



Friends of  
Turnham Green

**408-430 Chiswick High Road, Chiswick, London W4 5TF**  
**[00248/408-430/P1; P/2014/3288]**



### **Summary of Friends of Turnham Green's view**

Whilst *Friends of Turnham Green* are in principle open to sustainable development that improves the residential and commercial aspects of Turnham Green, it is our considered view that the Lend Lease/Empire House proposal seeks to maximise scale and density in a manner wholly inappropriate and detrimental to the Green and surrounding area. This is a classic case of a developer undoing the very amenity and aesthetic values it seeks to capitalise on. The Empire House/Essex Place site has wonderful potential to build something of genuine value for the area. To allow this proposal to proceed would be to squander the unique opportunity it offers.

It is also important to say that though Lend Lease met with us and CHRAG representatives, we do not feel that any of our input is represented in the documents they subsequently submitted. The London Plan policy states that consideration should be given to proportion, composition, scale and the proposal should complement the local character of the area. The reason we are strongly objecting to every aspect of Lend Lease's proposed redesign of Empire House and Essex Place, (with the exception of the shop frontage), is because their proposals are at odds with every one of these considerations. Lend Lease have historically sold to the Middle East and it is the desire to appeal to this market that appears to have been their primary aesthetic consideration.

Built in 1961, Empire House itself represents a regrettable aberration, a towering and oppressive presence whose unwelcome intrusion should not be further compounded. As the Local Plan noted in paragraph 6.10 "Hounslow has a number of tall buildings that do not positively contribute to the townscape and their existence should not be grounds for the provision of more." The illustration on page 9 (a composite of two Lend Lease pictures) speaks for itself, amply demonstrating how a Canary Wharf type outline would dominate and over shadow the Green itself. One has only to glance at the diminutive Old Pack Horse Public House (listed and dating back to 1747) in the far left corner of the illustration to see how out of scale the proposed development would be with the existing architecture of the Green. The proposed bolt on balconies, new elevation and the new high rise blocks would completely undermine the ambience of a village Green so cherished by local residents and visitors alike.

This unique village green atmosphere has been preserved over the years primarily because, other than the anomaly of Empire House, the north side of the Green has been maintained at an almost universal 2 to 3 storey height along the entire boundary, and indeed continues eastwards at the same height for another mile, and as such must be respected. At our AGM on the 11th November the show of hands was unanimously in opposition to Lend Lease's proposals.

## **Turnham Green and why it matters**

Turnham Green is the heart of the Turnham Green Conservation Area and a valued green lung, offering recreational value to local residents and office workers alike. It's triangle of parkland represents a high profile and well used civic face of the borough, where the residential and commercial meet on either side. With Christ Church (designed by George Gilbert Scott in 1841) at its centre, and Chiswick Town Hall (built in 1874) overlooking it, it is a space that features both natural beauty, together with key listed buildings (Christ Church, the Town Hall, the Crown and Anchor Public House and the Old Pack Horse Public House.) *Friends of Turnham Green* have been working with Hounslow Council since our inception in 2007 to strip away the municipal shabbiness and restore a natural parkland elegance to both east and west Greens - and also to improve its biodiversity, making a nature corridor between the *Gunnersbury Nature Triangle* and *Dukes Meadows*.

## **Breakdown of our objections**

We believe that the proposed Lend Lease development would have a detrimental effect on the Green itself for the following reasons.

### **1) Empire House**

1.1 We strongly object to the increased height by two storeys - taking it from 11 to 13 storeys (the addition of the duplex penthouse apartment) which will only compound the building's already intrusive and overbearing scale - so signally out of proportion to the rest of the High Road and at complete odds with the area's Conservation status.

1.2 We strongly object to the design details. In particular the Manhattan style entrance which serves to make its presence on the High Road extremely intrusive. We also object to the fact that the architectural details Lend Lease propose for the facade bear absolutely no relationship of any kind to the surrounding architecture. Even the most cursory of glances at an original photograph will make it plain that the developers claim that they have taken into account the former Empire Theatre (that once stood on this site) is a complete nonsense.

We would ask that the materials are chosen to marry with the

indigenous architecture of the area and to be as unobtrusive as possible and the intrusive entrance removed.

1.3 We object to the bolt on balconies on the east and west facades which will soon be filled with furniture and only serve to increase the width of the building.

1.4 We do however welcome the improvement to the shop units and would request the inclusion of glazing bars and stall-risers as outlined in the Shop Front Guidelines DO2.

## **2) Essex Place**

2.1 We strongly object to the fact that the proposed height of the new 7 - 8 storey buildings will be clearly visible from the Green, rising above the current High Road frontage of 2 to 3 storeys. They will intrude on the otherwise consistent roof height of the High Road that as stated earlier, runs for almost a mile. They will not only substantially compound the visual imposition of Empire House on the northern skyline, but would also make Empire House look even worse by making its intrusion an asymmetric one.

We request they be reduced to no more than 3 storeys.

## **3) Turnham Green**

3.1 The fact that Lend Lease are proposing 137 new dwellings with out offering any amenity space of any kind will only serve to put more pressure on an already densely used recreational space.

### **Friends of Turnham Green - who are we?**

*Friends of Turnham Green* are a community based voluntary organisation, founded in 2007 and we have a membership of just under 300. A team of enthusiastic volunteers regularly turn out in rain or shine to help with seasonal projects.

So far we have:

- Resolved the chronic bus congestion of north bound buses that blighted Sutton Lane North, the residential road that borders the northern flank. After 2 public consultations and high level lobbying of TfL, 500 north bound daily buses were eventually reduced to 180.
- Successfully lobbied to demolish the derelict lavatories that stood for decades on the corner of Sutton Lane North and Chiswick High Road.
- Raised enough money (with the help of Andy Smith, Hounslow Council and a grant from BIFFA) to up grade and re landscape the rockery that was left exposed by the removal of the derelict buildings.
- Also upgraded the cracked paths on both the east and west side to bonded resin.
- Raised sufficient s106 fund to establish the large wild flower meadow together with wild flower borders around the west Green.
- Replaced a shabby raised bed on the east Green with a herbal knot garden, funded by Waitrose's Community Matters scheme and planted by volunteers in collaboration with Abundance London.

Currently in the pipe line:

- Restoring or replacing the boundary railings on the west side where many sections have reached the point of no return
- Re-landscaping the war memorial on the east side which currently presents an over grown and gloomy aspect to those entering the Green from the commercial end.
- Creating the Tommy Hollis natural play area - a memorial space based around wild flowers and natural play on the corner of Town Hall Approach and Heathfield Terrace (in memory of 2 year old Tommy Hollis who was killed on Sutton Court Road.) Work begins in the spring 2015.







