

## **Robins and Day, 632 Chiswick High Road (00248/B/P22)**

### **Comments from the West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society**

**Community engagement** The West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society (WCGS) regrets that the applicant did not see fit to contact us before submitting the application. The application states “The Applicant’s intention was to provide details of the proposed scheme to the West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Residents Association (sic) in advance of the application submission and respond/clarify any matters arising therefrom. Regrettably the timetable for progressing the application is extremely tight, having regard to the need to relocate from the existing Citroen Dealership in Capital Exchange Way. It is however the Applicant’s intention to communicate with WCGRA shortly after the application has been submitted.”

**Context and character** Possibly as a result of this lack of engagement with the local community, the applicant’s consideration of the impact of the proposed development on the amenity and character of the area has taken insufficient account of the residential component of the site’s surroundings and its proximity to Conservation Areas, especially the Wellesley Road Conservation Area. The applicant has focussed on achieving “strong visibility from the M4 flyover” to the detriment of other considerations.

The proposals do not conform with London Plan and Local Plan policies on Context and Character, especially Local Plan policies CC1, 2 and 4. The southern elevation of the proposed building is along the Chiswick High Road. The high road east of the roundabout is the gateway to Chiswick town centre and is characterised by an important residential component. The residential properties opposite the site are within the Wellesley Road CA. WCGS has made clear its objection in principle to development at the Chiswick Roundabout that would increase the influence of the character-deforming presence of the M4 flyover and the rest of the major road infrastructure. In the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the Wellesley Road Conservation Area (2006), attention was drawn to the negative impact of the 20<sup>th</sup> century roads on the Victorian residential estates. In seeking to protect residential amenity and protect and enhance this CA, it is therefore essential to prevent “urban/commercial encroachment” and to mitigate rather than increase the influence of the major road network including the flyover. In commenting on other proposed developments in the area and in responding to the Partial Review of the Local Plan Issues Consultation on the Great West Corridor, the Society has made it clear that the corridor must not be allowed to extend eastward beyond the junction of the A4/M4 and the north Circular (A406).

Our January 2013 comments on the Council’s Context and Character Study included the following:

13.6 The boundary between Areas I and J runs across the middle of the heavily congested Chiswick Roundabout. This is an important gateway to Chiswick. On approaching the roundabout from the West there should be a scaling down of the large commercial and industrial developments of the A4/M4 corridor (the Golden Mile). Any development in this area should enhance the signal provided by the roundabout’s “green and natural”

landscape, that one is entering a different zone - a mosaic of low-to-medium rise commercial properties and mainly Victorian residential properties (including two CAs) leading towards Chiswick town centre. The attractive northern approach to the roundabout, Gunnersbury Avenue, is bordered by low-rise residential properties of another Conservation Area and by Gunnersbury Park and the adjacent cemetery. The B and Q store, while of no architectural merit, is low-rise and low-key and does not impinge.

13.7 The large green space of the roundabout with its informal mature tree cover is, at present\*, a positive feature helping to draw attention from the flyover, to soften its appearance and mitigate its influence.

\*The negative impact of the advertising structures since located on the roundabout itself (TfL's "Chiswick Towers" granted on appeal) should not be compounded by permitting further inappropriate development in the vicinity.

See also further detailed comments below.

**Height and footprint** The applicant's proposal is for a significant increase in height across the entire site.

We object to the height and massing of the proposed development along the Chiswick High Road (southern elevation) and request that it is reduced. In combination with the design and materials proposed (see below), the proposed height will have a detrimental impact on residential amenity and the character and appearance of the high road. This negative impact is compounded by locating the highest element of the building at the eastern end, adjacent to 630 Chiswick High Road. This late 80/90s office building, now occupied by the Cultural Bureau of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, stands on the site of the former St James' Church and is an example of a high standard of design and materials. Currently, as one approaches from the west, this sympathetic, well-articulated brick building can be seen above the low-rise dealership (see, for example "Existing Site from Chiswick roundabout facing North Chiswick High Road" in applicant's D&A statement and photos provided in Annex to these comments). Together with the refurbished houses on the opposite corner, views of this building contribute very positively to legibility and context. We request that the proposed development step down not up at its eastern end.

We would also request that the current distance between the buildings at 630 and 632 is maintained.

**Design/Materials** We request that the "large shopfront glazing and horizontally profiled metal cladding system" is of the highest quality with matt, non-reflective metal finishes. We object to the height (see above), design and materials proposed for the car-parking "tower" at the eastern end of the Chiswick High Road frontage. The proposal to clad this entire 17-metre long section of the elevation with an unrelieved silver metal mesh will have a very negative impact both on the character and appearance of the high road but also on the building itself. The overall design is not in conformity with the following London Plan and Local Plan policies quoted by the applicant:

London Plan Policy 7.6 states that architecture should make a positive contribution to a coherent public realm, streetscape and wider cityscape. It

should incorporate the highest quality materials and design appropriate to its context. Local Plan Policy CC2 requires new development to make a positive contribution to the surrounding context, with focus on design components such as scale, design and materiality.

We request that the car parking element of the development is relocated at the northern end of the Gunnersbury Avenue elevation, where its height and utilitarian design would be less out of context.

**Landscaping** The Society is pleased to note that trees planted on the frontage will be provided with suitable protection. This is important in view of the threat posed by display vehicles (see photos of Honda forecourt in Annex).

WCGS requests the planting of trees on all three frontages. This locality, which is subject to high levels of air pollution and noise, is expected to see a significant increase in pedestrian activity from consented and proposed residential developments whose occupants are expected to use mainly public transport (in particular, Gunnersbury Station). Tree planting will provide visual interest as well as environmental benefits.

We also request the addition of a “green wall” to the car park tower to mitigate its visual impact and improve air quality (mesh cladding on this element is intended to provide ventilation of exhaust fumes from the car-park).

**Access, Traffic and Transport** The applicant makes reference to the proximity of various means of public transport such as stations and to the good PTAL of the site. However, PTAL values only reflect proximity and frequency of service; station access and capacity are of equal importance. As the Council is well aware, both Gunnersbury Station and Kew Bridge Station have significant access problems and Gunnersbury Station also has severe capacity problems. These are expected to be exacerbated by the expected increased usage from the many large-scale developments within the area.

The Society also has concerns in relation to road safety especially that of pedestrians and cyclists, whose numbers will increase significantly as consented developments in the area are occupied. The Chiswick Roundabout, Gunnersbury Avenue and the Chiswick High Road are heavily congested routes. In addition, the surrounding area is a densely populated residential neighbourhood with some dwellings on the Chiswick High Road directly facing the application site.

How will a “no right turn” for access from the west-bound Chiswick High Road be enforced? Clients coming from this direction may be very reluctant to negotiate the heavily-congested Chiswick roundabout in order to access the site.

WCGS notes the applicant’s intention that all display/sales vehicles will be driven to the site and that transporters will not be used. To ensure adherence to this intention, we request that delivery by transporters or other large articulated vehicles is expressly prohibited by Condition and that this is monitored by the Council.

**Lighting, Signage and Advertising** The design, intensity and timing of display and office lighting must be controlled to protect the quality of life of local residents and the character of the area.

The number, size and design of any free-standing totem signs should be carefully considered; they should not be more than 5.2 m in height (as for Honda showrooms). The Chiswick High Road frontage faces residential buildings within the Wellesley Road Conservation Area and a large sign would appear as an intrusive element.

WCGS wishes to be consulted on any separate advertisement application for signage etc.

**Conditions** The Society requests enforceable Conditions to control the timing and intensity of internal and external lighting, the times and method of deliveries including the prohibition of delivery of cars by means of transporters (see comments in relevant section above). We wish to avoid the type of problems experienced by local residents as a result of the recent expansion of the Porsche dealership on Cedars Road (A4), Chiswick.

**S106/CIL** We request that a contribution is made for public realm improvements in the vicinity of the site.

WCGS  
July 2017

Annex attached – pages 5 & 6

## Annex

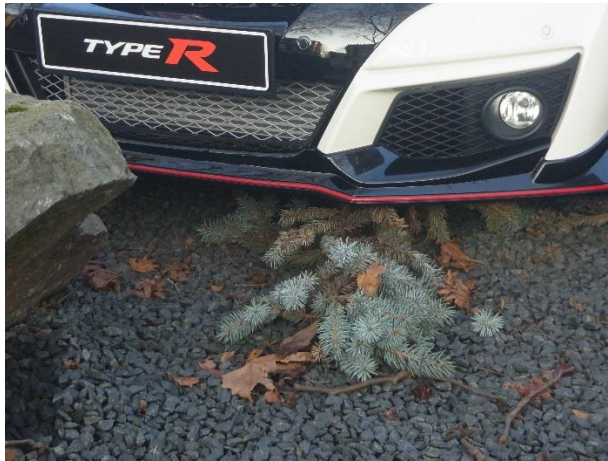


630 Chiswick High Road



## **Honda Show Rooms**

Condition 7 of Planning consent 00890/O/AD13 (October 2012) required planting of a semi-mature tree on Chiswick High Road forecourt



Crushed tree – Honda forecourt Jan 2017



Dead tree – Honda forecourt March 2017