



THE WEST CHISWICK & GUNNERSBURY SOCIETY

www.westchiswickgs.org.uk

Annual Report for 2016

1. Meetings

Apart from the Annual General Meeting, which was held in February, there were two open meetings for all Members and residents, held in July and November. In addition, there were five meetings of your Management Committee, held in January, March, June, September and December.

We were delighted that Ruth Cadbury MP invited us to visit her at Westminster in March. All our committee members attended for a useful and cordial meeting. Our thanks are due to Ruth, who takes a lively interest in Chiswick affairs.

2. Activities of the Society

The Society is active in a number of spheres affecting the quality of life of members including **planning** (building development, advertising and planning policy), and **environment** (streets, traffic and public transport) and **citizen engagement**. We respond to Council consultations and/or initiate activities.

The Society is an active participant in bimonthly meetings of the Residents' Association Forum, alongside other members of G15+, an informal grouping of residents' organisations, civic and amenity societies within the Borough. 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 Community Stadium.

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.

Because our part of the borough is particularly attractive to developers, the Society is kept busy representing residents' interests in a continual stream of major development applications. Nevertheless, the Society is also keen to promote the more positive aspects of life on our patch, such as a sense of place and history and those amenities which make life here more enjoyable.

3. **Planning Issues**

We keep an eye on relatively small developments such as house extensions including basements, shop fronts etc. and respond on those which would have a negative impact on our Conservation Areas or which would affect our Members' interests in other ways. However there are always a number of very large developments which could have a profound effect on all our lives.

Major planning issues of this type we have been addressing during the year are:

- **Brentford Football Stadium**

Construction will start in 2017 with a view to the stadium being ready for use in the 2019/20 football Season. We are now in the position of trying to obtain adequate mitigation for the impact of the development including the use of the stadium on our residents, in particular crowd control, traffic and noise. To this end we attended the October meeting of the Lionel Road Liaison Group (the only one held in 2016).

A further twist to this saga is the application to share the ground with a rugby club (London Irish). The Society submitted comments on this application in November requesting that a decision on amending the Condition that restricts use of the ground to football be deferred until the stadium is constructed, commissioned and real experience of its use on match days has been gained. While we can see the economic benefits to the stadium, we want a proper analysis of the corresponding costs (economic, social and environmental) to the local community (residents and businesses.) Ground-sharing with a rugby club would result in a match taking place practically every weekend during the 9-month football/rugby season. We have expressed our concerns as to the impact on Gunnersbury station (the applicant acknowledges that the expected use of this station by rugby supporters will be higher than that of football supporters) and on air quality (The applicant's air quality assessment concludes that there will be a moderate adverse impact on air pollution as a result of additional traffic movements along the public highway).

- **Empire House**

A completely new application was submitted by Lend Lease in February 2016 with very minor changes from the original scheme. The latter had been approved by Hounslow's Planning Committee in January 2015, despite the significant, reasoned objections submitted by the Society and other resident groups. The applicant indicated that the new application was in order to avoid any delay in awaiting the outcome of the legal (Judicial Review) process initiated by a local resident, Simon Kverndal QC.

This new application, which was approved by the Planning Committee in May, was then withdrawn by the applicant in June 2016; permission thus reverts to the original scheme. However, development activity at the site appears to have stopped. Meanwhile, an article in the local media in November reported that Sainsbury's had acquired the freehold of its car park and suggested that the two companies had been in exploratory talks to see if there was a way forward towards a comprehensive development of the combined Sainsbury/Lend Lease site.

- **Chiswick Roundabout (The “Curve”)**

The year opened with the need to consider the proposed 32-storey tower at Chiswick Roundabout the so-called “Chiswick Curve”, the monstrous successor to the defunct “Octopus”. It was decided to object to it in the strongest possible terms on the grounds of the unsuitability of that site for residential development, the grossly disproportionate size of the building and its impact on the surrounding Conservation.

Areas and major heritage assets such as Gunnersbury Park and Kew Gardens. This we did, submitting substantial comments in February.

We campaigned throughout the year, working with other resident groups. We held a public meeting in April, which was attended by Ruth Cadbury MP, Steve Curran, Leader of Hounslow Council, the local media and a good attendance of residents. We learned that the Curve scheme was “on hold” for further discussions between the developers and the Council’s officers. After that, we expected major changes to the proposal, but when it eventually re-emerged towards the end of the year, it was essentially the same, with only minor modifications.

The year ended with the welcome news that the planning officer recommendation was for refusal. We would have to wait for the New Year for the planning officer’s report and the important decision was expected to be made by the Planning Committee at their January 2017 meeting [Note: At the Planning Committee meeting on Thursday, 12th January 2017, Members unanimously refused planning permission for both the building and the digital media screen advertisements.]

We wish to record our thanks to WCGS Members, members of other local resident groups and everyone who has been involved in the campaign so far; working together we can make a difference.

- **Capital Interchange Way**

This is another massive development proposed near the edge of our patch (behind the Fountains Leisure Centre and next to the Capital Court and Central Eastern residential blocks of the Brentford Football Stadium scheme). An application has been made to Hounslow Council for a new bus garage and 550 residential units in three buildings of 18, 19 and 20 storeys. These are all taller than the tower at Gunnersbury Station. At the end of the year the Society was preparing its response to the application. The scheme would suffer from the same negatives (pollution, traffic, density etc) and inflict similar harm on heritage and residential communities as the Curve. Apart from the design, scale and density of the scheme, we are concerned about the lack of infrastructure to serve the large number of additional residents at this site and in the immediate vicinity. Are such huge “whacky” towers what Londoners want to live in or look at?

Planning policy issues on which the Society has been active include:

- **Local Plan Partial Review: Great West Corridor (GWC)**

We responded in detail to the Council's "Issues" consultation in February. All the comments received are now available on the Council's website. The next stage, the Preferred Options Consultation, is behind schedule. It was expected in June 2016 but it will now take place during summer 2017 with Adoption of the Plan not expected before 2019. It is essential, meanwhile, that no assumptions are made by developers as to the conclusions of the Partial Review. Any applications for development on sites that may fall within the GWC (such as the Chiswick Roundabout and Capital Interchange Way) must be assessed against the currently adopted Local Plan.

4. During the year, the Society has been active on several other issues:

- **Wellesley Road Transport Survey:**

The Council carried out a consultation on the tricky problem of rat-running through Wellesley Road and Stile Hall Gardens. A preliminary survey, to which the Society and many individual members contributed, showed that two-thirds of residents think that there is too much traffic on these roads and that something needs to be done. The Council has now sought residents' views on three options for action. Residents were asked to vote on these options. Whichever is chosen will be subject to a trial period, impacts will be monitored and adjustments made.

The matter was discussed at our public meeting in November when it was generally recognized that none of the options would be without some inconvenience for vehicle journeys by local residents. However, as the preliminary exercise had shown, there was too much non-local traffic on Wellesley Road; doing nothing was not an option. As the impacts of the different options will vary depending on where in the area residents live, the Society has not advocated a particular option. However, we have requested that traffic officers take account of the suggestions and comments we made on other aspects of improving the safety and amenity of the local road network in our comments submitted in July 2016.

- **Gunnersbury Station**

The Society continues to press for substantive improvements to the station. The massive increase in the workforce at the Business Park has greatly increased the overcrowding of the station at peak times. This situation is extremely unpleasant for all concerned – those struggling in the crush to leave the platform, those being delayed from accessing the platform and the unfortunate TfL staff on the front line having to cope with all this stress and frustration.

- **Footbridge**

It is now a year since the Planning Committee once more approved the construction of the footbridge intended to take pedestrians from the north end of the business park to Bollo Lane and Chiswick Park Station, thus taking some of the pressure off Gunnersbury Station. Construction has not even started, however, because the Legal Agreement between the developers of the Business Park, Hounslow Council and Transport for London has still not been signed. Despite the recognition that it is an essential piece of infrastructure and despite the occupation of Building 7 (capacity 2500-3000) being underway, a completion date for the footbridge during 2017 is now looking unlikely.

These matters and associated issues concerning the pedestrian crossings on the Chiswick High Road and bus stops were discussed at meetings of the Gunnersbury Station Action Team in June and September. They were also raised by our Chairman in November when she met with the CEO of Enjoy Work, the park management, and with members of their team responsible for community liaison.

- **Crossovers**

The Council's revised policy for crossovers (i.e. vehicular access over sidewalks) is now adopted. Unfortunately, it does not rule out permitting crossovers within Controlled Parking Zones, despite requests from several residents groups that it should do so. With respect to Conservation Areas, recent cases were noted where planning permission had been refused on grounds of harm to the CA. Unauthorised crossovers (i.e. those without dropped kerbs) should be reported to the Council.

On several occasions during the year, the Management Committee invited Members to respond to consultations which required individual responses rather than joint ones through the Society. Our thanks are due to all Members for their interest and support.

5. Society Officers and Management Committee

The Honorary Officers elected at the Annual General Meeting on 8th February, 2016 were:

Chairman	Marie Rabouhans	(Silver Crescent)
Vice Chairman	Adam O'Neill	(Cambridge Road North)
Treasurer	Charlotte Aldridge	(Thorney Hedge Road)
Secretary	Don Osborne	(Arlington Gardens)

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

Nic Atkinson	(Wellesley Road)
Robert Hare	(Grosvenor Road)
Anna Rumian	(Sutton Lane North)
Sarah Thorn	(Thorney Hedge Road)
Terry Thorn	(Thorney Hedge Road)

Our thanks to Gerald Smith who stood down as Treasurer at the AGM

All of the Honorary Officers and Management Committee Members will offer themselves for re-election at the AGM on February 6th, 2017.

There are a number of vacancies on the Management Committee. 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.

6. Website

Robert Hare has spent a lot of time and effort to create our new website. We are delighted to be able to use this important means of communication with members of the Society and others. It is still a work in progress and we will be adding new material and will make every effort to keep it updated. We urge Members to make regular use of this informative and interesting facility:

<http://www.westchiswickgs.org.uk>

7. Membership

Membership is holding steady at 145, despite some turnover of people leaving or arriving in our area.

8. Treasurer

The Society continues to be solvent.

Treasurer's Annual Statement for 2016

As at 31st December, 2016

DAY-TO-DAY ACCOUNT

Opening balance (Brought forward from 2015): **£1,340.84**

INCOME

Membership subscriptions	705.00
Donations from members	60.00

Total Income **765.00**

EXPENDITURE

Venue Hire	170.00
Refreshments (2 meetings)	113.55
Printing	170.00
Postage	108.00
Website subscription	59.88
London Forum subscription	28.00
Transfer to Campaigns Account	200.00

Total Expenditure **849.43**

Closing balance carried forward to 2017: **£1,256.41**

£ 50.00 Donation to Hounslow Heritage Guides not yet cashed by HHG, so not deducted from closing balance.

CAMPAIGNS + CONSERVATION ACCOUNT

Opening balance (brought forward from 2015): **£229.25**

INCOME

Members' campaign donations	145.00
*Kew Society	50.00
Transfer from Day to Day A/c	200.00
Deposit refund (St Michaels)	50.00
*Brentford Community Council	20.00

Total Income **465.00**

** 27/4 campaign meeting support*

EXPENDITURE

Venue hire inc deposit (St Michaels 27/4)	200.00
HACAN subscription	35.00

Total Expenditure **235.00**

Closing balance carried forward to 2017: **£459.25**

NOTE ON AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS

The accounts kept by the Treasurer are reconciled against statements issued from time to time by the Society's banker, HSBC, together with other relevant records. The Society's constitution requires that the financial records and the Treasurer's Annual Statement be examined by 2 Members of the Society who shall provide signed statements that they are satisfied as to their accuracy. We are grateful to Richard Vinter and Chris Jenks for carrying out this duty.

Charlotte Aldridge, Honorary Treasurer January 2017

Campaigns & Conservation Account

At the Public Meeting in November, 2013, it was agreed that a separate account be set up to enable the Society to support any relevant local campaigns and the pursuit of local conservation matters at short notice. The account would be funded by voluntary donations from the membership. This year £200 was transferred into this account from the general Day To Day account.

9. Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2017 are due by the AGM on **February 6th 2017**.

The subs are being held again this year at £10 per annum (£5 for concessions, i.e. over-65's and the unwaged).

Cheques to West Chiswick & Gunnersbury Society (or WCGS) either at the AGM or by post to the Secretary.

Subs can also be paid by Standing Order. Our bank is HSBC Sort Code 40-02-13 Account No. 51399306 The West Chiswick & Gunnersbury Society

To pay during February each year.

Please give your name as the Reference.

However you decide to pay, please fill in the Membership Application Form. This helps us keep track of Members' contact details.

The Secretary WCGS
18 Arlington Gardens
London W4 4EY