



Friends of St. James's Park and The Green Park

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John Walker Esq.,
Operational Director
Development Planning
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
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for the attention of Mike Gray

22nd April 2010

by email also

Dear Mr. Walker

The Green Park, Piccadilly, London W1V 9HA
Removal of perimeter steel park railings to park, landscape works including paths,
paving, tree planting and stone benches, erection of Bomber Command memorial
in Portland stone with bronze sculpture,
(West end of Green Park fronting Piccadilly)
ref 10/00926/FULL

We refer to your letter dated 16th February which we received 11th March and the documents attached, relating to the above. The late receipt was explained due to the lack of copies of the documents being available.

As you know, any applications concerning The Green Park are of extreme interest to us as "Friends of The Green Park". This application we find quite extraordinary as do our members and many whom we have consulted. We have concluded that the proposals are totally unacceptable to us and we seek the application to be rejected in its entirety.

The reasons and explanations are covered in our written responses to the "Planning Appraisal" by RadcliffesLe Brasseur dated 5th February 2010; the "Character Study" by Alan Baxter dated 5th February 2010; "the Opinion on Design" by Professor J L Curl dated 1st February; and with the background of the "Design and Access Statement" by Liam O'Connor dated 5th February 2010.

Background commentary to objection

Briefly we consider that The Green Park has remained a 'green' lung for the London Community for many generations, that its relatively natural and raw state is unique in the Royal Parks, and a precious commodity in central London. It provides wonderful open space for relaxation and enjoyment and is as far as is possible an informal and natural area of grass and woodland, simulating within its context rough countryside which few can experience in their daily life. It has as a consequence a rich habitat of fauna and flora. It is so different by contrast with St James's Park - rich in organised planting and flower beds, requiring hairpin railings and an obvious over view of control. The Green Park offers freedom.

The inherent qualities and advantages of The Green Park are clearly neither recognised nor seen by some, and that is at the heart of the conflict over this Application. Mr.O'Connor the architect, Professor Curl, and the Bomber Command Association do not see The Green Park as anything more than an opportunity for development, offering an interesting site for the extremely lengthy and large monument of the proposal. They do not see The Green Park's features as positive

qualities in themselves. If they did Professor Curl would not have written that “the proposals would undoubtedly enhance this part of The Green Parkas the present appearance of the area is uninspiring and aesthetically extremely dull” (3.6) He after all is a classicist and what could be more absorbing to him than to support a new classically inspired experiment which also has references to neoclassical architecture in Berlin. He refers to some “massive” parts of the central building, but does not find the extraordinary wide spacing of the columns in the two colonnades the least disturbing, the beams spanning the columns in a most unnatural manner, presumably for effect rather than from classical example. Is arguable how far one should accept the ‘stretching’ of an apparent stone beam before it is realised that it is a concrete structure clad in portland stone pretending to be what it is not. The Greeks had both rules and practical conditioning; here the rules have been revised by Mr O’Connor or as Professor Curl describes it as reliance on “paraphrase”.

Again it is stated that the memorial will “nestle” into the landscape and the trees and the views through to the Park will become more obvious. This of course would be the case since a number of trees will have been cut down to allow the building of the monument.

In essence therefore, the Proposers have no respect for the centuries old Green Park tradition, cannot accept its age long provision of being identified as “The Green Park” and see no harm in encroaching into it, to satisfy wilful building of a monument which is not essential nor exceptional, in a cause of remembering the dead who are already remembered in central London and in many memorials over the country. And this on the argument that those who died more than 60 years ago should have another memorial in London, which would be the biggest new memorial in for a long time, and which destroys peace and harmony of semi wild and natural habitat at the heart of London. Do those who propose this, believe that those who they claim to be representing, seriously believe that those who died in the defence of the nation would be content to see the damage to The Green Park, caused by a pile of construction, which in itself conveys nothing about the people who died ?

Objection Summary

1 Bomber Command are already remembered at the RAF Memorial church of St Clement Danes in central London. Therefore the claim that they are not is unsound. Setting aside the fact that there is remembrance of Bomber Command in central London already, there is absolutely no justification for another memorial to be built in The Green Park, of any size.

2 We believe that the Application proposal is contrary to a number of Westminster City Council Policies; and we do not consider that the proposal in it’s own right is exceptional, nor that a proper case has been made which would allow the WCC Policies to be set aside. The policy of “no more memorials” is in the interests of the living community, and in this regard must be maintained to prevent any incursion into The Green Park. Should there be any weakening of that resolve, then that precious and unique open space will be at ever greater risk of intrusion and destruction

3 We do not accept that because there are a number of memorials in the Hyde Park Roundabout and in Hyde park, that this is justification for there to be another one. Neither do we accept as part of the argument the proximity of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace as representing ‘central London’ being the justification for a site in the vicinity of the Hyde Park Corner Roundabout; which already being full The Green Park is considered the available extension.

4 Central London covers a wide area; and the most appropriate location in Central London would be in the vicinity of the National RAF memorial on the Embankment, which is also close to St Clement Danes RAF memorial church. Such a location also brings it close to the Fighter Command memorial, which surely is a

highly relevant factor

5 The scale, size and design itself we find unacceptable. Nor is there any justification for a memorial to be of the totally disproportionate monumentality of proposed.

Comment in addition

6 We very much regret that this application has pursued the form that it has

7 We are at one in regard to remembering the sacrifices made by those who died for the defence of the Nation, and freedom for others; but we find the concept which forcibly requires the destruction of parkland, to be completely at odds with the ethos of those who died in the defence of the nation.

8 This monumental proposal is not the only way nor clearly do we consider it the appropriate way, for the living to recognise the sacrifices of the past. By the inclusion in the Access and Design Statement of horrendous photographs of destruction, the tone and underlying nature of the Bomber Command application, provides in part an explanation for the resulting physical proposals.

9 Given that it is some 65 years after the cessation of hostilities, and with a United Europe in which Germany is an alai; and whereby constructive concern for those who continue with physical and mental traumas, either as a result of direct or indirect involvement, the whole approach to this Memorial is considered to be contrary to our times and to achieving its intention. It is no longer appropriate to build a vast monumental structure. A memorial can be expressed more modestly, with gravitas and sensitivity, such as that to the Battle of Britain. This memorial in central London, in the vicinity of other RAF memorials to those who also gave their lives and service for the nation, has infinitely more poignancy and feeling than a colonnade and building.

10 Our views in principle were made known to Mr. O'Connor, The Royal Parks, Mark Field MP and the Prime Minister's Office, in January 2010. No response was received from Mr O'Connor. Our views were more recently made known by direct letter to Bomber Command Association. No response has as yet been received. Wide support has been notified to us however from various bodies and Societies who consider the inadvisability of the project, including the insensitivity of the architecture style as well as the short-sightedness of the harm that would be generated as a result of the proposal if consent were given.

11 We have sought information from the Government and others as to how it can be possible for a private body - the Bomber Command Association and their architect, to appear to have some tacit understanding that public land held in trust by the Government, could be made available for a building structure: and that structure having no meaningful use or relationship to The Green Park.

We trust that our comments will be taken into account and made known in full to the Planning Committee.

Yours sincerely
for and on behalf of The Thorney Island Society

Tom Ball

PP

June A Stubbs
Chairman

Registered Charity Number : 1000751