

**The Thorney Island Society's Objection to the Planning Application Reference  
10/00926/FULL  
Bomber Command Memorial, The Green Park**

**Document : A Character Study of The Green Park and West Piccadilly  
by Alan Baxter for Liam O'Connor, 5th February 2010**

We respond to the Character Study, and refer to its sections. We may allude to other aspects of the Application's proposals for the memorial and its structure. This part of our objection to the Application, should be read in the context of all others.

The study is clear and well presented. It covers the history of The Green Park and the immediate surroundings, reports on the existing memorials, and the nature of the park. The map orientation follows the standard convention of being orientated to the north, unlike the irritating presentation by Liam O'Connor and others which has it in reverse. We however find the conclusion drawn, not to be the logical outcome of the study, which appears to be overly influenced by the arbitrary decision of the Architect's inflated promotional arguments.

A distinction must be drawn between the serious and emotional purpose of a memorial; and the form in which it has been presented. These are two distinct areas of concern, and as in the case of the current proposal for Bomber Command the emotional background has been used to motivate a monument out of all sense of reflecting the true emotional significance. We agree entirely with the Study where it makes the statement that the Royal Artillery Memorial to some 44,000 who died in World War I is 'superb'. It has also to be noted that its size is considerably less than the proposal. It maintains dignity, and expresses great feeling and emotion. Very much to be regretted is the insensitive handling of the revised landscape adjoining the memorial, whereby the discreet and modest sense of enclosure has been removed. The latter should as a matter of some priority be reinstated.

**Detailed contour map of the land form**

Missing from the study is a contour map of the site. Within The Green Park there are a number of variations by mounds which are not shown in the generalised illustration fig 2.2. The significance of this localised information shows to a critical point the physical relationship of the proposed building structures to the existing landscape. We were not able to find this information in any of the Applicant's submission. Only some spot levels appear on an Architects plan and also on the Tree plan by Barrell Tree Consultant, but these were only in the immediate vicinity of the proposed monument. It may be that such information has been submitted but that it was not forwarded to us.

**Existing memorials in The Green Park fig 5.1**

In addition to the Commonwealth memorial in the form of gate posts on Constitution Hill and a gazebo/temple in The Green Park, the report confirms that there are only two other memorials in The Green Park. It must be well understood that neither of these are substantial monuments, or in any way intrusive to the visual scene of the green and 'natural' landscape. One is the Diana fountain, a small and delicate statue including a small fountain. The other is the Canadian Memorial, which discreetly fits into the natural lie of the land, sensitively designed and above all inviting an opportunity for calm reflection and contemplation of those for whom it was erected.

**Existing memorials in the 'Apsley Roundabout' fig 5.1**

In section 5 the study comments on "The Green Park being largely green in nature". This is to undermine the true nature that The Green Park **IS GREEN**, and cannot be qualified as the study writes.

While describing the distribution of the memorials and the ubiquitousness of them now placed within the "Apsley Roundabout", it is clearly seen that the so called 'cluster' is a miscellaneous collection having no aesthetic relationship to one another. The more recent New Zealand and Australian memorials vie with each other as outrageous features, the former resembling a missile installation, built into a specially constructed earth mound: while the latter is

overly fussy, causing a screen to reduce visibility for the road traffic. It was during this installation that the setting of the Royal Artillery Memorial was made impoverished. To describe the roundabout as anything other than the Hyde Park Corner Roundabout, is an attempt to give it a higher status than it merits.

#### **The case for the location of memorials section 5.1**

The case for the location of memorials in the area of the Hyde Park Roundabout is made with a kind of logic, better expressed than in other parts of the submission. Claiming the proximity of the symbols of monarchy, government, and national leadership as its justification for siting the proposed memorial - whatever the consequences. However using the same approach, the logic includes the whole of an area from Westminster to the City. The latter which received the possibly highest concentrated demolition in London during World War II, followed by the more diffuse area of the East End. It is therefore abundantly clear that the thinking is Westminster focused, not central London; let alone the Nation as a whole. Such argument is not only tendentious but distasteful and insensitive. We cannot accept that there is no other location for a national memorial to Bomber Command than in The Green Park, or even the 'Hyde Park Corner Roundabout'.

**Sections 5.2 and 5.3** are basically factual assessments.

#### **Section 5.4 Missing bench fig 5.5**

the distribution of benches should be checked. Their precise location in the vicinity of the proposed monument should be clarified, and at least one is not shown - at the western end of The Green Park (see our photographs of the site).

#### **Section 5.6 Character areas**

Notable for its absence is any detailed description of the 'west park' area. It is dismissed as not used for "recreation or resting areas because of the noise and pollution, particularly towards the Apsley Roundabout". Yet the most relevant explanation is that the area is not on a major desire line. It is used however.

Also missing is a proper appreciation of the northern area. Here the difference in levels provides a degree of screening from Piccadilly; and within the Park establishing a clearly defined boundary. This is reinforced by the difference in level and the hedging along Piccadilly. (see our photograph of the site).

#### **Section 6 Conclusion**

In the main we consider the Study has put forward a good overview of The Green Park and the memorials in the Hyde Park Corner roundabout. The recognition of the forced separation of The Green Park by the very intrusive road works and underpass, is a demise which has not been ameliorated by the lack of at grade pedestrian crossings until partially in recent times. They are still not adequate nor of a quality to match their surroundings. It is hoped that this will be rectified especially at the east end of the roundabout system by the provision of a north-south crossing. That however is outside this application. We regret that Alan Baxter holds the opinion that an 'edge of Park' monument "on the west side of The Green Park... could bring significant benefits to the Park". (Please note that this is incorrect since the existing entrance is on the west side: what is proposed is on the north side of the Park).

We do not agree with the pompous statement that if it were built "it would constitute a new landmark to the Park without affecting its overall informal and open character of The Green Park". This is a contradiction of the logic since the size and scale of the monument would be very intrusive into the Park. The architect's drawing shows just how intrusive it would be, and how alien to the whole accepted ethos of the Park for several centuries. It is by maintaining it as a 'natural' area, without flower beds and with minimal formal structure, which makes it unique. It is a green lung, which provides an escape from the over ordered and restricting environments elsewhere.

We totally disagree with the statement that "above all, it will begin to restore the important historical relationship between the buildings on Piccadilly and the Park, and as such provides an opportunity to regenerate the immediate area".

This is an astonishing claim. For centuries the Green Park has always been separate from the north side of Piccadilly, and for a number of reasons must remain so. This is not a facility to be lightly used to support commercial activity, and some spurious notion of regeneration. It is a totally preposterous suggestion, out of character with the Conservation Audit; and we believe out of kilter with the Study itself. Also the notion that a monument is necessary in order to bring about local improvements to the public realm - such as railings, street furniture and local planting to the road edge, cannot be taken seriously.

We reject the conclusion entirely, regarding it as unsustainable from many points of view, but the most important being its damaging effects to the centuries old tradition of The Green Park, which must be safeguarded for future generations.

For and on behalf of the Thorney Island Society  
*Tom Ball 20.4.10*