMS planning committee minutes and newsletters at the time made no reference to it, despite the most active members working in the St Marylebone Library and all SMS meetings and lectures taking place directly opposite the site. The only evidence that the society was aware of the site was that they undertook a photographic survey of the existing buildings, prior to demolition for their 'Records Section' (a SMS sub-committee set up to survey and record the post-war building fabric). These photographs show a substantial terrace of Georgian houses had survived up to the corner of Gloucester Place with a small public house intact on the corner. Slightly later images show the site under demolition by 'Griffiths", with the backs of Dorset Square properties visible beyond. It is possible that structural damage to these houses was too great to warrant repair, but it was out of character for the SMS not to have considered or discussed the possibility of saving this terrace.



Fig. 6.6 Marylebone Road North side during demolition with the rear of Dorset Square beyond (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)

Demolition of the houses and loss of the public house was uncontested and possibly deemed inevitable by the society. The SMS was knowledgeable

enough to understand that the site already had an approval, that reconstruction was essential to increase productivity and that a large commercial business on the site would be beneficial to Marylebone's local economy. It was also the case that some of the St Marylebone Borough Councillors who had been vocally supporting the development since 1944 were now members of the SMS. This raises the question, could the lack of SMS planning objections be evidence of deliberate non-participation? With this in mind, reading between the lines of the ensuing planning discussions between SMBC and the other actors for the Casson & Conder/GMW proposals for Castrol House might illustrate the covert influence of the SMS under a different guise.

6.2 Casson & Conder Applications (1955-1956)

In November 1955, when Casson & Conder submitted their first application for the Hammerson Group, with a design for a 22-storey tower, two basements and two-storey end blocks east and west. SMBC raised no objections to this radical new proposal.

A draft planning report from the LCC (undated but filed between 6 December 1955 and 10 February 1956) also recommended, "Grant Permission" but with conditions that reduced the tower by four storeys and increased the parking provision. However, this was hand-written over, crossed out and annotated "Refuse Permission", "... for the reason that the development as proposed having regard to the Town Hall on the opposite side of Marylebone Road ... The Council does not consider the site to be a suitable one for the erection of a tower ...". It's not clear who at LCC scribbled this order, but Leslie Martin was then Chief Architect. Following this, the developer wrote directly to the SMBC, requesting a separate meeting with them to discuss the proposals stating,

We wish to ensure that its relationship to the group of civic buildings it faces ... is thoughtfully and imaginatively conceived so that all the buildings concerned are, in architectural sense, of *mutual benefit to each other* [my emphasis] ... we are naturally anxious not to pursue our

plans in ways which are unsympathetic to your Council (WCC, TP files, 18 January 1956).

This is The 22 Storey Tower

Exemption 460.

Town and Country Planning Act, 1947 to 1954

JOINT REPORT by the Chief Engineer and the Architect to the Council

Engineer No. 49/3794
Case No. TP-2996J
Plan Regt. No. 16195
Applicant Plan(s) No(s): 354/10B and 20-26

Premises Nos. 174-204, Marylebone Road, Nos. 133-135, Gloucester Place, Nos. 3-5, Balcombe Street and Nos. 12-19, Dorset Close St. Marylebone

Application dated 1.11.55 Received 3.11.55 Group III (A)

from Sir Hugh Casson and Neville Conder On behalf of The Hamerson Group of Companies

Proposed development Development by the erection of an office building and tower block.

CONSULTATIONS AND NATURE OF REPLY

Borough Council Letter dated 6th December, 1955. No objection in principle, subject to reduction in plot ratio; compliance with daylighting standards; additional car-parking space; omission of showrooms, etc.

Adjoining Owners

Other Authorities

DEVELOPMENT PLAN				INDUSTRY			
Density	ppa	Use	Offices	ICD class		Present	Employment
Plot Ratio	3.5 : 1	Programming	period	ICD floor area	sq. ft.	Proposed	Employment
APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL				DETAILS/TEND			
Density	ppa	Use	OFFICES AND showrooms	Angle		Infringe/Complies	
Plot Ratio	4.5 : 1	Dwellings	Rooms	Commercial B.S.W	except across court-Residential B.	except across yard and	at rear
SITE AREA		FLOOR AREA		PARKING			
Net Residential	37,366 sq. ft.	Present		sq. ft.	Spaces		47
Residential		Proposed	169,459	sq. ft.	Loading facilities		Yes

RECOMMENDATION ~~is made in favour of~~ for the redevelopment of the sites of Nos. 174-204, Marylebone Road, Nos. 133-135, Gloucester Place, Nos. 3-5, Balcombe Street and Nos. 12-19, Dorset Close, St. Marylebone, by the erection of an office building comprising two basements, ground, mezzanine and first floors with a tower block on the west side of the site, and for the formation of means of access to Marylebone Road and Balcombe Street, as shown on Drawing Regd. No. 16195 (applicant's Nos. 354/10B and 20-26), subject to the following conditions:-

(1) The bulk of building being reduced by the omission of 4 storeys of the tower block

As proposed to incorporate existing residual & 2. To include P.T.O on the opposite side of Marylebone Rd. and the

Fig. 6.7 Extract from LCC planning report for the Casson & Conder 22-storey tower proposal, 1955 (WCC TP files)

The SMBC asked the LCC to attend and also to set up a further meeting with all parties involved to discuss a London-wide strategy for high buildings. The

LCC didn't feel such a meeting was necessary and continued to delay their decision, much to the frustration of the architect, Sir Hugh Casson, who referred the project to the RFAC himself, only to receive an objection from Godfrey Samuel (Secretary) on the proposed height:

While the Commission would not oppose buildings of this height on certain sites in the County, for example the proposed Shell Building on the South Bank, it is convinced that this site in Marylebone Road is not suitable for any form of exceptionally high building (WCC, TP files, 10 February 1956).

A revised planning application was then submitted for "... a 16-storey block occupying the southwest corner of the site, permitting the remainder of the site to be developed with low buildings placed around a turfed courtyard open to the street and planted with trees" (WCC, TP files, 22 May 1956). Commenting on this scheme the SMBC wrote to the LCC (12 April 1956) stating that they maintained their preference for the 22-storey scheme, but had no objections and only minor suggestions on parking, sight lines and access. This discussion illustrates the differing positions taken by SMBC, LCC, Casson & Conder Architects and the developer, Hammerson. The developer tried to set up individual meetings with SMBC to negotiate in private, encouraged by the fact that the borough council were clearly in support of the taller tower, the greater density and the modern design. They evidently felt the need to qualify their shrouded suggestion of 'mutual benefit' mentioned in their letter (as quoted above). It was the LCC and RFAC who were more cautious and raised concerns relating to the context of the proposed glass skyscraper.

Sir Hugh Casson insisted that, "the new building will add to the amenities and interest of this neighbourhood." He explained that the scheme,

sets back from the building line to maintain the "punctuation" of the street created by the existing low-rise and set back houses. The low-rise blocks respect the relatively low height of the Town Hall whilst economically developing the site and this option is much preferable to the orthodox solution of a bulkier building maintained at an even height

of about eight storeys for the full site frontage (WCC, TP files, 22 May 1956).



Fig. 6.8 Letter from SMBC to LCC stating no objections, preference for the original 22-storey scheme and calling for a meeting to get the site developed as soon as possible (WCC, TP files, 12 April 1956)

The planning officer agreed with this rationale such that their planning committee report now supported the revised 16-storey tower application over the approved lower scheme, stating:

The proposed tower block would, however, be of a light construction faced in glass which would have the effect of reducing the apparent bulk of the building, in contrast to Dorset House ... It might also be considered that a change in the form of development, from the general character of Marylebone Road, coming directly opposite the Town Hall, would bring a welcome visual emphasis to that part of the Marylebone Road in which the Town Hall stands ... the proposed scheme would form a pleasing contrast to the cliff-like monotony of the existing large buildings which line both sides of the Marylebone Road (WCC, TP files, committee report, 31 March 1956).

Casson & Conder Architects made an architectural model for the LCC planning committee to consider, anticipating a favourable outcome, but despite the positive tone of the above officers' report, the committee recommended refusal, finding the 16-storey tower inappropriate for its location, signed J.L. Martin (WCC, TP files, 28 May 1956). Illustrating the urgency of the matter, the next day Casson & Conder compromised and submitted a much lower nine-storey scheme. To this the SMBC wrote that they still had no objections and supported the proposal but added,

... we do so greatly regretting that the previous scheme should have been disregarded in favour of such a dull and unimaginative substitute, and that the Council's suggestion of a conference between the London County Council, Borough Council, and the applicants to reach an acceptable solution has been ignored (WCC, TP files, 11 July 1956).

The RFAC also wrote to the LCC now with no objections to the revised 9-storey scheme, noting that this was "... following an informal discussion by the Technical Committee with Sir Hugh Casson and Mr Widdaker of your office." A telling remark and evidence that a meeting behind closed doors had influenced their decision. On 21st August 1956 the LCC recommended approval of the nine-storey scheme, signed by J.L. Martin and J. Rawlinson.

Over the previous twelve years the SMS had not been formally consulted by the LCC or SMBC, nor involved in any planning decisions relating to the site. At the time public consultation was restricted to adjoining owners who might

be personally affected by a development and the LCC only sent notices to the residents on the south side of Dorset Square and the adjacent flats at Dorset House. Ten local residents and businesses objected on grounds of loss of outlook and daylight, yet checking SMS archives reveals that none of the objectors were members of the society. This was one of the most controversial developments at the time in Marylebone, covered in the architectural and local press, yet the SMS membership and planning committee remained silent on the matter.

6.3 GMW Applications for Castrol House (1956-1961)

However, this was not the end of the planning story of Castrol House. In November 1956, Neville Conder met Mr Widdaker (LCC Town Planning: Marylebone) to discuss revisiting the scheme with a different architect, Gollins Melvin Ward & Partners (GMW). In April 1957 GMW submitted three options of tower height and massing within a contextual model; their preferred being a 10-storey tower on a three-storey podium. To this proposal SMBC continued to raise no objections but asked that a public car park be incorporated into the design; a suggestion to which Sir Wavell Wakefield MP wrote to *The Daily Telegraph* arguing was very much needed in Marylebone (*The Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1957).

The LCC (now under Hubert Bennett), decided that no further public consultation was needed for the revised scheme as the previous response was 'negligible' and because all previous refusals were based on 'civic grounds'. This statement was made in June 1957, following which the town planning files provide no evidence for what appears to be a unilateral recommendation by the LCC for approval of a 15-storey with 3-storey podium scheme. The RFAC remarked, somewhat piqued, in a letter to the LCC that they had not been consulted on the GMW taller scheme, and that it was too late to comment as the works were well under way on site without their knowledge (WCC, TP files, letter, 22 April 1957). The *Architects' Journal* featured an illustration of the approved design with a caption repeating the confusion,

An announcement which appeared in the daily Press stated that the height had been reduced from 22 to 15 storeys, following objections from the Royal Fine Art Commission. This is incorrect: the RFAC had objected to an earlier design for the site - a design which incorporated a tower block not a slab block (*Architects Journal*, 25 July 1957, p129).



Fig. 6.9 Neville Conder letter to LCC regarding submission for 22-storey tower which he notes was favoured by SMBC (WCC TP files, 6 December 1956)

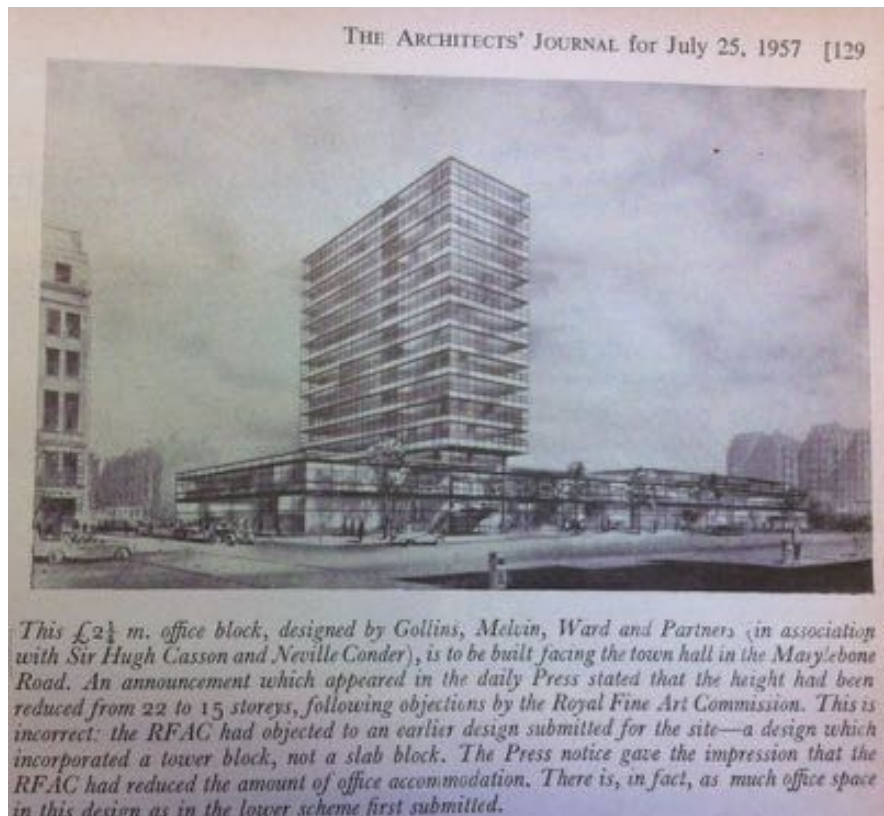


Fig. 6.10 The 15-storey approved GMW scheme (*Architects' Journal*, 25 July 1957)

Marylebone Mercury
 EX INDEPENDENT & WEST LONDON STAR. WELbeck 2870
 FRIDAY, JULY 26, 1957 THREEPENCE

T. W. Funerals
 Personally Conducted
 7, HARROW ROAD
 (Opp. Edgware Road)
 Telephone: [unreadable]

OUR FIGHT FOR OFFICES 'UNO building' for Town Hall site

A £1,250,000, 15-STORY, MOSTLY GLASS-FACED OFFICE BLOCK IS TO BE BUILT FACING THE TOWN HALL IN MARYLEBONE ROAD.

One of England's most modern office blocks, it will be erected on an island site where slum dwellings and a public house previously stood.

The site has been acquired by the Hammerman Group of Companies, who have recently cleared it of its collection of derelict buildings. The scheme illustrates the new concept of

A NEW LONDON LANDMARK OPPOSITE MARYLEBONE TOWN HALL.

Fig. 6.11 Local press report the planning approval opposite Marylebone Town Hall (*Marylebone Mercury*, 26 July 1957)



Fig. 6.12 Sketch recording demolition, 1957 (City of Westminster Archive)



Fig. 6.13 'The Changing Face' – Erection of Castrol House, 1958 (City of Westminster Archive)

When the developer changed the architect to GMW, he introduced a high profile, young and fashionable practice with a growing reputation. GMW had successfully completed two smaller glass office blocks in the Borough of St Marylebone, nos. 93-97 and 118-126 New Cavendish Street (1955-1957), and the original proposal for a 22-storey tower had been consistently supported by SMBC. GMW injected economic optimism and aspiration to a project that had spent a decade of delays and compromise imposed by the LCC and RFAC; weighed down by deliberation of plot density, neighbours' daylight objections and road-widening boundaries. Construction involved a further four years on site, with the Certificate of Completion issued in 1961.



Fig. 6.14 View of Castrol House from Dorset Square (*Architectural Review*, 1960 March, p166-174)

6.4 Analysis of SMS Non-participation and Covert Power (1955-1961)

Based on archival evidence one would conclude that the SMS had no involvement in the Castrol House development. No mention in the newsletters, meeting minutes or internal memos and letters carefully compiled, filed and archived by the St Marylebone Borough Council librarians who started the St Marylebone Society and worked directly opposite the site. A possible reason for this lack of activity could be because, through their members at SMBC, in particular Alderman Coucher, who was also at the time Deputy Chairman at the LCC from 1952-1955, they had knowledge of the various pre-existing approvals supported by planning policy. These were all for conventional seven or eight-storey urban blocks, similar to other buildings along the Marylebone Road and therefore not contentious. There would have been no point in the SMS entering the debate and using their resources to fight for something they may have realised they could have no influence over. The developers were a powerful economic force and the SMS must have accepted that any campaign to restore a terrace of bomb-damaged houses would not be likely to succeed. The economic needs of rebuilding London were urgent and many similar Georgian houses were being demolished across the city; indeed, less than a mile further along the Marylebone Road, Charles Dickens' house had been shown no mercy by the bulldozers.

Tall buildings were beginning to be accepted and in 1954 the SMS had entered debate with the LCC and the Westminster Society to discuss their proposed policy for reconstruction in London and specifically the impact of tall buildings, with SMS Chairman Coucher writing to *The Times* on the matter (*The Times*, 6 April 1954). The SMS was not anti-development and their comments on a similar height tower within the redevelopment plans for Portman Square reveal a pragmatic approach and the need to encourage reconstruction and development in Marylebone. Ethel Bright Ashford noted in a SMS planning meeting that they ought not to object to the proposed hotel tower, as it would be built with "American steel and dollars" (SMS archive, meeting minutes, March 1952).

It is also the case that at the time the SMS had many other important projects locally which diverted their attention and resources, such as ensuring the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park were restored properly and simultaneously running a campaign to protect the setting of St Marylebone Parish Church and create the Memorial Garden in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951. Their expertise was in historical and architectural matters and focusing on smaller, conservation projects was much more realistic and achievable. The society was new, learning and finding their way through the planning system and for the majority of members it was more interesting and rewarding to be involved with Georgian buildings and small-scale detail, rather than trying to battle with commercial developers and high tech, modern glass architecture they knew nothing about.

Following the Town & Country Planning Act (1947) and throughout the 1950s public involvement was not envisaged beyond consulting with those directly affected by a development. In May 1956 the LCC had written to all the properties neighbouring Castrol House, however the residents' objections were deemed irrelevant. Indeed, looking at the specific objections made, all were concerned with their own personal self-interest and some openly requesting financial compensation. For example,

I wish to object most strongly about the proposed erection of a 16-storey block of offices facing my bedroom window. I have 3 children and the only sun we get is at the back where their bedrooms are. It's disgraceful ... Yours Truly, J. Ralin (Mrs). PS. Couldn't I transfer to a flat in St John's Wood?

The erection of the building means two or three years of perpetual noise and dust, which will make my flat unbearable to live in. I am of the opinion that the people affected should receive compensation. Yours Faithfully, C.G. Denham (WCC, TP file 29963)

The planning officer summarised that none of the objectors had asked to see the plans, that they would object to any building on the site and that any loss of light was within day-lighting standards. When the LCC considered the taller

GMW 15-storey tower a year later, they decided it was not worthwhile re-consulting the public due to the 'negligible' non-planning related and therefore irrelevant previous responses. This tendency for individual objectors to only consider the impact of a development on their personal circumstances is one of the reasons that local amenity societies' objections tend to be taken more seriously by local authorities. The SMS were aware of what constituted a valid planning objection and they always maintained they were commenting to protect the amenity of all, not just personal gain. It is curious and inexplicable from archival records why the residents in Dorset Square who objected to Castrol House were not SMS members.

One theme running throughout the Castrol House planning history is that, irrespective of its design, height and size, the GMW tower proposal had a constant ally in St Marylebone Borough Council. Here is an example of a post-war, cash deficient local authority needing to improve and balance their budget, welcoming commercial development that would take care of itself, leaving their finances for the pressing needs to build housing and schools. SMBC were Conservative and aligned with the commercial/private developer's ambitions, in both principle and politics. When they saw a chance for some additional monetary/financial benefit to the scheme they took it, even arguing for a public underground car park to be added into the scheme; an idea backed up by local MP Wavell Wakefield, who was also a member of the SMS at the time.

The SMBC appear to have had difficulty maintaining contact with the LCC and having any influence in the decision-making process for Castrol House post-1955, which was the year that Alderman Coucher died. They constantly write supporting the developer and are pro-active in requesting meetings. Even when planning permission was granted for the nine-storey tower they wrote repeating their preference for the 22-storey scheme over the lower version. The property rates collected by local councils at the time were based on floor area, so increased height and density would have only served to bolster the council coffers. With so many local Conservative councillors (and even MPs) embedded in the SMS we may infer that any protestations by ordinary society

members were quelled or not raised. Added to this is the fact that the Castrol House site owner, Lord Portman (who was also a SMS founder member) would have wanted to maximise land value of his site. The enduring positive support by the SMBC and 'non-action' by the SMS contributed to Castrol House being approved and built, securing for Marylebone a prestigious modern building for an international business, directly opposite the local seat of political power, St Marylebone Council House.

6.5 Attempts to Demolish and Alter Marathon House (1994-1996)

Castrol House was successfully occupied for the ensuing years without any material changes to its fabric until an application was made in 1973 for its refurbishment by John Spratley Architects (for British Leyland Motor Company). The building was renamed Marathon House in 1980 and an application for re-cladding the entire block's failing curtain walling was made in 1986, although this was never implemented and the building fell into decline. In November 1994, thirty-four years after Castrol House was completed, GMW Partnership submitted a planning application to Westminster City Council proposing demolition of their own building and redeveloping the entire site as an eight-storey block; exactly the same massing as originally approved in 1949! Castrol House had been excluded from the Dorset Square Conservation Area (designated in 1968 following the Civic Amenities Act 1967) and as such had no protection from demolition.

GMW's 1994 proposal was post-modern, bulky, bulbous and cliff-like. The original partners had retired, and the excessive commercialism of the 1980s and demand for open plan office accommodation overrode any appreciation for their former ground-breaking design, hard won after so many years of negotiation in the 1950s. Conversely, the SMS had developed an understanding and appreciation of the innovative modern design embodied in Castrol House/Marathon House and wanted it to be saved.

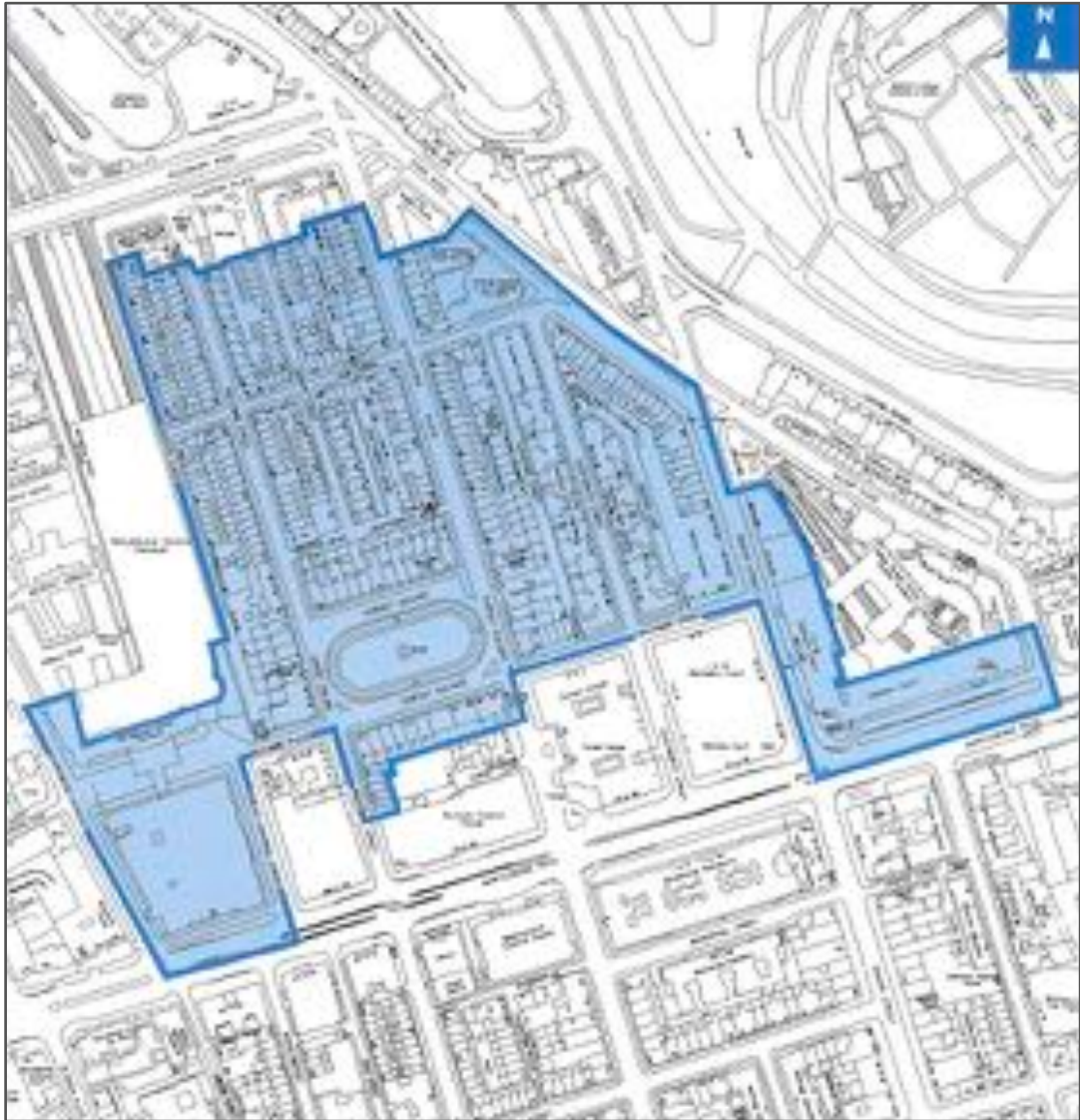


Fig. 6.15 Dorset Square Conservation Area boundary (WCC Leaflet, 1996)

The SMS was very concerned with the GMW proposal and asked for an urgent meeting with the WCC planning department. The 'Head of the North Planning Team' attended the next SMS monthly planning committee meeting and explained the proposals in detail, outlining the relevant policies would be applied and informed the society the grounds on which they could reasonably object. WCC planning officers advised the SMS to write to English Heritage (EH) and try to get the tower listed. They also confirmed that they agreed with and would support the SMS's argument that the proposed building would harm the townscape. They advised the society that the proposed building would bring 30% extra floor area, so over-development was also an issue, explaining that, "If office space is increased, one can bring in traffic and public transport

implications” (SMS Archive). To a remark that the SMS considered there were too many offices already they conceded, “... this was not a planning matter; the market had to prevail.” This was supported by a file note that confirmed the entire site was now designated as being in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) in the Local Plan and suitable for commercial uses.

Following the meeting, the SMS wrote to WCC objecting strongly to the proposals. Their letter followed a typical SMS format which started by stressing their importance and designated consultee status,

We are astounded that the proposals presented to the Society for the above site are considered a worthy replacement for the green ‘Marathon’ Tower which has become such a feature of the Marylebone Road. We are also surprised that they should have reached this point without any consultation with the St Marylebone Society or any of the local residents whose lives would be affected. Normally, we would expect proposals for such a major development to be put before the Society at an earlier stage and we regret that the agents have not followed this helpful procedure (SMS Archive, letter, 20 December 1994).

They then listed their planning objections, exactly as previously advised would be valid by the WCC Planning officer:

- Bulk, especially harming the setting opposite listed civic buildings
- The building would ruin the skyline from Dorset Square
- Over-development of 30% increased offices, putting pressure on parking, local transport etc.
- Poor design, monotonous and monolithic
- Loss of amenities, light and privacy to neighbours

They concluded by stating there was a

Groundswell of local opinion which could result in the tower being listed. Many residents refer to have their daylight obscured for part of the day rather than live in perpetual semi-gloom from an eight-storey block. They are thus likely to campaign to keep the tower unless the present proposals are revised; two storeys removed and the corners stepped back (SMS Archive, letter, 20 December 1994).



Fig. 6.16 GMW visualisation of proposed office block (WCC, TP file 29963, 1994)



Fig. 6.17 GMW proposed design for 8-storey block (WCC, TP file 29963, 1994)



Fig. 6.18 SMS flyer asking neighbours to object to the development (SMS Archive)

The SMS followed WCC Planning Department advice and wrote to the Secretary of State to try to get Castrol House, now Marathon House, listed although their own planning committee minutes noted, “not everyone likes it”. The building was one of nineteen buildings under consideration by the Secretary of State, at the time Virginia Bottomley. In the architectural press the *Architects’ Journal* ran an article on the possible listing of ‘Castrol House’ (*Architects’ Journal*, January 1995). This somewhat half-hearted campaign failed and the minutes of the SMS planning committee recorded without further comment that “Marathon House is not to be listed” (SMS Archive, planning committee minutes, 11 December 1995). Ironically, listing was refused for the reason that the ‘as built’ was a compromised design and if it had been constructed at 22-storeys, as originally planned, it would have been worthy of

preservation. This was outlined in an eloquent letter from Hammerson (the original developer) with extracts from Anthony Blee's evidence stating reasons not to list (WCC, TP file 29963, 9 May 1995). With listing refused the applicants made a revised submission.

Ahead of the WCC planning committee meeting of 22 February 1996, the SMS and thirty-four other members of the public wrote to object to the scheme. Westminster sent out named invitations to all the objectors to attend the committee meeting where a recommendation for refusal was upheld for the reason that,

The length of the elevation on such a big monolithic block would be problematic and the planners agreed that Casson Conder's massing was right - the tower with a low-rise plinth creates a better setting of the Town Hall.

The applicant started an appeal which was withdrawn when the building was sold to Berkeley Homes who initiated discussions with WCC on change of use to residential. Leighton Carr Architects submitted the design which received only two letters of objection. A site visit was arranged by the SMS in the 'Slide Theatre' of Marathon House with three representatives from Berkeley Homes and their architect. The meeting included a presentation of the proposed conversion to 100 flats and a tour of the buildings for SMS members.

The change of use required demolition of part of the podium to create an inner courtyard otherwise the massing would remain as existing, therefore there was no valid objections on townscape grounds. The SMS wrote supporting the concept and the application in principle. They only questioned the colour of the glass exterior, suggesting turquoise blue and asking that a name change to "Octavia House" would be welcome, to represent the role of Octavia Hill who once resided on the site. With SMS support and only two other objections, the remodelling of the podium, conversion and re-cladding was approved (20 December 1996). Unfortunately requests from the SMS and EH to retain the entrance foyer with stainless steel sculpture and staircase went unheeded.



THE ST. MARYLEBONE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Number 290

Registered Charity 2784082

Early Autumn 1997

SOON TO BE A PRETTIER SIGHT

This amazing version of the former green glass tower designed by Sir Hugh Casson in the 1960s came into view this year – part of the Berkeley Homes' major conversion to 105 flats. Although the tower failed to win listing in 1996, a proposal to demolish and build a monolithic office building was refused by Westminster City Council, with the wholehearted support of the St. Marylebone Society.

Shortly afterwards, Berkeley Homes sought a meeting with the St. Marylebone Society Planning Committee, took us over the building and discussed their ideas with us. At our invitation, some residents of Dorset Square came, too. Several points were raised. Would we like to see another colour for the glass cladding? Blue perhaps? Whatever happened, and Ron O'Connor, Casson's basic design should be respected. Some were doubtful about flats at ground level on Marylebone Road and suggested shops – but these were ruled out by the Council. We also asked that the 1960's staircase with its plaque to Octavia Hill, should be retained, although, sadly, some of the contemporary artefacts will go to a museum or be sold. A delightful lecture theatre, perfect for our Talks, also had to go. There was the possibility of renaming the building Octavia House, but it appears that Marathon will stay.

At the time of writing, all the flats have been sold – a sign of the strength of the residential market and a tribute to Berkeley Homes who had the foresight to realise this and get local people on their side before going for planning permission. Look out for Feng Shui signs on the windows later on – a sign that some new tenants are from Hong Kong!



Fig. 6.19 St Marylebone Society Newsletter, Autumn 1997 (SMS Archive)

6.6 Conclusions – Site 2

SMS Changing Power and Influence over Time

Fifty years had passed since the planning story of Castrol House had begun and over that time the political framework and planning policy for public consultation had radically changed. St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) had been replaced by Westminster City Council (WCC) following restructuring of local government in 1965. The decision-making context had been altered by the Skeffington Report (1969) with planning policy now encouraging public participation in the planning process. The 1967 Civic Amenities Act created the Dorset Square Conservation Area, offering properties within its' boundary protection from demolition and alterations, but unfortunately Castrol House was not included within it.

By 1996 the SMS had become the designated non-statutory consultee for all planning applications in this part of Marylebone. It had a growing membership with approximately 400 local residents and businesses and the WCC planning department welcomed the support of the SMS, which was now seen as representing public opinion. The SMS planning committee was much more structured than it had been in the 1950s. Through local ward councillors it had representation at WCC planning committee meetings and enjoyed direct communications verbally and in writing with WCC planning officers. Its objections were coordinated with and supported by other local and national amenity societies. Communications were much easier than fifty years ago, everyone had a telephone and distributing information was simplified by access to photocopiers. In fact, in the 1990s all local amenity societies in Westminster were given a £600 per annum grant to assist with their administrative overheads.

The 1990s campaign shows how proactive WCC planning officers were in encouraging participation. They fed the SMS information that would stand up at committee and put them in touch with like-minded organisations, such as English Heritage (EH). Whilst the SMS lost the request for listing, the GMW bulky planning application was refused permission and the SMS congratulated

themselves on their campaign to prevent demolition and redevelopment. But did they really have any power? It seems more the case that their views were aligned with those of EH and WCC planning officers. When it came to the application for change of use and re-cladding, all parties concurred on the need for a new use for the building. Office trends had rendered the tower obsolete and many people were returning to live in city centres. Hence all parties agreed to conversion and the need to re-clad an energy inefficient building. However, the request to retain the internal foyer's original art and sculpture within the conversion was not granted, illustrating that the SMS had no power of persuasion to force the developer to keep the artwork. No doubt because the developer understood that this would make impossible any future campaign to restore and list the building.

The SMS also lacked the technical knowledge at the time to insist on the re-cladding being in like-for-like curtain walling and at time of writing the building presents a sorry sight (particularly at plinth level) due to twenty years lack of maintenance to the aluminium framed cladding system. Today twentieth century architecture is appreciated for its innovation and style and the tower would have potential for restoration. The SMS, HE, the 20th Century Society and WCC conservation officers would support this position. They could potentially argue with the developer or owner that sensitive refurbishment would actually increase its commercial value, they could even agree to increasing the height to 22-storeys as this would now be perceived to be a better proportion to which all parties would agree.

This case study illustrates the machinations of local government and planning decisions in the immediate aftermath of World War II, which excluded both the local amenity society and general public. The only reason the SMS was possibly involved in the 'non-decision-making' process that made Castrol House a reality, was because a number of their key members were also SMBC local councillors and even included an MP and the landowner of the site. The SMS had power because through them, covertly, they were working inside the planning system. By the 1990s it was ruled that a local amenity society membership could not include local councillors, and at the start of any local

authority meeting those present had to declare any interests as a matter of course for democratic transparency. This is obviously much more equitable and fairer, but as outlined in chapters 1 and 2, local amenity societies often have close, familial or neighbourly links to their elected representatives and potential for covert network power to influence decisions. In 2014 the owners of Marathon House began negotiations with WCC to seek permission to add the extra storeys to the tower, a proposal objected to by many of its current residents. It remains to be seen what the SMS stance will be when an application is submitted to realise the originally-planned 22- storey tower and what power they will have in determining the future of ‘Castrol House’.

This chapter considered the SMS influence on contemporary design; covertly in the mid-twentieth century and overtly towards the end of the 20th century. The amenity being protected was subjective and aesthetic; architectural design, conservation area character and townscape. The next site to be investigated will consider these issues alongside transport, pollution and environmental amenity at Marylebone Station.



Fig. 6.20 Marathon House, 2021 (by author)

CHAPTER 7

SITE 3 - MARYLEBONE STATION & THE GREAT CENTRAL HOTEL



Fig. 7.1 Marylebone Station and Port Cochere in the 1980s (SMS Archive)



Fig. 7.2 The Great Central Hotel (SMS Archive, Postcard c1960)

Introduction

At the previous sites investigated, Regent's Park, St Marylebone Parish Church and Castrol House, the object of the SMS was to protect the amenity of Marylebone embodied in its heritage, architecture and townscape. At Marylebone Station and Great Central Hotel, they campaigned to protect social and environmental amenity of public transport, air quality, traffic and noise nuisance.



Fig. 7.3 Location of Marylebone Station and Great Central Hotel (OS Digimap, 2020)

On 15 March 1984 British Rail (BR) posted an official notice that initiated proceedings to close Marylebone Station, and a number of stations along its route, intending to divert trains to Paddington and Baker Street Stations. They wanted to demolish the station and the Great Central Hotel in order to sell off their extensive site for commercial development. Two years later a further notice was posted stating that “The British Railways Board has decided not to proceed with the proposal to discontinue all passenger services” (BR Notice, 30 April 1986, SMS Archive).

This chapter investigates why BR changed their plans and how the SMS activities influenced that decision. The SMS had concerned itself with planning matters at the station since the 1950s but their major involvement was during the 1980s, when they led and sustained an intensive campaign on two fronts: firstly, to save the railway station and secondly, to prevent a coach terminus being developed in its place. They connected with many other individuals and organisations locally and along the tracks to other stations included in the closure plans. The following diagram (Fig.7.4) illustrates the network of key actors involved were (in alphabetical order):

- Aylesbury and District Passengers Association (ADPA)
- British Rail (BR)
- Dorset Square Trust (DST)
- Councillors (Labour and Conservative Ward representatives)
- Greater London Council (GLC) from 1965-1986
- Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG)
- London County Council (LCC) up to 1965
- London Regional Passengers Committee (LRPC)
- National Bus Corporation (NBC)
- Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (PFTRA)
- The Press - local and national
- Regent’s Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee (RPCAAC)
- St John’s Wood Society (SJWS)
- The Marylebone Association (MA)

- St Marylebone Society (SMS)
- St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) up to 1965
- Transport Users Consultative Committee (TUCC)
- Westminster City Council (WCC) from 1965 to present

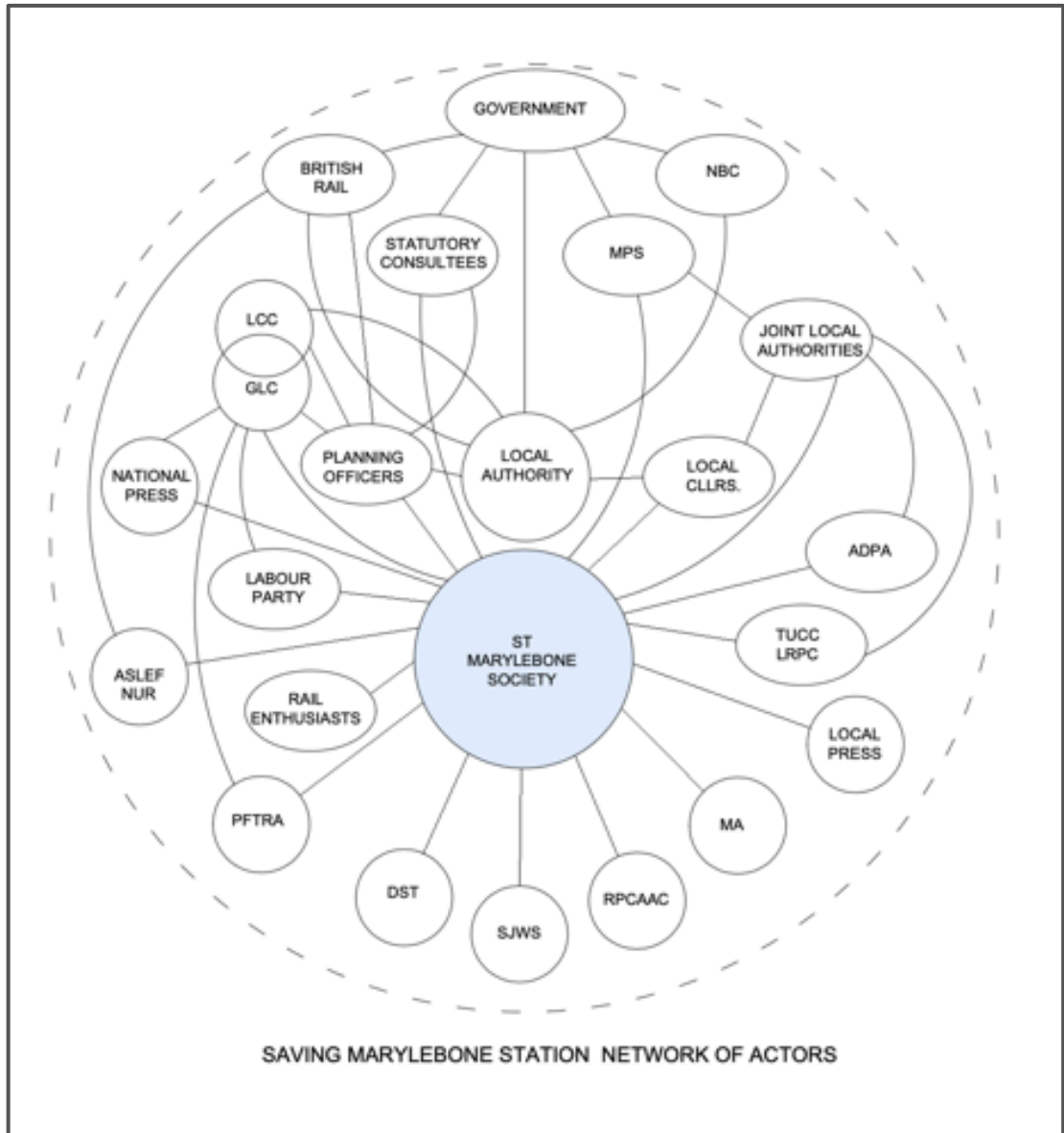


Fig. 7.4 Network of actors involved with the campaign to save Marylebone Station

As a point of reference and to contextualize the SMS activities Fig.7.5 lists relevant events and policies over the forty-year time span of their involvement at this site.

DATE	POLICY OR EVENT The events highlighted in red indicate SMS involvement at the time
1943	<i>County of London plan</i> (Forshaw and Abercrombie)
1944	<i>Greater London plan</i> (Abercrombie)
1948	Foundation of the St Marylebone Society (SMS) British Transport Commission established (BTC) British Railways (BR) the name for its Railway Executive
1952	The Greater London plan Public Inquiry
1962	Transport Act of 1962 & Foundation of the British Railways Board (BRB)
1963	<i>The reshaping of British railways</i> – Report by Dr Richard Beeching
1965	<i>The development of the major railway trunk routes</i> (British Railways Board, 1965) LCC replaced by GLC St Marylebone Borough Council replaced by Westminster City Council
1968	<i>People & planning</i> – The Skeffington Report Dorset Square Conservation Area designated
1975	Dorset Square Conservation Area extended to include the Station and Hotel
1979	Listing of Station and Hotel Refused
1982-83	Serpell Report identified duplication of services at Marylebone Station
1983	National Bus Company – Busway and Terminus at Marylebone announced
1984	BR Closure Notice 15 March 1984 – SMS Campaign Begin WCC Committee 23 July 1984 - no objection to closure of station or coach terminus
1985	Public Hearing of the Tucc scheduled for February/postponed to June Consultation starts on WCC Draft Planning Brief for Marylebone Station Site WCC Planning Brief for Marylebone Station Site approved 23 July 1985 Paddington Federation of Residents and Tenants Associations (PFRTA) Alternative Neighbourhood Plan submitted November 1985 Chiltern Railways & Network SouthEast created
1986	BR announce the decision not to close the station 30 April 1986

Fig. 7.5 Chronology of Key Transport and Planning Policy relating to the Case Study

A detailed chronological narrative of the campaign has been possible due to the organisational skills, vigilance and impeccable record keeping of the SMS activists. Due to the length of their involvement, analysis of the effectiveness of their activities, strategies and tactics and evidence of their power is discussed within the chronological narrative at each stage of their campaign. To appreciate the importance of the SMS's long-term involvement at Marylebone Station, this research goes back to the 1950s, when the SMS was founded and when London was planning its reconstruction after World War II.

Symposium held at Westminster City Hall 26 January 2015

To reach impartial conclusions on the SMS's influence in BR's decision to retain Marylebone Station I organised a focus group bringing together key actors involved with decision-making at Marylebone Station in the 1980s to reflect, discuss, corroborate or counter the research question, "Did the SMS have any power and influence in Saving Marylebone Station?" The participants were:

Chris Austin	BR author of the report recommending Station closure
Chris Green	BR Sector Director, London & South East
Bill Simpson	Railway writer
Donald Wilson	Station Master at Marylebone
Paul Dimoldenberg	WCC Labour Councillor, town planner and local activist
Joe Hegarty	WCC Labour Councillor, Church Street Ward 1974 -1990
Graham King	WCC Head of Strategic Planning & Transportation.
John Walker	WCC Operational Director of Development.
Carolyn Keen	Chair of St Marylebone Society
John Walton	Paddington Residents Against Coach Terminus
Judith Allen	PFTRA Planning Activist

7.1 SMS Involvement at Marylebone Station Post World War II

Public Inquiry for the *Greater London plan (1952)*

Marylebone Station, completed in 1899 was the last private mainline station to be built in London and its lines served the Home Counties northwest of London and as far as Birmingham. It was set back from the Marylebone Road, located behind the Great Central Hotel and later connected to it by a glazed porte-cochere. During World War II enemy bombing targeted important industrial

areas, such as Marylebone Station with its extensive goods yard and sidings. Many railway workers died and after the war much of the Marylebone Station site was left badly damaged and redundant.



Fig. 7.6 Marylebone Station Site, aerial view in 1946 showing the station, tracks, marshalling yards and warehouses (*London's Railways from the Air*, 1984, p160)



Fig. 7.7 Redundant yards and warehouses (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)
Fig. 7.8 Station bomb damage (SMS Archive/City of Westminster Archive)



Fig. 7.9 Marylebone Station Site (Marylebone Centenary Publication, frontispiece)

Physical town planning at the time for reconstruction was based on definite zones for separating uses and the whole of the Marylebone Station site, including the hotel, sidings and warehouses, was designated for 'Industrial and Railway use' in Forshaw and Abercrombie's 1943 *County of London plan*. Following the 1947 Transport Act, which led to the nationalisation of Britain's railway network, the Great Central Hotel was granted planning permission for railway associated office use and it became the headquarters for British Rail.

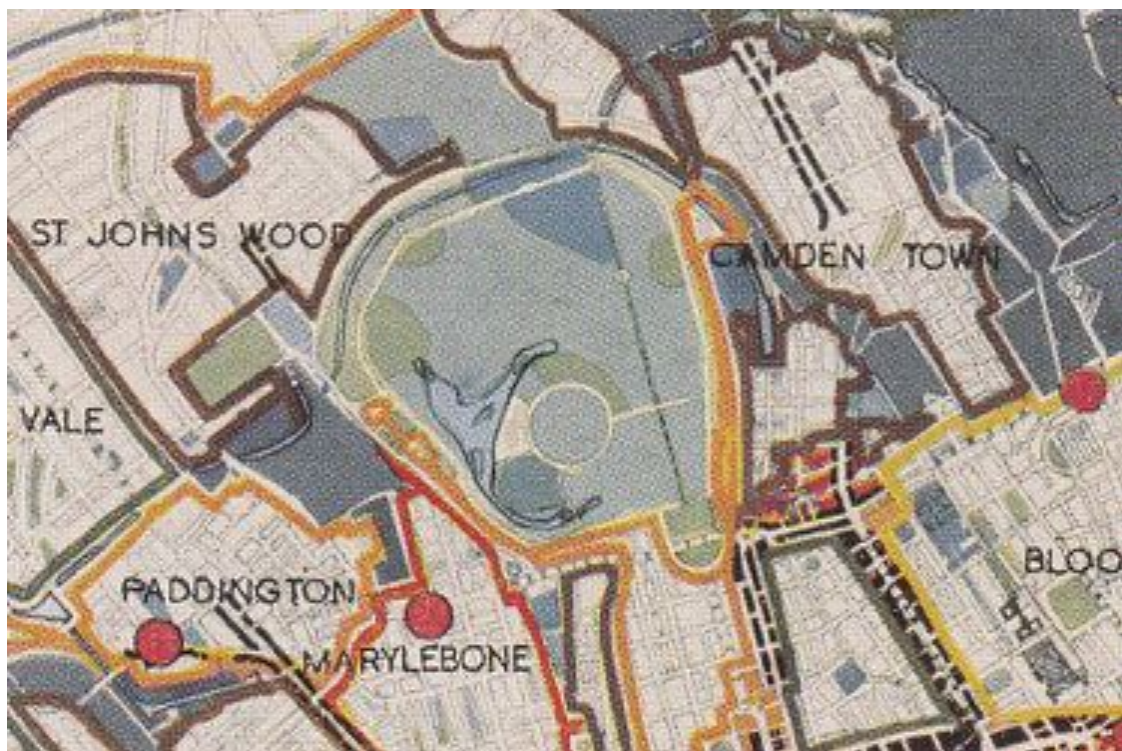


Fig. 7.10 Extract from *County of London plan 1943* (Dark grey denotes railway use)

With material shortages and austerity measures in place, redevelopment across London was slow and the future use of the Marylebone Station site was still being debated in 1952 when the revised *Greater London plan* was being finalised by the London County Council (LCC). SMS involvement began with the public inquiry into the detail of this plan, and the decisions made then would prove to be instrumental in preventing the development of the site and closure of the station over 30 years later. Specifically, that the entire station site was designated as being *outside* the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and that the redundant marshalling yards should be put to residential use. The *Manchester Guardian* reported,

For a brief bright while to-day a new spirit came upon the London Plan Inquiry at County Hall. For the first time since the daily sessions started on September 29, the proceedings became in fact as well as name a public inquiry in the best sense of the term – an opportunity for the public to put their point of view to the planners rather than a tedious argument between public authority planners and private planners.

The opportunity has, of course, been there all the time and the citizens of London have only themselves to blame for not taking fuller advantage of it. But at last there came two groups of people in the category of “objectors” who had no immediate and direct personal problem arising from the proposals – the St Marylebone Society and the Stepney Reconstruction Group.

The *Manchester Guardian* continued, describing the SMS as,

... an organisation of people who live in the borough and seek to make it an even more pleasant place. They charge a subscription of 5s a year and have a monthly newsletter. The London Plan is an obvious occasion for their vigilance and to-day they raised ... the need to deal with the “white elephant wilderness” of the 23 acres of marshalling yards at Marylebone which according to local observation are scarcely used (*Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1952).

The person charged with giving the evidence was Ruth Eldridge, SMS Hon. Secretary and founder member, who recalled looking at the plans with SMS Chairman Alderman Coucher, and together they formulated the written and verbal responses for the public inquiry (Interview with Author, 30 April 2013). The SMS objected to the LCC’s suggested large northern zone of the site to be continued as railway use and argued that with the demise of steam and introduction of diesel trains, it was no longer needed for the functioning of the railway. Community uses, such as housing, a school and public open space should be considered instead. It was noted that the St Marylebone Borough Council (SMBC) supported the SMS suggestions and objections and the article added that, “the LCC would probably agree gladly if this was possible” (*Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1952).

PRIEST SPEAKS FOR STEPNEY AT LONDON PLAN INQUIRY

“Country People at Heart”

From our London Staff

FLEET STREET, FRIDAY.

For a brief bright while to-day a new spirit came upon the London Plan inquiry at County Hall. For the first time since the daily sessions started on September 29, the proceedings became in fact as well as in name a public inquiry in the best sense of the term—an opportunity for the public to put a point of view to the planners rather than a tedious argument between public authority planners and private planners.

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The first Abercrombie Plan was published in the shadows of 1943, a defiant, high-spirited vision of a new London, that was glimpsed in the black-out and among the air-raid shelters, among the bomb craters and the broken buildings. This was the inspiration of the London Plan which is now being considered, tediously and without imagination, so that it has become as unattractive as an old love who has changed out of recognition.

Rulers, Plans, Maps

But except for the people who live in what was the old village of Stebenhythe centred round the church of St Dunstan's the inhabitants never think of themselves as living in Stepney, but still use the old parish names—Limehouse, Mile End Whitechapel. It is a succession of little villages with distinct national boundaries—Jewish along the Mile End Road and Commercial Road, but Jews are almost unknown in Wapping and Limehouse colonies of coloured sailors live round Limehouse Docks and St George's Docks and near the river in tight, unassimilated groups live Irish people, and the majority of all of them live in what the bombs left of concentrations of pre-1870 slums of the worst type.

“White Elephant”

The St Marylebone Society is an organisation of people who live in the borough and seek to make it an even more pleasant place. They charge a subscription of 5s. a year and have a monthly news letter. The London Plan is an obvious occasion for their vigilance and to-day they raised two points—the need to deal with the “white elephant wilderness” of the 23 acres of marshalling yards at Marylebone which according to local observation are scarcely used.

Miss Eldridge, appearing for the society said that this would be invaluable for housing and for a school and there would still be room for some open space. Apparently no information could be obtained from British Railways about their intentions and the L.C.C. had zoned the site for continued railway use.

Mr Arthur Ling, senior planning officer of the council, said that a serious view was taken of the amount of land used by railways—over 3,350 acres in London—

Fig. 7.11 *Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1952

It is pertinent to note that the SMS was one of only two public representatives at the Public Inquiry for determining the *Greater London plan* and therefore their input carried considerable weight. The SMS had specifically determined

to involve themselves with planning matters that affected Marylebone and this was an ideal opportunity to get involved and influence policy. Their local knowledge about the site and its under-use were brought to the attention of the experts and the SMS had the skills to participate on a professional level with the town planners. The LCC and the Government had a massive task to undertake and so research, data and analysis given freely by volunteers like the SMS would have been welcomed because it could assist them in their work and also allow them to focus their in-house resources on other areas of need in the city. Both national and local press were involved and this media coverage raised the profile of the SMS and its ideas for local redevelopment began to be taken seriously. Membership increased and with this representation, connections and networking opportunities.

Following the public inquiry, the SMS sent a formidable deputation to speak to the LCC at County Hall and reiterate what they wanted to see planned on the station site. The delegates listed the letters after their names to highlight their social status, expertise and professional acumen,

The Society's objections to certain items, particularly the future of the Marshalling Yard, were presented at the Public Inquiry held on Friday 12th Dec. Our own Portia, Miss M.R. Eldridge, conducted our case most ably and evidence was given by our Chairman, Alderman A.E. Reneson Coucher, O.B.E., F.R.I.C.S., F.A.I., L.C.C., Mr. Peter Macfarlane, F.R.I.C.S., M.T.P.I. [Town Planning Consultant], Mr. Ralph Cropper, M. Soc (Econ), B.A., A.M.Inst.T. [Transport Consultant], and Mr. B.G.K. Allsop, J.P., F.R.I.C.S., F.A.I. [A senior partner in the old-established local firm of Surveyors, Valuers, Auctioneers and Estate Agents, Messrs. Allsop & Co.]. A full account of the proceedings appeared in the Local Press of 19th December (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, no. 4, January 1953).

The two key people commenting on behalf of the SMS were Alderman Coucher (local politician and qualified surveyor) and Ruth Eldridge (solicitor). Together they would have been seen to represent male/female and young/old and they described themselves as representative of the public and residents within their

locality. Possibly true for their immediate neighbourhood within the Portman and Howard de Walden Estates, which were populated by a professional, white, privileged 'public' at the time. However, the borough of St Marylebone extended far beyond the Georgian squares of W1, spreading north to Boundary Road, east to Regent's Park and west to the Edgware Road, and included a diverse socio-economic demography. In the 1950s many wealthy SMS members also lived in St John's Wood, just north of the railway site, in an area scheduled for school and social housing redevelopment. Preventing the demolition of many historic villas in this area (homes of SMS members) would have been a further reason for their suggested changes to the *Greater London plan*. Ruth Eldridge wrote that,

... instead of the London Plan's proposed demolition of ninety-one well maintained, detached and semi-detached housing in the Carlton Hill Area of St John's Wood ... why not put the proposed school on the marshalling yard? (SMS Archives, *St Marylebone Society Newsletter*).

The SMS displayed genuine philanthropic concern for working-class residents in sub-standard housing but their discussions suggest that they would not wish this be provided in their immediate vicinity. Instead, the SMS proposed "low-cost housing" should be built on the Marylebone Station railway yards and this was eventually agreed by the LCC and included in the *Greater London plan*. Marylebone Station, the Great Central Hotel and all the platforms and tracks, were to remain outside the CAZ (Central Activities Zone) and it was written into the plan that future commercial development would not be permitted other than specifically for railway use. The SMS had been involved with the formative stages of the *Greater London plan*, influencing the development of housing to the north on the goods yards (eventually developed as Lisson Grove Estate in the 1970s) and keeping the rest of the site for railway station use only. Ultimately this determined the planning brief and future uses permitted on the station site and thwarted BR's radical plans for non-railway large scale commercial development (similar to that executed at Euston Station) over the following decades.

Marylebone Station and Railway in Decline (1970s)

The downside of this uncertainty and lack of development opportunity due to restrictive planning policy contributed to minimal investment by British Rail (BR) at Marylebone Station and it fell into disrepair with reduced train services. “An Imperial-sized hangover” is how James Abbott describes the suffering at Marylebone Station in the early 1980s (*Modern railways*, January 1980, p21-26), and this set the scene for BR’s closure plans. The lack of investment and the 1970s recession, coupled with disproportionate fares controlled by the Greater London Council (GLC) and London Transport (LT), took its toll and passenger numbers started falling. Commuting into central London had decreased by 12% during the 1970s (SMS Archive, House of Parliament meeting minutes, 26 June 1984) and was predicted to fall further as industry and offices moved out of central London to the suburbs.

Since railway nationalisation in 1948 BR had been looking for efficiencies in the railway system and after Beeching’s report, *Reshaping of British railways* (Beeching, 1963), most of the British population had resigned, often despite hard fought campaigns, to wide-spread railway station closures being inevitable. However, the campaign to ‘Save Marylebone Station’ proved to be an important exception and the fact that it was not closed down was pivotal to the future of BR, especially Network SouthEast, and of public attitudes to railways nationally (Saving Marylebone Station Symposium, 26 January 2014).

Marylebone Station and its lines were not included in Beeching’s later report, *The development of the major railway trunk routes* (British Railways Board, 1965) and therefore received no financial investment and were allowed to wither. By 1980 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on rail services in the south-east had identified extra capacity on many lines and duplication of routes, which the Serpall Report (*Railway finances*, 1983) confirmed as being the case at Marylebone. Passenger numbers were the lowest of all London’s termini and predicted to fall further as coach and car travel increased with the completion of the M25 and M40 motorways. In 1982 passenger numbers reached a low point and problems for BR were exacerbated by NUR (National Union of Railwaymen) and ASLEF (Associated

Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen) strikes that year. Deadlock between BR and the NUR over driver-only operated trains, added to the line's problems with disputes, reduction of training programs and consequent staff shortages.



Fig. 7.12 Marylebone Station Entrance in 1983 (SMS Archive)



Fig. 7.13 Railway tracks in 1983 (SMS Archive)

'Balance sheet'	
1983	£m pa
Operating costs	6.5
Infrastructure costs	5.0 approx
Revenue	6.8
Support required	4.7

Fig. 7.14 BR Marylebone costs

Marylebone passenger numbers			
Year	Daily	AM peak	PHLF
1973	17,110		
1983	14,500	5,000	67%
2012	24,029	13,237	112%

124 coaches used (now 173)

Fig.7 .15 Passenger Numbers

- Figures from the report**
- Electrification cost: £14.2m (£40m today)
 - Marylebone site worth £2m (£5.6m today)
 - Value of depot site £0.5m
 - Cost of moving tube exit £3-5m

Fig. 7.16 Land Values and Costs



Fig. 7.17 Commuter Analysis

Diagrams and Figures from the BR Report on the Closure of Marylebone Station 1983 (Presented at the Saving Marylebone Station Symposium, 26 January 2014)

Interviews with BR representatives at the time confirmed that the property department at BR and the railway operational departments were not closely linked and that the BR Board was under intense pressure to develop its land and property. WCC planners confirmed this, stating that they sensed, “An antipathy to anything that would obstruct BR maximizing their real estate values”. A long-term resident and SMS activist added,

One forgets what a backwater Marylebone was at the time. In 1980 much of the area was run down, there were still bomb sites. No one really came to Marylebone and most politicians lived and worked in the south of Westminster (SMS member, Saving Marylebone Station Symposium, 26 January 2014).

Difficulties in altering the historic buildings and developing the Marylebone Station site led to BR moving their administrative departments to Paddington

and Euston. In the early 1980s plans were drawn up for development which envisaged BR vacating the whole Marylebone site and bringing anticipated commercial sales worth over £10 million. The proposals were debated in the local press and between residents and amenity societies, with BR continuing to pursue negotiations with WCC behind closed doors for large-scale redevelopment, attempting to redefine the Commercial Activities Zone (CAZ) to get round the restrictive planning policy of the *Greater London plan* and Westminster District Plan.



Fig. 7.18 London Station up for Sale, *The Standard*, 11 July 1983

7.2 The Start of the SMS Campaign (1983)

What BR might not have anticipated after posting the closure notice at Marylebone Station on 15 March 1984, was an established, informed and active local community of planning activists to contend with. Twelve local community groups were united under the umbrella of the SMS and together

they united with politicians and railway users along the threatened lines to sustain a two-year intensive campaign to 'Save Marylebone Station'.

Collaboration with Labour Councillors

Prompted by an article in *The Standard* (11 July 1983) and a letter from Labour opposition councillors (6 August 1983) the SMS wrote to the WCC Chief Planning Officer for information and clarification about the future of Marylebone Station and the Great Central Hotel, which at the time was used as offices for British Rail (BR). This solicited a reply and an assurance that WCC had received no proposals concerning the station but that they would “*ensure that the SMS were consulted* [my emphasis] as soon as any planning application was received” (WCC, TP File, letter, 22 September 1983).

The SMS encouraged collaboration with Labour councillors, who shared their concerns about station closure, by inviting them to a meeting (5 September 1983) where together they agreed to share information, contacts and compiled an article for publication in the Autumn 1983 issue of the *St Marylebone Society Newsletter* to widen the debate and garner support. The newsletter was a regular publication sent to SMS members, local councillors, libraries and the local press and therefore a useful tool in raising awareness of local matters. At this stage the amenity issues to consider were:

- Loss of the railway station as an important public service, and
- Protection of the historic buildings.

SMS Attempt to List the Buildings

An attempt to get the buildings listed in 1979 had been refused by the Department of the Environment (DOE) on the grounds that they did not have, “special or architectural interest” (SMS Archive, letter, 24 May 1979). However, the buildings were within the recently extended Dorset Square Conservation Area (1975) which offered Marylebone Station and the Great Central Hotel limited protection, in that BR would now need WCC permission for any demolition. However, when the threat of station closure became apparent, the SMS was keen to retry to statutorily list the buildings, because if successful this would prevent demolition or alterations and restrict commercial

uses on the site. The SMS spent six months collecting evidence, historical information, photographs and wider support for listing the station and hotel, which included an evocative description of the Great Central Hotel from conservation activist and writer John Betjeman writing that he had,

... stood dazed by its marble entrance hall, the wide stone staircases, and the painted tympana of nymphs and goddesses ... the architect spared no expense on the exterior which is gold terra-cotta and with a central tower on the Marylebone Road front (Betjeman, 1972).

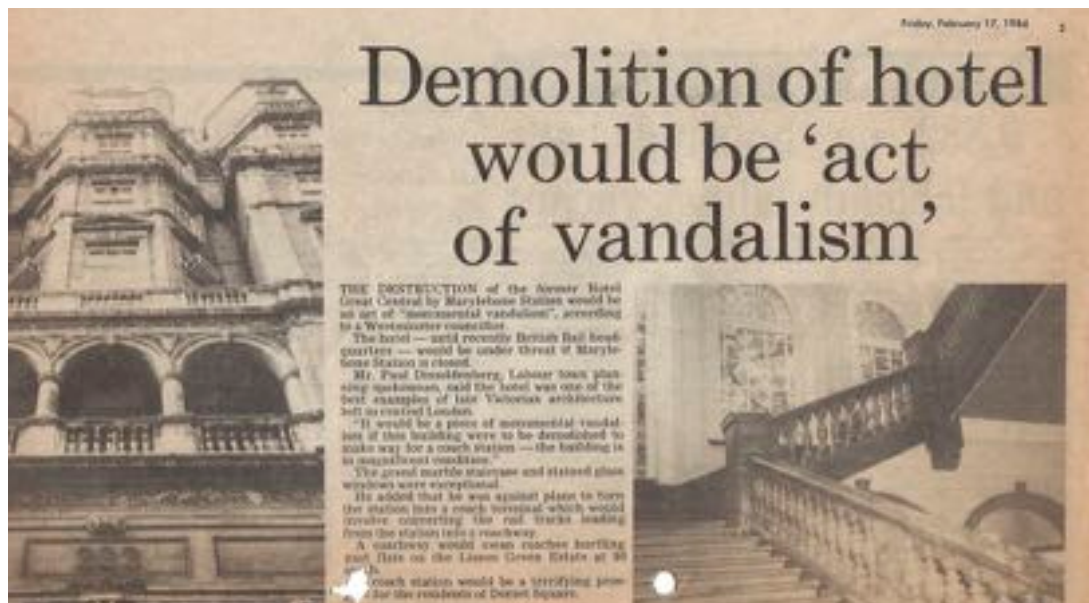


Fig. 7.19 Demolition of hotel would be an 'act of vandalism', *Marylebone Mercury*, 17 February 1984

BR agreed to permit the SMS and Labour councillors to visit the building and they took along a member of the GLC Historic Buildings Division, "with a camera, in an undercover role" to collect evidence of the building fabric (SMS Archive, letter, 20 October 1983). The SMS wrote to the Rt Hon. Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for the Environment urging him to re-consider listing and offering their amassed information in support of this (SMS Archive, letter, 16 October 1983). Their letter was copied to the GLC, WCC, SAVE (Save Britain's Heritage) and the Victorian Society and numerous articles were written in the press in support of the listing. Despite this the SMS received a reply which repeated the decision of 1979; that the buildings had been carefully inspected

and had been, "found to be of insufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant inclusion in the statutory list" (SMS Archive, 20 January 1984).

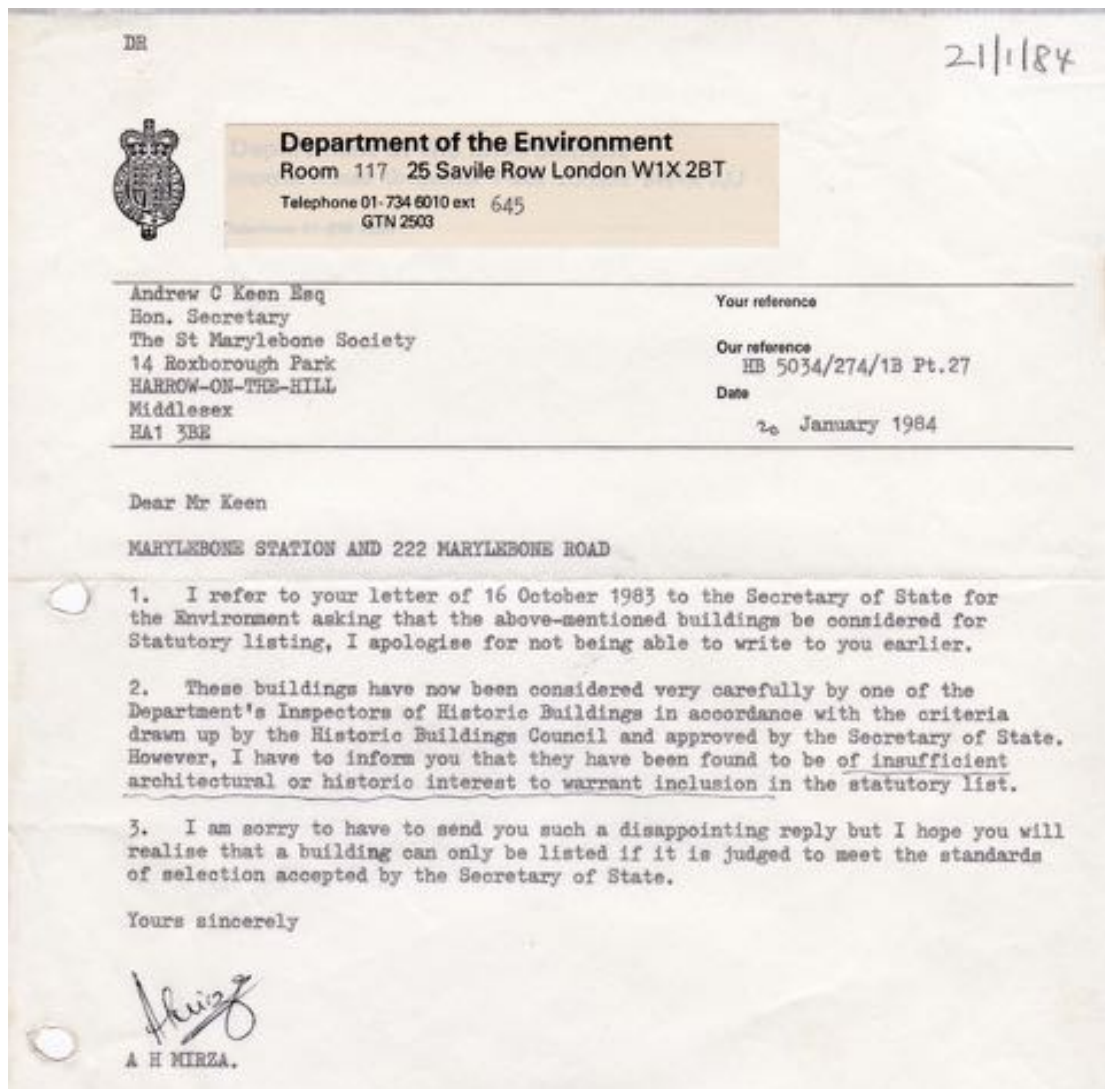


Fig. 7.20 DOE letter to SMS refusing listing (SMS Archive, 20 January 1984)

Westminster City Council's Plans for Marylebone Station

Concurrent with the campaign for conservation of the buildings, the SMS also began to research planning policy and formulate counter proposals for the future of the station ahead of any planning application by BR. This activity was informed by an internal WCC Briefing Note passed to the SMS by sympathetic Labour councillors. It outlined the various uses permitted on the site under the current WCC District Plan, explained relevant policies and gave detailed statistical information, such as land use, areas and employment data (SMS Archive, 18 July 1983).

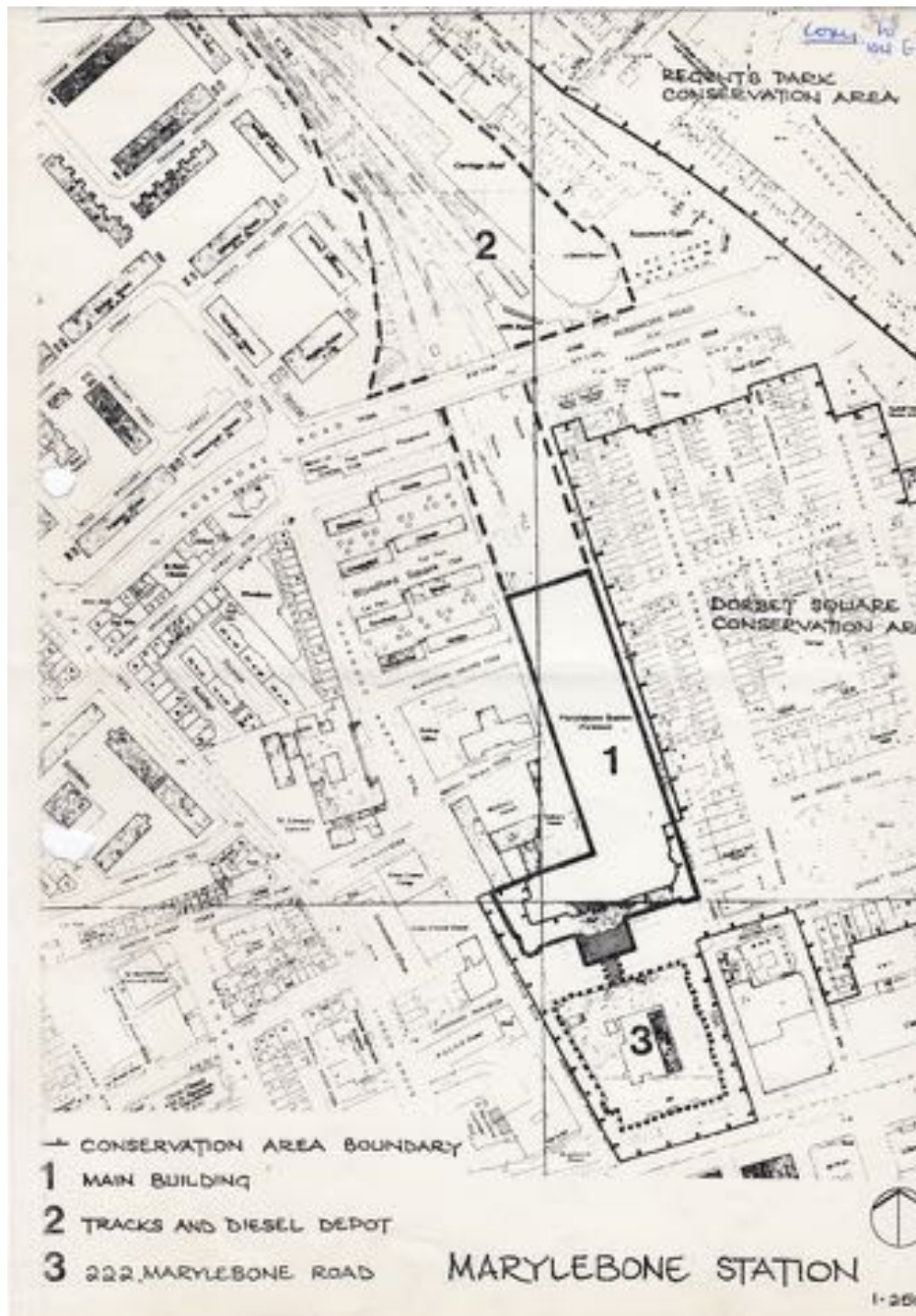


Fig. 7.21 Plan attached to Marylebone Station 'Briefing Note', 18 July 1983 indicating the three distinct areas under consideration should the railway close (SMS Archive/WCC TP files)

The Briefing Note set out the informal discussions WCC had already had with BR concerning the station, in which they had divided the site into three specific areas; the station and train sheds, the tracks and diesel depot to the north and 222 Marylebone Road, the Great Central Hotel. The position of the WCC planning officers was in favour of retention of the historic buildings for office

use because they were within the Dorset Square Conservation Area. They suggested a mixed-use development would be most appropriate on the rest of the site with some non-railway commercial development likely to be permitted, even though they noted this would be contrary to the WCC District Plan. The WCC City Engineer went further, adding that they should offer technical assistance to NBC as he thought, "... the use of Marylebone BR Station as a coach terminal [was] to be welcomed as part of the Council's determination to reduce the impact of coaches in the Victoria Area" (WCC, TP files, 22 March 1983). Many politicians and wealthy residents lived in Victoria and Belgravia so an alternative coach station would have benefited them. This was the first time the idea of a coach terminus was tabled and it alerted the SMS to their additional challenge.

The Threat of Proposed Busway and Coach Terminus

Plans for the coach terminus were first publicly announced in an article in *The Times* (5 March 1983), then followed four months later by NBC's technical report for the rail-to-road conversion at Marylebone Station (29 July 1983).

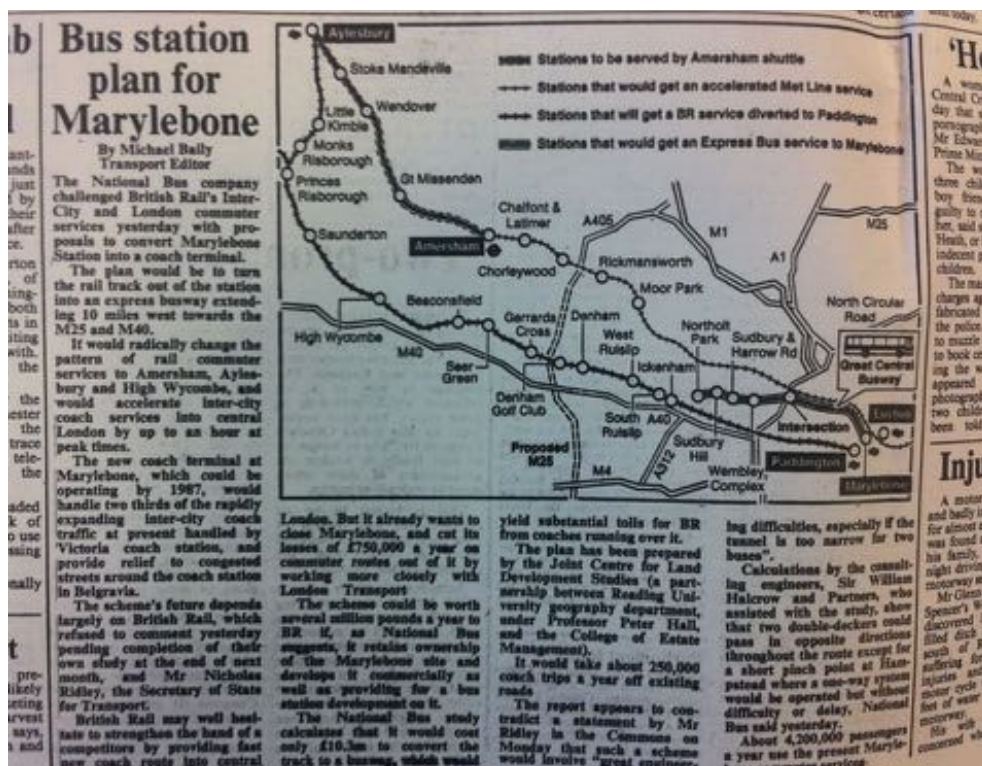


Fig. 7.22 Bus Station Plan for Marylebone, *The Times*, 5 March 1983

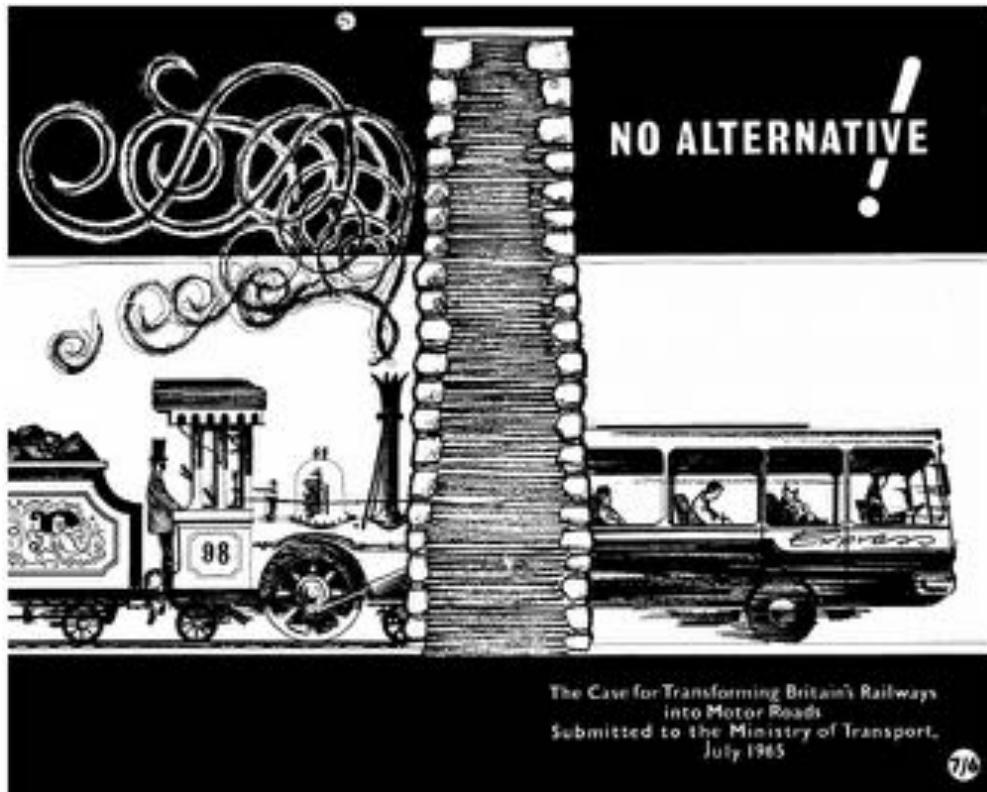


Fig. 7.23 *No alternative!* The case for transforming Britain's railways into motor roads (Railway Conversion League, 1965)

The scheme at Marylebone was seen to be part of a sustained political campaign, begun in the late 1950s by the Railway Conversion League and supported by the Conservative Government.

The scheme will be put to a £50,000 study announced by British Rail 10 days ago. The study will be carried out by Coopers and Lybrand, with a three man steering committee including Sir Alfred Sherman, one of Mrs Thatcher's right-wing policy advisors and a supporter of the rail-into-road idea. Sir Peter Parker, the retiring British Rail Chairman who called the idea naïve only last year was persuaded to set up the study by Sir Alfred and fellow Tory advisor Sir Alan Walters (*The Guardian*, 30 July 1983).

The NBC proposal would convert the station into a new terminus for all long-distance coaches travelling to London from the north. Ten miles of track from Northolt to Marylebone Station were to be concreted over to create 'The Great Central Busway', a fast reserved route that would speed up journey times into the city centre and also alleviate congestion at Victoria Coach station. Sir Alfred Sherman not only backed the plan but had a vested interest,

Like all good Thatcherites, Sherman made sure he profited personally from the economic changes he had helped bring about. Having propogandised tirelessly for privatisation, he accepted a position as public affairs adviser for the newly-privatised National Bus Corporation - and duly issued a paper advocating the paving over of the nation's railways (Neil Clark, *Morning Star*, 4 Sept 2006).

The NBC report stated that the proposal would take approximately 250,000 coaches off existing roads a year. It would cost £10.3m to convert the tracks but NBC claimed BR could make several million pounds from developing the Marylebone site commercially alongside their new coach terminus and WCC agreed:

'Coach move is on the right track' – Marylebone Station would make a good site for a super new coach terminal, according to Westminster Council. The council is refusing to back the Tory-controlled borough of Ealing in a campaign to keep the rail service going at Marylebone Station. It was keen to see the station used as a coach terminal with the railway tracks converted to bus routes (*Paddington Times*, 29 July 1983).

Handwritten notes:
 1) See past hand with not last station hope the by rail terminal would allow us to
 2) Present H & Q would make a main excellent L&N&W strategic position
 3) Consider all approaches to Warran, Spilling Hill
 4) Will be a bus route to Marylebone
 on Northern rail station is now
 a A 40 from Hillingdon is W

TIME SAVED BY BUSES

MOTORWAY LINKS

TUNNEL SECTION

THE METROLINER
 ... flagship of the new Great Central

Non-stop London via St Marylebus?
 by Philip Boredard

Left, present rail and coach times compared with coach times using Marylebone, Centre, right appears is the St John's Wood tunnels, Right, the luxury Metroliner

Later seven hours now, will take only five hours.
 The scheme to convert Marylebone station - if British Rail decides to close it - was proposed in a report by passenger journeys into central London, which are mostly made by passengers changing coach.
 There would also be shuttle services operating into the Marylebone and

British Rail is believed to endorse the Marylebone scheme. At the very least, it will turn a £700,000-a-year loss-making line, requiring about investment, into a

For 15 June 1983

Fig. 7.24 Non-stop London via St Marylebus? (SMS Archive)

There were however, differing opinions within the government as to the suitability of conversion. Mr Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State for Transport, saw great engineering difficulties. He thought the idea of a NBC Busway into Marylebone, “would be unsuitable ... the half-mile of tunnels leading to the station under Lord’s Cricket Ground was not wide enough for conversion to road” (WCC, TP file, undated and unattributed newspaper article). Local Labour councillors shared a letter with the SMS from the Department of Transport, which clearly stated their position on the use of Marylebone Station as a coach terminus:

As to the conversion of the railway line to Marylebone into a motorway. Let me assure you that the Government has no such plans; the existing railway track’s narrow width for much of its length would preclude a multi-lane highway altogether (SMS Archive, 22 September 1983).



Fig. 7.25 Experiment for rail-to-road conversion tunnels (NBC Report, February 1984)

These pessimistic views were contradicted by Consulting Engineers, Sir William Halcrow & Partners, who had assisted with the NBC report. They claimed that two buses could easily pass in opposite directions throughout the route, except for a pinch point at Hampstead, where a one-way system could be operated. A ‘Heath Robinson style’ experiment was set up to demonstrate the feasibility of a busway running within existing railway tunnels, which

involved building a mock-up of the St John's Wood tunnel bore, with fascias fixed across the entrance to London County's bus garages at Grays, Essex. Two double-deckers were chosen for the experiment (as they were higher than the coaches used by National Express at the time) to be driven past each other at a speed of 70mph through the opening to prove the scheme was workable. Therefore, when BR posted the closure notice on 15 March 1984, the SMS now had two battles to fight:

- To save the railway station from closure, and
- To prevent NBC converting the station to a coach terminus.

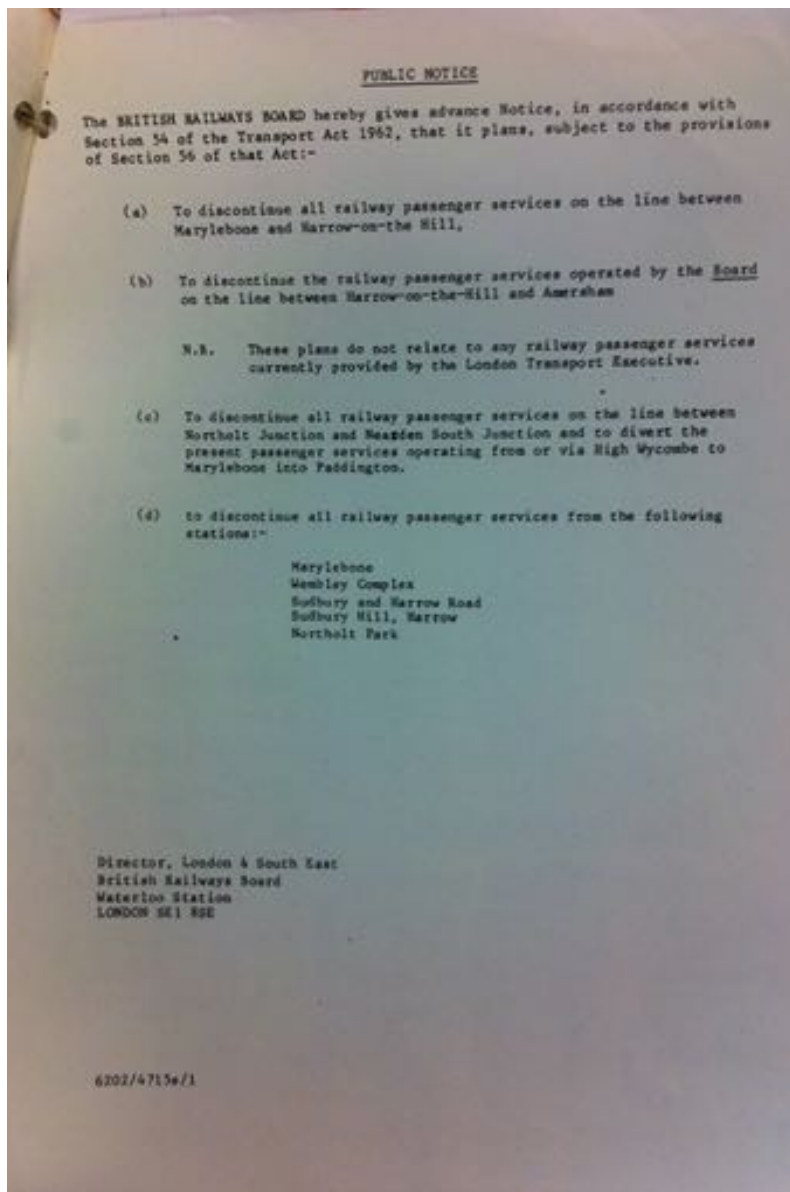


Fig. 7.26 BR PUBLIC NOTICE, 15 March 1984 (WCC, TP files)

Analysis at the Start of the Campaign (1983 - 1984)

SMS Activities, Tactics and Influence before the BR Closure Notice

By taking a proactive stance from the outset of closure rumours, the SMS had in writing WCC's promise to be consulted on future planning applications by BR as soon as they were submitted (SMS Archive, letter, 6 August 1983). Additionally, the SMS knew that there were restrictive planning policies on the site; policies they had influenced thirty years before, which kept the whole station site outside the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), with residential use on its tracks and yards and commercial development only permitted for railway use.

Whilst the SMS and Labour councillors had independently been worrying about Marylebone Station for some time, their decision to meet and collaborate motivated both organisations and provided mutual support at the start of the campaign. The Labour councillors shared inside information and the SMS provided skilled volunteers with plenty of time to hold meetings, write letters and spread the message through their well-connected network of local residents and businesses. In this way Labour were also assisted in their criticism of a staunch Conservative local authority by Conservative voting residents (as the majority of the SMS membership were Conservative, as described in Chapter 4). This cross-party political offensive gave the campaign an advantage in that it could be seen to be fighting for a genuine community cause. The Labour Party primarily wanted to protect the railways as an important public service, vital for the economic well-being of the nearby Church Street Ward; as a national industry and to support the workers of NUR and ASLEF. The concerns of the SMS were for the retention of the railway service and protection of the historic buildings; however, all these issues were overtaken by the far greater fear of a coach terminus in its place and the consequential environmental problems that would bring to their neighbourhood: traffic, noise, pollution, litter and anti-social behaviour.

When the SMS received the confidential planning information, it allowed them to understand the political machinations taking place behind the scenes at

WCC. The documents revealed that transport officers were in favour of the station closure and the coach terminus development on the site and that WCC planners would also be prepared to permit some non-railway commercial development. The SMS had the expertise to understand the specific issues they would need to challenge and knew how to use the information to their advantage, including the tactic of non-disclosure. For example, they wrote letters to WCC with queries relating to rumours and press articles that implied ignorance of the fact that they were fully aware of the situation from the inside. Having possession of the research and data undertaken by the planning department saved the SMS time and gave them information on numbers of passengers, floor areas and employment on the site etc. In time, this statistical evidence would be used to challenge WCC in support of their arguments for retaining the station and preventing non-railway commercial development.



Fig. 7.27 Council backs Marylebone busway plan, *The Times*, 13 April 1984

The SMS had gained covert power through shared confidential information, extended networks across political boundaries and increased their membership, planning and technical knowledge. However, the SMS hadn't the strength of power or influence to prevent BR posting the closure notice nor the local authority supporting a coach terminus in its place. The attempt to list Marylebone Station and the Great Central Hotel also failed, even with support from the GLC and national amenity societies. This was partly due to attitudes to the value of Victorian industrial buildings at the time, but also because the conservationists were fighting two aligned and stronger adversaries:

- British Rail, a powerful national organisation with financial difficulties, streamlining its rail services and capitalising on its property portfolio, and,
- The Conservative Government, who had promoted road over rail since the 1950s.

The potential commercial development value of Marylebone Station site was too great to be stymied by the DOE listing the buildings, a minority of Labour Councillors and the voices of the local amenity society.

7.3 Campaign to Save the Station from Closure (June 1984 - May 1985)

In June 1984 Labour councillors forwarded the SMS another internal document, the 'Draft Planning Report' ahead of the next WCC Planning and Development Committee meeting (scheduled for 26 June 1984), at which they would formalise recommendations supporting station closure and a coach terminus on the site. The SMS set to work with a detailed critique of the WCC draft report questioning the assumptions on predicted traffic, existing and proposed coach numbers. They picked out subjective and imprecise wording such as 'significant', 'considerable', 'largely', and they challenged the NBC research and statistics as not impartial and therefore unreliable. In letters to their local councillors, they concluded that the opportunities offered up by the planning officers' recommendations were mutually exclusive, for example, "Redevelopment of the site as a coach station" and "Improvement of Environment for Adjoining Residents". They asked permission to speak at the committee meeting to try to get the report "thrown out" (SMS Archive) but the SMS request was refused and WCC maintained their position: raising no objections to station closure and the proposed coach station.

The same evening, MPs were also debating the 'Proposed Closure of Marylebone Station' in the House of Commons. They examined routes, existing and alternative services, numbers of trains, capacity and potential hardship for commuters should their branch line stations close. Crucially at this meeting, "Members from all political parties expressed their opposition to BR's


closure plans" (SMS Archive, copy of Hansard, minutes of parliamentary meeting, 26 June 1984).

Despite the House of Commons position, and SMS continued lobbying of their local councillors, when WCC's Full Council met a month later, on 23 July 1984, it ratified the decision of their planning committee:

- to raise no objection to the withdrawal of BR services from Marylebone
- to consider the possibility of a coach terminus

Marylebone Labour Party's newsletter *Marylebone Spotlight* angrily headlined with, "Tories to say 'yes' to coach station plan" (SMS Archive) and outlined advice to continue the fight against closure.

MARYLEBONE SPOTLIGHT



TORIES TO SAY "YES" TO COACH STATION PLAN

TORIES on Westminster City Council are poised to give the go-ahead to a controversial Coach Station to replace Marylebone Station.

At the Council meeting on 23rd July, the Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee, Alan Bradley, will be asking for approval for a 'Planning Brief', which includes a Coach Station, to be drawn up.

The main features of the Coach Station plan are:

- the end to rail services to and from Marylebone
- the relocation of TWO-THIRDS of the Victoria Coach Station traffic to Marylebone
- Coach Parks for over 120 coaches
- a car park for over 170 'short-stay' visitors.

Councillor Paul Dincolt **EBERG**, Labour's Planning spokesperson, attacked the proposal "to dump the Victoria Coach Station problem onto Marylebone's quiet residential streets" He said that if the proposal is approved and is successful the new Coach Station would have to handle about 12 million passengers a year - just under half the number of passengers handled by Heathrow Airport!

"The Coach Station will put enormous strains on the local area. There will be pressure from people wanting to open bed and breakfast hotels and fast-food takeaways" he said.

Church Street Councillor, Richard Nicholls, said:
"A Coach Station is a 24-hour a day operation. Our streets will be constantly full of taxis, cars, buses and travellers. Our local shops and pubs will change out of all recognition!"

The Council meeting is on 23rd July, 6.00pm at the Council House, Marylebone Road. Labour Councillors are urging local residents to attend the meeting.

Ask the Tory Trio

THE Marylebone Station area is represented by three Tory Councillors - Reg Forester, Roger Bramble and Barry Legg.

When the Coach Station idea was discussed in the Planning Committee on 20th June, Councillors Forester and Bramble voted for the proposal. If you want them to explain why they support the Coach Station, contact them at the following addresses:

Councillor Reg Forester
47 Clarence Gate Gardens, Glenworth Street, W11 7ZJ 2124

Councillor Roger Bramble
2 Sutherland Street, W11 8ZB 2439

Councillor Barry Legg
4 Pyrae Street, W11 8EJ 9885

Opposition Mounts

OPPOSITION to the British Rail plan to close Marylebone Station is steadily mounting. Local rail unions - NUR and ASLEP - are against the closure, as, too, are rail passengers.

The President of the Aylesbury and District Passengers Committee, Leslie Freitag, put in a request to address the Planning Committee on the impact of the closure on people living in the Buckinghamshire area. But this request was turned down despite strong support from Labour members of the Committee.

Fig. 7.28 *Marylebone Spotlight*, July 1984 (SMS Archive)

The SMS contacted their WCC local councillors asking for support, but all replied with the same response: that they could not interfere with the operational or financial affairs of BR and they must consider all options for alternative commercial uses on the site. As a concession, Councillor Forrester personally promised the SMS, “I will certainly make sure that a full public consultation exercise is undertaken before decisions are made ...” (SMS Archive, letter from Councillor Forrester, 27 July 1984). The national and local press covered the WCC decision noting that it was at odds with local opinion; “Council ‘out on a limb’ over station coach plan” ran the headline in the *Marylebone Mercury* (27 July 1984). However, to ensure no worsening of the local environment WCC had stipulated a condition to restrict all coaches to the converted tracks. This promise was made in a speech by the Head of Planning (Fig. 7.29) and reported in the local press the next day, with one local councillor adding he thought NBC “had made too light of probable engineering problems” (*Marylebone Mercury*, 27 July 1984).



Fig. 7.29 WCC written confirmation of the restrictive conditions attached to a coach terminus at Marylebone (WCC TP files, committee speech, 23 July 1984)

SMS Networking and Lobbying locally and ‘Up the Line’

At this point the SMS decided they needed to increase their power and invited other local residents’ groups to form a consortium, coordinate activities and operate as an ‘umbrella group’. It included the Dorset Square Trust (DST), the Harrowby & District Residents Association, the Homer Street Residents Association, the Marylebone Association (MA), Marylebone Village Residents Association, the St John’s Wood Society (SJWS), and Regent’s Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee. This extended network connections and together they constituted greater representation. When the SMS wrote to WCC planning department stating that the group wanted to, “... seek involvement in the discussion of any new strategic plan for the area, or any proposed variation to the District Plan” (SMS Archive, letter, 23 August 1984), WCC replied positively, accepting the ‘SMS consortium’ as a designated consultee.

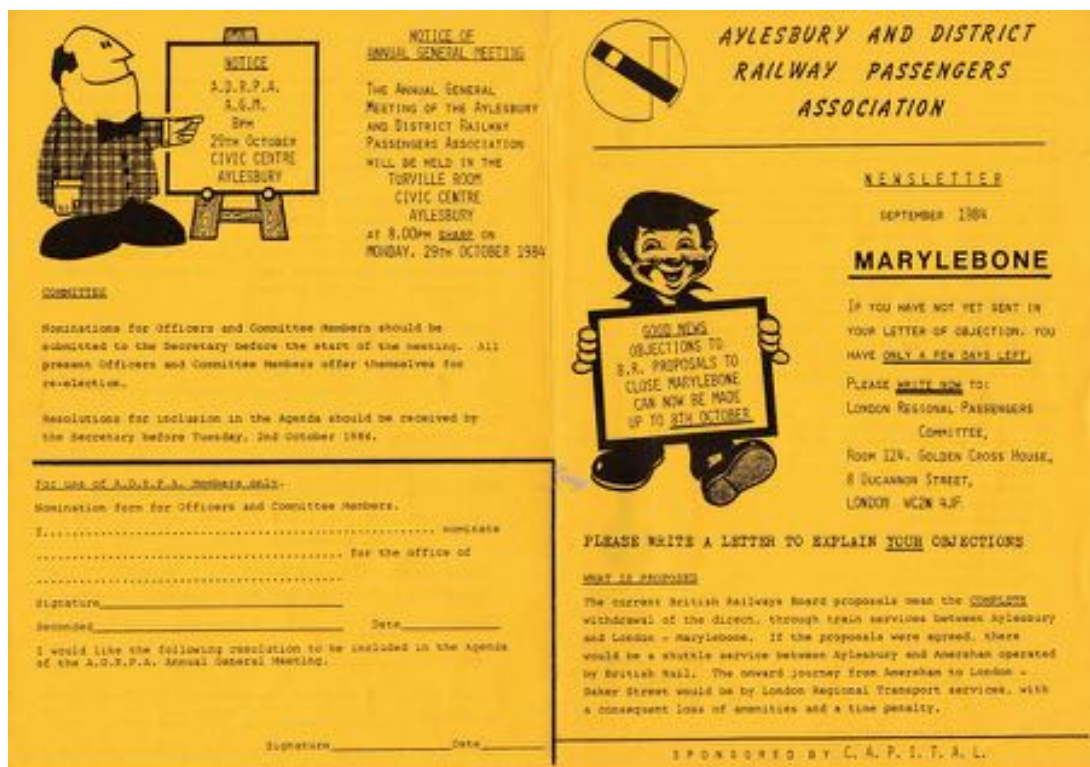


Fig. 7.30 Aylesbury and District Passengers Association Newsletter, September 1984 (SMS Archive)

The SMS also connected with other local campaigns which arose along the tracks out of Marylebone at the places which would be adversely affected by closure of Marylebone Station. Fortuitously, SMS founder Alderman Coucher’s

family lived in one such area, Harrow, and were still active SMS members with his great-granddaughter now Chair of the society. Through them links were forged with the Aylesbury and District Passengers Association (ADPA), a well-organised group who kept abreast of transport matters. These affluent commuters and their local councillors created a Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG), which included ten local councillors and seven MPs, along with representatives from the GLC. It had a very powerful network with direct access to the top of government. Newspapers throughout the Home Counties covered the campaign and their letters pages were filled with correspondence from angry commuters who would suffer hardship and inconvenience if the line into Marylebone were to close. For them the station closure was far more important than the threat of the proposed coach terminus.



Fig. 7.31 Joining forces in bid to halt rail axe falling, *Financial Times*, July 1984

Connecting to cross-party political groups was a benefit the SMS had realised when collaborating with the Labour Party and so they wrote to Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary of NUR (SMS Archive, letter, 3 August 1984), who replied supporting the retention and expansion of rail services (SMS Archive, letter, 14 August 1984). In turn, local Labour councillors with close contacts to the

NUR could feed back useful information to the passenger groups and amenity societies. The SMS rallied,

What we have to remember is that the fight for the retention of the railway will have the support of many thousands of individuals, together with every local authority bar the Westminster City Council – yes, the Conservative shire counties are joining forces with ASLEF for this fight! (SMS Archive, letter from Sam Briddes).

Coordinating Objections for the Public Hearing on Station Closure

In accordance with the Transport Act 1962 (Section 54) having posted the Marylebone Station closure notice, the second stage of the process invited objections. With 'hardship' being the only criteria that would be considered by the Transport Users Consultative Committee (TUCC), later the London Region Passengers Committee (LRPC), there was a cut-off date for responses set at the end of July 1984. After this date the LRPC would report to the Secretary of State. The SMS distributed information to residents and commuters, providing the rationale to ensure people objected effectively.

As 'hardship' was the only relevant, admissible reason for objection against the closure of the routes into Marylebone the SMS took time to define at length what constituted 'hardship'. They distributed standard letters, that highlighted 'hardship and inconvenience', to make it easy for people less committed or less able (or with less free time) to make valid objections in a professional manner (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 4 September 1984). The SMS also prepared and handed out 'briefing sheets' at Marylebone Station on which commuters could note journey times, different routes, delays and overcrowding, to amass their own data relating to the use of the railway's lines (SMS Archive, letter, 30 July 1984). In a pre-computer era, this represented a considerable task in terms of physical letter writing, mailing and telephone calling. Through the effective alliance of the SMS consortium, the ADPA and the Joint Local Authorities Group, with a GLC agreement to help with technical support (for example, carrying out passenger surveys), valid objections that closure would cause hardship were therefore supported by extensive knowledge and specific data on railway timetables, capacity and practicalities.

PASSENGER SURVEY 27-11-84

1. A survey card should be given to every person boarding a train at your station (whether or not they entered on an earlier journey).
 2. DO NOT give a card to anyone leaving a train.
 3. Where children are accompanied by adults give the adults sufficient cards to cover all persons in their party. They should complete a card for each person in their party however young.
 4. The cards are all postage paid but, should they wish, passengers can hand them to our surveyor on their return.
 5. If anyone refuses a card please make a note otherwise we will not have an accurate record of the total number of passengers.
 6. At the end of your shift please pass on the cards & instructions to your successor. If anyone turns up please give them to the booking office for safe keeping.
 7. If you are late & your predecessor has left, the booking office should have the cards.
 8. At the end of the day any cards remaining must be returned, someone will arrange to pick them up.
- BR have given their permission for this survey (Stephen Hucker
Area Manager
Marylebone)

Fig. 7.32 Handwritten Passenger Survey for the date 27 November 1984 (SMS Archive)

The press reported, "Station objections pile up", with an article pointing out widespread anger that timing the public consultation to be during the holiday period was devious as it meant fewer people would object, with less time to formulate objections, and Parliament would be in recess. "BR's timing under fire" railed the local press in Marylebone and all towns along the affected lines (*Marylebone Mercury*, 10 August 1984).



Fig. 7.33 BR's timing under fire, *Marylebone Mercury*, 10 August 1984

The hard work and media publicity paid off with the hearing delayed and the time to object extended. When the LRPC announced the Public Hearing would take place between the 25th and 27th February 1985, they stated that they had already received over 900 written submissions objecting to the closure of Marylebone Station.



Fig. 7.34 LRPC Press Release, 17 December 1984 (SMS Archive)

7.4 The Campaign to Prevent the NBC Busway and Coach Terminus
(Jan 1985 – July 1985)



Fig. 7.35 *Marylebone Station Site Draft Planning Brief*, April 1985
(SMS Archive/WCC TP files)

Challenging the Planning Brief for Marylebone Station

While objections to railway closure and hardship mounted and continued to delay the Public Hearing, the SMS had to fight a simultaneous campaign to prevent the proposed NBC coach terminus in Marylebone. Local residents were far more concerned about this than station closure and the SMS resolved to get it removed from the WCC Planning Brief for the station site. The SMS already had in place WCC agreement to be consulted and called for a public meeting at Marylebone Council House (10 January 1985) to discuss the proposed coach terminus. They assembled representatives of all the local organisations in their 'umbrella group', WCC local councillors and residents. They listed objections concerning loss of amenity and environmental issues and also stated their preferred alternative uses for the site should the station close. They stressed there should be more consultations with residents to which WCC councillors assured them that their comments would be taken into account when the planning brief for the station site was finalised (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 17 January 1985).

The SMS understood that an important lobbying tactic is to take control of the agenda. They were the instigators of meetings with WCC and used the local press and their own newsletters to publicise the meeting outcomes as statements of public record. Not only did the SMS chair the meetings, they also took and distributed the minutes. Minutes were circulated to all parties with a polite covering letter that also emphasised the 'Actions' for the recipients and were delivered 'by hand' to avoid any loss or delay. In this way direct communication was established between the Chair of the SMS and the Chair of the Planning & Development Committee. Following the public meeting they received a letter from WCC repeating back and taking ownership of the SMS original suggestions for action:

We have concluded that the best and simplest approach would be for the City Planning Officer to write to all the local Resident's Associations and amenity groups in the Marylebone area explaining the Council's intention of preparing a planning brief and enclosing a copy of the note of our meeting on 10 January ...

I enclose a list of those organisations we propose to consult and will be grateful if you would let me know if there are any you think we have missed (SMS Archive, letter, 31 January 1985).

The WCC Draft Planning Brief for the station site was released for public consultation on 26 March 1985, anticipating station closure and the possibility of a busway and coach terminus. WCC sent 300 copies of the Draft Planning Brief to local groups, those with commercial or wider interests and the general public. The SMS scrutinised the document point-by-point with a red pen, crossing out whole paragraphs and editing the wording. One word which WCC used throughout was 'significant' and this was deleted to make the clause non-subjective. For example, "Proposed traffic levels will not lead to a ~~significant~~ worsening of environmental condition ..." (WCC, TP files, WCC Draft Planning Brief, 26 March 1985). In this way, the SMS effectively edited the whole document, changing the bias in favour of local residents, the conservation area, and imposing stricter requirements on future commercial developments. For example (SMS comments indicated in capital letters),

3.4 line 5 to read '... levels will not lead to a worsening of environmental conditions **BUT INDEED WILL IMPROVE IT** and that the bulk ...

3.13 **NO USE OF A COACH STATION WILL BE PERMITTED UNTIL THE FULL CONVERSION OF THE RAILWAY TRACKS HAS BEEN MADE AND PROVEN SUITABLE FOR ITS MAXIMUM POSSIBLE USE.**

3.22 paragraph to read 'In addition further traffic management measures **WILL BE** necessary ... **PARTICULARLY WITHIN A ONE MILE RADIUS.**

3.17 paragraph to read '**ANY ADDITIONAL OFFICE DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE INTENTIONS OF THE DISTRICT PLAN ...**

The SMS assumed a partnership role in developing and editing the WCC planning brief for the site. When they submitted their comments, the SMS closed the covering letter with, "We ask that prior to the final planning brief being adopted the City Council holds a meeting with ourselves." This kept the lines of communication open and also created another opportunity for and

checking the final document. They added, “We should need to have the [final] draft at least 3 weeks prior to such a meeting in order that representatives can consult with their membership” (SMS Archive). This was effectively an instruction that assumed the first request was agreed and also specified the timetable for ongoing consultation. It was stated in a polite, cooperative and reasonable way that WCC could not refuse without seeming unreasonable themselves. They also wrote an open letter to the Leader of Westminster Council, Shirley Porter, referring back to the confidential ‘Briefing Note’ of the Planning & Development Committee (26 June 1984), which had stated, “The commercial redevelopment of the site other than for railway use may constitute a departure from the District Plan” and reported it in their newsletter (*St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, Spring 1985).

Delaying Tactics and Technical Knowledge

In 1985 the SMS was recognised as a designated consultee in the planning process and they capitalised on this status by notifying BR that they were collaborating with WCC on the planning brief for the station site and needed a fact-finding site trip to take photographs and to, “ascertain and understand the context”. In setting up the visit they requested that as well as Marylebone Station Master, “It would be helpful if either an engineer or surveyor plus yourself could accompany us” (SMS Archive, letter, 14 February 1985).

BR agreed to the request thereby allowing the SMS to gather evidence they could potentially use in future arguments against them. Following the visit, a polite thank you letter was sent including an ‘Action’ for BR asking, “I should be grateful if you could ensure that the Society receives copies of any literature put out by BR in particular any press releases concerning the Station” (SMS Archive). It is interesting to note that the SMS always named who they deemed personally responsible for any requested ‘Action’. This was an effective tactic for ensuring compliance by conferring personal accountability within a large organisation; what it really meant was, ‘If we don’t receive the press releases it will be your fault!’



Fig. 7.36 SMS visit with BR surveyor (SMS Archive)

Having undertaken their own site analysis and survey the SMS then began to draft their own alternative planning brief for the site. They started by dividing the site into six zones, listing appropriate uses for each which, unlike the WCC planning brief, were in accordance with the WCC District Plan. The SMS proposed mixed use, mainly residential, and their plan was developed with all the other organisations in the 'umbrella group' and included Marylebone Housing Association and Labour councillors.

Delaying the process was an important strategy because not only could the activists collect more objections, a protracted timespan allowed social, economic and political change. At the start of 1985 doubts as to the feasibility of redirecting trains to Baker Street and the potential loss of revenue to BR by passengers switching to coach travel were beginning to be voiced. Profits and numbers of passengers on trains out of Marylebone were beginning to rise. In a confidential report prepared by a joint BR/LT working party (and leaked to the press), it was concluded that the Marylebone site was perhaps only worth £2m and not the £20m being quoted earlier in the year (*City Limits*, 17 August

1984). BR themselves began to have doubts on their previous predicted savings by diverting trains from Marylebone:

Despite the significant real resource savings from closure, consent to closure would not be justified because of the inconvenience and hardship which it would impose, particularly on users of the four stations which would be closed, and the considerably increased grant cost of diverting the service into Paddington. (Heads of Information from BR London Midland Region, August 1984)

Delays also gave the SMS more time to research and develop technical expertise and within the SMS, as in many local amenity planning battles, the determination of one dedicated member was instrumental in this regard - Sam Briddes. His railway knowledge and passion to protect Marylebone Station made him a powerful, persuasive and persistent objector. His single-minded approach continued unabated with a lengthy and objective analysis of the problems and hardship that closure of Marylebone and diverting trains to Baker Street Station would bring. He had the facts to demonstrate that:

- Baker Street Station could not cope with additional trains
- Baker Street platforms were too short
- Baker Street could not cope with Wembley traffic on match days
- Overcrowding would bring discomfort and hardship to passengers
- LT trains had guard operated doors and in winter passengers would be colder than on BR trains
- Baker Street had no access or waiting facility for waiting taxis, coaches and ambulances
- Royal conveyances were impossible via Baker Street for security reasons
- BR census figures were inaccurate
- BR/LT diversions and alterations to tracks, curved radii and alterations to points up the line were unfeasible
- Adjoining lines would require electrification
- Journey times would be increased by any changes

- Disabled and elderly access was poor at Baker Street (45 steps from street to platform as opposed to none at Marylebone)
- Insertion of lifts at Baker Street would require major civil engineering

In his concluding statement he used humour to make his missive memorable noting the detrimental effect, “in millions of homes where the closure of the station will render obsolete the Monopoly board” (SMS Archive, Sam Briddes letter to LRPC, 18 March 1985). His objections were sound and backed up by London Transport (LT) who in 1983 had originally thought Baker Street could absorb the additional services redirected from Marylebone Station. Technical argument and determined pressure on those in decision-making positions was beginning to have an effect. The Public Hearing was further delayed as a result of a legal challenge to its procedure as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*,

The GLC, together with Brent, Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon Boroughs, have asked the court to overturn a decision of the LRPC not to allow objectors to cross examine witnesses or make submission of evidence, at the forthcoming Public Hearing (*Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1985).

In May 1985 the GLC and Joint Local Authorities Group took their case to the High Court to ask that objectors be allowed to publicly cross-examine BR and London Regional Transport and added that if unsuccessful could be allowed to appeal the decision, which created a further delay. When the SMS was notified that the Public Hearing would again be postponed to June 1985 they noted that, “It is important that we use this breathing space” (SMS Archive, meeting minutes, 1985).

The SMS continued lobbying throughout the summer of 1985 making front page headlines in the *Marylebone Mercury* (26 April 1985) and started a petition which stated they wanted the coach terminus, “excised from the planning brief” (SMS petition, 25 June 1985). They insisted on and gained an extension of time for the consultation period, citing the postal system at fault and therefore the statutory three weeks allowance was not being adhered to. Labour councillors joined them in delivering leaflets and urging people to comment on the WCC Planning Brief. The local Labour Party gave the Conservatives at WCC an ultimatum in their summer newsletter, *Marylebone*

Spotlight: “Will the Tories listen to what local people have said? Or will they steamroller through the coach station plan?” (SMS Archive).

The SMS once more requested permission to speak at the Westminster Planning & Development Committee meeting, noting that, “We believe that the great importance of the Station site to the community justifies our request for this privilege” (SMS Archive, letter, 14 June 1985). By the end of June, the consultation exercise was finished and WCC sent the SMS a report on their findings and confirmed they could speak at the committee meeting; a coup for the SMS as this was the first time it had been permitted (SMS Archive, letter, 21 June 1985). Despite this and all the SMS, Labour Party and community efforts on 23 July 1985 WCC approved their *Marylebone Station Site Final Planning Brief*, including a possible coach terminus. The Labour Leader of the Opposition accused the council of ignoring the views of local residents, saying, “When the Council goes out to consultation, it doesn’t really mean consultation. It’s largely a sham”. With the opposite viewpoint, Conservative councillors replied, “The Council would miss a golden opportunity’ if it missed the chance of a coach station at Marylebone” (*Marylebone Mercury*, 26 July 1985).

However, additional restrictive conditions were confirmed at the Planning and Development Committee meeting which reflected the amendments the SMS had made to the wording of the WCC draft planning brief. Rules restricting coaches to the Busway and keeping them off the roads to ensure no worsening of the local environment were now formally adopted into the *Marylebone Station Site Final Planning Brief*. These conditions effectively rendered the site unfeasible technically, practically and economically for the NBC coach station.

Unknown by the SMS at the time, WCC Planning officers had already privately noted that problems with the coach terminus were likely to include:

- Worsening environmental conditions
- Technical problems converting the tracks and tunnels
- Enforcement of buses being restricted to the road tunnel only
- The need to ensure complementary reduction in coach traffic to Victoria (WCC, TP files, Report by ‘Tony’, 10 September 1984).

7.5 Alternative Uses on the Site (July 1985 – May 1986)

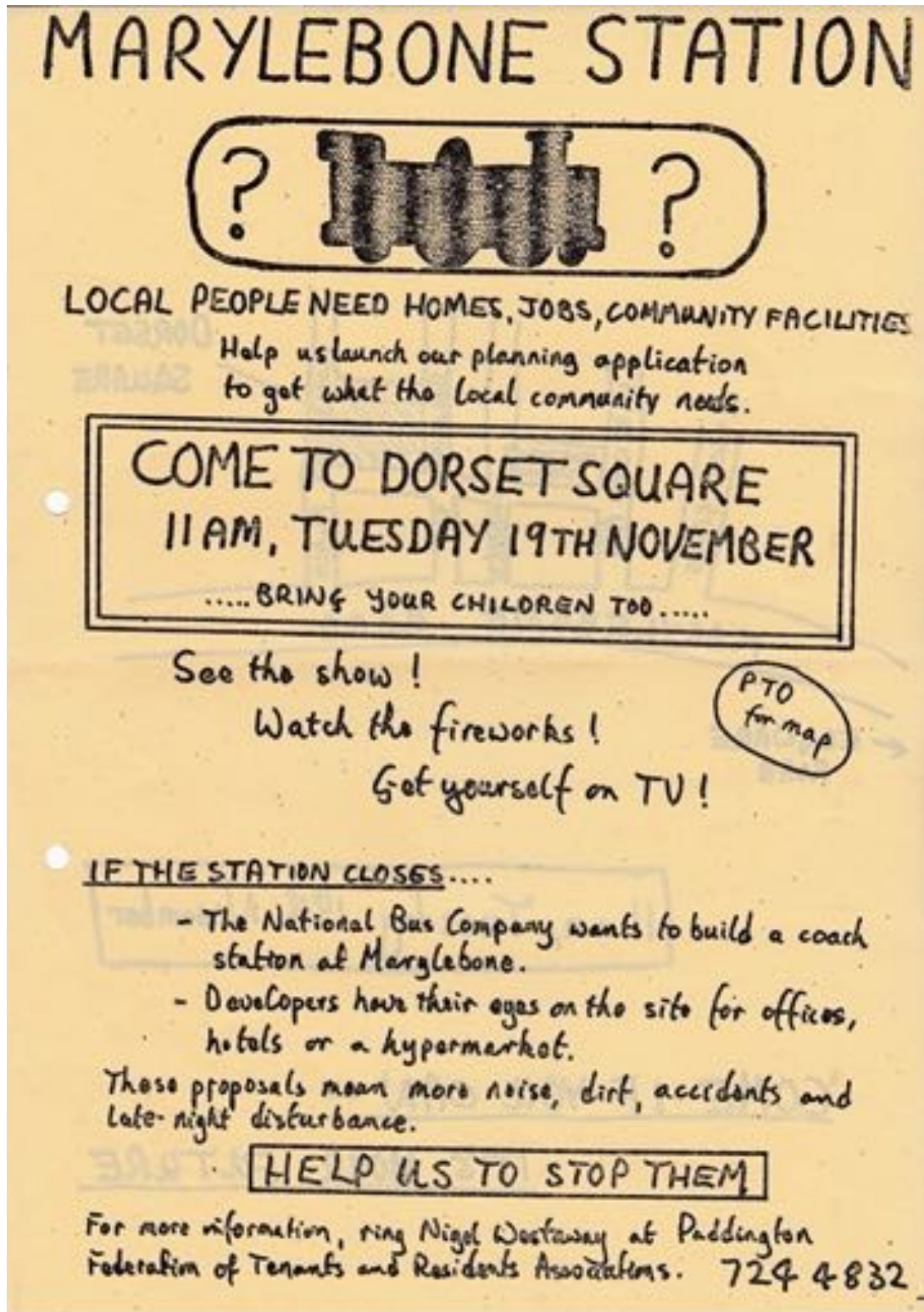


Fig. 7.37 PFTRA Campaign Poster (SMS Archive)

A Neighbourhood Plan

Following WCC approval of the *Marylebone Station Site Final Planning Brief*, which still included the coach terminus, the SMS was undeterred and determined that the fight would continue. They sought to divert and widen attention with a range of inventive and radical grass-roots plans as alternative proposals. Posters were designed calling for residents to, “Take part in the future of MARYLEBONE”, which listed all the relevant people and organisations to contact; MPs, councillors, Conservation Groups, Westminster Planning Department and Ken Livingstone at the GLC.

One group who responded was a local residents’ group, the Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (PFTRA), who drew up an alternative master plan for the site for mixed-use, housing and community uses. In an open letter to the SMS consortium they wrote,

Paddington Federation is very concerned that unless alternative proposals are put forward at the same time, the Bus Company’s plans will be pushed through the Council’s Planning Committee unopposed, without proper public consultation (SMS Archive, letter, July 1985).

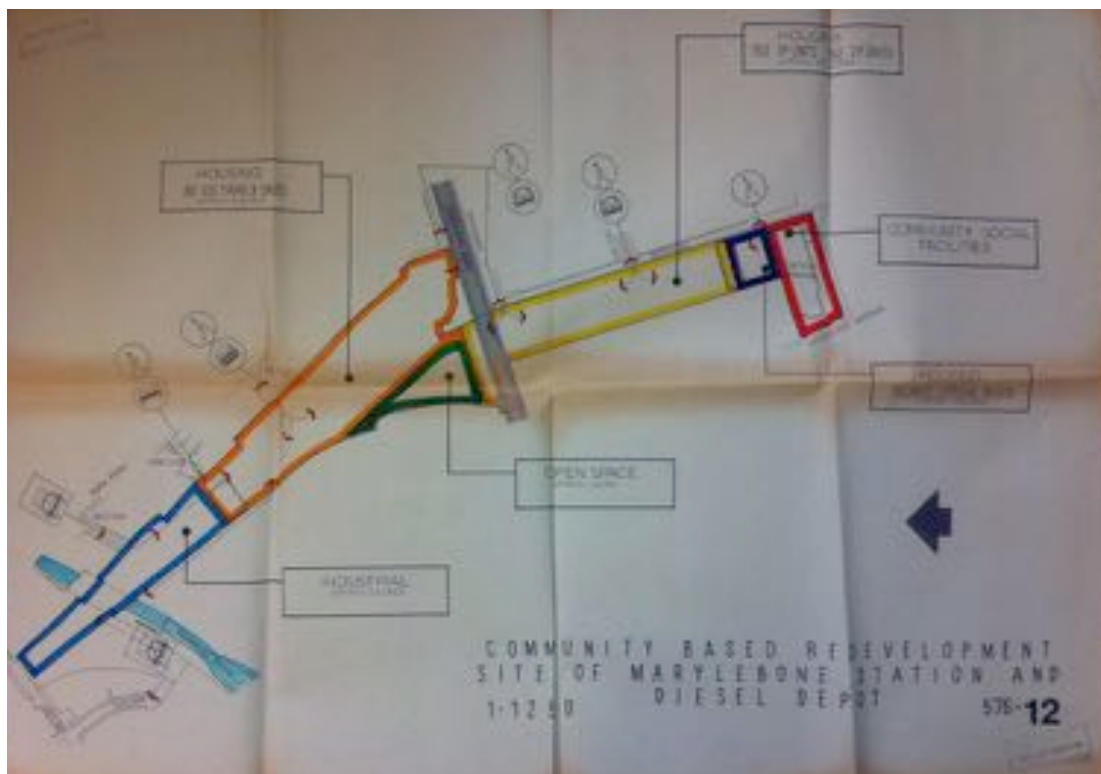


Fig. 7.38 The PRFTA Neighbourhood Plan (WCC, TP files)

Titled *Planning brief for community-based redevelopment* and written by planning activists, their plan provided 435 new dwellings, open space, play space, small workshops and retained the station buildings. The station concourse they envisaged as shops and social facilities. (SMS Archive). The plan was formulated quite independently of the SMS and they did not meet until March 1985, but PFTRA stressed that all their proposals were in line with the SMS amendments to the planning brief.



Fig. 7.39 The Monopoly Board launch event, *Paddington Times*, 22 November 1985 (SMS Archive)

The PFTRA plans were submitted for planning in November 1985 (85/05426/OUT) to agree a change of use for the station with the GLC funding the planning fee £1,650. The press launch of the PFTRA application was held in Dorset Square, using the Monopoly Board as its theme and the event was a great success with *Marylebone Mercury*, *Paddington Times*, *Time Out*, LBC and Capital Radio covering the story. WCC would not validate the application due to insufficient information so it was withdrawn and the fee rebated. However, it had the effect of delaying the planning process and opening up the debate to a wider public.

Steam Railways, Museums and Shopping

By mid-1985 *Steam Railway Magazine* was declaring 'Marylebone: a recipe for survival' on its front cover and outlined a vision for an economically thriving Marylebone Station not very different from the reality today. They suggested, "making the terminus an attraction in its own right – a showpiece of the Victorian railway era which offers not just a nostalgic attraction – but also things to see, to do to buy" (Wilcock, 1985, p36). The SMS fuelled the railway conservation campaign with a letter to *The Times* (3 December 1985) following an article featuring *The Flying Scotsman*, titled 'Due for shunting'. The letter quoted 16,000 passengers now using the station every day and highlighted the station's potential for steam and railway enthusiasts. Steam excursion trains had been introduced and proved successful, prompting the idea of making Marylebone an extension of the York Railway Museum and tourist attraction, alongside commuter trains. The SMS had railway enthusiasts within their membership who could network with steam preservation societies and use special interest magazines and railway forums to garner and extend mutual support.

The SMS also had architects within their membership who devised alternative masterplans for the site. Covent Garden had been revitalised in the 1970s and Marylebone Station was seen as having similar potential as a retail destination. The SMS Spring newsletter (1986) featured an alternative plan for regenerating Marylebone Station by local architect and SMS member, John Prizeman. This described in great detail his vision for a transformed station concourse which incorporated the railway and connected commercial development up to the Regent's Canal and beyond to Lord's Cricket Ground. Other retail opportunities were proposed in an article in *Time Out*, 'All change at Marylebone', which outlined an idea to create a specialist indoor market

The media coverage and public debate on ideas for alternative uses on the site and many small-scale SMS interventions over two years had contributed to lengthening the consultation period and causing delay to BR and NBC decisions. The result of the SMS activities was summed up by a WCC internal planning note which stated the current state of play in January 1986 was:

An Alternative Coach Terminus Location

WCC councillors had welcomed the NBC proposals for Marylebone from the outset because it presented a solution to the problems of congestion, pollution and noise extant at Victoria Coach station, in the southwest area of Westminster. Many politicians and wealthy residents living here had vocally supported relocating the coach terminus to Marylebone because this would benefit and improve their locality. The SMS realised that two of their local ward councillors also lived in SW1, close to the existing Victoria Coach Station, and this gave them the idea of contacting local councillors and residents' groups in Victoria and proposing a joint approach to try to get the NBC to relocate their coach terminus out of central London altogether, thus solving both areas environmental problems. The SMS wrote to John Wheeler MP suggesting an interchange terminus somewhere on the M25 and enclosed maps of suitable locations. This idea received a positive response with a promise that he would inform the Secretary of State for Transport. A month later (18 July 1985), he wrote back to the SMS with reference to a letter from David Mitchell, Under-Secretary of State (Department of Transport), who also agreed that he thought an out-of-town coach station was a good idea.

The SMS, now with the strapline on their letterhead reading, '*The Marylebone Station Working Group*', determined to research and write their own 'Draft paper on coach traffic and coach stations in London'. The first draft was drawn up by David Phillips of the SMS and Marylebone Village Residents Association (SMS Archive, 30 August 1985). In this they argued that with the M25 recently completed, it could provide a suitable location for a NBC coach terminus and transfer station, to take as many coaches as possible around the city, to avoid central London. The SMS report was finalised in October and distributed to residents in Victoria, urging them that they would all be stronger fighting for a 'common cause'. The SMS made videos and took photographs evidencing the existing environmental problems at Victoria Coach Station and of the already congested roads around Marylebone to support their proposals.

The SMS also highlighted that the House of Lords had been discussing the privatisation of the NBC and that the emerging White Paper *Buses* could

change the overall pattern of transport and requirements of a major coach terminus, raising concerns about uncertainty. Westminster's argument had always been that the new coach terminus in Marylebone would relieve pressure and problems in the south of the borough at Victoria Coach Station, however deregulation might necessitate retaining both coach stations as well as a connection via shuttle buses.

Joining ranks with residents in Victoria who were already suffering the problems of living beside a major coach terminus had two influential outcomes:

- The SMS used the problems experienced by Victoria to irrefutably illustrate what would be the likely 'worsening' of environmental conditions should a coach terminus be permitted. This was a condition they had insisted on in the planning brief if a coach terminus use was accepted.
- They also demonstrated that even if Marylebone were a coach terminus, the increased coach traffic and deregulation of the NBC would mean little improvement in Victoria. Private operators would not be tied in to any legal agreement put in place by Westminster with the NBC. The proposed 'shuttle buses' between the two coach termini would add to the road chaos.

Arguing for a terminus on the M25 was something both groups could join together in supporting and whilst it wasn't realised, it delayed, diverted and put up an additional obstacle to the proposed NBC coach terminus at Marylebone.

7.6 BR Reverse Decision May 1986 - Marylebone Station is Saved Conflicting Information, Doubts and Delays

As early as 1985, reports that BR were beginning to have doubts about Marylebone were surfacing and the Public Hearing into station closure was subject to continual delays. The SMS/ADPA and the Joint Local Authorities Group had delayed proceedings until February 1985; BR then postponed it until May, admitting that it had some of its figures wrong, then again, on legal grounds, until June.

The SMS used these delays to try to slow down the proceedings further by writing to the LRPC proposing re-advertising of the station closure notice, due to the excessive time lag since the original consultation. Since the closure notice on 15 March 1984, employment patterns in London had changed and many more were commuting regularly into Marylebone Station. The SMS thought that the original cut-off date for objections (8 October 1984) should be extended to give a fair opportunity for people who had become new rail users over the past six months to comment.

On 15 August 1985 SMS wrote to the *Financial Times* journalist, Mr Fishlock, asking if he had any information about the situation at Marylebone. He replied suggesting that they might get guidance from the BR Area Manager, “over a pint in the bar”. He concluded that, “In any case, he tells me the axe has been postponed for at least a year” (SMS Archive, letter from FT to Sam Briddes, 19 August 1985). Local MP John Wheeler was also now publicly stating his support for the residents, “The local community should be reassured that it is their environmental interests that are paramount and will remain so” (*Marylebone Mercury*, 9 August 1985). Even Leader of WCC Lady Porter was stating her support for local residents in the press:

Local Councils have to support free competition, greater choice, the development of new industries like Tourism and Coach Stations whilst at the same time, and with equal strength, stand up and protect the local residents ... That’s why we are going to set up a new coach working party ... (*Marylebone Mercury*, 9 August 1985, SMS Archive).

Nigel Westaway (of PFTRA) noted that he was aware that other sites were been looked into by NBC, at Kings Cross and Paddington Stations (15 October 1985), yet it wasn’t until 6 March 1986 that LRT issued an official press release entitled, ‘A New Coach Terminal for London?’, This reported that in September 1985 a study had been set up, at the request of the Secretary of State for Transport, which asked LRT to examine the existing and potential future coach services in London. It had been undertaken by Steer Davies & Gleave Ltd., transport consultancy, and concluded that:

Three shortlisted sites – at Kings Cross, Paddington and White City – were selected after an extensive review of opportunities across the whole of London. The consultants found that one possible site, Marylebone, which had been the subject of previous imaginative studies, did not meet the planning requirements set by the latest study. Access restrictions would make Marylebone ill-suited to the “hub” terminal concept, and its future potential availability as a coach terminal depends on decisions yet to be taken by the Secretary of State for Transport. For these reasons, Marylebone will not be taken forward to the next stage of this study (LRT press release, 6 March 1986).

The Report found that, “There are a number of potentially critical constraints in Westminster City Council’s Planning Brief” (Steer Davies & Gleave Ltd., 1986, p17). These were the points reinforced by the SMS, that the coaches had to stay on the busway only to ensure no worsening on the local environment. The plan for a coach station at Marylebone was abandoned. On 30 April 1986 BR announced by PUBLIC NOTICE that Marylebone Station was to remain open. The campaign was won. As noted in the local press, “British Rails’ surprise decision two weeks ago to abandon the closure has given the station a new future.” The suggested reason given was

the unexpected success of the Travelcard and Capitalcard, which have increased passengers by 15% in three years, has saved Marylebone and four other stations on the Chiltern line. Today about 15,000 rail and another 15,000 Underground travellers pass through the station each day (*Marylebone Mercury*, 15 May 1986).

In 1985 BR created the Network SouthEast brand and the role of BR Manager Chris Green has been noted as important for the future of the railways. Despite being brought in to manage the closure of Marylebone Station railway blogger ‘Abe’ suggests:

He was an innovative railway manager, and had lobbied hard within BR against the closure of the Chiltern Line. He then persuaded the BR Board to use the Chiltern Line as a test-bed for new signalling and train protection systems – one of the advantages of the line being largely

self-contained. Suddenly, a line that was being considered for closure was allocated £85 million in investment. Total Route Modernisation was now the name of the game ('Abe', 2014).

Having vacated their offices within the Great Central Hotel, British Rail sold the building to a developer and its restoration into a luxury hotel commenced. A joint endeavour by the hotel, British Rail and Westminster provided the commitment and funding to restore the Porte Cochere in 1992.

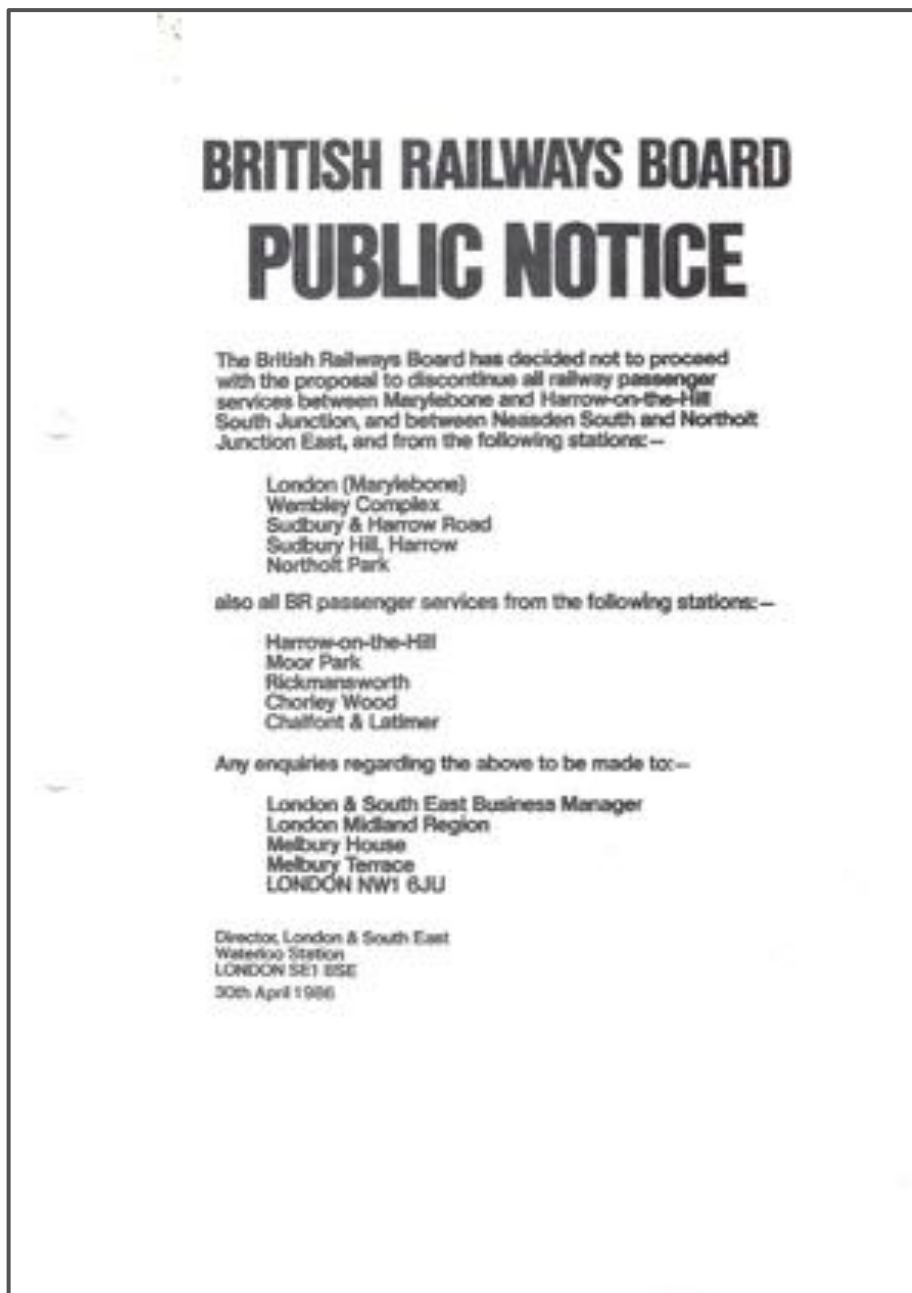


Fig. 7.41 BR PUBLIC NOTICE (SMS Archive)



Fig. 7.42 Marylebone Station and the Chiltern Line today (Mike Wood, SMS Archive)

SMS 'folk memory' maintains that a key part of their campaign which saved the station, also secured the listing of the Marylebone Station, Great Central Hotel (222 Marylebone Road) and the Porte Cochere (*SMS Newsletter*, Summer issue, 1999). However, as the WCC planning files revealed, this was not the case. English Heritage listed 222 Marylebone Road (Hotel) in 1987, as well as a railway turntable (No. 1265123). Marylebone Station and Porte Cochere were listed in 1996 a decade after BR decided to keep Marylebone Station. Today the listed buildings are protected from any alteration, advert or demolition and renowned for their integrity and period style, frequently used as film locations. Steam railway days continue to be part of the station's heritage, Chiltern Railways celebrate commercial success and the station thrives as a restaurant and retail centre and community hub.

7.7 Conclusions - Site 3

In this campaign the SMS had to take on three powerful agents, unified in supporting station closure and the proposed NBC coach terminus for differing reasons:

1. British Rail, whose decision to close the station was part of a much bigger national plan to find economies in the railway network. Its size

and location made it potentially extremely valuable for BR which was keen to realise real estate values.

2. WCC politicians, for whom the site represented an ideal opportunity for large-scale commercial investment in the area. With the proposed coach terminus, a solution to the environmental and traffic chaos extant at Victoria Coach Station thought possible.
3. The Conservative Government at the time, who favoured road transport, supported NBC and had antipathy to railways and their unions.

Despite this colossal adversary the evidence in this research concludes that the SMS did influence the outcome so that Marylebone Station was saved and the proposal for the NBC busway and coach terminus abandoned. However, the SMS was not acting alone but as part of a coalition and network of many other similar voluntary groups, which included other local amenity societies, residents' associations, housing associations and passenger forums.

As the longest-standing amenity society in the consortium, the SMS built on their previous thirty years' experience to network effectively and assist smaller or newer organisations to put their resources to best use. Coordinating their activities had the effect of increasing the power of individual groups and thereby the whole group's collective power.

The SMS campaign to Save Marylebone Station was the subject of a focus group attended by key actors involved from BR, WCC, PFRTA and SMS. Their actions, strategies and tactics were debated from a historical perspective to assess the role and power of the SMS in the decision-making process and are reflected in the following direct quotes from the participants.

Network Power

The SMS reached out to everyone who would have been adversely affected by the BR and NBC proposals and developed and nurtured these connections. The SMS already had long-established and overlapping local networks with other local amenity societies and residents' groups in Marylebone which gave them a ready-made database of like-minded professional and powerful

personal contacts. This allowed their campaign to get off to a flying start when station closure was still just a rumour.

Whilst the focus of the campaign was initially centred on Marylebone Station itself, it gained traction and power when it spread out and linked the SMS to communities along the railway lines out of Marylebone Station. This commuter belt represented one of the wealthiest and most influential in the capital; home to many politicians, City workers and executives who used the rail service. Likewise, the Joint Local Authority Group combined the political power of a number of local authorities, and through them the SMS could directly connect to Parliament.

When the campaign expanded to fight the proposed coach terminus, many more local people joined the campaign because, as WCC planners noted,

What gets communities involved in planning is fear. It was the threat of the coach terminus that got them out kicking and screaming (John Walker).

Towards the end of the campaign, the SMS connected with politically diverse organisations, from the left-wing activists in the PFRTA to their right-wing establishment opponents in Victoria, to challenge a common adversary. On the SMS collaborative process, a PFTRA activist at the time reflected,

It was a team effort. For community activists, it is important how issues shape who you talk to ... you need to know where the networks should go ... to pull people together. It's about *how* you network ... you need a locus. Sharing information ... and the communication aspect is important ... and you can't really judge who you are talking to without being face to face (Judith Allen).

Power in Numbers - Representation

This large and wide range of people evidenced their representativeness. Their differing standpoints gave the SMS a comprehensive understanding of the problems that needed addressing and provided a variety of ways to frame their objections. SMS Chair at the time commented,

I'd like to think the SMS did have an influence. We did what an amenity society should do, to the best of our ability. The committee was strong and we had wide support, not just one or two voices. We could demonstrate that we were representative (Carolyn Keen).

At the outset, the SMS invested considerable time to understand the political, planning policy and economic drivers behind decision-making at Marylebone Station. They improved their social and political diversity by connections with the Labour Party, housing associations and trade unions. This cross-political spectrum support gave them a much stronger voice which would be used when arguing with their local councillors and MPs. With the GLC-funded PFTRA joining their ranks, and an aligned desire for low-cost housing and community facilities on the station site, they could also set a social agenda which their elected representatives could not publicly refuse to support. The SMS had created and nurtured significant collective power by getting many organisations and individuals involved in the campaign, such that whilst they were protecting their own local interests, they could prove to those in power that they were also acting in the wider public interest. PFTRA summed up, It [the campaign] had a broad class spectrum and lots of vested interests. The SMS did a fantastic job ... it was an achievement to get them all facing in the same direction (Judith Allen).

Personal Power - Resources and Skills

All the voluntary organisations involved had similar attributes that led them to take part in the campaign. The SMS, like all the activists they worked with, believed in self-determination and had time for networking, organising, administration and persistent proactive involvement with BR and WCC. Skills such as diplomacy, mediation, letter writing and managerial skills were natural to them.

They were civic-minded people, familiar with the political and democratic system and met their adversaries with an assumed equal footing, to participate at 'partnership level'. This self-confidence drew others into the campaign and it ensured communication and cooperation from WCC and BR. Even when

they failed at various stages throughout the planning process, they stayed focused as a group and did not give up, as SMS Chair leading the campaign at the time explained,

We didn't know how long it was going to go on for ... once you're on the treadmill!

If there's an immediate problem you get on and set up meetings and deal with it. Then more things get thrown into the pot and you just keep on going (Carolyn Keen).

Reason and Technical Knowledge

From a position of weakness in the face of raw power the SMS educated themselves to become planning and railway experts, assisted by a professional membership base which included legal and architectural professionals who could offer their services gratis. SMS's attention to the detail of the planning brief and continued insistence that the Central Activities Zone would not be extended thwarted BR's intention of large-scale commercial development on the site. They had been arguing this point since the 1950s when they involved themselves in the *Greater London plan*, which illustrates the power conferred on a local amenity society by long-term involvement in an area.

The SMS also made early connections to railway and transport enthusiasts who would prove vital to understanding and challenging BR and NBC. They quickly understood that the technical requirements for a busway on the railway tracks was not realistic. Therefore, by reinforcing the rigid planning conditions attached to the WCC Planning Brief and insisting that they be met - for example, that coaches could only travel on the busway, not local roads - the SMS made the practicalities of the coach terminus impossible. It is quite extraordinary that they voluntarily drafted their own Planning Brief and Neighbourhood Plan for Marylebone Station and a 'Draft paper on coach traffic and coach stations in London' with proposed locations for an alternative NBC coach interchange on the M25.

Diversion and Delay

Collectively the outcome of the SMS activities to network, lobby, challenge the experts, harness the media deploying, perhaps subconsciously, subterfuge and diversionary tactics, resulted in delaying the BR decision on the closure of Marylebone Station. Their knowledge of the planning process, legal time frames and protocol allowed them to employ further delaying tactics. Raising issues concerning due diligence or questioning opacity in the legal process stalled the programmes for WCC's planning department and for the LRPC Public Hearing which was continually delayed and rescheduled, giving the campaigners additional time to continue their activities.

When the participants at the Saving Marylebone Station Symposium each summed up their conclusions on the influence of the SMS all concluded that the delay caused by the campaign was the most important factor that influenced and ultimately saved Marylebone Station from closure. WCC Labour councillors reflected that,

In 1983 to 84 our expectation was that despite our campaign we thought we would lose. But by 1986 the mood had changed ... All the campaigners kept it alive to allow things to change (Jo Hegarty).

WCC planning officers added that,

It was one of those interesting periods of time, when lots of different interest and pressure groups were querying what the establishment thinks, the experts in government as oppose the other experts, academics, practitioners.

Attitudes to conservation had become mainstream. Two names to mention are Ian Nairn and John Betjeman, neither were planners or professionals, but they hit the media and made amazing TV programmes about saving Victorian buildings, such as station architecture (Graham King).

Over the protracted time-frame BR as an organisation had changed and developed a new vision for the future of the railways. Many more passengers were using the service into Marylebone as working patterns in the city had

changed and also fares had been reduced/restructured. BR representatives expressed relief that the campaign had been a success,

It was a close-run thing. If people hadn't put up the 'red flag' and been vociferous in their complaints it would have shut much earlier (Chris Austin).

Public attitudes were changing from the old deferential view so people power definitely played a part. You held the campaign until the traffic [passenger numbers] went up. The world had moved on (Chris Green).

The SMS Chair who led the campaign through the 1980s summed up, "The SMS campaign was clearly part of a joint effort ... we prolonged it through the decline" (Carolyn Keen).

Following the success of this campaign the SMS was left exhausted and the intensity of the involvement by the key activists in the society had meant that they had been unable to deal with other issues happening in Marylebone at the same time. At the AGM of November 1986 only a handful of approximately 200 members attended the meeting in the Marylebone Council House, and with volunteers in such short supply everyone present was given a position on the SMS Council (SMS Archive). They had saved Marylebone Station and now needed to re-group and concentrate on saving the society.

During the course of the campaign WCC realised that the SMS had neglected consultation on many planning policy consultations and applications; a situation which was exacerbated by the property boom of the 1980s with increasingly large commercial building typologies and commensurate planning documentation. The result was a decision to divide the SMS planning consultation area and create an additional local amenity society, the Marylebone Association (MA). These sister organisations share objectives, members and continue to work together today. They would both be involved with the next site investigated, the Marylebone Magistrates Court, where, twenty years later, their combined power would prove futile in influencing the development.

CHAPTER 8

CITY OF WESTMINSTER MAGISTRATES COURT



Fig. 8.1 Marylebone Magistrates Court – Previously the Public Baths, 2008 (by author)



Fig. 8.2 The City of Westminster Magistrates Court, 2021 (by author)

Introduction

This investigation assesses the SMS involvement with the development of the City of Westminster Magistrates Court, which necessitated the demolition of Georgian and Victorian buildings on a prominent, historic and archaeological site within the Portman Estate Conservation Area.

In 2006 HMCS proposed rationalising three of their courts in the City of Westminster (Bow Street, Horseferry Road and Marylebone) into one large new complex. Marylebone was chosen due to its relative low land value to become the site for the City of Westminster Magistrates Court. The project funding was complex due to the fact that the other Westminster courts at Bow Street and Horseferry Road were to be developed as private market housing with all the required Section 106 social housing (planning gain) provided on the Marylebone site, at the rear of the courts on Seymour Place.

At the time the SMS had approximately 500 members but only twelve people were actively involved on the SMS planning committee. The Patron was Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, the President was Colin Amery, distinguished journalist and long-time campaigner for conservation. I was a member of the SMS Planning Committee and therefore personally involved with the campaign. Despite 60 years' experience and 40 years after Skeffington, with continual policy changes to protect historic buildings and encourage public participation in planning decisions, the SMS campaign failed. The SMS had the support of Westminster City Council (WCC), neighbouring amenity society and local councillors. However, they had no influence arguing against the developer; an organisation with great economic and institutional power, in this case Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS).

The following amenity issues were at stake:

- Conservation – loss of buildings and townscape
- Design - architectural idiom of the new development

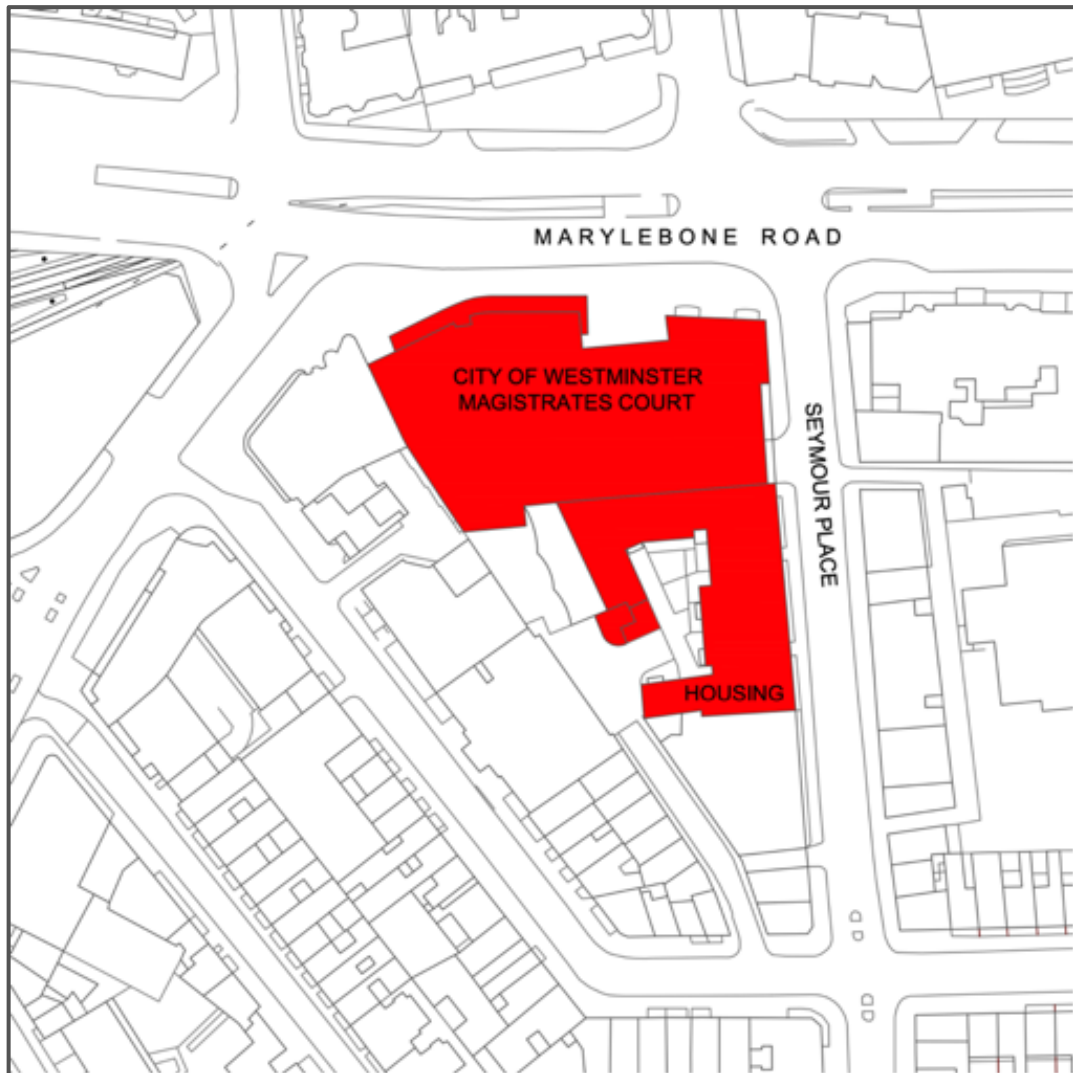


Fig. 8.3 Location Plan (Base: OS Digimap license, map downloaded December 2020)

The SMS wanted all the historic buildings retained and incorporated into the design for both the courts and the associated social housing. For the housing development, the SMS planning committee were not unanimous on architectural style although the majority supported good modern design rather than a pseudo-nineteenth century idiom. This approach was also the position of WCC planning and conservation officers at the time and this case will highlight the alliance between the SMS and WCC. It had potential to be a successful campaign but, despite the local consensus, most of the period buildings were demolished and a pastiche housing scheme built.

The planning history information has been collected from WCC, TP files ref: 2346 and 4322 held by WCC Planning Department and SMS Archives.

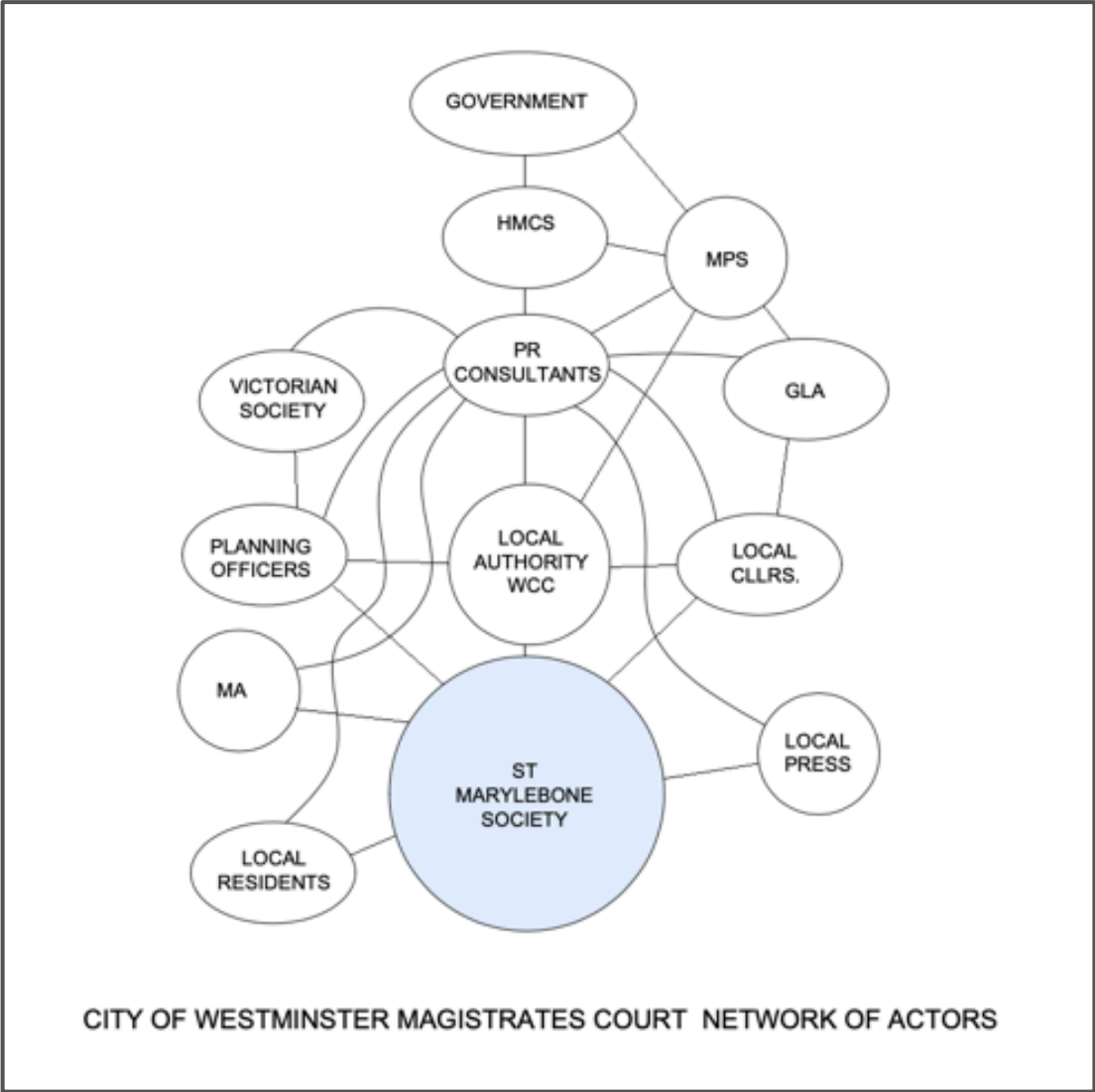


Fig 8.4 Network of Actors

- St Marylebone Society (SMS)
- Her Majesty’s Courts Service (HMCS)
- HMCS’s Architects
- Westminster City Council (WCC)
- Planning Department
- Local Councillors
- Public Relations Consultant
- Marylebone Association (MA)
- Victorian Society
- Local Residents

8.1 History and Heritage

Marylebone Magistrates Court was housed in the original Georgian courthouse and had been extended into the converted Victorian public baths building fronting Marylebone Road and Seymour Place. The site was historically significant, where Watling Street (now the A5/Edgware Road) once crossed the New Road (now Marylebone Road) and the location of a famous public house, the Yorkshire Stingo.



Fig. 8.5 County Court and St Marylebone Baths (*Illustrated London News*, 1850, p32)

The original County Court (1850) was on the corner of the site adjacent to the public baths. The baths were built following a public meeting at the Mansion House (16 October 1844) to provide the poor with washing facilities and represented a pioneering social improvement and technical feat. Marylebone was one of the first councils to take advantage of the Public Health Act of 1848 and in 1849 two large swimming baths were opened (First and Second Class), plus 107 separate baths and a washhouse, with 8.5 million visitors a year in the 1880s. By the 1890s the buildings needed renovation and the new St Marylebone Public Baths were opened in 1896. The baths were eventually closed after World War II and between 1947-1952 used for storage space until 1961, when the building was sold and converted for Marylebone Magistrates Court Service. In Seymour Place the facade of the original Pompeian Baths

remained intact and was adjacent to a terrace of five substantial, although run-down, Georgian houses.



Fig.8.6 St Marylebone Public Baths (*The Builder*, 20 June 1896)



Fig. 8.7 St Marylebone Baths: exterior, 1957. The Pompeian Baths facade on Seymour Place (Copyright London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, Record no. 220001)



Fig. 8.8 The original County Court building on the corner of the site, 2005 (by author)

With the above architectural history, interesting social history and intact range of period buildings, for a local historically based amenity society such as the SMS, they represented an important group of buildings creating a townscape which contributed positively to the Portman Estate Conservation Area character and were worthy of preservation.

8.2 The Start of the Campaign 2006

SMS Private Pre-Application Consultation

A pre-application to WCC was made on 29 August 2006 and following this, in October 2006, WCC Planning Officers wrote to Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) stating the Pompeian Baths facade on Seymour Place and 179 Marylebone Road (the existing Magistrates Court) should be presumed not for demolition as these buildings, though not listed, made a positive contribution to the conservation area character. Thus, it was clear from the outset that the

local authority planning and conservation officers were against demolition and that conservation policies supported them.

By 2006 it was becoming standard practice for professional public relations (PR) companies to manage public consultation exercises on behalf of the applicant during the planning process. Their role is to advise on and manage the consultation process with local councillors, amenity societies and residents. This usually occurs after a planning application has been submitted. At pre-planning submission stage, a local amenity society would not normally be consulted and pre-application discussions with the local authority are deemed only advisory and also confidential to protect the economic interest of the site owner. However, the SMS were contacted independently by the applicant's PR agent who requested a private meeting stating that they were keen to get local groups involved as soon as possible. This took place at the Landmark Hotel (9 November 2006), where two members of the SMS Planning Committee were shown the proposals and they discussed their preliminary thoughts and potential issues for concern. The SMS were given a binder of preliminary information, marked 'For Discussion Purposes Only' to share with their planning committee, whose individual comments were then collated and sent to the PR consultant as follows:

On the demolition of the existing buildings, whilst the SMS acknowledged that the retention of the whole building group was impractical and the proposed design at least retained the facade of the original courthouse on the corner they felt that,

The fact that this building was a public bath house is an interesting historical fact and the retention of at least the baths' facade would leave behind a relic of this, a historical marker.

The baths' facade was built for that purpose and whilst you feel it is not suitably 'civic' enough to suggest the main entrance to the new court development, it could be incorporated into the design, and should be respected as a local landmark

The SMS insist that the remaining period terraced houses at the rear of the site, fronting Seymour Place, should be retained and incorporated into the housing plans.

On the design of the new courts, they highlighted that the problem with demolishing any historic building, especially in a conservation area, is ensuring that the replacement is as architecturally valuable as that lost; a highly subjective matter. With four architects on the SMS planning committee, effectively acting as a self-appointed design review panel, they commented,

The proposed design is not especially distinctive and does not immediately seem like a civic building. Its' entrance is hidden behind a screen wall. It has a modern grid like structure, it lacks context and could be a commercial building anywhere. The scale dwarfs the retained County Court building.

Access and noise nuisance issues are material planning objections and the SMS show this knowledge to their guests and knowing the locality well were resourceful in the range of their objections:

We note that there is no possible drop off to the court. We are concerned that this may be a loitering place for defendant's friends and family. The area may need to be supervised area, will there be security on the door or police presence? Will there be problems of roof plant and air conditioning noise in close proximity to existing and proposed residential uses?

The proposed social housing was at the rear of the court building, fronting Seymour Place, and comprised 68 flats in total. Family housing was seen as a priority as it was noted that the large Bengali community in this area, with large and extended families required bigger family flats. The objections raised to the housing were far more numerous than the SMS criticisms of demolition and proposed design of the courts. However, outright opposition to social housing would not have been politically correct nor indeed a valid planning objection in the face of housing need. Whilst the SMS objections raised are valid at face-level, the number and detail of comments compared to the architectural objections could be seen as 'faux' concerns or euphemisms for their opposition to the large social housing project being proposed in Marylebone, rather than the more expensive sites in Westminster. For example, the SMS commented,

We feel that the site is being overdeveloped. Horseferry Road and Bow Street are seen as more lucrative for private development. The Marylebone site is to have the entire required social housing site concentrated on it. There is not a mix of which would be more in keeping with this area.

Objections to large family housing units were many and included diverse reasons and potential problems with an aim to reduce the size of the housing site and increase the plot for the court

We feel that this site is not suitable for family housing. Play areas, pollution, lack of parking, open space, proximity to drug and homeless unit opposite, busy traffic, red routes, etc. did not appear to have been considered by the developers. Large refuse and recycling facilities needed by families was not considered.

The developer has not addressed the number of children proposed to be living in this block. If all bedrooms had only one child in them this would give a total of 61 children in the block. This would obviously increase greatly if families with more than 2 children per room were to live in this block. A small internal landscaped area is provided and roof terraces suggested. These are not suitable for children's play areas and can cause noise nuisance to neighbours. Concentrating social housing here has significant implications for local school provision.

The design does feel 'tight' on the site. It is over developed. Increasing the site area for the courts would have the advantage of enabling a more comfortable, spacious layout of the courts and also reduce the number of housing units behind.

That the proposed design of the housing was in a 'modern' idiom caused further consternation to some on the committee:

The proposed design of the housing is in its early stages and unresolved. It is modern and has a uniform, monotonous facade treatment. It should fit in with the character of the street, with the Georgian 'wigmaker's house' retained.

(All quotes from SMS Archive, comments, 9 November 2006)

The pre-application meeting had solicited valuable feedback for the applicant, the SMS had openly given their thoughts and suggestions in good faith that they were collaborating openly, playing their part representing their members and the wider public, in the participatory planning process.

SMS Site Visit

At the pre-application meeting the SMS asked for a private site visit, at which over fifty SMS members took the opportunity to access the buildings and they treated the visit as a fact-finding exercise (23 November 2006). They surveyed the existing building and made their own photographic record of the historic building fabric hoping to gather evidence in support of their objections to demolition. The swimming pools fabric still remained with decorative floral tiles in the hallways, and geometric patterns on the old pool walls and floors. One pool had been converted into the prisoners' cells and a corridor ran the length of the pool with small cells either side, an arrangement that gave cells increasing height towards 'the deep end'. In the court rooms the cast iron pool observation balconies remained as public galleries. However, accommodating the courts and the complicated need for separate internal circulation routes had led to numerous internal changes; stairs, metal ladders and corridors winding ingeniously around each other. Within the remnants of the Pompeian Baths, the boiler room remained in situ with large cast iron hatches in the ceiling through which coal was once received into trucks on rails to heat the vast quantities of water needed.

Their findings and photographs of the existing buildings were then set out in the next *St Marylebone Society Newsletter* (Spring 2007) along with their list of objections and concerns, as already sent to the applicant, to inform and alert their members. As well as consulting its membership, a newsletter is a way an amenity society can create hard evidence for future use in objecting to planning proposals, by effectively putting their position 'on file'. This is even more useful if the local press picks up on the case and disseminate the SMS objectives to a wider audience. However, with hindsight the survey worked against the SMS objections as their images highlighted how far the original building fabric had been altered. When the formal planning application was made it included a

detailed historical analysis of the buildings by a respected architect outlining that the interiors were not worth preservation; a fact unfortunately backed up by the SMS's own evidence. Their detailed feedback and objections had also given the applicant an advantage, as they had outlined all the issues that needed to be addressed ahead of the Public Consultation exercise.



Fig. 8.9 Marylebone Magistrates Court's converted pool interiors (SMS Archive, site visit 23 November 2006)



Fig. 8.10 Marylebone Magistrates Court's converted pool interiors (SMS site visit 23 November 2006)



THE ST. MARYLEBONE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Number 319

Registered Charity 274082

Spring 2007



An architect's illustration of the proposed development.

SILENCE IN COURT

Marylebone Magistrates' Court will close next month. The familiar landmark will be demolished under plans to redevelop the Marylebone Road site as the City of Westminster Court.

The court's work will be transferred to Hensley Road until the new building is finished in about three years. It is hoped that the replacement, which will retain the mid-19th century facade of the existing corner courthouse building, will also have landmark status.

It will house 10 magistrates' courts covering the whole of central London following Bow Street courts' conversion to a hotel and the development of Hensley Road courts for private housing.

Marylebone Magistrates' Court has long been considered obsolete, failing to satisfy modern requirements for segregating witnesses, court staff and visitors and having inadequate facilities for defendants.

Part of the complex occupies the site of

swimming baths established in 1849. These were first and second class baths with 107 individual baths and a wash house. The baths closed in 1937 and the building was used for storage from 1947 to 1952. The court took it over in 1961.

In November two groups of members had an opportunity to inspect the interior and the remains of the baths, thanks to Mr Ian Lawrence, the court's manager.

HOLY TRINITY VISIT Details on back page

Traces of the old swimming baths, with beautiful tiles of fruit and flowers, could be glimpsed below the courtroom floors.

One pool is converted into cells. A corridor runs the length of the pool with small cells either side. This arrangement gives cells of increasing height as you approach the 'dooey end'.

Cast-iron pool observation balconies create public galleries in the courts. The

need for separate circulation routes, stairs, metal ladders and corridors of steel gave the impression of being below deck on a ship.

The huge boiler room had large cast-iron bathtubs in the roof through which coal was delivered from trucks on rails. The enormous quantity of coal needed to heat the water and the labour involved is inaccessible today. It must have been an inferno.

At the end of the day the water was discharged through a large cast-iron drain, still visible, to sluice the sewers of Marylebone.

Some may be surprised that none of the buildings are listed. The old boiler facade is not considered architecturally important but some residents do like this humble style of civic architecture and it does stand as a reminder of the history of the use of the site.

The problem with demolishing any old

Continued on page 2

Fig. 8.11 *St Marylebone Society Newsletter*, Spring 2007 (SMS Archive)

The SMS also had another issue to consider before finalizing their verdict on the proposals. There was consensus amongst their membership that locating the centralised courts in Marylebone would be beneficial, bringing an increase in professional and public visitors, who would support local shops, restaurants and services. Additionally, the use was prestigious and would give Marylebone recognition as a centre for legal matters, and it would feature frequently in the

media, especially as the backdrop for TV reports of hearings. As reported in the local press, the SMS Chairman was quick to announce,

We welcomed the plans and praised the developers for involving the community in the consultation from the start. The scheme as a whole is to be encouraged as it will put Marylebone on the map.



Fig. 8.12 Plan for super court backed (30 November 2006, SMS Archive)

The SMS planning committee added (but it was not printed) that,

We need to ensure that the permitted building is a suitable landmark for this important use and situation. Its' modern character must carefully complement our local historical context. It must provide City of Westminster Magistrates Court with a building of exceptional Civic Architecture (SMS Archive, Press Release).

In this article the SMS conveyed their role as speaking for the community, ingratiated themselves to the developer with 'praise' and had publicly stated their overriding support for the development in principle. This was additional information HMRC could use to frame the forthcoming PR Public Consultation exercise.

8.3 The Public Consultation

The two projects, City of Westminster Magistrates Court and social housing development were now made as separate applications, perhaps logically because each had different clients and architects. However, this strategy also allowed the court development to be considered on its own merits and consulted on without involving the majority of objectors to the housing. This imbalance in objections was something the developer had learned from the SMS during the informal pre-application stage. The developers set up a three-day public exhibition (30 November 2006 – 2 December 2006) and their PR company managed the event. The whole neighbourhood was extensively leafleted, local councillors and the press informed, yet only 57 people attended the exhibition, with only 16 leaving feedback. Of these 50% objected to loss of the baths' facade, 30% had concerns about security, architectural design and screen facade and only 20% supported the scheme.

The public exhibition took place over three days in the existing Magistrates Court and the room also served as evidence to the public how the interiors of the original building had been altered and were beyond restoration. Despite the applicant's best efforts to involve as many local people and organisations as possible, relatively few people attended and the number of PR representatives frequently exceeded the general public attending the exhibition. The results of this consultation exercise fed into a 'Statement of Community Involvement' report supporting the full planning application, which was made in February 2007 (07/00916/full) and all documents were made public for consultation. The SMS hoped that their time-consuming commitment to the consultation process over the past three months would result in their comments being incorporated into the proposals.



Fig. 8.13 Marylebone court façade a step too far, *West End Extra*, 5 December 2006



Fig. 8.14 Public consultation on first application, Public Exhibition, November 2006 (WCC, TP files, Report by PR Consultant)

Why do we need new courts?

The need for the new courts arises from the obsolete facilities at the Marylebone Magistrates' Court. The current premises fail to satisfy modern requirements relating to the segregation of witnesses, court staff and visitors, have inadequate facilities for the defendants, limited accessibility and a range of other issues. The new court building will be a modern purpose built facility that will meet these requirements and bring considerable benefits to the scheduling of cases, operation of the Magistrates' Court service and on a broader level, the delivery of a modern justice system in London.

Further information and comments?

There are various ways you can get in contact with us:

By email:
hmcsp@justice.gov.uk

By phone:
Development Planning Partnership - 020 7554 9244

By fax:
Development Planning Partnership - 020 7553 7058

By post:
Development Planning Partnership,
1 Piccadilly Square,
London,
W1T 3SE

Exhibition

We will be holding a public exhibition to provide more information on the proposed redevelopment. This exhibition will be held at the Marylebone Magistrates' Court at the following times:

- Thursday 30 November: 9am - 4pm;
- Friday 1 December: 9am - 4pm; and
- Saturday 2 December: 9am - 12 noon.



Exhibition Site Plan and Exhibition Location



hmcsp **DPP**

**Redevelopment of
Marylebone Magistrates' Court**
Public Consultation

On behalf of Her Majesty's Courts Service we are consulting with the public on a proposed redevelopment of the Marylebone Magistrates' Courts and associated buildings located at:

- 175 Marylebone Road;
- 141 and 155 Marylebone Road; and
- 175 and 177 Seymour Place.

The purpose of this consultation exercise is to explain to the public the latest proposals for the redevelopment of the site in advance of the submission of a planning application. This leaflet acts as an invitation to an exhibition illustrating the proposals at which visitors will be able to ask specific questions in relation to the scheme.

The Proposal



The redevelopment will retain the red brick Court County Court building at the corner of Seymour Place and Marylebone Road and the redevelopment of the remainder of the front portion of the site at 141-155 Marylebone Road. It will provide 30 new magistrates' courts which will form the City of Westminster Court. The new building will be a modern landmark which is both an attractive addition to the street scene, operationally efficient, accessible and sustainable in terms of energy efficiency.

This will meet the space requirements of a modern court building. The new building has been designed to meet the needs of its users, whilst respecting the character of its surroundings. In addition to the new Court building, a residential scheme to the rear of the site (subject to sale on the site plan) is proposed. This scheme, promoted by Barratt Homes, will form a separate planning application and details of the existing scheme will be available at the public exhibition.

Fig.8.15 Her Majesty's Courts Service public consultation flyer (WCC TP files/SMS Archive)

8.4 Planning Applications for City of Westminster Magistrates Court

The first planning application for the City of Westminster Magistrates Court was submitted in February 2007 and discussed at the SMS monthly planning committee meeting in March. Residents from Manor House, directly opposite the site, attended to add their objections and asked for SMS support with some of them joining as members to become more involved with the project.

In their response to WCC planning department the SMS stressed they welcomed the development as a benefit to Marylebone, but suggested more of the site should be dedicated to the court and less to the housing development to allow a lower overall building height and potential future expansion. The SMS were dismayed to note that whilst the Statement of Community Consultation had listed all their issues and comments, none had been taken on board.

Retention of at least all the historic facades was a priority and the SMS explored its feasibility at length, with ideas as to how the structures could be incorporated into the current plan put together by the architects on the committee. They listed many detailed context and design objections as to how the building related to its surroundings, its form and materials. The illogical 'brise-soleil' (shading structure) on the north face of the building was challenged and the white Portland stone criticized as being unsuitable in such a highly trafficked and polluted location. The colonnade, under-croft and recessed entrance would, they thought, create security issues and permit anti-social behaviour. They summed up,

Given the importance of this building, we feel strongly that the demolition of the historic buildings should be reconsidered, and that the proposal requires a great deal more thought. We hope for an architectural and civic landmark (SMS Archive, planning comments, 13 March 2007).

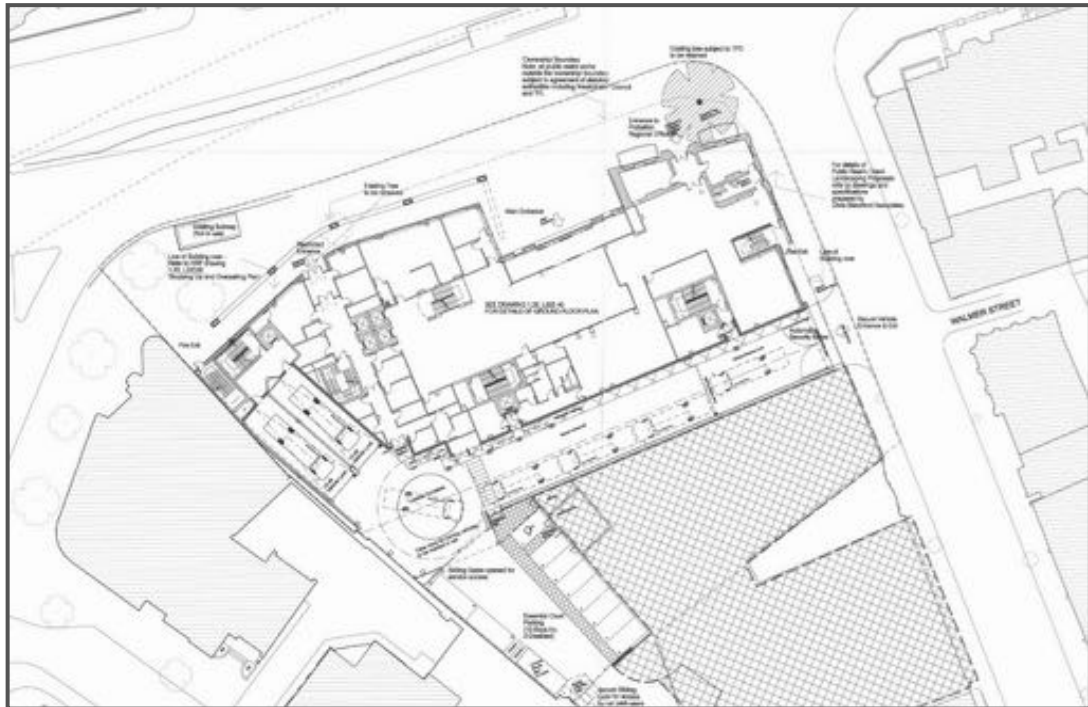


Fig. 8.16 Proposed revised site plan – City of Westminster Magistrates Court (WCC, TP file). The Seymour Place housing site is shown hatched, with the white space of the 'Wigmakers House', 173 Seymour Place, still showing as retained.

WCC planning and conservation supported these comments and also had further design objections on the projecting stone screen, the entrance, landscaping, fenestration and the stair tower height, stating that they would not support the application. The applicant withdrew and entered into discussions with WCC, submitting additional information and revised designs in May 2007. This 'Post Consultation Addendum' was forwarded by WCC to the SMS for their consideration. In response the SMS followed their standard response format of: saying something positive, "improved mass at the corner and relationship to retained county court building" followed by repeated objections and regret, "that there seems to have been a decision that demolition is inevitable and accepted" (SMS Archive, Planning committee comments, May 2007).

HMCS then requested to attend the next SMS planning committee meeting and presented their revised proposals on 11 June 2007. An indication of the importance that the applicant attached to this meeting with the local amenity society was illustrated by the attendant delegation. It included senior representatives from the whole development team: the developer Barratt

Developments PLC, senior architect, senior planning consultant, their PR consultants and a client representative for HMCS.



Fig. 8.17 SMS planning committee meeting at the Marylebone Council House (by author, SMS Archive)

Likewise, the SMS coordinated the meeting to present themselves as a professional, representative and credible organisation. The meeting was held in one of the formal, panelled meeting rooms in Marylebone Town Hall, with agenda, digital projection and refreshments. Over two hours HMCS presented their proposals in detail and the SMS chaired and took questions and comments from an assembled group including local councillors and the neighbouring amenity society the Marylebone Association. All twelve SMS planning committee members attended, which at the time included architects, planners, lawyers and artists, alongside other local residents. The SMS took the minutes and distributed them to all after the meeting.

When the SMS considered the HMCS revised design they noted that still none of their objections or demands had been addressed. Rather, only very minor design alterations had been made to the design of the courts; the stair tower to Seymour Place has been reduced in height, the entrance area was now an

open court and the curved screen was shorter but its height had not been reduced. Even though the social housing scheme was not officially part of this planning application, the fact that it was indicated on some of the plans, gave the SMS an opportunity to repeat their objections to the housing on grounds of overdevelopment and design issues. Additionally, they continued to insist that the facade of Pompeian Baths ought to be retained and more of the site given over to the courts. The Marylebone Association (MA), the neighbouring amenity society, also objected to the housing design, bulk and parking issues.

WCC direct consultation with adjoining neighbours to the development (at Shilliber Place to the rear of the site) drew only three responses, and these were detailed objections to the housing, its modern design, lack of context and massing as well as the demolition of old buildings. Other issues raised involved potential noise nuisance and loss of their privacy, with the lack of amenity space for future residents. Parking issues, access issues, increase in crime likely from affordable housing was also noted. However, these residents made no objections to the proposed Magistrates Court.

The application was recommended for refusal by WCC planning officers on design and conservation grounds and this was upheld at the WCC Planning Committee (19 July 2007). The councillors commented that they would like to see a scheme that retained the Pompeian Baths facade, protected the setting of the original County Court building on the corner and also incorporated the public baths facade. These supported the SMS demands, and interestingly, two of the local councillors involved in that committee decision were previously active SMS members.

A further revised planning application was made six months later (28 September 2007) and all parties repeated their previous objections, which the revised scheme had again not addressed. Having made no comment on previous schemes, the Victorian Society now added a late comment, "The Victorian Society advise retention of facade of baths as combining with old court into civic group" (WCC, TP files, 14 November 2007). This application was also refused (30 January 2008) due to loss of the historic buildings, the

new design not enhancing conservation area where the modern, curved, freestanding Portland stone screen was seen as being out of keeping with the locality. The applicant then started an appeal.

8.5 City of Westminster Magistrates Court - Appeal & Decisions

With two previous refusals, the planning and conservation officers and local ward councillors all in agreement alongside national and local amenity objections, the appeal was entered into with some confidence by the SMS. Everyone was convinced that the buildings (or at least the facades) would be saved. The SMS were invited by WCC to speak at the appeal (13 March 2008) and this was delivered by the SMS Planning Committee Chair. Their evidence started as usual confirming their local status as representative and influential, having previously instrumental in saving the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park. This assertion was followed by positive statements relating to the matter at hand, specifically that the SMS welcomed the decision to make Marylebone the location for a centralised magistrate court development in principle because of the investment and employment it would bring to the locality. The SMS agreed that the retention of just the facade of the original 19th century corner courthouse building was an acceptable compromise, because the existing interiors were not architecturally significant and would not work well as modern courts.

Following what Flybvjerg (1996) would describe as these 'stroking statements' the SMS turned to their objections saying they did not agree on the necessity to demolish the old swimming baths facade, that as a building of townscape merit its demolition should be resisted. The SMS went on to try to influence the design of the building saying that the facade could be incorporated into the proposed atrium or the public open space stating, "This would add interest to the building and create another layer, especially as the concept of 'architectural layers' is one the developer is keen to illustrate in the design statement" (SMS Archive). Problems with the proposed design were then highlighted:

We are not opposed to good modern, innovative, sustainable design.

Whilst respecting the architect's planning expertise in the layout of the proposed building, we believe that the proposed design is not especially distinctive nor does it give the impression of a public or a civic building.

It has the entrance behind a screen wall, it is not highly visible or prominent. The heraldic shield needed to denote civic use is evidence of poor design.

It has a modern grid like structure, and could be mistaken for any commercial building. This 'International Style' of architecture does not take on any contextual references from the location on the edges of The Portman Estates Conservation Area. We feel that the scale dwarfs the retained corner court building and makes no reference to it nor the character of the Conservation Area (SMS Archive).

However, the SMS opinions were emotive and subjective, hence not likely to influence the decision of a more powerful adversary. Disappointingly to all, WCC policy, local councillors' opinions and planning officers' recommendations were also overruled and the appeal was allowed by the Planning Inspector (WCC, TP files, 13 March 2008). Such was WCC's support to protect the buildings and conservation area character, that they sought legal advice on challenging the Secretary of State Inspector's decision but were advised any appeal to the High Court would not be substantiated.

Despite eighteen months of consultation and debate, none of the amenity society demands and objections had been addressed. The SMS had simply delayed proceedings as ultimately the historic value of the public baths was not deemed significant enough to merit saving. The lengthy planning and consultation process had seen many objectors fall away due to apathy and boredom. Consulting the SMS early had the benefit of unearthing all the possible community objections so that they could be dismissed as unworkable or unfounded by the applicant's PR experts during the consultation period. For the applicant, the PR company had orchestrated a strategic public consultation exercise that allowed for 'box-ticking' which supported their obligations to the

planning process at appeal. The diagram of actors (Fig. 8.4) illustrates how the PR Consultants had positioned themselves in the historic place of a local amenity society. They had nurtured direct links to everyone involved via pre-application stage involvement with the SMS.



Fig. 8.18 St Marylebone Society Newsletter, Spring 2009 (SMS Archive)



Fig. 8.19 St Marylebone Society Newsletter, Summer 2011 (SMS Archive)

The developer, HMCS, had financial resources to employ a full-time team of consultants who had great experience in architecture, planning and public relations. They urgently needed planning permission for the new courts in order to close Horseferry and Bow Street Magistrates Courts and carry out their conversion to private flats which would unlock financial resources to fund the overall development. The SMS and WCC supported the principle of a new

modernised and efficient court in Marylebone and united to try to retain the historic buildings and promoted better, contextual design, but ultimately the economic and social benefits outweighed the conservation issues. For the SMS the next step involved turning their attention to influencing the Seymour Place housing element of the scheme. The developer had to fulfil complicated planning conditions attached to the Appeal approval relating to its building programme and resolving funding prior to demolition, without which HMCS's overall development plan could not be implemented.

8.6 The Seymour Place Housing Development

The proposed housing applications were made in tandem with that for the City of Westminster Magistrates Court. Putting the social housing (which was required by planning policy) onto one combined site raised greater revenue for HMCS and allowed the Horseferry and Bow Street sites to be developed to their full market potential and without delay. This strategy was agreed in principle but the design of the social housing on Seymour Place would take three years to resolve.

The first planning refusal for the whole City of Westminster Magistrates Court development (in April 2007) had proposed a modern idiom for the social housing. In their revised housing application, the developer submitted two options for the design of the proposed flats on Seymour Place. 'Contemporary' and 'Classical' schemes were presented for exactly the same plan and housing layout in an architectural exercise of pure facadism. The 'Classical' scheme showed an infill similar to Georgian houses with stucco at ground level but without the typical hierarchy of floor heights and fenestration and with an oversized stuck on pediment. The 'Contemporary' design was a brick, gridded elevation with recessed windows and glass balconies. Both schemes retained the original house, known as 'the wig-makers house', at 173 Seymour Place. Along with the SMS and Marylebone Association amenity societies, 509 local residents were also consulted. However, this extensive consultation exercise elicited only six replies - all objections.



Fig. 8.20 Classical facade to Seymour Place (wig-makers house retained)
(TP files, Barratt West London Architects, visualisation for public consultation)



Fig. 8.21 Modern facade to Seymour Place (wig-makers house retained)
(TP files, Barratt West London Architects, visualisation for public consultation)

On 11 June 2007 the applicant requested another private meeting with the SMS planning committee to update them on the project and discuss the housing design. Again, senior representatives attended from the development team included architects, planning consultant, PR consultant and client representative for HMCS. The SMS re-stated their opinion that a pastiche would not be acceptable and good modern design would be the preferred option; a stance matched by the Marylebone Association. The developer confirmed that the modern architectural character for the housing had been also agreed following separate consultation with WCC planners. On this basis the applicant decided to pursue the 'Contemporary' version based on everyone's comments and at this stage they also agreed to retain the facade of the original 'wig-makers house' at 173 Seymour Place.

With the Magistrates Court application refused in January 2008 and scheduled for an appeal hearing, the housing application had been withdrawn. Following success at appeal (in March 2008) for the demolition and new court building, a revised 'Contemporary' scheme for the housing part of the site was re-submitted eight months later in November 2008. The SMS repeated their objections as previously regarding proportion and detail, and now added that active street frontages should be aimed for on this busy, heavily trafficked and commercially fronted street. The Marylebone Association made no further comments. English Heritage had no objections as long as thorough recording of the buildings to be demolished was undertaken. For this application 759 letters of consultation were sent out to neighbours, once again soliciting few resident's responses, only three, objecting to the wholly social housing scheme, which they felt, "would place a significant strain on the amenities of the area". No one mentioned the design. This revised application was also recommended for refusal by WCC planning officers (WCC, TP files).

Barratt West London made a further revised 'Contemporary' application in January 2009 and this was again refused on design grounds. Demolition of the last standing Georgian building, the 'Wig-makers House' at 173 Seymour Place, was proposed and this contributed to the planner's recommendation for

refusal because they considered that the, "... proposed design did not enhance the Portman Estate Conservation Area" (WCC, TP files).



Fig. 8.22 The Georgian house to be demolished (WCC, TP files)

Six months later (3 June 2009), two more schemes were submitted now reverting to both idioms, 'Contemporary' and 'Classical' to which WCC planning and conservation commented:

Contemporary might be acceptable if better detailed, proportioned, sensitive to context regarding materials and colour. Did not welcome pseudo-historic detailing. Ground floor treatment needed attention.

The Classical scheme could not be supported because it involved increased height, and the grand portico was inconsistent with the conservation area setting. Floor to ceiling heights were not in proportion and should match the retained house, with a mansard (WCC, TP files).

However, these amendments would have reduced the number of units required to offset the private housing developments at the other two developments sites. Of the revised Contemporary scheme (09/06012/full) submitted 21 July 2009, the SMS considered the new design worse than the withdrawn scheme although the Marylebone Association supported, "... the bold treatment but objected to the detail design" (WCC, TP files). The Victorian

Society objected to the demolition of 173 Seymour Place (WCC, TP files, letter 18 August 2009).

Of the revised Classical scheme, the Marylebone Association lamented that it was a, "... dreadful, non-sensical pastiche" (WCC, TP files, MA comments, 6 August 2009). The SMS also repeated their objections to demolition of the Georgian house and proposed pastiche,

Marylebone is an area rich in historical buildings, especially from the 18th century. This proposal is ludicrous when set alongside the real thing... Slapping on a pediment and some columns to a modern slab and post building, where all floors are the same height, does NOT make a classical building (SMS Archive, letter, 8 August 2009).

Only one individual resident wrote supporting the classical scheme.



Fig. 8.23 The alternative facades public consultation brochure by Barratt West London Architects (SMS Archive/WCC, TP files)

Prior to the WCC Planning and Development Committee meeting (scheduled for 15 October 2009) at which a decision would be made, the Head of Development at Barratt wrote a letter to the WCC explaining that they would be presenting two schemes at the meeting, one 'Contemporary' and one

'Classical', because, "... the feedback has led us to conclude that there is no single design approach ... that would be viewed as appropriate by all of the parties involved." He continued to urge WCC councillors to support the application and grant consent (WCC, TP files, letter, 9 October 2009).

The Heads of Terms (that is the planning gain, Section 106 legal financial agreement) for the development were also agreed ahead of the committee meeting for the housing scheme, which allowed for:

- education contribution £450,000
- public art – suggest an art initiative for local schools £30,000
- £100,000 for public realm improvements
- social & community facilities/apprenticeship on site £41,600

The WCC draft planning report ahead of the committee meeting recommended that the 'Classical' scheme be refused on design grounds. The "Contemporary' scheme was supported by local councillors (including a past Chairman of the SMS), but with reservations about the design, maintenance issues and the uniformity of the flats. Thus, the 'Contemporary' scheme was recommended for conditional approval but with heritage matters and the facade design still unresolved. Over three years had passed and because of the lack of consensus on the design idiom of the housing the overall City of Westminster Magistrates Court development was in paralysis.

Just one day before the WCC Planning and Development Committee was due to meet and determine the application, a 'Design Summit' was quickly organised by WCC to try to resolve the deadlock. This took place at the prestigious Wallace Collection Gallery in Manchester Square on 14 October 2009 and was presented as an academic debate, 'Classical v Modern', where architects representing each style presented their views. Advocating for 'Modern' were the French architect Michel Mossessian and John McAslan and Partners. For the 'Classical' were Robert Adam and Julian Bicknell. Chairing the debate was the WCC Cabinet Member for the Built Environment, who had been instrumental in setting up the event and who would also be chairing the WCC planning committee meeting the next day.

The audience comprised invited WCC councillors, planning officers, architects and amenity societies. It was a fascinating and interesting evening where all had a chance to air their views with questions from the floor and the amenity societies were directly involved, acting as equals, collaborating in the planning decision-making process. The debate ended without any definite outcome but left all with much to reflect on as summed up by the Chairman in his concluding remarks,

I do not expect us all to concur at the end of tonight's debate what the best architectural styles are. I do hope that everyone here is able to agree that we must all demand the highest possible standards of design are rigorously sought in every development we consider (SMS Archive, WCC Design Summit hand-out).

The SMS had enjoyed the event and reflected afterwards on how fortunate they were to work with such a forward-thinking local authority and how far their involvement had progressed since 1948 with the planning system radically changed to take account of public opinion (SMS Archives). The following day the SMS made a last-ditch attempt to argue that the modern scheme be chosen with a letter to the WCC,

We write to thank you for a very interesting and informative evening yesterday; and we also want you to know that The St Marylebone Society will try to support you in "raising the bar of good design" in Westminster. We too want to ensure good quality 'contemporary design' is allowed to be built, especially in our Conservation Areas, which will contribute to the time-depth character of Marylebone and Westminster (SMS Archives, letter, 15 October 2009).

To no avail. Later that day, in contradiction to their planning officers' recommendations, WCC local councillors voted in favour of the 'Classical' scheme at the Committee meeting. Their decision was however,

Deferred: In order to allow the applicants to submit a more hierarchical scheme in line with classical architecture rules (WCC Planning Committee Decision, 15 October 2009).

After this decision, the SMS had no longer any opportunity to be involved in the planning process as discharge of conditions, that is, approval of materials,

details and the final facade design for the buildings is done in-house. It took a further eight months for the 'Classical' scheme to be resolved by WCC planning officers with permission for a stripped back facade eventually granted on 28 June 2010.



Fig. 8.24 Seymour Place housing development as built, 2021 (by author)

8.7 Conclusions – Site 4

This case set out to investigate why after 60 years of involvement, with some notable successes and planning policy re-defined to include and involve amenity societies in the decision-making process, the SMS had no influence on outcome. Following over three years of planning negotiations the Magistrates Court site was eventually cleared for redevelopment in 2009, with only the 1850 courthouse corner façade retained. To the SMS it seemed that the lessons of the past and importance of conservation had not been heeded, planning policy to protect heritage assets had no weight and even with local authority support and their councillor's support the SMS were powerless to influence decisions.

The SMS was involved in the City of Westminster Magistrates Court's development from the outset, ahead of the general public, which illustrates that amenity society's early involvement in the planning process has improved since the 1940s. The developer and their PR consultant kept the society informed at every stage, but in practice they used the society's genuine, altruistic concerns and voluntary input to their advantage whilst taking none of their comments on board. The PR consultants were paid to connect all the actors, effectively to build a network for the actor with the greatest power, HMRC. Ultimately the power imbalance between them and the SMS, and indeed all the other actors, was far too great. Everyone involved wanted the City of Westminster Court to be in Marylebone, it was only the design and conservation matters in dispute. These somewhat subjective issues carried less weight at the appeal where the balancing act, necessary in any planning decision, weighed towards the benefits of the new courts as opposed to the harm to the conservation area character.

Objections to the Seymour Place housing development were relatively few in number as the site was actually quite apart from other existing residential uses. Only a small mews was directly affected by the development and the three residents who objected had voiced strong opposition to all the housing being socially affordable in principle. The continual revisions to the housing applications were confusing to follow and comment on and the SMS planning committee struggled to identify what exactly had changed with each redesign. Increasing apathy and loss of interest over time mean that in the end there wasn't the quantity of objectors needed to have any real influence.

The SMS comments and objections on the housing could be seen as 'euphemisms' for an underlying desire for a mixed tenure development, rather than it being totally social housing. However, their objections that the proposals represented overdevelopment were actually true. The original scheme density was 1029 habitable rooms per hectare, whereas the London Plan's Zone 1 policy sets out guidance of 400-850 habitable rooms per hectare. The revised scheme had reduced the density to 966 habitable rooms per hectare,

admittedly still overdeveloped but argued as acceptable due to good transport links and the need for larger affordable housing units. In the end the scheme allowed for a significant number of children (approximately 133) to live in the block, with no external amenity and on one of the most polluted streets in Europe. The acute affordable housing shortage in London is a problem all political parties have to address and on balance this weighed heavier than amenity, townscape, design and conservation.

The idea of a WCC chairing a 'design symposium/debate' was a master stroke as it diverted the campaign against demolition of the Georgian 'wig-makers house' and the number and type of social housing units to address a single question - whether it should be 'Classical' or 'Modern'. It finessed the debate and the agenda was set such that all the objections regarding over-development, social mix, access, space standards and conservation were no longer up for discussion; it was to be decided purely on the style of the facade. Despite unanimous objections from planning and conservation officers, amenity societies and residents, the 'Classical' scheme was chosen to be taken forward and the demolition of the last standing Georgian house on the site was allowed. The project had dragged on for over three years and the delay was becoming problematic as HMCS wanted to unlock the Horseferry Road and Bow Street private residential developments and needed the Seymour Place social housing design issues resolved and started on site.

Over the lengthy time frame of involvement with this planning application, with finite resources of volunteers and feeling ignored, the SMS had directed their attention away from the City of Westminster Magistrates Court site. Instead, they concerned themselves with a restoration project at the historic heart, rather than the fringes of Marylebone, the Memorial Garden on Marylebone High Street. This was the small public space they had created in 1951 and now in urgent need of restoration (as discussed in Chapter 5). Coincidentally the £45,000 of funding needed for this garden project came directly from the Section 106 agreement for the Seymour Place housing development, which had allocated £100,000 for local public realm improvements. The amenity society had lost the fight to save the Victorian public baths and Georgian

houses on Seymour Place but perhaps as a gesture of compensation and good will, WCC decided to give the SMS the financial resources needed to restore the Memorial Garden. This public garden remains a tangible physical manifestation of the amenity society's overt power some 60 years earlier. The money provided by WCC following the SMS defeat in their Magistrates Courts campaign could be seen as a quiet manifestation of their changing but continuing covert power.

CHAPTER 9

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW & CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to analyse the work of the St Marylebone Society (SMS), as a typical voluntary urban amenity society, to evidence their power to influence decision-making within the participatory planning process. Whilst this relates to a specific group of people and place, the external factors influencing and driving their activities were common to local amenity societies across London and indeed other British city centres. Groups demanding protection of amenity had been in operation since the nineteenth century but the collective experience of World War II bombing, demolition, post-war reconstruction and ever-increasing road traffic led to an intensification of public involvement in conservation and planning nationally. The SMS were part of this movement and the four case study sites investigate over six decades of SMS participation in planning matters and together represent an alternative recent urban history of Marylebone. Similar to inner-city areas across Britain, Marylebone has undergone radical changes to its built environment, such as, commercialisation, tall buildings, increased densities of populations (workers and residents) and suffers the negative effects of transportation, congestion and pollution. However, evidence of the SMS's influence to limit and control these detrimental urban interventions was found at all four sites under investigation, although the extent of that power was seen to rise and fall with the prevailing social, economic and political context. The "mechanics of power" (Foucault, 1998) was elucidated by their words and actions, strategies and tactics undertaken with one over-riding objective,

... for the benefit of the public ...The stimulation of public interest in and the care for the beauty, history and character of St Marylebone (SMS Constitution, See Appendix B).

The ebb and flow of SMS influence in Marylebone, its campaigns, key actors, activists and membership, set within the changing architectural and political landscape is described in the illustrated time line at Appendix C (page 355).

The attitude of the SMS founders is captured in Chapter 5 which considers sites in the environs of Regent's Park and St Marylebone Parish Church in

1948. Networking across the hierarchical class and political system was possible by close connections with the local authority and by the fact that Marylebone's geography lent itself to informal relationships socially, often with neighbours occupying positions of power within the establishment. Their potential for network power depended on these contacts, providing firm roots for long-term partnerships, for example with the Aristocracy, Church and established national amenity societies. Additionally, at the outset the SMS membership included MPs and officers of St Marylebone Borough Council allowing the society to be embedded in local politics, which conferred insider knowledge of proposed developments. Without policy to control conflicts of interest the SMS could use these connections to their advantage. During the 1950s, at both Regent's Park and later at the Castrol House site, covert power-play was in operation and the politics and economics involved in conservation are shown to be fully understood and pragmatically managed by the early SMS membership. Chapter 6 considers the planning history of Castrol House (later Marathon House) and illustrates how policy following the Skeffington Report (1969) formalised and effectively controlled the tactics available to the society. The SMS became more closely integrated with the local authority planning department and its proscribed protocol but more constricted and distant from local and national politics, with consequent loss of power.

Despite the political change of leadership at a national level, in the Borough of St Marylebone, and later Westminster City Council, the Conservative Party continually held power locally and from the outset the society had always supported their elected leaders. However, when Marylebone Station was threatened with closure in the 1980s their position moved to one of confrontation with Conservative MPs and local councillors. Chapter 7 describes the intensive campaigning activities of the SMS, evidencing the enormously increased workload required to fight the Conservative Party, WCC and British Rail / National Bus Company's development proposals. The SMS was able to generate a high level of wide public participation because the loss of the railway service and threat of a coach terminus in its place would have detrimental consequences for all sections of society. The success of the SMS depended on this influx of fellow activists, and alongside their collective

experience, networks and organisational skills, they were fortunate to have people who could provide unique expert local knowledge.

Over the course of the late twentieth century planning policy evolved to reflect political ambitions, economics and sociological change alongside wide-ranging debates on urbanism, architectural style, conservation and the environment. Throughout this period of cultural upheaval, the objectives of the SMS stayed constant; they had instigated the practicalities of participatory planning policy two decades before they were made law and stuck to their modus operandi, firmly maintaining their views on preservation, architectural style and beauty which also continued to attract a homogenous membership. This somewhat entrenched stance may have contributed to their falling active membership in recent years and consequent weakened power and influence on planning matters. As seen in Chapter 8, the City of Westminster Magistrates Court development, even when the SMS's aesthetic objectives were aligned with WCC politicians and planners, the demolition of historic buildings could not be prevented. When only townscape amenity was at risk there was no groundswell of public outrage for the SMS to harness to bolster its membership and increase its network power, vital to support the operations of the society.

The research has evidenced that the strength of an amenity society's network power is based on the cumulative power of its individual members; their dedication, knowledge, expertise and, most importantly, their contacts. The power is vested in the people involved, and acting as special interest or privileged voluntary organisations, as well as 'people power' it is typically a case of 'powerful people'. Having identified this as the locus of an amenity society's power, the practical ambition of this research was to understand how it can be exercised to have a positive influence on the decision-making process and ultimately on environmental and built amenity. That reflecting on the past will allow those promoting and involved with public participation today to target specific projects and direct their campaigns to where they can have influence and strategically use their limited voluntary resources to best effect. Finally, I will reflect on current policy initiatives, such as neighbourhood planning and the changing role of amenity societies in the participatory planning process,

recently changed, perhaps irrevocably, by evolving information technology and the 2020 Covid pandemic.

9.1 Network Power - Powerful People

All people have individual power and the power to act invested in themselves and some people are more powerful than others. Connecting with more powerful establishment figures such as politicians, the clergy and land-owners proved vital to the success of the St Marylebone Society (SMS). From its foundation in 1948 the SMS had a network which included elected representatives actively and overtly involved in conservation campaigns alongside their own political activities. The SMS Chairman, Alderman Reneson Coucher is seen as a dynamic go-between, openly connecting St Marylebone Borough Council, the London County Council and the landowners who owned much of Marylebone, the 'Great Estates' (the Crown, Howard de Walden and Portman Estates). In their first campaign to restore the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park the SMS also capitalized on association with national amenity organisations, wealthy residents and aristocratic circles. They had generated collective power linking with like-minded people creating a significant network power-base on which they could grow and campaign together (Alinsky, 1972; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Through their contacts the SMS could by-pass bureaucracy to further their cause by reaching high-level decision-makers without delay. That the network's activities were overt and well-publicised added to the society's power by attracting new members, donations and media attention.

Openly belonging to and representing their local amenity society, perhaps as a patron with minimal commitment or involvement, usefully displayed a benevolent and positive role for the upper echelons of society and this is a situation that continues today for community organisations and charities. Despite decades of political will for social equality by breaking down class barriers, it is still considered a good idea for an amenity society to have a titled patron or president. As with the heraldic St Marylebone crest bestowed on the society, it looks impressive on a letterhead or website 'ribbon' and conveys a sense of tradition and permanence. It also retains a suggestion of the amenity

society's deference to their superiors, acknowledging their position in the natural order of the system as beneficial (Foucault, 1998; Lukes, 2005). That is, it maintains the status quo that best suits the operations of an amenity society and that the current SMS has as Patron Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and President the Labour peer Lord Adonis is important for the society today. Through such networks the amenity society has the potential to utilise the 'second-face of power' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 2005) and covertly make connections to the government (ideal if cross-party), the press and elite circles within the establishment to lobby for their campaigns.

When the SMS was founded network power was the only type of power they possessed and they utilised it in all 'three dimensions' (Lukes, 2005). In Regent's Park, overt networking activities included public lectures, social gatherings, reports in their newsletters and letters to the press. Simultaneously they covertly met key stakeholders, shared and suppressed information which contributed to securing financial support and ensuring the complete restoration of the Nash Terraces. These discussions were recorded within confidential memoranda and only evidenced due to the diligent archival activities of the librarian founders of the SMS. The fact that nothing is found on file evidences the uncharacteristic 'non-action' by the SMS to involve themselves with the concurrent Castrol House development in the 1950s. This suggests that the SMS were exercising the second dimension of power – the power not to act (Lukes, 2005), as reading between the lines of the local authority's planning files we can see the possibility of internal, covert power-play. This was a time when the most active SMS members included MPs and local elected representatives working within St Marylebone Borough Council, who in this case consistently and vocally supported the 22-storey glass tower, whilst throughout a decade of planning debate the SMS remained silent.

Whilst the SMS had strong network power, without legal policy supporting their objectives they had no structural power and their achievements were due to their objectives being aligned with those in authority. Thus, their power was fragile and illusory in the face of greater economic power and where there was conflict with their superiors their attempts at rational persuasion proved futile

(Machiavelli, 1532; Flyvbjerg, 1998), resulting in the loss of a Georgian terrace, that included Charles Dickens's house, and two undistinguished office blocks built in its place destroying the setting of the St Marylebone Parish Church. Close working relationships between politicians and amenity societies were stopped, coinciding with the reorganisation of local government in 1965, for obvious reasons of conflict of interest. Nonetheless, the spouse, neighbour or relative of a local politician could still be an amenity society activist. The potential for the SMS to receive information and power covertly remained throughout the ensuing decades and was most productive when it flowed two-way between contacts.

In an urban setting economics dictate property values which results in concentrating socio-economic groups by neighbourhood, a situation polarized by the gentrification of conservation areas in central London. In Marylebone the Georgian townscape is largely preserved where policy and development control, supported by the SMS, has limited growth creating an enclave and limited supply of restored period dwellings. Considered over the seventy-year time span of the SMS activities it would be interesting to calculate how much the society has contributed to the significant increase in Marylebone's land values since the 1950s (perhaps a subject for further research). From the outset to the present day, the 'Great Estates' have been long-standing supporters of the society, which suggests they possibly understood that local amenity societies could surreptitiously, subconsciously increase future property values. These powerful landowners were integral to the SMS's early network and had provided support and funds for the realisation of the Memorial Garden in 1952. Once completed, sub-committees of patrons and trustees for the garden were drawn up by the SMS as a means of recognising their support and cementing the relationships. The historic links remained strong sixty years later, when the garden needed restoration, the same people's successors came together to ensure capital and conservatorship for the project in perpetuity; an example of enduring power and benefits of the *longue durée* (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The SMS used tact and diplomatic skills over decades to protect and nurture this intangible source of accumulative mutual power. Once strong and trusting bonds were established, the amenity society did not need

to use their elite contacts for years, and vice versa, but like old friends they knew that at some time in the future they could be assured of support if called upon.

9.2 People Power - Active Volunteers

This research illustrates that network power is a living organism which is initiated, increased and energised by social contact. Networks with elite connections, as described above, need active support and strengthening by ordinary (less powerful) people investing their time into maintaining good relationships with those more powerful than themselves. Without volunteers there is no scope for action, and without action power cannot be generated or nurtured (Foucault, 1980; White, 1996)

There needs to be a clear impetus, a simultaneous spark of concern for people to start or join an amenity society and voluntarily engage with and challenge those in authority. The context and conditions for this to happen were ideal post-World War II, following the shared experience of war and community spirit to re-build towns and society. The evolution of the SMS, from an initial interest in localism and history to proactive engagement with politics and planning to protect and improve amenity, accorded with the nineteenth century pioneers' palimpsest of an elite voluntary civic group. Marylebone was one of many historic villages that were enveloped by the growth of London over centuries, with tacit, strong yet permeable boundaries subconsciously delineated by their social and built urban fabric. Amenity societies return these inner-city areas to be 'village-like' structures with close communities and high levels of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Halpern, 2005). This confers a sense of belonging and guardianship of public shared spaces, leading to a desire to control and dictate decisions on townscape and buildings outside their ownership. In this respect the SMS and amenity societies in general, are acting just as the CPS and SPAB proponents did over a hundred years ago. They have a sense of entitlement and are acting with their own cultural values and in their own self-interests which they equate with also being in the interest of the rest of society.

This self-belief in the face of more powerful authorities who thought otherwise was clearly evidenced in the 1980s when the closure of Marylebone Station and threat of a coach terminus in its place catalysed the whole community into action. The SMS galvanised its role by uniting disparate groups, which led to the successful campaign to save the station. Developments that threaten environmental damage, such as, traffic, pollution and noise draw in many more volunteers as activists because this type of amenity affects everyone. At Marylebone Station the architectural and conservation arguments carried no weight; it was the proposed coach terminus that energised people into action.

Since its founding the SMS membership has fluctuated between approximately 200 and 600 members, although this figure is difficult to assess accurately due to inconsistent record keeping. This is partly due to differing subscription charges, for example, joint and life memberships, corporates and free honorary membership, with people sometimes retained on lists despite not paying their dues. From a peak in 2002 of 609 members (possibly the result of an incredible hard-working and charismatic social secretary at the time) the SMS membership has fallen to approximately 375 at time of writing. Meanwhile, the number of active volunteers has steadily fallen since the mid-1980s with vacancies for various essential SMS Council positions (such as, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Social and Events) frequently unfilled, leaving a handful of people to multi-task.

As explored throughout the research, to be involved in planning activism one needs time and money to volunteer. For the younger generation spare time is not likely to be spent sitting through committee meetings nudging decisions towards a conclusion that may be a decade away. Campaigning to affect change takes time and patience. It requires long-term commitment and stability, which is hampered by transient populations. Significant too is the role of women, no longer housewives as potential full-time volunteers. This is a matter for concern, because, lack of actively involved members, risks the society losing their network power and influence.

9.3 Representation and Consensus

The loss of members and volunteers is a problem because the planning framework, and the case study evidence, indicates that an amenity society must be seen to be representative of the wider public for credibility and success, and for that they need as many members as possible. Whilst the mid-century demographic, with collective ambitions for post-war recovery, allowed early amenity societies to accept all-comers without concern of introducing internal conflict to their organisation, today it might be in the amenity society's interests to control its active membership to maintain a shared stance on for example, contemporary design, conservation, cycling and environmental matters.

Over the course of the twentieth century, socio-economic change has eroded the homogenous character of settled urban communities across London. Culturally diverse, vibrant and interesting neighbourhoods have been created but these are not beneficial to maintaining the status quo, in which amenity societies thrive. Population movement, cultural and racial diversity challenges the consensus of the local amenity society, whose long-standing constitution, written perhaps half a century ago, is no longer aligned with or feels relevant to the majority of the population. For example, the cultural capital in conserving historical buildings and open spaces, may not be considered as critical as the need for affordable housing; and an international community may not be aware of the machinations of British local governance and the established, unwritten 'rules of the game'.

The amenity society, using its two and three-dimensional power (Lukes, 2005) can prevent conflict from arising by controlling its membership, agenda and suppressing incompatible opinions. Consensus is primarily controlled by a legal constitution that members sign up to when they join and reinforced through their regular newsletters and AGM. This clearly states shared objectives and ensuring it is adhered to avoids internal conflict. Amenity societies realise that consensus of opinion is vital for their collective action to be successful as a group; that in-fighting on issues would weaken their power

and they would struggle to assert themselves on the local authority or other dominant party, so prevent it from arising. Their management structure is operating like the wider group of actors in the planning system by avoiding conflict to reach the decisions that best suit them (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Lukes, 2005).

Having amassed a significant membership, the actual number of active volunteers within any amenity society will be few, often in single numbers. The vast majority of amenity society members are passive and disengaged from any of the society's campaigning activities with the burden work falling to a dedicated minority. However, this does not harm the power of the amenity society, on the contrary, it permits and perpetuates consensus under the cover of a multitude of unvoiced opinions of people who do not have the time or inclination to be actively involved. This behaviour displays the amenity society's ability to set their own agenda and control the information dissipated to its membership, utilising their two-dimensional power (Lukes, 2005). If there are no active volunteers then that is a different story, such an amenity society cannot be taken seriously by the authorities or survive.

9.4 The Exercise of Power - Strategies and Tactics

With extensive networks, a critical number of active volunteers and a large membership base to ensure the potential for power the amenity society must also have skills, understanding and awareness of how to exercise its power to further its objectives. Characteristic of the SMS throughout its existence was an underlying attitude of perseverance and determination. Founder members told me that this stance came from living through World War II, enduring hardship and developing resilience to setbacks. The next generation may have inherited this from their elders and continued their activism due to a sense of civic familial duty. Their children would have become adults in the 1970s and been politicised by changing radical politics of liberation, equality and environmental activism; and it is these middle-aged activists that form the majority of the amenity society membership today. How this personality trait comes about in a person's development is not a subject for this research, but

as the case studies illustrate it is certainly vital to organise, drive and propagate an amenity society's objectives and success.

Political Acumen and Diplomacy

Political judgement and tactical political allegiance were important factors in determining the best exercise of the SMS's power. Its active members have always had a deep understanding of the workings of local democracy and the legal and policy frameworks to be negotiated within the planning system. The entire period of investigation has been one with the constant presence of the Conservative Party: in St Marylebone Borough Council (when the society was founded) and since 1976 in Westminster City Council. There is an implicit, but not necessarily true, understanding that the SMS's (and those of the majority of amenity societies) conservative views are aligned with those of the Conservative Party. This situation of intentional ambiguity has served the SMS well throughout its existence in maintaining open, respectful relationships with all political factions. The ability to contact political leaders and local representatives informally is the first step to avoiding open or public conflict by reaching a resolution that works for all covertly. It is in this scenario that both parties can use stroking tactics to direct proceedings (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Having a stable political structure, alongside a stable population allows amenity societies to establish strong relationships with their elected representatives, which become closer and create invested friendships. Together they can exercise both one-dimensional and two-dimensional power (Lukes, 2005) by debating and arguing between themselves, in public and sometimes in private, on and off the record and nurturing strong links for the future. It is also important that despite these close political links the amenity society must remain publicly apolitical and nonpartisan, presenting what Lukes calls its 'public face' of power.

This research evidences that if all parties can negotiate, compromise and reach accord on a development or decision, then the amenity society's influence is seen to be high, for example as previously noted in conserving the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park. However, if an amenity society's view

contradicts powerful or political will that can force an issue, their influence is inevitably negligible (Machiavelli, 1534). At the City of Westminster Magistrates Court development in 2006-2009, those arguing for conservation of the historic buildings alongside the SMS included the Victorian Society, WCC planning and conservation officers, yet together they were no match for their powerful adversary. Her Majesty's Court Service and their PR consultants cleverly controlled the consultation exercise and decision-making process to bring about a result in their favour.

Dealing with strategic, diplomatic and delicate power-balancing depends on volunteers with time, intuitive decision-making and communication skills and long-term commitment to a particular neighbourhood. This comes back to the need for a stable, active, well-connected community which was evidenced in the Marylebone Station case study (Chapter 7). The success of this campaign was also due to an alternative political approach and highlighted the persuasive tactic of involving cross-party political opponents. In this campaign the local authority WCC and the Conservative Government were united in their ambitions to close the railway station and invest in road transport. The SMS managed to co-opt numerous political organisations from the far-left and trades unions, through Home Counties' Conservative MPs to the radical anarchist tendencies of the PFRTA and the GLC. The SMS broke down the campaign into different basic elements with common principles that supported the ambitions of these differing organisations. This allowed them all to face in the same direction with potential for cumulative power. In this case the network power was spread out of its normal territory and political opponents came together to campaign to save the station but for fundamentally different reasons. It is interesting to note that the SMS Chair who skilfully coordinated the campaign to save Marylebone Station went on to become a local councillor and Lord Mayor of Westminster (and was also the great-granddaughter of the society's charismatic founder Alderman Reneson Coucher).

For an amenity society, the research evidences that visible political neutrality goes hand-in-hand with absolute financial independence to permit the free exercise of its power. In a situation of conflict, it is crucial for an amenity society

to have the potential to balance power relations, to negotiate for damage limitation or bring in reinforcements such as environmental activists, the press or the general public. An amenity society could also field an independent candidate on a single issue at local elections, where the threat of expanding the debate into the wider population has the potential to affect voting and destabilise local politics (Lukes, 2005). These are dangerous tactics, only used as a last resort. However, whilst they exist as optional weapons they confer 'latent power' on the amenity society. Autonomy permits the amenity society to make decisions with no associated obligations, open or covert, to deal with and utilize "the full gamut of instruments in naked power play" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p233). Financial support with political independence is the dichotomy that policy makers have to reconcile in supporting disadvantaged groups to participate in planning, without the privileges of an amenity society.

Rationality and Knowledge

Researchers into power theory agree that rationality and persuasion are the weapons of the weak (Machiavelli, 1534; Flyvbjerg, 1998). However, the Marylebone Station case study evidences that knowledge and rational power can play a significant part in overcoming a more powerful opponent, but only if other strategies and tactics are also in place. History has shown amenity societies attracted architects, town planners, surveyors, lawyers and academics who volunteered for active roles that utilised their skill set; people who had the knowledge and confidence to argue with those in power on a level footing. However, in challenging the transport experts the SMS was fortunate to have someone in their ranks closely connected to railways with a life-long knowledge of trains. This man was Sam Briddes who knew as much as the experts but coupled with local knowledge better understood the technical practicalities and in time British Rail and London Transport agreed with him.

Planning expertise combined with local knowledge also helped to amend the planning brief, preventing a coach terminus on the site in opposition to WCC's planning department and local councillors. The SMS had established the permitted uses in the site in the 1950s when they were consulted on the *County*

of London plan, and constantly reminded the planners, politicians and press of this fact. They also tackled the draft policy documentation forensically with the benefit of legal know-how, spending months doggedly insisting on minor amendments to the text, arranging meetings, setting the agenda and using the local press and councillors to get verbal promises in writing. Diverting attention to the minutia of details, such as insisting on 'no worsening of the environment' as oppose to 'no *significant* worsening of the environment' by keeping the coaches on the (unfeasible) rail-to-road conversion, rendered the proposal technically impossible. Rational argument evidently had a role to play within a multifaceted campaign that united a multitude of actors on an issue that affected the whole community – environmental pollution and traffic congestion were true public concerns. The diversity of actors, from different political standpoints could powerfully use their specific knowledge to argue their own genuine, rational views. This resulted in the problems being understood from many angles and together solutions could be thought up to solve issues whilst creating real political and technical problems for their adversaries. Whilst they were challenging much more powerful organisations their combined, constant and diversionary campaigning activities served to cause delay to the proceedings, which allowed time for social, political and economic change to take place and change the agenda to be in their favour. In Saving Marylebone Station, the SMS had managed to capture and unite both types of nineteenth century amenity campaigners - the genteel beauty and townscape conservationists and the radical environmental and social reformists.

At Marylebone Station the SMS had first entered the debate on its planning brief thirty years earlier, then again in 1983, a year before BR posted its closure notice in 1984. Since their foundation, the SMS had been pro-active and integrated into the planning process from start to finish through their membership and networks; they understood that getting involved early was essential. Following the Civic Amenities Act, which legislated for public participation, theoretical planning models (as discussed in Chapter 2) were developed to invite and encourage participation and envisaged increasing community power. Early involvement in the process was seen to be beneficial for meaningful participation and the envisaged collaborative approach. In

practice these frameworks were proscriptive, controlling the agenda and information in the same way as other powerful actors, making use of all three-dimensions of power (Lukes, 2005). However, the ambitions of the Skeffington Report, encapsulated in the Civic Amenities Act took time to instigate and when the Marylebone Station campaign started the SMS continued as they had done in the past, involving themselves voluntarily a year ahead of official process, which contributed to their success.

By the time of the later SMS campaigns considered in this research, Castrol House re-development (1994) and the City of Westminster Magistrates Court (2006), the procedural planning process structures were well established. Coinciding with declining membership and increasing development in London, the SMS and other amenity societies, fell into the dictated time frame of public consultation. At Castrol House policy had evolved such that they now had the full support and assistance of WCC councillors and planners, which prevented the demolition of the tower and a post-modern, daylight-blocking mega-block put in its place. However, an attempt to get the building listed and restored proved impossible and their rational arguments for conservation went unheeded by the much more powerful property developers.

At the City of Westminster Magistrates Court (Chapter 8), the developer made use of a pre-application consultation which purported to be in the collaborative spirit of consultation. Instead, the developer and their PR consultant using their structural and economic two-dimensional power to set the agenda, deftly reduced the debate to be on the architectural style of the housing alone, an aesthetic and subjective matter of importance only to architects and conservationists. Analysis of the actors involved with decision-making at this site revealed how the developer's PR consultants effectively infiltrated the SMS's network to their advantage (see Fig. 8.4). Early collaboration unearthed their objections and contacts, allowing them to take over the SMS's pivotal role in the consultation process, rationalise the SMS's objections as irrelevant in their public consultation, control the agenda and harness their network power. Having spent decades campaigning for early involvement in the planning process, with policies foregrounding conservation and opportunities to

collaborate, their more powerful opponents could still manipulate the process to achieve their own objectives. This illustrates how despite early incorporation into the consultative process, participating high on the 'ladder of participation' (Arnstein,1961), the agenda and information is still controlled by the more powerful actors (White, 1996; Lukes, 2005).

Despite setbacks and disappointment, loss can be seen as a positive by an amenity society. When actors, such as the amenity society and the planners in the above two examples, have collaborated on an issue whatever the outcome, the shared experience adds to the relationship and provides something to reflect on and take forward to the next campaign as a lesson learnt for future reference. The action of participating is self-fuelling with amenity society members constantly learning, gaining knowledge and improving their communication skills to feed back into their campaigning activities; this is 'collective learning' (Collins and Ison, 2006). In this way an amenity society acquires information, understanding and experience which over time confers phronetic knowledge. Amenity society planning activists become experts not just on the facts, history, architectural detail, planning policy etc. but on the mechanisms of power in the decision-making processes. They learned to instinctively question, interrogate and decipher the reasons behind developments and decisions. They also began to realise that the purpose of their activities was to induce an action in another. Questioning and campaigning was undertaken both consciously and subconsciously, intuitively and for genuine reasons related to civic duty and in the sincere belief that they were protecting amenity for the benefit of all.

Organisation and Technology

Throughout the detailed case study narratives, it is clear that the administration of a planning campaign is a considerable undertaking. Asserting two-dimensional power by taking control of the agenda requires a professional approach to meetings, the functioning of committees and protocols with a full-time, unpaid and dedicated corresponding secretary. For an amenity society acting in an 'umbrella role', the organisation is not unlike that of a business

where the internal structures and activities require a management team to discuss and agree to implement decisions relating to finances, planning and development involvement and organising campaigns.

Over the course of the twentieth-century the SMS's financial status allowed them to utilise advances in technology, such as photography, printing, media and communications to enhance their power and support their objectives. The Internet, digital information and the ease of consultation should logically allow more people to participate in planning matters, but in the recent experience of the SMS this has had the opposite effect. The issues have been much debated in WCC and at the London Forum of Amenity Societies and the conclusions drawn are that amenity societies must embrace technology to survive and attract younger active members, for example, using Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter to lobby developers and local authorities. Amenity societies must also have an up-to-date website and manage events and activities in the manner of an efficient corporate organisation. The amount of work undertaking this digital transformation is significant and time-consuming, as well as demanding considerable expertise. It also takes away the human contact, the social interaction which underpinned successful amenity societies in the past. Dealing with everything online alienates the older generation, yet the younger generation who can deal with the technology are too busy working to commit. There has been a suggestion that amenity societies start to pay people to handle the online management of their activities, but this creates more administrative and accounting tasks whilst destroying the voluntary nature of their work. These would be like Machiavelli's 'mercenaries', only doing the work because of payment rather than for loyalty, passion and interest, and as he states, "That nothing is so weak or unstable as a reputation for power which is not based on one's own forces" (Machiavelli, 2004, p61). The issue of funding would also be problematic as running costs would increase and possible conflicts of interest might arise if local authorities or landowners and developers contributed to an amenity society finances. As with legislating for and controlling participation, paying people to do the work for an amenity society further constricts the freedom of members and activists to use their covert, intuitive tactics and power to best effect (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

Looking at the how the mechanics of an amenity society participating in development control have changed over the time will serve to illustrate the difference that technology has enforced on the SMS since its foundation. At the monthly planning meetings (which began seventy years ago and continued until the Covid pandemic in 2020) a dozen local people would meet (in a committee room at the St Marylebone Council House) to discuss the applications and consultations received. The documents would have been delivered 'hard copy' in large envelopes by post to the Chair's home and each distributed to the member best placed to consider the proposals, who would then assimilate the information and present the scheme at the next meeting. Guests such as local councillors, or the project's architects and developers might be invited and refreshments would be served whilst a lively discussion took place. Inside each set of planning documents was an A4 sheet ready to fill in by hand at the meeting with the committee's combined comments. The documentation and the SMS comments were deposited into the local authority's internal mail system on the way out of the building and everyone went home after an enjoyable evening, informed, stimulated and content that they were helping local democracy and also protecting their neighbourhood. This routine continued from the outset until around 2012 when all documents went online and plans were distributed by email. WCC bought laptops and projectors for all its nineteen local amenity societies to access the planning drawings and reports. This technology instantly excluded anyone not computer literate and made the few who could deal with the Internet overloaded with a new administrative role. They had to check the planning database, read through and 'triage' the digital documents selecting the salient drawings and information, then create a PowerPoint presentation of the planning applications that month ready to present at the committee meeting via projector onto a screen. This became a full-time job and it took away the shared experience and activity of researching, talking and discussing - instead the committee were watching the chair present the projects on a screen that had no discernible scale or possibility of communal deliberation. Not only was it arduous for one person, it was no fun and passive for the others.

Concurrent with the digital revolution, many local authorities sold their town halls and libraries, which meant there was nowhere local for amenity societies to meet. Because of the reliance on technology any meeting room 'borrowed' from a friendly corporate member's organisation needs to have a good Internet connection, broadband passwords available and synced digital display. Community centres, church halls and as a last resort members' dining rooms were simply not suitable for the job. The public consultation role had become professionalised and practically impossible to sustain. Into this scenario the coalition government launched two new planning initiatives – the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Neighbourhood Planning.

9.5 Neighbourhood Planning, NPPF & the Localism Act

This research is historically based and the case studies completed long enough ago to give time for reflection and analysis; there was no remit for me to consider more recent case studies. However, as a part-time researcher I have been simultaneously involved with participation as a community activist and I can briefly bring the investigation up to date and provide pointers for the future.

Participating in one's local governance, community and environment is acknowledged as beneficial for social, political and economic reasons. Throughout the research we have seen that governments have sought to capitalize on the 'social value' that the voluntary amenity society movement brings, culminating in 2012 with the coalition government introducing the NPPF that, alongside the Localism Act (Nov 2011) declared,

'The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today'. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Coalition Agreement, May 2010 (Great Britain, DCLG, 2011).

This changed the role for public participation in planning with stated objectives to shift power away from central government and to place greater importance on local plans and policies to permit communities to take greater control in the planning matters that affected their neighbourhoods. It aimed to invigorate the

voluntary sector, replicate the activities of an amenity society and garner the accompanying social capital.

There are, however, some significant flaws in the planning system that this Government inherited. Planning did not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives. Too often, power is exercised by people who are not directly affected by the decisions they were taking.

To further strengthen the role of local communities in planning, the Act introduces a new requirement for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. This gives local people a chance to comment when there is still genuine scope to make changes to proposals (Great Britain, DCLG, 2011, p11 and p13).

How this reform for improved democracy and power shift was to be achieved in practical terms was not explained. Likewise, the future role for existing amenity societies was not clear and there was no mention of 'amenity societies' in the Localism Act or the NPPF. One of the problems identified in Neighbourhood Planning pilot studies was that many communities would need professional support in order to engage with the planning process, and that this would need to be provided gratis, on a voluntary basis (Derbyshire and Oosthuizen, 2011, p35). The onus was on local authority planning departments to provide technical assistance to communities to enable them to participate. For existing amenity societies this expertise and connections with the planners are well established and therefore an inbuilt inequality continued to exist from the outset of the Neighbourhood Planning idea.

Amenity societies have since been quick to understand the implications of the Localism Bill and involved themselves with Neighbourhood Forums, often operating in tandem with their existing societies. There is a limited number of volunteers interested in planning matters with time to spare and many are now involved with two organisations in the same locality. Neighbourhood Forums need twenty-one representative individuals from all parts of the community, residents and businesses, to propose a Neighbourhood Area. If the local

amenity society is one of these, they have the ability to connect with many more organisations than they did previously, forge links, establish common ground and increase their membership. Businesses are keen to be involved, as being seen to be participating is essential under the new legislation for their future developments to make their way expediently through the new system. All the actors know the implicit new rules of the game and understand that cooperating can bring about win-win situations. For the amenity society they now have access to funding, meeting rooms, other disciplinary experts and fellow professionals. Thus, the ambition of the Localism Act to create strong cohesive communities might possibly be polarizing them, excluding the majority and increasing the power of existing neighbourhoods that already have a long-standing amenity society on watch.

Planning departments witnessed this noting, “Anecdotal evidence that most advanced Neighbourhood Plans are those (white middle class) rural areas with existing parish councils ...” (Macqueen, 2012, p9). This situation was reiterated in the London Assembly Report of November 2014.

Boroughs with historically large numbers of civic and amenity societies, and with established experience of supporting those groups, may be in a better position to react to neighbourhood planning applications. Historically, Westminster has always had very active engagement in planning. Prior to the Localism Act, it had 19 amenity societies that were fully involved in both policy-making and in response to applications and commenting on them (GLA, 2014, p17).

Whilst neighbourhood planning is still in its infancy and the bureaucracy of setting up Neighbourhood Forums (agreeing their boundaries, priorities, committees and constitutions) moves slowly through the system, the local amenity society continues its work exactly as before. This is advantageous to the local authority planning department because it ensures that in the interim there is no vacuum or gaps in the planning consultation process. It is also beneficial for the amenity society activists who can continue to be the primary consultees on planning matters, whilst formulating how to use the new policy to their advantage in devising their local neighbourhood plans. In Westminster City Council there was an initial suggestion that all the amenity societies would

simply switch to become Neighbourhood Forums. This proved impossible for many practical reasons, such as overlapping boundaries and potential 'black holes' where no amenity society had remit, often in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. Amenity societies felt that this suggestion could effectively co-opt them into Neighbourhood Forums, effectively taking possession of their network and phronetic power along with their independence whilst increasing the workload for a finite (and decreasing) number of planning and conservation activists. This would result in their power being decreased rather than increased as purported by the Localism Act. It was also the case that many envisaged that policy could 'about turn' under a new government and they would have to rebuild their previous organisations.

Additionally, the ambitions enshrined in the Localism Act, and also the NPPF, seem incompatible with organisations who promote conservation and lobby against development. These ambitions are often the core rationale for the existence of an amenity society

The Government wants to delegate power and yet to retain control, at least over big projects... It wants to liberate local decisions, but not if that decision might be conservationist.

Jenkins adds that this was evidenced by paragraph 124 in the Localism Bill, which "privileges 'local financial' considerations, to promote 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development'" (Jenkins, 2011, p18). This became a key tenet enshrined in the NPPF (paragraph 11).

Another policy in the NPPF aims to achieve good design by consulting local design review panels (paragraph 133), a role which amenity societies are already fulfilling as confirmed by WCC Director of Planning,

Many authorities including Westminster, have specialist design officers in place and amenity groups who have architects and historians in their ranks. What added value is achieved by a design panel in such circumstances (Macqueen, 2012, p7).

In 2018 Westminster City council reviewed the role of amenity societies and considered if Neighbourhood Forums had superseded them (WCC Cabinet Report 16 March 2018). The report noted that established amenity societies,

“Provide a strong effective voice for local residential communities” and that, “Considerable weight is given to their views as representative of residents within that designated area”. A questionnaire sent to all amenity societies concluded that Neighbourhood Forums would concentrate on delivering Neighbourhood Plans and amenity societies would retain their role as consultees on planning applications.

In March 2020 a London Assembly press release stated 24 out of 33 London boroughs had no Neighbourhood Plans and 9 boroughs still had no Neighbourhood Forums. Nationally over 700 Neighbourhood Plans had been made, and these were mainly linked to Parish Councils (Greater London Assembly, 2020). One of the challenges for London is to create Neighbourhood Forums where there is a reluctance for amenity societies to take on this new or additional role, therefore to remedy the situation the London Assembly proposes funding, resources and support to make neighbourhood planning inclusive. This initiative has most likely been put on hold as the Covid pandemic has thrown almost every sector of society into chaos and change. The emergency powers granted by the government have increased delegated planning decisions and moved to partly virtual planning committee meetings. Voluntary organisations involved in planning matters have raised the potential dilemmas, for example,

While it's obvious that a business-as-usual approach is neither possible nor desirable right now, it's essential that the following be adopted and maintained: sound principles to safeguard public engagement in planning decisions and plan-making; access to information and transparent decision making (policy.friendsoftheearth.com).

Public consultation, meetings with local ward councillors and internal SMS planning and council meetings have been virtual for months with no social or cultural events taking place. The whole raison d'être for an amenity society was to create network power by face-to-face activities and socialising. The Skeffington Report (1968) was entitled *People and planning* but without real human interaction and physical campaigning activities what is the point of having power to change your neighbourhood and environment if the physical

and social networks that bound it together are broken? In central London the pandemic has seen many residents re-assess their work-life balance and leave for the suburbs, countryside or their second homes. In their place Airbnb short holiday lets have run rampant across cities and there may not be the critical mass of like-minded volunteers left living full-time in neighbourhoods to keep urban amenity societies alive. Conversely, the arrival of new, well-connected wealthy residents may benefit provincial societies and rural parish councils.

9.6 Contribution to knowledge, beneficiaries and further research

The primary reason for my undertaking the current research was to understand how the intangible power that an amenity society possesses was created and to ensure that the deep local knowledge, experience, strategies and tactics generated by the amenity society movement will not be lost with this generation, but can be built upon. Almost two years since the start of the Covid Pandemic with no physical consultations or participatory planning activities the task of re-energising the public to volunteer to become planning activists is increasingly challenging.

At the start of the pandemic Catriona Riddle, Vice Chair of the Town & Country Planning Association and planning commentator, suggested a positive outcome might be that the pandemic forces those interested in planning participation to re-think the whole process.

Our new-found sense of community as a result of the Covid-19 experience has given us a real opportunity to do things differently in future, using the tools, technology and networks that have been put in place to facilitate proper community engagement in plan-making. It would be a shame not to embrace this to help build places fit for the future (Catriona Riddle, 2020, p17).

This is well-intentioned but like previous initiatives may be too optimistic in anticipating committed, voluntary public involvement for all the reasons previously discussed. A two-year hiatus leaves much of the amenity society's membership older, disconnected from the system and unaware of what is

happening outside their homes. Their delicate networks, which require constant nurturing through social intercourse to stay strong, now lay in tatters as many actors have changed or disappeared, with initiatives similarly stymied by the cycle of lock-downs and feelings of alienation. As evidenced in the current research, amenity societies also depend on phronetic, intuitive knowledge built up incrementally over time by participation which is also impossible to replicate in the short term. This historic research may therefore be timely in reflecting on who, why and how people can be encouraged to join local amenity societies. Amenity societies were already seen to be in decline, so a re-think is essential of their role and perhaps the structure of the decision-making planning process itself. In the mid twentieth-century the amenity society could be seen as a microcosm of wider society, fitting neatly into its place within the establishment hierarchy. However, today they do not appeal to the majority, feel outmoded and irrelevant to younger generations so need to radically change. Since taking the Chair in 2008, myself and others in the society have dedicated much time to outreach in Marylebone, for example, talking to schools and colleges, organising art and photography competitions, hosting exhibitions and engaging with diverse neighbourhoods on planning issues without success. We have found no evidence of keen interest in the link between local politics, conservation, architecture and planning outside professional circles which is a great concern for the future of the SMS and other similar groups across London and the UK. Not the subject of this research, one could go further and reflect on the whole political and planning system, representation and equity in an increasingly transient and disparate society.

For organisations who strive to assist disenfranchised communities to engage with planning and civic society I hope that this research presents ideas to develop strategic ways to collaborate with amenity societies (in whatever form they might take) whilst allowing them to maintain their independent and more dominant role. The power of the privileged should be utilized for good, 'self-interest' recognized as universal human nature and the amenity societies' motivation to protect their locality and 'have a little more', as understood by Alinsky (1971), extended to the wider public. A pragmatic approach to suitable

projects for public participation should be undertaken. As evidenced in the case studies, focusing on local, small-scale and feasible interventions has potential for great change in the long-term.

Throughout the late twentieth-century architects and planners have been tasked with enclosing or gating external spaces for semi-private and semi-public use, conferring shared ownership from 'resident only' gardens in housing estates to corporate controlled business parks, encouraged by 'secured by design' principles. More recently the concept of 'urban commons' has introduced theories relating to the free use of public spaces in cities for people to meet and enjoy associational and social interaction. This is an idea which the traditional amenity society would welcome in principle as an urban and social improvement. It is in line with similar ambitions of the nineteenth century Commons Preservation Society and in this research the small-scale Memorial Garden on Marylebone High Street, which the SMS appropriated, designed, self-funded and managed by volunteers. That is, the amenity society members took on the responsibility for looking after the public space, with the help of the local landowners and their local authority, and assumed ownership.

Radical environmental activism, demonstrating and campaigning have the potential to catalyse people into action but ad-hoc design, constructions, landscape, graffiti and community art projects may alienate others, not least many planners, architects and conservationists who consider their own cultural values on townscape and beauty essential for the well-being of the city. Additionally, if local authorities cannot fund the provision and maintenance of public parks, playgrounds and free meeting places, people's priorities will need to change, taxes rise or volunteers to step forward. Like amenity societies, those implementing innovative ideas for new 'urban commons' require many like-minded people with time to work for free, who are based locally and committed long-term so that their small-scale interventions can grow into meaningful vehicles for social change. Commoning groups and traditional amenity societies could prove successful alliances if they worked on projects with aligned objectives such as reducing traffic, dealing with pollution and promoting trees, cycling and walking in cities. At grass-roots level, both

organisations are working to increase associational social activities, strengthen social capital and neighbourhood identity.

For politicians and policy makers I hope that a detailed understanding of the workings of local amenity societies can allow their consultation exercises to be designed to collaborate with more transparency, rather than work as adversaries within the planning system. Considered good modern design, alongside the conservation of heritage, results in interesting townscape character with enhanced property values and creates safe places where people want to live and work. Participating in local politics, decision-making and civic society generates social capital and amenity societies provide a ready-made network of local organisations that could be strengthened and supported to bring wide societal benefits, but this needs to be done without taking away their autonomy and inherent power to cut through bureaucracy to get things done. Neighbourhood Forums need to have real power and more freedom to manage local matters, make their plans and make final decisions locally to encourage people to voluntarily commit to them. Once people voluntarily become engaged their opinions must not just be listened to but taken on board, as Sherry Arnstein demanded in the 1960s – there is still a long way to go.

This research has spanned three generations, and the early history of the SMS feels very distant. The covert alliances and elite contacts used to further their cause in return for maintaining the status quo, complicit in creating consensus for those in power, seem anachronistic. The handmade propaganda and home-grown strategies to further a basic, simple shared ambition focused on protecting their immediate locality's environment and townscape feel somewhat naive and introspective. Conservation is seen as a niche interest of the elite in society standing in the way of urgent housing need. More relevant today and potentially attractive to the younger generation would be for amenity societies to return to their radical roots and concentrate on protecting environmental amenity. However, environmental concern has evolved from the local to the universal and today's climate activists' politics, strategies and tactics (for example those of Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain) are very

different from those of local amenity societies. The genesis of the local amenity society movement may have been a unique moment in time and one that proves impossible to manufacture, reinvent or sustain by political or digital will. The challenge will be to work out how to make the traditional local amenity society's positive attributes, knowledge, skills and power transferable to the next generation of virtual, global planning activists,

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Great Britain. Monopolies and Mergers Commission. (1980). *British Railways Board: London and South East commuter services: a report on rail passenger services supplied by the Board in the South East of England*. London: HMSO.

Greater London Assembly, Neighbourhood planning – progress and insights. Available from <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/london-assembly-publications/neighbourhood-planning-progress-and-insights-0> [Accessed 31 August 2021]

Greater London Assembly. Planning Committee. (2014). *Localism in London: what's the story?* London: Greater London Authority. Available from https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/14-11-20-Localism-Report.pdf [Accessed 31 August 2021]

ARCHIVES AND PRIMARY SOURCES

City of Westminster Archives, London

St Marylebone Society Archives, 10, St Ann's Street, London SW1P 2DE

Accession 728

Correspondence, 1948-1965. Including lists of SMS photography exhibitions in boxes 1 and 7.

Accession 843

Files 1950

Accession 981

Minutes, Haydon plaque file, New Road Exhibition file

Accession 1170

Files 1971-1980

Accession 1469

Papers re Marylebone Grammar School, 1978-1980

Accession 1513

Photographs of boundary stones and society members, 1950-1970.

Accession 1660

Photographs of visits, exhibitions and garden competition prizes, 1987-1992.

Accession 2436

Chairman's Reports, AGM minutes, 1995-2002

Accession 2598

Minutes, publicity, records of plaques etc. photographs of events, printed material, photographs of buildings, 1910-2006.

City of Westminster Archives, London

Labour Life, Magazine of St. Marylebone Labour Party. 1946-1950

Private collection of Dr Leonard Jacobs

Westminster City Archives

St Marylebone Society Archives

Private collection – contact author

www.stmarylbonesociety.org.uk

Westminster City Council, Town Planning Files

City Hall, Victoria, SW1

The White Town Planning Files are organised by address, that is they record all the applications at the site under consideration. When this research started, I had access to the paper hard copy files. WCC was undergoing digitisation of their records with a view to these being publicly accessible online.

Heron House, 19 Marylebone Road – WCC, TP file: ref 3160

Castrol/Marathon House, 200 Marylebone Road - WCC, TP file: ref 29963

Marylebone Station and the Great Central Hotel, TP file: ref 6181

City of Westminster Magistrates Courts WCC, TP file ref: 2346

Seymour Place Housing, Town Planning file: ref 4322

London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Surveys of Amenity Societies in London

70 Cowcross Street

London

EC1M 6EJ

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Miss M.R. Eldridge (SMS founder member 1948) 30 April 2013 (recorded)

Miss P. Gunst (SMS founder member 1948) 1 April 20014 & 18 May 2014

Dr Leonard Jacobs (1948) November 2013 (recorded)

Dr Ann Saunders (1957) 26 March 2016 (recorded)

Gordon & Ursula Bowyer (Architects) 22 August 2015 (recorded)

Roger Button (SMS member, architect) 25 September 2011 (recorded)

FOCUS GROUP - RECORDED

**Saving Marylebone Station Symposium 26th January 2015 6.00pm
Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1**

Saving Marylebone Station Symposium Attendees

British Railways

Chris Austin Author of the original report jointly with London Transport, which showed how Marylebone could be closed. He was also involved in planning the retention of the station.

Chris Green BR Sector Director, London & South East. In April 1986 he announced that Marylebone station in central London would be reprieved from closure, and launched Network SouthEast to unify London suburban rail services.

Bill Simpson Railway writer currently researching Marylebone Station.

Donald Wilson Station Master at Marylebone & train enthusiast.

Westminster City Councillors

Paul Dimoldenberg Labour Councillor, town planner and local activist in the Saving Marylebone Station campaign.

Joe Hegarty Labour Councillor, Church Street Ward 1974 – 1990.

Westminster City Council Planning Department

Graham King Head of Strategic Planning & Transportation.

John Walker Operational Director of Development.

Amenity Societies

Carolyn Keen Chair of St Marylebone Society and local activist in the Saving Marylebone Station campaign.

John Walton Chair of the Paddington Residents Against Coach Terminus (PRACT) amenity society formed in 1986.

Judith Allen Paddington Federation of Residents & Tenants Association (PFRTA)

Planner, academic and local activist who submitted an alternative plan for Marylebone Station funded by the GLC.

APPENDIX A

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CIVIC SOCIETIES CONSTITUTION (1939)

F.J. Parsons Ltd., London and Hastings, undated. SMS Archive

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CIVIC SOCIETIES

Chairman - - - THE RT. HON. THE VISCOUNT ESHER
Vice-Chairman - - - W. R. DAVIDGE, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.I.
Hon. Treasurer - - - THE HON. LIONEL BRYTT, A.R.I.B.A.
Hon. Secretary - - - MISS E. BRIGHT ASHFORD

BRITISH MUSEUM, W.C.1
Telephone: Museum 8196

8-27-1939
W.R.D. 1939

THE PURPOSES OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL.

The Council was formed in 1939, for the following purposes:

- i. To enable Civic Societies to confer on matters of common interest.
- ii. To encourage the formation of new Civic Societies.
- iii. To enable Civic Societies to take concerted action as a representative national body.
- iv. To stimulate public interest in the improvement of urban amenities.

Societies have already been formed in many cities and towns. Their general aims are:

- To increase and develop public amenities.
- To preserve buildings and monuments of historic or artistic value and places of natural beauty.
- To encourage and co-ordinate activities relating to architecture, music, drama, and the other arts.
- To co-operate for these purposes with local authorities and with bodies with similar aims, both local and national.
- To stimulate interest in these matters—to encourage a sense of citizenship.

The character of the work which is being performed by some of the Societies is indicated by the Programme of Work given on page 3.

THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL.

The Council meets on two or three occasions each year; meetings of the Executive Committee are held more frequently. The principal activities are as follows:

- i. Public Meetings are arranged from time to time.
- ii. Assistance is given in the formation of new Societies.
- iii. Contacts between Civic Societies are maintained by the interchange of reports and information as to activities.
- iv. A list of speakers is being prepared for the information of Societies.
- v. Contacts are maintained with Government Departments, with other Societies with similar objectives and with the professional bodies concerned with urban amenities.
- vi. Assistance is given to Societies in connection with exhibitions, publicity, contacts with national bodies and similar matters.
- vii. A periodical Bulletin is issued to all Societies represented on the Council.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL.

1. TITLE. The title of the Council shall be "The Central Council of Civic Societies."
2. OBJECTS. The Council is formed for any or all of the following objects:
 - (a) To provide for co-operation and discussion between Civic Societies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and to enable such Societies to take concerted action as a representative national body.
 - (b) To encourage the formation of new Civic Societies.
 - (c) To stimulate public interest in the improvement of urban amenities.
 - (d) To take all such other measures as may be conducive to furthering the principal objects of the Council.

3. MEMBERSHIP.

i. There shall be four classes of members :

(a) *Affiliated Societies*, being voluntary bodies which, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, are, by reason of their aims and policy, eligible for membership.

(b) *Co-operating Bodies*, being bodies of any type which desire to keep in touch with the work of the Council.

(c) *Honorary Members* } whom the Executive may co-opt to

(d) *Individual Members* } assist the work of the Council.

Election to membership shall be made by the Executive Committee.

ii. Each *Affiliated Society* or *Co-operating Body* shall be entitled to nominate one representative to the Council.

iii. A member may retire on giving 3 months' notice to the Secretary.

4. OFFICERS. The Officers of the Council shall be a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen, a Treasurer and a Secretary, all of whom shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. At its Annual Meeting the Council shall appoint an Executive Committee, consisting of the officers and not less than four or more than twelve other members, being representatives of *Affiliated Societies* or *Co-operating Bodies*, or *Honorary* or *Individual Members* of the Council. The Executive Committee shall have powers :

(a) To conduct the general business of the Council and to deal with elections to membership under Clause 3 hereof.

(b) To co-opt additional members to the Executive Committee.

(c) To elect its Chairman, to fix its quorum and to decide its procedure.

(d) To appoint Sub-Committees, with special powers.

(e) To fill any casual vacancy on the Executive Committee.

(f) To appoint Trustees, in whose names shall be invested all moneys of the Council not required for its immediate use.

6. MEETINGS

i. The Annual General Meeting of the Council shall be held once in each calendar year, at such time and place as the Executive Committee may appoint, for the purpose of :

(a) Electing Officers. (d) Fixing Subscriptions.

(b) Appointing the Executive Com. (e) Electing an Auditor.

(c) Approving the Annual Accounts. (f) Transacting any other business.

ii. Other Meetings of the Council shall be held at the discretion of the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman, or the Executive Committee. Not less than seven days' notice of any meeting shall be given to all members.

iii. Only the representative of an *Affiliated Society* shall be entitled to vote, but representatives of *Co-operating Bodies* and *Honorary* and *Individual Members* shall be entitled to take part in discussions.

7. FINANCES

(a) Unless otherwise determined by the Council, the Annual Subscriptions shall be : *Affiliated Civic Societies*, £1 1s. ; *Co-operating Bodies*, 10s. 6d. ; *Individual Members*, 10s. 6d.

(b) The Annual Accounts of the Council, duly audited, shall be presented at each Annual Meeting for approval.

8. ALTERATIONS TO CONSTITUTION

The Council may, by ordinary resolution, modify or vary this Constitution at any of its meetings, provided that at least seven days' notice shall have been given to all members as to the proposed amendment.

9. DISSOLUTION

The Council may, by ordinary resolution, resolve that the Council be dissolved and may make such provisions as it deems desirable as to the disposal of its funds available after the discharge of its liabilities.

EXISTING CIVIC SOCIETIES

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The following list indicates some of the work which is being done by Civic Societies. A newly formed Society could scarcely attempt all these activities without ruining the health of its officers, but the list serves to show how useful Civic Societies can be and the width of the programme from which a selection can be made:

(a) PLANNING AND PUBLIC AMENITIES

Representations regarding Town Planning proposals (e.g., bombed areas), new buildings, open spaces, tree planting, playgrounds, design of street furniture, unsightly advertisements, litter, control of petrol stations, noise, care of cemeteries, air-raid shelters; transport facilities; gifts of trees, shrubs; seats; development of bombed areas as gardens, etc.; preparation of specimen plans for development of specified areas (in conjunction with Universities or Architectural Societies); preservation of footpaths and "green belts"; community centres.

(b) ARTS

Co-ordination of local concert arrangements (e.g., if Committee includes representatives of musical societies). Support of Civic or Repertory Theatres. Arrangements for special Concerts and Exhibitions (e.g., in conjunction with the Fine Arts Council). "Holidays at Home" programme.

(c) LOCAL HISTORY

Preservation of buildings and monuments of historic or artistic worth (preparation of schedules, representations, publicity, appeals). Preservation of iron railings of artistic or historic value or where needed for protection. Mural Tablets for buildings of special interest (e.g., birthplaces). Lectures and visits. Arrangements for voluntary Guides. Exhibitions. Guide Books.

(d) PUBLICITY AND PUBLICATIONS

Arrangements for Public Meetings, Addresses to Schools, Clubs, etc. Exhibitions (e.g., in conjunction with the Fine Arts Council, the Royal Institute of British Architects, Local Photographic Societies, the Housing Centre, etc.). Visits of members to places of special interest, e.g., to which the public is not normally admitted. Popularisation of Museums and Art Galleries. Provision of Street Plans at Stations, Clubs, etc. Publication of lists of Concerts, Plays, Clubs, etc. Relations with B.B.C. Press Publicity. Guide Books. Publication of Annual and other periodical Reports and special Bulletins. Competitions for School Children, etc. Preparation and encouragement of films of local interest. Appointment of "Liaison Officers" in each Ward or district to watch local developments.

(e) SMOKE ABATEMENT

Exhibitions and publicity, representations on specific instances of pollution.

(f) HOSPITALITY

Provision of club-rooms, etc., for Allied or other overseas visitors, private hospitality and theatre and similar facilities. Arrangements for Conferences visiting the City or Town. Information Bureaux. Receptions to meet distinguished visitors.

NEW CIVIC SOCIETIES

SOME HELPFUL NOTES

One of the main purposes of the Council is to assist in forming new Civic Societies. The following notes have been prepared for the help of those wishing to promote such bodies:

i. PRELIMINARY STEPS

The first step is usually the formation of a small Committee to consider:

- (a) General objectives.
- (b) A programme of work.
- (c) Relationships with Local Authorities and with existing Societies.
- (d) Methods of recruiting members; subscriptions; constitution.
- (e) Officers (President, Vice-Presidents, Chairmen, Secretary, Treasurer, Hon. Solicitor, Auditors, etc.).

It is often advantageous to arrange an Inaugural Meeting (if possible at the Town Hall or at some similar civic centre) and to secure speakers who will be able to deal both with the general advantage of Civic Societies and with the specific purposes of the Society which is to be formed. It is most important that arrangements should be made at an early stage for full co-operation with existing bodies with kindred purposes.

ii. CONSTITUTION

Specimen Constitutions may be obtained from the Central Council. The usual clauses deal with: Title, Objects, Membership, Honorary Membership, Affiliated Societies, Subscriptions, Officers, Council, Executive and Sub-Committees, General Meetings, Finances, Auditors, Trustees, Alterations to Constitution and Dissolution.

iii. MEMBERSHIP

Since a large and representative membership is desired, it is often necessary to fix a low minimum subscription (e.g., 5s. or 2s. 6d.). Provision may be made for special classes of subscribers—

- (a) Affiliated Societies (Chambers of Commerce, Ratepayers' Associations, Youth Organisations, Schools and Clubs).
- (b) Life Members.
- (c) Junior Members (16 or under).

It is important that good relationships should be established with Local Authorities and their officials, and with the Churches, Councils of Social Service, Architectural and Amenities Societies and similar bodies. A careful selection of Presidents and Vice-Presidents is desirable.

iv. COMMITTEES

At the commencement, the work of the Society can usually be performed by the Executive Committee and Officers, but later it may be found desirable to form Sub-Committees, e.g.:

- Planning and Public Amenities.
- Arts.
- Local History.
- Publicity and Publication.
- Smoke Abatement.
- Hospitality.

APPENDIX B

THE ST. MARYLEBONE SOCIETY CONSTITUTION AND RULES

1.The name of the Society shall be The St. Marylebone Society.

2.The objects of the Society shall be to further the following for the benefit of the public:

a) The stimulation of public interest in and the care for the beauty, history and character of St Marylebone.

b) The scheduling and assistance in preservation of landmarks and buildings of historical and antiquarian interest in St Marylebone and the protection of its amenities and traditions.

c)The study and recording of the history, topography and social development of St Marylebone.

d) The collection of material for preservation in the St. Marylebone Local History Collection of Westminster City Archives.

In furtherance of these objects, but not otherwise, the Society shall have the following powers:

i) To pursue these ends by means of meetings, lectures, visits, publication of papers and transactions, and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

ii) To take any lawful action which is necessary to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

3.Officers

A president shall be invited to accept office at an Annual General Meeting and shall serve for three years and then retire for one year before being eligible for re-election. The Council may nominate persons to serve as Vice-Presidents in appreciation of service rendered to the Society and/or St. Marylebone. Other Officers shall be the Chairman of the Council, (appointed under rule 5.) an Honorary General Secretary, a membership Secretary and an Honorary Treasurer who, together with an Honorary Auditor, shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting.

4.Duties of Officers

The Honorary General Secretary shall keep the Minutes of all the Council and General meetings and shall conduct all correspondence and have custody of all records and property of the Society. He/she shall also give notice of all Council, General, or Member's meetings in writing.

The Honorary Treasurer shall hold all funds on behalf of the Society and keep proper account. He shall collect all subscriptions and other monies due to the Society and pay them into an approved bank account in the name of the Society. He/she shall be responsible for all payments on behalf of the Society and no disbursement shall be made except by cheque signed by two officers, of whom one shall be the Honorary Treasurer.

The Membership Secretary shall process new applications and maintain the index of members of the Society.

5. Council

The affairs of the Society shall be conducted by a Council consisting of the President, the Honorary Treasurer, the Honorary General Secretary, and six members of the Society to be elected at the AGM. In addition, the Chairman and Honorary Secretaries of Sections (Rule 10) shall be ex-officio members of the Council. Nominations for officers and members of the Council willing to stand for election must be given in writing to the Honorary general Secretary not later than seven days prior to the day of the General meeting. The Council shall have the power to co-opt not more than six additional members and to fill any casual vacancies that may occur.

At the first meeting of the Council after election, they shall elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from their number. The Council shall be empowered to appoint Committees and delegate business thereto, and such Committees shall report fully to the Council on the exercise of their duties. The Quorum for any meeting of the Council shall be seven members. In case of emergency, the Officers shall be empowered to act as an executive committee until the Council can be called.

6. Membership

The membership shall consist of Ordinary, Institutional and Honorary membership. Any interested person may apply for membership. Each Ordinary or Honorary member shall have the privilege of introducing one guest to all Ordinary Meetings of the Society, but the council shall have power to suspend this privilege for any specific meeting.

Any Institution may become a member of the Society if, in the view of the Council, the aims of the Society might be promoted thereby. Institutional members shall pay an annual subscription of £25 (twenty-five pounds), which may, in certain circumstances, be reduced or increased at the discretion of the Council. Institutional members shall be entitled to send two delegates to the AGM and to Special general Meetings, who shall have the right to speak.

An Institutional member is entitled to send two delegates to members meetings and additional delegates may be admitted on specific occasions at the discretion of the Council.

Honorary Members shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting on the recommendation of the Council for distinguished services to the Society and/or St. Marylebone.

7. Subscriptions

The annual minimum subscription for ordinary (i.e. individual) members shall be £10 or such other sum as the Council may determine, payable on acceptance by all members except Honorary Members, enrolled on or after 1st October 1998 and thereafter annually in advance on 1st October each year.

Members enrolled after 31st May shall be deemed to be covered up to 30th September of the following year, members who fall twelve months into arrears with their subscriptions shall lose their membership.

8. Annual General Meeting

The Annual general meeting shall be held in the month of November each year, at which the Council shall submit a Report, and the Honorary Treasurer a full account of all the receipts, expenditure and property of the Society, together with a balance sheet up to the preceding 30 September, duly attested by the Honorary Auditor. The Council shall lay down the procedure within the Constitution for the conduct of the Annual General Meeting and all other meetings.

9. Ordinary Meetings

Ordinary meetings shall be held at such times and in such places as the Council may direct. There shall be not less than three meetings held in one year.

10. Groups for Special Objects

The Council shall form Sections from the membership to study or undertake research or any other activity covered by the objects of the Society as set out in the Constitution. Each section shall elect a Chairman and Honorary Secretary from their number to serve on the Council. Sections shall function in such manner as the Council shall from time to time determine.

11. Amendments

The Constitution may be amended by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting, provided that 10 days' notice of the proposed amendment has been sent to all members, and provided that nothing herein contained shall authorise any amendment permitting the expenditure of funds on the Society on any object which is not a charitable object. A Special Meeting shall be called on a written requisition signed by not less than ten members sent to the Honorary General Secretary not less than fourteen days prior to the desired date of the meeting.

12. Winding Up

In the event of the winding up of the Society, the available funds of the Society shall be transferred to such one or more charitable bodies having objects similar, or reasonably similar, to those herein before declared as may be chosen by the Executive Committee and approved by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.

Adopted after agreement to this amendment of the former Constitution at the Annual General Meeting of 24th June 1987 and again at the Annual general Meeting of 17th November 1994. Increased subscription rates November 1998.

APPENDIX C

ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE OF THE REASEARCH CASESTUDY

REDACTED