

STOP THE TOWER BLOCKS!

OWGRA Newsletter (Tesco & Homebase Redevelopment) March 2021, Issue No. 5

TESCO & HOMEBASE PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DECIDED BY HOUNSLOW PLANNING COMMITTEE ON THURSDAY 8TH APRIL 2021, 5 pm

The applications for the redevelopment of the Tesco & Homebase sites will be determined by the Hounslow 15-member Planning Committee at a virtual meeting on Thursday 8 April at 5 pm.

Despite our requests for these two huge planning applications to be considered on different days, Council Management has ignored us and decided to do them in one evening, so be prepared for a long ride! Incidentally, the Planning Committee meeting that considered the Nishkam School planning application in Dec 2015 lasted 4 hours. When Berkeley Homes presented their plans for the redevelopment of these two sites in July 2020 at a virtual meeting to some members of the Planning Committee and our Ward Councillors, that meeting lasted 4 hours, and that just included presentations from the developer and architects. The Planning Committee meeting will involve presentations for both sites separately from the Planning Officers, Objectors and Applicant. The application is highly contested requiring close attention from Planning Committee members.

KEEP AN EYE ON OUR WEBSITE www.thb.owgra.org.uk CLOSER TO 8 APRIL TO SEE HOW TO WATCH THE VIRTUAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING AND FOR THE RESULT AFTER THE MEETING

WILL THESE PLANNING APPLICATIONS BE DECIDED ON PLANNING GROUNDS OR WILL POLITICS PLAY A PART?

Planning decisions should, by law, be made strictly on planning grounds. It is possible that some Councillors will counter detailed planning considerations by saying "but we need the housing". However, pressures for housing, which override planning guidelines, are legally dubious and should be rejected. **Even more so when the housing that is proposed is the wrong sort of housing for the needs of Hounslow's residents.** Watch the Planning Committee meeting to see if any Councillors try to state that housing needs trump all planning guidelines and the Council's own policies. All Councillors have been elected to serve the local community not to ignore its considered views.

THE PROPOSAL

The planning applications propose to demolish the Homebase site, build a new Tesco store with 2 levels of parking above, plus 473 flats. The intention is to build a residential development on the Tesco site of 1,677 homes. There would be ugly 17-storey tower blocks on both sites. The current population of c 13.5K in Osterley & Spring Grove ward would increase by over 40% to c 20K.

OWGRA'S OBJECTIONS

We have submitted robust objections based on Planning Law and many of these have been independently confirmed by the **Hounslow Design Review Panel**.

Here is a summary of our objections:

- **Excessive height/massing/density**, in relation to existing residential areas and listed Gillette building.
- **Out of character with the area** (mainly 2-storey houses).
- **Overdevelopment**: adding 2,150 homes across the 2 sites in mostly tower blocks (up to 17 storeys) to our neighbourhood of mainly 2-storey houses. The population would increase by about 6,000 which is equivalent to a small town (e.g. the size of Bagshot or Egham).
- **Serious lack of decent-sized family homes** to meet Hounslow's Council's stated dire shortage of 3-4 bedroom homes.
- **Adverse effect on heritage assets** (including the Grade II listed Gillette building between the two sites).
- **Inadequate public transport, no improvements to roads, infrastructure and amenities**, with no firm plans or funds to upgrade in the foreseeable future. If public transport is not improved prior to this development then the number of parking spaces is inadequate.
- **Unacceptable traffic** (dangerous/over-capacity at Gillette Corner), route used by ambulances.
- **Environmental impact** (increased noise, air pollution, carbon emissions & poor sustainability).
- **No justification for demolishing existing Tesco and Homebase buildings** instead of retaining or re-purposing.
- **Insufficient measures to meet Zero Carbon targets and Climate Emergency measures.**
- **COVID-19 issues and lessons learned have been ignored**, with respect to the type of accommodation proposed, as well as the extent and quality of the landscaped areas provided.

Here are some of the conclusions from **Hounslow's Design Review Panel**, published on 28 January 2021 (which we fully support).

"Although the design team have tackled several issues that were raised at the previous DRP relating to the clean air route, the scale and massing of the proposal and the linked vision for the two sites, the design evolution has focused on mitigating these issues rather than solving them. Ultimately, we still believe that the brief to accommodate a Tesco Superstore of equivalent size to the existing located on the opposite side of the road on this site has made it virtually impossible for you to achieve a scheme of the quality that you and Hounslow are aiming to achieve here."

Homebase site, Syon Lane

"...we are still certain that the footprint of Tesco is compromising your ability to provide public realm that is good enough in character or scale for this quantum of new housing."

"...we still feel that the overall amount of residential accommodation is too great for the site..."

Tesco site, Syon Lane

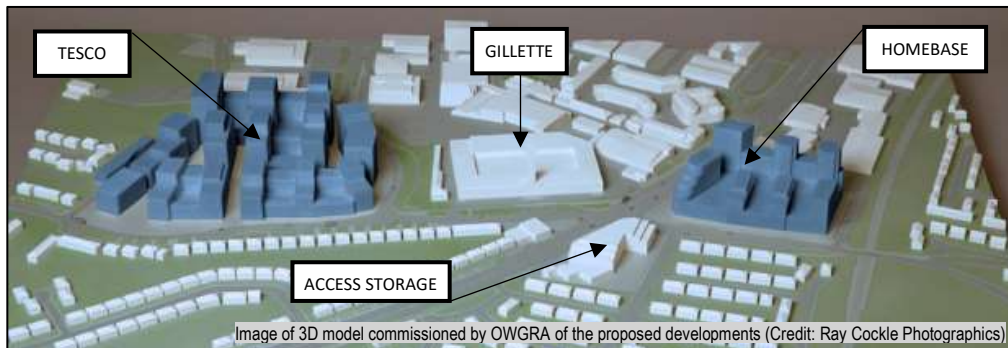
"In summary, the panel has fundamental concerns about the scheme and feels that many of the issues highlighted in the first review are still to be fully addressed. ...we advise that you take a step back and reconsider the overall quantum of development. Both you and Hounslow should be aiming to have the highest aspirations for this very important site in terms of quality of accommodation, public realm, sustainability and relationship to heritage, and we do not think the scheme delivers these in its current form."

We believe that smaller schemes, at much lower height and density (maximum of 6 storeys), would be an appropriate solution, but it is essential that they must be preceded by completing all transport and roads infrastructure necessary to fully support them.

IMAGES OF THE 3D MODEL COMMISSIONED BY OWGRA OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Below are photographs of the 3D model that OWGRA commissioned from a professional model maker in October 2020 as the developer had not produced such a model, despite numerous promises to do so. To this day the developer has still not offered a model for residents and Councillors to view.

OWGRA's model is accurate and to scale and is based on Ordnance Survey maps and the information and dimensions given in the planning applications.

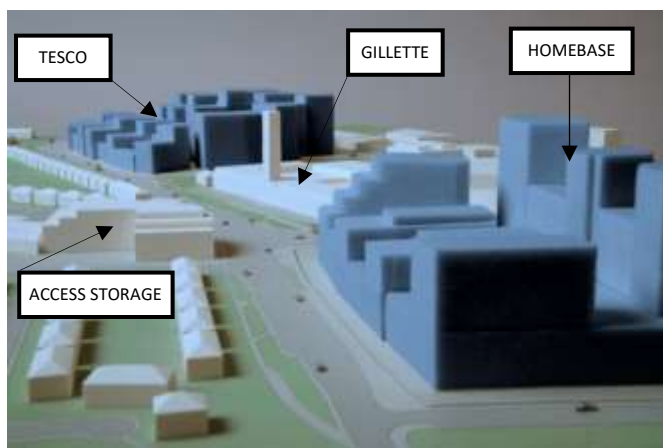


The 3D model illustrates how inappropriate the proposed development would be in this area:

- out of character
- excessively high (in relation to the existing homes)
- adverse effect on Grade II listed Gillette building

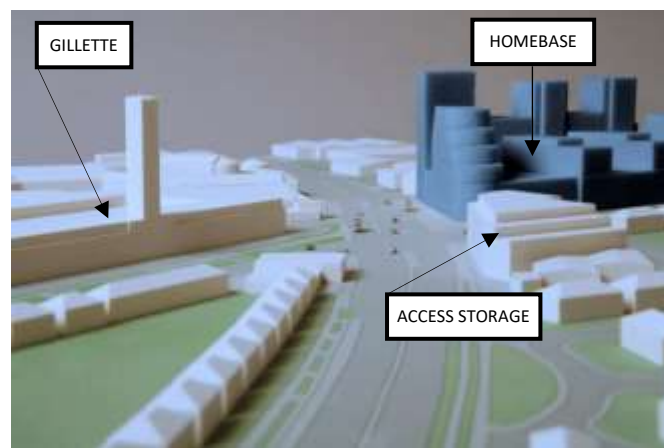
Image of 3D model commissioned by OWGRA of the proposed developments (Credit: Ray Cockle Photographics)

GILLETTE CORNER FROM SYON LANE STATION



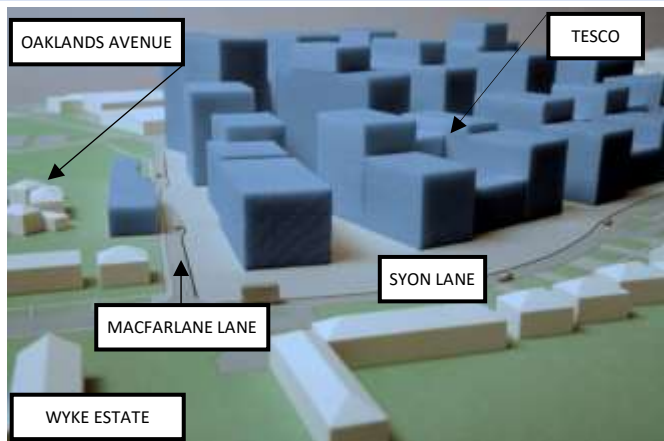
Photograph: Ray Cockle Photographics

GILLETTE CORNER FROM A4 EASTBOUND



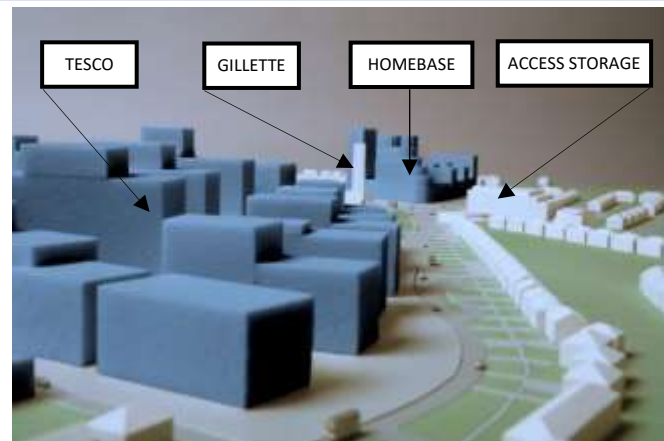
Photograph: Ray Cockle Photographics

JUNCTION OF MACFARLANE LANE AND SYON LANE



Photograph: Ray Cockle Photographics

SYON LANE SOUTHBOUND TO GILLETTE CORNER



Photograph: Ray Cockle Photographics

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- You can join, or renew your subscription for 2021/22 if you have not already done so, with the membership form enclosed with this newsletter.
- If you want to check whether you have already renewed for 2021/22, then just e-mail or phone us.
- If you have been a member before and your details are the same, then why not do it online? Further details are on the enclosed membership form.

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