



THE WEST CHISWICK & GUNNERSBURY SOCIETY

www.westchiswickgs.org.uk

Annual Report for 2020

1. Meetings

Shortly after the AGM on 10th February the Covid 19 coronavirus changed how we meet and conduct our lives. As a consequence there have been no further public meetings of the Society this year and Management Committee meetings have been held ‘virtually’ using Zoom. We held such meetings in June, October and December. Public meetings will only resume once it is safe for all to attend.

2. Pandemic response

The Society sent a message to all members just after the first lockdown to share information about websites and other sources of information about the pandemic. We also pointed members in the direction of our website for updates on our activities. Unfortunately this could not be updated as often as desirable due to the illness and then long-term effects of the coronavirus on one of our committee members. However we have moved to keep members informed by email where possible and a newsletter was sent by email or by printed copy for those without email access in December.

We were impressed with a crowd funding initiative launched by the Osterley & Wyke Green Residents’ Association to raise money for the fabrication and delivery of visors for key workers and medical staff in Hounslow. We made a donation on behalf of the Society and circulated information to our members so that they could donate if they wished.

3. Activities of the Society

The Society is active in a number of spheres affecting the quality of life of Members including **planning** (building development and planning policy), and **environment** (streets, traffic and public transport) and **citizen engagement**. We respond to Council consultations or, alternatively, we initiate activities. We also regularly encourage our Members to get involved in these consultations.

The Society is an active participant in the Residents’ Association Forum, alongside other residents’ organisations, civic and amenity societies within the Borough many of which, like WCGS, are members of the informal grouping G15+. We work with fellow G15+ members on issues of mutual concern. We attend meetings of the Chiswick Area Forum and also participate in specific-issue groups such as the Gunnersbury Station Action Team (GSAT) and the Lionel Road Liaison Group (LRLG) concerning the Brentford Football Stadium. These groups were all affected by the pandemic but each managed to hold at least one virtual meeting in the latter part of the year in which the Society participated.

As a Member of the London Forum we made use of the Forum's detailed response to the Planning White Paper to submit a Society response in October.

Our Management Committee scrutinises the Council's list of new planning applications and its Pending Decision List week by week and takes action, submitting comments etc. on relevant items. We work with the Council's planning officers, other interested bodies, residents and amenity groups and, when possible, with the developers themselves. The Society is also represented at various meetings of the Hounslow Planning Committee, Inspector's Inquiries, etc. when matters affecting our Members' interests are being decided.

As well as watching out for residents' interests in these planning matters, the Society is also active in promoting the more positive aspects of life on our patch, such as a sense of place and history and in improving those amenities which make life here more enjoyable.

4. Planning Issues

We keep an eye on relatively small developments such as house extensions including basements, shop fronts etc. and respond on those that would have a negative impact on our Conservation Areas or on residents' quality of life. In addition, there are always some very large developments which could have a profound impact on all our lives. Major planning issues of this type we have been addressing during the year are:

- **Brentford Football Stadium**

Development slowed due to the pandemic but the stadium came into use during the year. Matches with a limited number of attending fans were played in December, before spectators were once more excluded. The Society is concerned about future match-day parking, other means of transporting fans to the grounds and crowd control once the world opens up again, especially as the Chiswick Business Park will be providing a large number of off-street parking places. We have been involved in discussing these issues via the LRLG and GSAT. Unfortunately, there was a poor response from residents to the Council's consultation concerning potential extension of the West Chiswick Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) to cater for match days. It will be necessary to monitor the impact of spectator travel on our streets and on Gunnersbury Station when match attendance resumes.

The application for the final phase of the residential scheme (the Duffy site) has not yet been decided.

- **The Chiswick Curve**

We were delighted to learn in March that the High Court had dismissed the claim by the developer, Starbones to quash the decision of the Secretary of State. This meant that the decision to refuse planning permission made in July 2019 by the then Secretary of State stood.

- **L&Q Citroen Site**

We were very disappointed that the Secretary of State granted the appeal for this large-scale development in September.

- **1-4 Capital Interchange Way**

LB Hounslow approved this application in March 2020 but we continued to scrutinise proposed amendments to the plans to check for significant changes. This follow-up is an important activity for the Society as developers may submit so called “non-material amendments” after planning permission is granted. It is important to keep an eye on these to assess their significance.

- **The Fourth Mile/Hudson Square (B&Q Site)**

The application for this major development on which the Society submitted detailed comments has not yet been decided.

- **TFL/Bollo Lane Development**

This is a major development within the London Borough of Ealing including several high-rise residential blocks. Whilst the development is not in our area, it is adjacent to it and the consequences of the size and height of it will have a significant effect on Chiswick amenities, our sightlines and on heritage assets within the wider area including Gunnersbury Park. We submitted extensive comments on the application in August along with many other local groups and heritage bodies.

- **2 Thorney Hedge Road**

We were pleased in April when the application to build a house at the rear of this property was refused. We had objected on principle to the proposal to build on garden land at the heart of a Conservation Area. Unfortunately, the applicant has now appealed so we have written to the Inspector.

- **The Gunnersbury Pub**

An application to add 3 flats, 2 at the back and one at the front was approved as was a new application to add balconies to the 1st and 2nd floors of the “billiard hall” extension. In the latter case design changes were requested by the Society and a suitable amendment was made to the plans.

- **Land to the rear of Kew Bridge station**

Planning had been approved for a 6-storey residential development on this constrained back-land site (30 units). New plans have been submitted to increase the height to 9 storeys (45 units). We submitted an objection to this in December on the grounds of inappropriate height, high density of accommodation and not enough communal outdoor space. We also objected to the negative impact of this higher building in an area of lower, older buildings in the Kew Bridge Conservation Area. This harm would be to the Conservation Area, to the Listed and Locally Listed buildings within it and to key views from Kew Bridge (a Listed structure) and the surrounding area.

- **Empire House**

Work on this scheme finally commenced at the end of 2020. The Chairman has suggested to the developers that they circulate a bulletin to local residents to keep us up to date with the development. The idea was apparently well received but has not yet produced any result.

5. Planning: Policy

- **Local Plan Review: Great West Corridor (GWC)**
The Council's Local Plan Review of the Great West Corridor was approved by the Council in November and has been submitted to the Secretary of State for an examination in public, led by a Planning Inspector. The Society will request to participate in this.
- **Government White Paper on Planning for the Future**
The Society's October submission on the Government's White Paper was framed as an endorsement of the robust response of the London Forum of which we are a member. We added our own comments to elaborate points or for emphasis.

6. Heritage

- **Conservation Areas**
The Council continued to review and update the appraisals for a number of conservation areas (CA). The Society participated in this review with respect to the relevant CAs. The revised appraisal for Turnham Green CA was adopted by the Cabinet in December; this updated appraisal dated January 2021 will be made available on the Council's website. We were pleased that the extension we proposed comprising the buildings on the north side of the Chiswick High Road as far west as the junction with Chiswick Road has been included. The updated appraisal will also incorporate a significant extension to include the residential streets to the south of the green – the Devonhurst Character Area.

The need to conserve, enhance and pay respect to our heritage assets, including our Conservation Areas and Listed and Locally Listed buildings is a key consideration when we examine planning applications.

7. Street Environment

- **Green Up Gunnersbury Campaign**
In January, we added 2 new planters to the Meanwhile Garden. The planters and plants were donated from the Robins and Day construction site and were kindly transported to the Meanwhile Garden by Cultivate.
Despite difficulties due to the pandemic we continued with this initiative. With no source of water available on the High Road, we were reliant throughout the dry weeks of summer on a brave band of volunteers lugging cans of water from their homes to our thirsty garden. The Chiswick Business Park also kindly let us have a number of plants at changeover time in the autumn.
In the summer heat wave we also sent out a request to members to water trees newly planted by LB Hounslow.

8. Social Activities

No social activities could be arranged this year. We will resume as soon as we are able to.

9. Society Officers and Management Committee

The Honorary Officers elected at the Annual General Meeting on 10th February 2020 were:

Chairman	Marie Rabouhans	(Silver Crescent)
Vice Chairman	Adam O'Neill	(Cambridge Road North)
Treasurer	Charlotte Aldridge	(Thorney Hedge Road)
Secretary	Kate Vicic	(Grosvenor Road)

The following Members were elected or re-elected to the Management Committee:

Robert Hare	(Grosvenor Road)
Sarah Thorn	(Thorney Hedge Road)
Terry Thorn	(Thorney Hedge Road)
Don Osborne	(Arlington Gardens)

All of the Honorary Officers and Management Committee members, will offer themselves for re-election at the AGM on February 22nd, 2021 except for Sally Thorn who is resigning from the Management Committee after serving since the establishment of the Society.

Any Member who would like more information about serving on the committee should approach the Secretary. We are especially eager to bring younger people onto the Committee.

9. Website

As explained above, we have had difficulty in maintaining the website during the pandemic.

10. Membership

Membership now stands at 78 paid-up Members.

11. Treasurer's report

The Secretary WCGS
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