Kew WHS and the challenges of the regeneration of Brentford

Andrew Williams, Director of Estates & Capital Development

Georgina Darroch, World Heritage Site Coordinator
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003 under three criteria:

Criteria (ii): Since the 18th century, the Botanic Gardens of Kew have been closely associated with scientific and economic exchanges established throughout the world in the field of botany, and this is reflected in the richness of its collections. The landscape and architectural features of the Gardens reflect considerable artistic influences both with regard to the European continent and to more distant regions;

Criteria (iii): Kew Gardens have largely contributed to advances in many scientific disciplines, particularly botany and ecology;

Criteria (iv): The landscape gardens and the edifices created by celebrated artists such as Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and William Chambers reflect the beginning of movements which were to have international influence.
The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Kew Gardens comprises of:

A rich and diverse historic cultural landscape providing a palimpsest of landscape design.
The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Kew Gardens comprises of:

An iconic architectural legacy
The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Kew Gardens comprises of:

Globally important preserved and living plant collections
The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Kew Gardens comprises of:

*A horticultural heritage of keynote species and collections*
The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Kew Gardens comprises of:

Key contributions to developments in plant science and plant taxonomy
Recent additions:
Overview

• **Estate** – Kew Gardens is a major tourist destination (1.8m visits) and a World Heritage site

• **250th anniversary** – in 2009 (established 1759)

• **Globally-significant science collections** – 8.5m items: Herbarium, Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, fungarium & plant DNA representing c.95% of known flowering plant genera

• **Living collections** – c.30,000 taxa of living specimens

• **1,000 staff** – (nearly 350 scientists); also c.100 postgraduate students & 800 volunteers

• **Kew Foundation** – 110,000 Members across both sites

• **Global Reach** – collaborating with c.400 organisations in c.110 countries

• **Education** – 100,000 school children through to MSc & PhD students

• **Governance** – An NDPB and an independent charity
Mission

Our mission
To be the global resource for plant and fungal knowledge, building an understanding of the world’s plants and fungi upon which all our lives depend.

Our vision
We want a world where plants and fungi are understood, valued and conserved – because our lives depend on plants and fungi.

Our purpose
We use the power of our science and the rich diversity of our gardens and collections to provide knowledge, inspiration and understanding of why plants and fungi matter to everyone.

Our attitude
We are authentic and passionate experts, collaborating and sharing our knowledge to stimulate curiosity and debate, celebrating beauty and encouraging a life-long love of plants.
Strategic objectives

Our science makes a demonstrable contribution to solving critical challenges facing humanity today.

We are valued as the pre-eminent provider of public education on plant and fungal science, conservation and horticulture.

We are the world’s leading botanic gardens where our large and diverse audiences develop their understanding of why plants and fungi matter.

We are a sustainable and dynamic organisation, making positive global impacts in partnership with others.

Our collections are curated to excellent standards and are widely used for the benefit of humankind.
### Total visitor numbers for Kew

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitor Numbers</th>
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<td>2010/11</td>
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Protecting the World Heritage Site
The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is overlain by and contains a number of designations including:

- World Heritage Site
- Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden
- 2 Conservation Areas
- 46 Individual listed buildings and structures, ranging from Grade I to Grade II
- 1 Scheduled Monument
Setting

The Property is situated alongside the River Thames, in an area characterised by a predominately urban environment interspersed with large open green spaces and is a key feature of the ‘Arcadian Thames’ landscape.

There are important views and vistas into and out of the site, the broader Thames-side and parkland setting of the site, and significant and inextricable links between the complex history and development of the Gardens and the adjacent areas. The parks and green spaces around Kew also greatly add to the site’s special character and sense of place.

RBG Kew’s 2010 Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) places considerable emphasis on the historic designed landscape of the WHS, stating that “These elements, which express the Outstanding Universal Value, remain intact.”

The Mayoral SPG describes Kew Gardens as “the most self-contained of the four sites” with “its immediate surroundings are domestic” referring to the “village atmosphere of Kew Green with its church” which “provides an agreeable and low key approach to the gardens”.
A Buffer Zone has been agreed the local authorities and stakeholders to:
- Protect important views and vistas into and out of the gardens;
- Maintain relationships with areas that have strong historical links to the Gardens;
- Protect the character and setting of the Gardens.

The buffer zone comprises:
- areas key to the protection of significant views in and out of Kew (e.g. Syon Park);
- land with strong historical relationships to Kew (e.g. The Old Deer Park, Kew Green);
- Areas that have a bearing on the character and setting of the gardens (e.g. the River Thames and its islands between Isleworth Ferry Gate and Kew Bridge).

The majority of the proposed buffer zone is designated by both Richmond upon Thames and Hounslow as Metropolitan Open Land, and is therefore protected.
Detractors

The ICOMOS evaluation at the time of the nomination took the view that “…the overall aspect of six 22-storey tower blocks at Brentford seriously diminished the visual experience at Kew at several points in the gardens.”

In a 2013 ICOMOS report it is also noted that “new development carried out within the buffer zone (and beyond) since inscription has harmed OUV.”

The Mayoral SPG specifically notes that “high rise development north of Kew at Brentford and along the A4 is the most tangible evidence of the Botanic Gardens’ urban context”.

The statement of integrity within the SOUV states that “Development outside the Buffer Zone may threaten the setting of the property.”
Brentford Opportunity Area

Figure 0.02
Great West Corridor location plan

Context
- London Borough of Hounslow
- Great West Corridor study area
- City of London
- Greater London
- Town centre
- London Heathrow Airport
- National Rail Line
- Railway station
- Motorway
- Major green areas
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Water
Brentford Opportunity Area

(Great West Corridor Local Plan Review, LBH)
The Site contains no listed buildings and is not located within a Conservation Area.

The Site is located within Hounslow’s Golden Mile, a recognised regeneration area (identified in Hounslow’s Local Plan as a potential Opportunity Area).

Design, townscape and heritage evidence presented by the Appellant determined that the Proposed Development will not cause substantial harm to or total loss of significance of any designated heritage asset, and in many cases would bring ‘benefit’ due to the quality of the design.

The earlier ‘Citadel’ permission for the site has been implemented and could be built and its architecture is of lower quality therefore the effects on the settings of heritage assets would not be as beneficial due to the quality of the design.

**Townscape 'layering',** where heritage assets receive a new 'back drop', can be acceptable where a conscious decision has been made to design buildings to harmonise with the asset and qualitative excellence arises.
The Chiswick Curve threatens the authenticity and integrity of two key attributes of the WHS: (1) its rich and diverse historic cultural landscape and (2) its iconic architectural legacy.

The 109m tall glass and metal structure would appear as a massive intrusion into numerous views within the designed landscape, including views protected by the WHS Management Plan, and in the settings of listed buildings.

RBG Kew made the case for ‘substantial harm’ to the setting and significance of the World Heritage Site based on the cumulative impact of previous buildings including the Haverfield Towers, Kew Eye and Hyperion.

Chiswick Curve would be the ‘tipping point’ resulting in substantial harm to the OUV, authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site.

This is the first instance where RBG Kew has participated as a Rule 6 party in a planning inquiry.
Accurate Visual Representations
1. To be more proactive with requesting specific AVR’s from future planning applications.

2. Engage with Hounslow on their Emerging Local Plan and Tall Buildings study.

3. Update the Management Plan and undertake a Setting Study to better characterise setting and significance for future developers.
Continuing Development Pressure

The Brentford East Collective

Plot 01: Brentford Community Stadium
Plot 02: Capital Interchange Way
Plot 03: Citroen Site
Plot 04: Chiswick Curve
Plot 05: Hudson Square
Plot 06: Gunnersbury Avenue

(Brentford East Collective Public Realm Strategy, 2017)
Citroen Site

(Design & Access Statement, Hawkins/Brown, 2018)
Brentford Community Stadium

[Image of the stadium and surrounding area]
Capital Interchange Way

(Design & Access Statement, ALL Design 2016)
Albany Riverside
Cumulative Impacts
Future Challenges

• The Chiswick Curve decision

• Hounslow Local Plan Review & Tall building strategy

• Potential for the Chiswick Curve, Citroen and Citadel setting the height for tall building clusters in Hounslow’s urban master planning

• Acceptance of harm as an inevitable result of the Great West Corridor’s urban development

• Increasing pressure from affordable housing targets

• Reaching the tipping point for cumulative impact