

## **Studios 1 and 5, Power Road Studios, 114 Power Road, Chiswick W4 5PY**

**00890/114/P1**

### **Comments from the West Chiswick and Gunnersbury Society (WCGS)**

**Summary** WCGS strongly supports the retention of the existing employment B1 uses of buildings within the Power Road Industrial Estate; we recognise the importance of the estate and the current mix of SMEs that it contains.

- We object to the current proposals with respect to Studio 1
- We object to the current proposals for Studio 5 but would support a new building of revised scale and design at this location.
- We request that adequate consideration is given to the cumulative impacts of this and other consented developments with respect to public transport, especially Gunnersbury Station.

### **Studio 1**

The Society does not object, in principle to the addition of a single-storey roof extension to Studio 1 and an entrance lobby on Power Road. We do, however, object to the current proposals. We consider that the current proposals would cause serious harm to the significance of the building, which is currently worthy of local listing and is one of the best examples of Art Deco architecture in Power Road. We regret that no attention has been paid to this and other aspects of conservation policy for several years due to the Council's lack of resources in this important area. We note that the original front elevation of this building was retained when the studios underwent a major conversion by De Metz architects in 1999/2000 (see also comments in Appendix). Our grounds for objection include:

- The additional floor over Studio 1 requires the demolition of the upper part of the brick parapet and entablature on the front elevation as well as the flagpoles, destroying the original Art Deco design of the front elevation and roofscape. The full extent of the facade is unnecessarily truncated at roof level, undermining the hierarchy of the facade which is highly characteristic of Art Deco office and factory buildings.
- The additional floor is overdominant and fails to respect the scale, hierarchy, character and appearance of the existing building to which it is attached, being built right up off the parapets and extending to the far east end of the Power Road frontage where it would be built over the currently subservient one-bay-wide eastern wing.
- Instead any additional floor should be set back behind the parapets and should not be built out over the western and eastern one-bay-wide wings, which were meant to be read as subservient features of the original building. If set back in that manner, an additional floor could be seen as a subservient addition to the building without requiring the loss of original architectural features to the existing building.
- The removal of the historic Art Deco brick wall, gate piers and railings on the Power Road frontage will result in the loss of the historic boundary treatment, which is characteristic of Art Deco office and factory buildings and is the only

remaining original boundary treatment in Power Road. This will cause a further loss of significance and harm to character and appearance of the building, which would be stripped of its original setting. The original boundary treatment should be retained and could be enhanced by new soft landscaping (see below).

**Landscaping/public realm** WCGS would welcome improvements to the public realm/street scene in Power Road (see Appendix). As the applicant acknowledges, the three *Ginkgo biloba* trees at the frontage of Power Studios are protected by a TPO. This TPO was made at the request of WCGS in 2011 following the felling of three of the original six ginkgos, which we understand were planted when the studios were built in the 1930s. The six trees were a most attractive feature of the street. Our wish was to protect the remaining trees as the only significant “street” trees in Power Road. While we would regret the loss of the ginkgos, their replacement by four native oak trees, together with the other landscape proposals for the frontage of Studios 1 and 2 would be acceptable, provided the oak trees were semi-mature and planted so as to ensure their longevity. If they are planted too close to the building they will not have room to grow and may suffer the fate of the ginkgos. We would request that the new trees are protected by a TPO. We would also appreciate confirmation that the tree to the west of Studio 2 will be retained. We would request an s106 contribution towards additional street trees to be planted in this section of Power Road.

### **Studio 5**

WCGS objects to this building in terms of the scale (height and length) and in terms of the design of its northern elevation.

**Scale** We request that the building is reduced in height (to 4-storeys) and length so that it has no adverse visual impact on the Power Road frontage/building line and so that from within the site it is clearly subservient to Studio 1. The South Site Elevation along Power Road (Design and Access, Volume 6, 6.8) clearly shows the western end of Studio 5 visible above Studio 2 and the top floor and plant of Studio 5 visible above the length of Studio 1. This new building must not be allowed to compromise the architectural merits of the 1930s building.

**Design of northern facade** The proposed large glazed elevations on this side of the building would compound the impact of the scale of the building. They would appear alien and would lead to the building and the site lacking coherence. The building will be prominent and very much taller than the existing Studio 5. ***Stray light/light pollution*** There are sensitive receptors within a relatively short distance (residents of Manor Court) that could be adversely affected by the proximity of a large, brightly lit building. The applicant maintains that “This will be controlled by the inclusion of blinds, PIRs and timed switches alongside a robust building management strategy.”. However, in our experience\*, even intelligent lighting systems and strategies are insufficient to prevent light pollution from office buildings having an adverse impact on neighbouring residents since successful control is dependent upon human behaviour; blinds are useless if not drawn and systems can be over-ridden. Before commencing work to replace the Power Road bridge, TfL felled a large number of mature street trees on both sides of Gunnersbury Avenue, together with trees along the B&Q and cemetery boundaries and, *very significantly with respect to this application*, those above the north-east railway embankment. These latter

provided an attractive outlook and some visual and acoustic screening of the railway and Power Road sites for the residents of Manor Court. This area is now the TfL/Hochtief compound for the bridge works labelled as “National Rail Compound” in Design and Access, Section 6, 7.1 and shown in 7.6 View E Massing model view from North Circular Road Railway Bridge. A very similar view to this would be experienced from the flats of Manor Court. An s106 contribution towards additional trees and shrubs, to be planted on either or both embankments once the bridge work is completed in 2017, would assist in mitigating the impact of a new Studio 5.

\*Problems are experienced by local residents with respect to offices along the north side of Chiswick High Road and within the Chiswick Business Park.

### **Public transport**

The significantly increased office floor area and reduced car-parking will give rise to an increased number of workers who will be expected to use public transport. The applicant refers to the proximity of various means of public transport such as stations but of equal importance is access and capacity. It should be noted that the use of Gunnersbury station has increased significantly in recent years due to the Chiswick Business Park (currently over 7000 workers rising to approx 10,000 on full occupation of Building 7) and other significant developments in the area. The Council is well aware of the negative impact on the local transport system arising from this increase in commuters and of the pressure that will be exerted by other major developments in the pipeline. CIL contributions from all developments in the area should be allocated to helping to address the serious and deteriorating situation at Gunnersbury Station.

### **Conditions**

In addition to the standard Conditions concerning details of materials, landscaping etc, we would request conditions to be included on:

- Removal of permitted development rights for office to residential conversion for existing and new buildings on this site.

### **Appendix:**

#### **Extract from WCGS comments (January 2013) on LBH’s draft Context and Character study**

13.3 Buildings which contribute positively to the character of **Power Road** include Chiswick Studios and Power Studios. This latter 1930s building underwent a major conversion in 1999/2000 and is a good example of sensitive refurbishment with some interesting new features including an attractive outside café. The felling in 2010 of three of the six mature ginkgo trees that serve to soften the rather austere “utilitarian” frontage of the studios is a significant loss. However, the remaining 3 trees (now with TPOs) are still an attractive feature that enhances both the building and the streetscape of this section of Power Road.

13.4 Any development within Power Road needs to take full account of its proximity to the Thorney Hedge and Wellesley Road CAs. In particular, the premises on the eastern arm of Power Road back directly onto the small gardens of the houses in Thorney Hedge Road. Great care is needed therefore in relation to the size, design and function of any new buildings or to changes to existing buildings. The influence of the somewhat higher modern buildings between the junction with Gunnersbury Avenue\*\* and the roundabout should not be extended into the estate to the detriment of its predominantly low-rise “quiet” character.

\*\* now including 250 Gunnersbury Avenue

**Extract from WCGS 2011 proposal for TPO on 3 remaining ginkgos**

Any trees within the industrial complex of Power Road are to be welcomed for their benefits for people and wildlife. People who benefit include not only those working or visiting businesses in Power Road and passengers on the rerouted 440 bus but also local residents who use the road as a quiet pedestrian route (avoiding the Chiswick roundabout) to Gunnersbury Park. In addition to improving the experience for people, trees in Power Road are also important for wildlife, especially birds. Together with trees in the Chiswick Business Park and in the adjoining residential streets of the Thorney Hedge Road Conservation Area, they provide vital “stepping stones” between the green spaces of Gunnersbury Triangle Nature Reserve and Gunnersbury Park. The importance of such green corridors in urban environments is well recognised by environmental and conservation bodies.

WCGS March 2017