

ENSURING A THRIVING RETAIL ECONOMY IN CHISWICK



**Chiswick Shops Task Force
July 2020**

LONDON'S RETAIL SECTOR: KEEPING LONDON'S HIGH STREETS OPEN

Comments made by speakers at the
London Assembly's Economy Committee meeting on 14th January 2020 ¹

"They [high streets] are an ever-changing, ever-movable, resource that is incredibly important, can't be overlooked, require constant work from local authorities and from the mayoral administration to make sure we are doing all that we can to support their function which is vitally important....Localised strategies that are really responsive to as well defined areas as you can possibly get are the best way to address some of the local issues that these places are facing."

Patrick Dubeck

Head of Regeneration. Greater London Authority (GLA)

"What we are seeing, because of the rise of online, changing shopping habits, increased use of technology generally, is a reversion to a much more mixed use high street and I think that is actually the direction we do need to be going in in terms of a greater range of uses for things like leisure activities, public services being located there and also housing in increasing density on some high streets...Do we introduce policies or implement policies that support that or do we in my view carry on with policies that hinder that and actually exaggerate some of the problems we are seeing on the high street?"

Dominic Curran

British Retail Consortium

"On the average high street, 95 per cent of businesses are going to be small businesses – micro-businesses, self-employed individuals – and they are very much a part of the local economy, they are the vibrancy, they provide the local jobs, they provide security to a lot of people within those areas and it brings that kind of community feel."

Matthew Jaffa

Federation of Small Businesses

"What we have is an ecology on the high street and it's grown up in a certain way which makes it work in some cases and not work in other cases. When that ecology breaks down and you end up with a very mono-cultural type of high street where all high streets tend to look the same wherever you go and they tend to have very similar shops wherever you go ...And I think a lot of that really does dispel the sense of community that high streets used to have....high streets survive best where there is a lot going on, there's a lot of different things going on, where you can go to the high street to have a range of experiences not simply to go there and buy... but actually to go there and have a whole bunch of different experiences whether it's shopping, it's eating, it's having coffee, it's living, it's bumping into friends, it's meeting new people, whatever those are – that's what's going to attract people back on to the high street."

Robin Osterley

Charity Retail Association

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Foreword



In their struggle to do something about the public dissatisfaction with retail decline most decision makers will declare sympathy with the idea that each area is unique and requires bespoke measures.

In practice, however, decision makers often resort to top down plans and one-size-fits-all remedies, often claiming that there is no alternative.

Whilst the burden of business rates (or whatever replaces them following the government's review) and increased rents remain the major challenges for all businesses, the ill-thought-out location of street furniture, parking controls that are there to meet a central revenue target and cycle lanes imposed with little regard to their environment accelerate the decline of retail as surely as any innovations in new technology.

When making policy for retailers we should listen to those whose livelihoods depend on them and the customers they serve. And, once we have listened, we need to turn those opinions into real policies which can command public support.

That's why I welcome this report as a positive contribution to ensuring that Chiswick becomes the place its residents want it to be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Boff', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Boff
Deputy Chairman of the London Assembly's Planning Committee and
Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group on the GLA

Introduction



I have had the pleasure and privilege of living in Chiswick for 36 years. For the last two and a bit years I've served as a councillor for one of its wards, Turnham Green. One of the great joys of living here is its village-like feel with tree-lined streets, the wonderful diversity of its shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants, its other independent local businesses and, when out, an almost guaranteed bump into friends for a pavement catch-up.

One of the reasons why I stood for election to the council was because I could see that Chiswick's unique qualities were under threat. Changes in shopping habits, the loss of on-street parking and the rise in commercial rents have all forced out independent traders and made our distinctive community start to look bland. The pressure for housing has led to successive London Mayors to encourage the construction of more and more flats in West London. Sadly, many of these developments are at odds with Chiswick's low rise, Victorian and Edwardian streetscape. London's increasing population has at the same time put strains on infrastructure, including tube and train services, and led to more traffic congestion.

This report is about the first of those problems – the threat to our community's unique mix of retailers and other businesses. Researched and written over the last 18 months, this policy document is the first overarching look at Chiswick's retail world. It makes sensible, affordable suggestions that all those involved in the success of our area can implement. There are recommendations for national government, local councils, landlords and their agents, and for residents and visitors because all of us have a part to play in celebrating and supporting the Chiswick retail experience.

Originally due to be published in March, the dramatic changes to our lives and to our economy brought about by the COVID-19 emergency have delayed it while at the same time highlighted the serious threat our local traders face. Even stalwart in-shop shoppers who made a point of supporting our local shops moved to shopping online to stay at home and save lives.

Overnight, many of our local businesses lost their entire custom. Some have been able to survive, supported by the government's retail grants scheme, this year's business rates holiday, the 80 per cent wage subsidy furlough scheme and other schemes – and by being extraordinarily innovative to respond to customers' needs. But, in a borough where over 40,000 jobs are linked to Heathrow Airport, the threat to the viability of our local businesses is probably greater today than it has been at any time since the Second World War.¹

Difficult though the current situation is, there is much to be positive about. The government has shown itself willing to act on the problems caused by business rates – and we urge ministers to be radical and pragmatic in its approach to reform – there are many ideas and models all over Britain that show that you can improve your local high street and our Chiswick High Road. Above all there is huge commitment in Chiswick to ensuring that, whatever lies ahead, we will retain our unique shops and community. I look forward to working with all of you to make a reality of that commitment.

Joanna Biddolph

Councillor, Turnham Green ward, and founder, Chiswick Shops Task Force

¹ Cllr Steve Curran, Leader of London Borough of Hounslow, has used the figure of "about 45,000"; see 'Heathrow airport job cuts' *My London*, 15 May 2020: <https://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/heathrow-airport-job-cuts-likely-18256645>

Executive summary

Chapter 1: Trading in Chiswick Today

- Sets the scene:
 - highlighting the difficulties of trading in Chiswick today;
 - illustrating what it's like for traders including the real cost of the retail pound [box 1];

Chapter 2: Making rents and leases commercially attractive to all

- Excessively high rents cause traders to fail;
- Shouldn't vilify landlords many of whom support local traders but current rents are untenable;
- Key policies to tackle problems:
 - Abolish upward-only rent reviews;
 - Introduce more flexibility on break clauses;
 - End full repairing and insuring leases;
 - Compare different markets properly and publish actual rents charged;
 - Celebrate character and difference on our shopping streets;
 - Councils should set an example by being responsible landlords.

Chapter 3: A vibrant and successful retail economy will raise more revenue

- Excessively high and unfair business rates and recent increases undermine local businesses;
- Key policies in response:
 - Scrap business rates; create a simpler and fairer system; introduce sliding scale for increases; cap increases; allow for reductions or standstill in times of difficulty; change the way space is assessed; introduce regional variations;
 - Balance taxes fairly across the business; successful business owners pay income tax;
 - End favouring large chains at the expense of local traders;
 - End unfair "understandings" that favour some businesses; improve the appeals system;
 - End nonsenses such as having to make empty premises unusable to avoid rates;
 - A tax on online traders would not solve the problems.

Chapter 4: Making shopping and socialising in Chiswick safe and welcoming

- If people feel insecure or if the local environment is unattractive, people will shop elsewhere;
- Crime including shoplifting is a problem;
- Key policies to improve the situation:
 - Install CCTV in known crime hot-spots; support the installation of in-store CCTV;
 - Improve communication between police and traders;
 - Reinvigorate the Shopwatch scheme; encourage traders to report small thefts;
 - Look at legislation and policies on shoplifting and try new approaches;
 - Increase police night time patrols and bring in special constables; publicise the work of Chiswick police; plan ahead for possible closure of the police station;
 - Restore street lighting to full brightness for longer periods on shopping streets.

Chapter 5: A better street environment

- The physical environment affects how we see and enjoy a place;
- Chiswick has a good environment but things could be better;
- Key policy changes needed to improve things:
 - Tackle the backlog of road maintenance – including potholes;
 - Increase and improve street cleaning; sacks to be removed the same day;

- Improve and maintain planted areas; install more and better seating areas;
- Adopt a new policy on street furniture; ban further advertising hoardings and remove existing advertising stands; refuse permission for street furniture and signs that impede movement, visibility and views; install road signs with more thought and care;
- Restrict out of area event advertising; keep tackling graffiti and flyposting;
- Provide traders with a daytime waste and recycling service; make waste bins attractive, install more tidy bin stores and empty more frequently;
- Install banners, bunting, new lighting and planters;
- Establish a shop fronts grant scheme and reduce the impact of empty units.

Chapter 6: Encouraging business success – improving the work of Hounslow and Ealing councils

- Retailers provide employment and generate income for councils; they need support;
- Council policies that would back traders include:
 - Reduce or abolish discretionary fees and charges such as for outdoor seating;
 - Revise street trading policy to protect shop front traders from unfair competition;
 - Be consistent and apply retail licensing rules to council events;
 - Protect retail space from changes of use;
 - Preserve Chiswick's unique character and identity through planning controls;
 - Adapt the government high streets funds to allow communities not just councils to apply;
 - Respect local knowledge and experience;
 - Reform the planning system with the retail economy in mind;
 - Councils to work together on Chiswick border issues and oppose excessive developments;
 - Say no to further charity shops and to more estate agents using ground floor premises;
 - Be consistent in council decisions across departments;
 - Consult traders and let them influence their area;
 - Support local traders through local procurement of goods and services;
 - Work with traders on regulation and not against them;
 - Set and keep high standards for outsourced services; require outsourced services to recognise social value, extend payment deadlines and understand local pressures;
 - Involve local councillors in council policy-making to use their expertise and local knowledge.

Chapter 7: Walking, cycling, parking and public transport

- Longer-term shift towards more walking and cycling means traffic and cycling measures that meet Chiswick's needs;
- Cycleway 9 (C9) is unpopular with many residents and traders because it is aimed at through-route cycling, not local journeys and would significantly reduce the pavement space;
- Parking is essential to some customers and to traders, as is access for delivery and collection;
- Key policy changes that are needed include:
 - A cycling plan for Chiswick that meets local needs;
 - Review C9 to mitigate its effects on traders and on social distancing;
 - Upgrade the A4 with cycle paths that link with those of Hammersmith;
 - Increase cycle parking near independent shops; upgrade cycle parking in other areas;
 - Invest in better bus services in and through Chiswick;
 - Introduce step-free access to all tube stations in the area;
 - Recognise that parking is essential to retailers and many customers; reinstate, maintain and publicise all free stop and shop parking;
 - Retain loading bays for traders and make parking easier for traders.

Chapter 8: Balancing chain stores and independents

- Chain stores bring many benefits including greater choice, employment and footfall;
- But they can also squeeze out independent traders, partly because of economies of scale;
- Chains benefit from discounted business rates;
- Needs a new approach that better balances the interests of chain and independent stores:
 - Chains could provide incentives for shoppers to use local traders;
 - Extend free parking in chain store car parks so customers can shop elsewhere too;
 - Encourage chains to fill gaps in the market rather than duplicate existing traders;
 - Adopt stronger rules on shop fronts/branding to make them more sensitive to the area;
 - Tackle shoplifting in chains, including encouraging them to report and pursue offenders.

Chapter 9: Listening to retailers

- National and local government must listen to local retailers;
- National government has been too inclined to consult and listen to large retailers;
- Big retailers do not know what life is like for small local retailers;
- Each area needs its own local strategy tailored for its area not centrally imposed strategies;
- Key policy changes needed include:
 - Create a national forum for independent retailers to discuss the state of the industry;
 - Establish a similar local forum in Chiswick;
 - Councils should support events wanted by retailers, rather than impose their own ideas;
 - Hounslow Council to work with the Chiswick Shops Task Force to support retailers;
 - Implement recommendations raised at a public meeting on the future of Chiswick to debate what local people and local traders want from the area.

Chapter 10: Making more of our rich neighbourhood

- Chiswick stands up very well against the seven ideals for a thriving retail economy;
- It measures well too against the concept of an ideal town;
- But there are many ideas for improving Chiswick that would help its local economy prosper;
- 32 ideas are discussed from doing more for teenagers and promoting riverside Chiswick, to installing better signage for shops, improving the Christmas experience and promoting the town as a tourist destination.

Chapter 11: A shared vision for the future

- This chapter brings together the main points;
- It urges Hounslow and Ealing councils to adopt the policies and strategies in the report;
- It considers national policy ideas such as BIDs and explains why they are inappropriate here;
- It considers the impact of COVID-19 on retailing and hospitality and its broader economic impact, as well as the local economic impact on Chiswick;
- It looks at the financial implications of the report's ideas;
- It finishes by emphasising the report's central theme: the importance of working together.

Chapter 1

Trading in Chiswick Today

Introduction

It has often been said that Chiswick is no different from other locations – shopping streets everywhere are struggling. The blame is often attributed to the growth of Internet shopping but online only represents about 20 per cent of retail sales.² Yet local retailers note that the numbers of people on our shopping streets has fallen by a far greater extent. Multi-layered complexities, including its geography, prevail in Chiswick, all of which are currently contributing to making shopping here less attractive.

Our research – hundreds of hours spent listening to hard-working retailers, observing their businesses in action, and working with several Chiswick retailers and service businesses over 20 years – shows that there is much about our community that is different from other places. Those differences make trading conditions here harder than elsewhere. Retailers in our bricks and mortar shops want to succeed, and residents and others want to shop at those bricks and mortar stores. But policies and practices make it unpleasant, difficult and sometimes impossible for them to do so.

This report is hard-hitting and, at times, uncomfortable to read. We make no apology for that as we know how much local people care about Chiswick. They cherish all that is good about it and want to see local political leaders and retailers come together to make it even better.

It is important to note that the scope of this report encompasses all traders, including owners of cafés, pubs, restaurants and bars as well as shops and service sector providers who operate through shop fronts. All these various businesses are retail businesses to some degree.

Our community

There is no single definition of Chiswick and all it offers. It is known for being on the river, its excellent transport links and having a village feel. Its roads are lined with large mature leafy trees, there are green open spaces, world-famous architecture and buildings. Wide pavements on its main shopping street and especially its independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants give it a Parisian boulevard character. People tend to stay here. According to one local estate agent, over half of Chiswick sellers stay in W4. It is also a destination for people coming to shop, eat, drink, explore and work.

Yet many independent retailers in Chiswick are struggling to succeed despite Chiswick being home to over 40,000 residents, in three Hounslow wards and one Ealing ward, plus a daily influx of over 31,000 workers.³ Empty shops are affecting Chiswick's appeal and its residents' morale. While this is also happening elsewhere in the UK, it is shocking to see it in an area long noted for the strength and variety of its independent traders.

What are the problems affecting traders?

Common issues are excessively high rents and business rates, unnecessarily high fees and charges, and onerous and insensitive bureaucracy. There is also a misconception that Chiswick residents have money to burn and that retailers must therefore be doing well. In fact, Chiswick is a mixed area with families on low incomes as well as the better off. Whoever they are, Chiswickians are responsible spenders who know the value of goods and what they can afford. Currently, retailers' costs can push prices beyond spending limits, driving shoppers away or, if prices are reduced so shoppers will buy, push businesses out of business.

² Online sales have hovered around 15-20 per cent for the last five years before spiking at 30 per cent in April 2020 (presumably because of the lockdown); see Office for National Statistics chart, 22 May 2020:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/timeseries/j4mc/drsi>

³ Figures supplied by Hounslow Council to the Task Force.

Sadly, we found that Hounslow Council has a poor reputation with retailers in Chiswick. The council appears to lack understanding of the retail sector and this has resulted in flawed, expensive and ineffective attempts to bolster the retail economy here. There is a need for significant shifts in thinking, attitude and policy direction to win the trust of traders. Ealing has a better reputation among its retailers but there is always more to be done.

Recent attempts in Hounslow to improve the situation included appointing a town manager, but that initiative made little impact beyond showing that the council lacked understanding of what Chiswick is and how it works. Occasional street markets have a role to play in bringing in shoppers, if marketed correctly, but the council's decision a few years ago to allow a market to take place in front of shops, obscured their frontages and reduced their ability to promote themselves to people coming to that market.

Hounslow council is seeking to raise income from its assets (a policy we support if done sensitively, respectfully and collaboratively) but it is also making decisions that will damage existing businesses:

- supporting the pavement-grabbing Cycleway 9 (formerly CS9) – this would reduce footfall even further on the south side of Chiswick High Road where traders need more custom, not less;
- considering holding a farmers' market yards from existing traders selling identical goods and which would also compete with and potentially damage Chiswick's existing farmers' market on Dukes Meadows;
- it has brought in third-party agencies who clamp down insensitively on traders without acknowledging their long-term relationships with the council, the borough, its communities and its residents;
- it favours traders from beyond Chiswick, bringing them in to trade here at council-sponsored events, jeopardising our existing local traders' success rather than promoting and supporting what we already have here.

Rival shopping centres, such as Westfield, are often blamed for drawing shoppers away from Chiswick. The reality is that local residents shop at Westfield or in Richmond because of the easy parking (there is little evidence that prices at Westfield are lower than in Chiswick so costs are not the motivating factor, especially if costs include travel and time). Parking is also a significant factor in local people switching to internet shopping; they find it more convenient if they cannot park easily nearby.

Chiswick's geography must not be overlooked. It is a significant factor in how residents, and visitors, enjoy Chiswick. Its cafés, pubs, bars, restaurants, service businesses and shops are spread along nearly two miles east-west and a similar distance north-south. Many residents shop in a relatively small area depending on closeness to home and convenience of travel; workers tend to stay near their workplaces. When Hedone opened, its owner commented that few residents ventured along to the "wrong end of the High Road".⁴ Meanwhile, residents of Grove Park have been heard to ask where Devonshire Road is. Of course, many residents disregard Chiswick's geographical quirks – but more of us could do so.

Chiswick needs and deserves a vibrant and varied retail economy. It is imperative that it does not become known as the place that *was* noted for its independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants but is now a home to the same chains as any town anywhere or, worse, a ghost town.

Policies for retail success

Policy influencers and decision makers can collectively change Chiswick's retail economy. There are many reasons, and many actions which national and local government (and others) could and should take to enable Chiswick's businesses to thrive. This report presents a set of policies and suggestions that will help decision-makers to make it easier for retailers to keep their prices competitive and for shoppers to be able to shop locally. Given the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on our economy, and especially retailers, this could not be more important.

⁴ Hedone custom affected as it is at the "wrong end of the High Road":
<http://www.chiswickw4.com/default.asp?section=info&page=hedonemichelin001.htm>

Before looking at what policies might support retail businesses, it is vital to begin with an understanding of how much one retail pound costs and why. We urge you to read that explanation in full (see box 1 below).

In subsequent chapters, we consider a series of policies that would help retailers to succeed in Chiswick (and indeed, elsewhere):

- tackling out of control rents so that we retain good businesses and don't force them out;
- scrapping the business rates system, not just tinkering with it;
- creating a more secure and welcoming atmosphere, reducing crime and improving the street environment;
- better waste and recycling services for traders, who unlike householders have to pay extra for these services;
- a better seasonal offering - Christmas 2019 highlighted how tired and half-hearted are our efforts to bring Christmas cheer to Chiswick plus there are other seasons to celebrate;
- better policies to encourage walking and cycling so that the needs and the safety of everyone are respected; but also
- retaining parking as many residents need to drive, especially if buying awkward/bulky/heavy/fragile goods, and the ability of customers to stop and shop is vital to traders and our lifestyles;
- better support from Ealing and Hounslow Councils, so that their policies reflect local need;
- more backing from national government for local businesses – the COVID-19 emergency saw swift action by government to support local business; we need that to signal a change in culture and not just be a one-off.

Box 1: How much does a retail pound cost?

The real cost of a retail pound is not widely understood. In a recent forum discussion in Chiswick, a resident said that a potential fee to retailers of £835 a year “doesn't sound that much”. The fact is that, for a retail business to raise one pound to spend on rent, rates, insurance, equipment, stock, recruitment, training, wages, electricity, heating, water, council fees and charges, bank charges and more (see the full list at Appendix 6), it must generate sales of about:

- three times more – for a business with a relatively high profit margin such as designer clothes;
- five and six times more – for businesses with a relatively low profit margin such as newsagents;
- eight times more – for new businesses trying to recover start-up costs.

In other words, to pay a fee of £835 means that a retailer must bring in sales of between £2,505 (more than three times the average weekly wage before tax in London: £736 in 2019) and £6,680 (more than nine times the average weekly wage before tax in London).¹ Less than that and the business is operating at a loss. So, a fee of £835 costs a retailer between £2,505 and £6,680. That is quite a lot.

And this is before the business owner has drawn a penny in salary.

It is easy to see why shops turnover so frequently. A small unit was recently on the market at an annual rent of £44,000 plus £13,500 in business rates. A large unit was on the market at £135,000 with £60,000 in business rates. To raise those sums, a retailer must bring in £175,500 (small unit) or £585,000 (large unit) a year at three times as much; or £468,000 (small unit) or £1,560,000 (large unit) at eight times as much – before taking any money home. These are mind-boggling amounts which will deter people from trying to start new businesses in Chiswick, especially with the long-term uncertainties of COVID-19.

It is essential to consider the real cost to the retailer and how much work traders have to do to earn its spending power. This misunderstanding about the real cost of a retail pound is crippling retail businesses.

Box 2: Cash or card?

There have been several debates on the chiswickw4.com forum about paying by cash rather than by card with some residents saying they make a point of paying by cash in independents. The key disadvantage of paying by card is that traders have to pay to process payments – with charges made by the electronic POS (point of sale) systems and by banks plus the overall cost of contracting into the POS system. They might lose 12 per cent, sometimes more, of the amount customers pay. Larger businesses, such as chains, are able to negotiate lower charges. Regardless, this is a charge that retailers would rather not pay.

Some say that the charges should be reflected in the price. Yet, many customers buy by price and would not pay more for the goods – witness the queues when Waitrose started offering free coffee and the many comments people make about goods being cheaper in chains.

Some think that paying in cash encourages tax fraud. This is a misunderstanding. The reality is that most traders have to make certain transactions themselves in cash. If they do not receive cash from customers, the value of the pound the customer pays by another means reduces when it goes through the POS system, then the bank - and the trader has to make up that amount again to withdraw a pound in cash, in effect paying the charges twice. Paying in cash helps our independent traders run financially efficient businesses. Residents can help by paying in cash when convenient.

Chapter 2

Making rents and leases commercially attractive to all

Upward only rent reviews

In the period 2015-2018, 3,200 shops closed in the UK.⁵ Even before COVID-19 hit, many major retailers were planning to reduce the number of their outlets. They were also trying to negotiate rent reductions with the landlords of their remaining stores to make their businesses viable again. Over 100,000 jobs have been lost in the retail sector in the last three years alone; worse may be to come.⁶ Several factors explain the decline of bricks and mortar stores but one of them is the mismatch between the level of rents and the turnover of retailers.

There is what seems to many retailers to be a cavalier ruthlessness in the retail rental sector. It starts with defective legislation, moves through the hands of agents, and ends in business failure. It works like this. Many commercial leases contain an upwards-only rent review clause. There is often no scope for standstill or reductions to reflect the economic climate. The only way is up – and in the recent past it has seldom increased by a manageable amount. This plays straight into the hands of unscrupulous agents who welcome a business failing because they can charge the landlord a fee for finding a new tenant. They can also use the vacancy to recommend an increase in the rent to the landlord, often setting a new rent level record for the road or for Chiswick. All too often the next retailer to take over the unit at the higher rent discovers that it isn't possible to survive and closes. The cycle repeats itself, leaving a trail of destruction behind it. The justification for it is that if someone is willing to pay it, that rent is the market rate. Too often it is the market rate for failure – as we have seen repeatedly in Chiswick.

Landlords are routinely vilified and often such attacks are unfair. It is not our intention to attack those trying to make their living by owning and renting property. We know that Chiswick has a diverse range of landlords with fewer large landlords than many town centres. We know that there are landlords in Chiswick who are passionate supporters of independent traders. We also know that some landlords depend completely on their rents for their income or pension and, like traders, have been hard hit by COVID-19. But we need to get across to owners and policymakers that the current situation with rents has become untenable and it is in their interests that we address this before irreparable damage is done – on top of that already done by COVID-19.

Bad legislation, and commercial practice that appears to violate the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ethical code, are partly to blame for changing Chiswick's character.⁷ There are signs, post-COVID-19, that agents and landlords understand this and are changing their approach. All agents need to advise their landlords to set realistic rents that support successful trading, recognising the volatility and uncertainty that follows a pandemic.

While residents want choice and variety including chains – and rightly so – every successful retail area needs a wide range of choice. That is determined not only by an area's characteristics but also by its range of independents. Yet independents are the most sensitive to increases in costs of any sort because they do not have the buying or negotiating power – or shared costs – of the chains.

Increasing rents to the level of failure has already changed Chiswick's character. It has changed Turnham Green Terrace significantly. And a shift is beginning in Devonshire Road. It is not too late to stop further unwanted and unnecessary change – but radical action is needed, for example as follows:

⁵ *The retail industry today and tomorrow*, British Retail Consortium, November 2018:
https://brc.org.uk/media/382906/future-of-retail-report_digital.pdf

⁶ 'High Street: How many UK shops have closed?' *BBC News*, 23 October 2019:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-49349703>

⁷ *UK commercial real estate agency*, RICS professional standards and guidance UK, first edition, October 2016:
<https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/real-estate/uk-commercial-real-estate-agency-1st-edition-rics.pdf>

- **Abolish the retail-damaging upwards-only rent review clause.** The voluntary code for leasing business premises aimed to abolish this upwards-only clause but has not been widely taken up.⁸ It relies on tenants asking for a change while under pressure negotiating a lease renewal and fearful of the future. Meanwhile, some landlords and agents appear to rely on frequent turnover of their premises due to others' business failure – from too high rents. Without the clause, retailers could negotiate a fairer rent, up or down or the same, to reflect the prevailing economic climate. Everyone should win.
- **Be flexible about break clauses.** Many leases tie in the tenant for long periods leaving them with no choice but to continue trading at a loss if the business fails and they cannot sell their lease. Break clauses at shorter intervals – three years, five years – would enable traders to pull out when it's clear their business isn't succeeding rather than struggle on. Landlords would be free to find new tenants – or to lower the rent level to one that is achievable by the existing tenant, gaining continuity of occupancy and a reputation as a reasonable landlord. This requires a major change in approach by agents and landlords. A culture shift is needed.
- **Abolish the full repairing and insuring lease.** Many leases include a full repairing and insurance clause making the lessee responsible for all repairs and buildings insurance not just contents insurance. Bodged repairs by previous lessees, or the landlord, can turn into expensive unexpected bills for the new lessee. In Chiswick, one trader recently had to find £14,000 for structural repairs during this current difficult trading climate. All repairs ultimately benefit the landlord whose property value increases. The cost of repairs should be shared between lessee and the landlord. Landlords should be liable for buildings insurance, as happens in the domestic property sector.
- **Compare the markets.** One trader was recently told by a reliable source that a chain restaurant which closed on Chiswick High Road in 2018 was paying more in rent per square foot for its Chiswick premises than for its branch in Kensington. While we are glad to live in a desirable area and to benefit from generally buoyant house values, ranking Chiswick above Kensington is a step too far. Rents in Chiswick should be significantly lower than rents in Kensington (see box 3).
- **Publish actual rents charged.** Although some businesses are offered concessions on their rent at the start of their tenancy, such as a rent free or reduced rent period, the published rent remains as originally advertised. This gives a false impression of the going rate; it is not what traders actually pay. This sets up newcomers to failure, believing other businesses are paying similar rents when they are, in reality, paying much less – and still struggling. This makes it impossible for them to assess the viability of their business. There must be a requirement to publish actual rents.
- **Celebrate character and difference.** Landlords must take a long view and set realistic rents that enable community-minded, committed, local independent traders to succeed, adding character and difference to the area. Education is needed to adjust landlords' ambitions, emphasising the value of investing for the long-term in the local community to keep the area different and attractive with an appropriate balance of chains. The active management approach taken by some landlords, seen on Marylebone High Street and in parts of Chelsea, shows what can be done (though in both places the chains over-dominate which would not be right for Chiswick).
- **Councils should set an example as responsible retail landlords.** Councils have to be increasingly resourceful about raising money. But they must also be responsible landlords, encouraging our retailers to succeed. Our councils have a duty to demonstrate commitment to local character, local difference and local neighbourhoods. They also have a unique opportunity to set an example to other retail landlords to follow by setting rents that attract local independents giving location and difference a value beyond profit-taking. They can do this as part of their Local Plan recognising that it is for economic benefit.⁹ Hounslow and Ealing councils can and should be instrumental in reinvigorating the retail industry throughout Chiswick. Doing so will improve their reputations with retailers and residents, as well as boosting their income and the local economy.

⁸ *The abolition of the Irish upward-only rent reviews*, College of Estate Management, February 2012, pp.4-6:
https://www.ucem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Irish_Rent_Reviews.pdf

⁹ *Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments*, 3rd edition, HM Government, April 2018, paras 19 and 20:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678866/Guidance_on_local_government_investments.pdf

Empty premises drive residents away from a shopping area leaving the remaining traders at a loss for customers, operating at a loss, then losing their businesses altogether. This creates more empty premises and an even larger loss-making area that doesn't just impact on traders but on landlords too. The eight ghostly empty retail units at Empire House on Chiswick High Road, and recent closures nearby, strikingly illustrate the problem. It is not confined to that part of Chiswick High Road and it does not have to be like this. We need everyone – agents, landlords and councils – to come together to bring an end to it.

It is right to note that alternative approaches to setting retail rents, including ideas such as paying rents monthly in arrears, rather than quarterly in advance, or having rents based on turnover are now being actively discussed. This increased awareness of the issue is a welcome step forward but, so far, the pace of change has been slow. With the devastating impact of the pandemic lockdown all too apparent on our shopping streets, government, landlords and traders need to act quickly to enable the retail sector to revive.

Box 3: Comparing commercial rents in Chiswick

How much do shops, cafes and restaurants pay in rent for trading units on the Chiswick High Road? To find out how rents in Chiswick compare, we carried out a spot check on 9 April 2020 of units available to rent in Chiswick, Hammersmith and Richmond. We looked at shop units and those suitable for the hospitality trade. Despite the close proximity of these three relatively prosperous areas, we found that prices were highest in Chiswick.

The search in Chiswick (confined to the High Road) identified 14 shops available to rent. In 12 cases the rent was published. The cheapest lease was £40,000 per annum for a small unit with the most expensive £125,000; the average was £65,000. In the case of hospitality units, there were three on the High Road available to let, the cheapest of which was £37,000 and the most expensive £100,000.

In Richmond, taking shops in the town centre, there were eight units to let but only four had publicly listed rents. Of those, the cheapest was £28,000 and the most expensive £45,000. No hospitality units were available.

In Hammersmith, where we surveyed empty units on King Street, there were six units available. One was little more than a kiosk at 258 square feet so it was excluded. Of the remaining five, the lowest rent was £27,000 and the highest £50,000 with the average at £40,000. The only hospitality unit to let in central Hammersmith was £39,500.

Inevitably such a spot survey is a rough and ready look at the market. But it is striking how many more units were available to let in Chiswick than in Richmond or Hammersmith and that prices were significantly higher in Chiswick than in the other two locations.¹

Chapter 3

A vibrant and successful retail economy will raise more revenue

Abolish the business rates system

After rents, the next issue that retailers raise when asked what affects their business success is the system of excessively high and unfair rates. We welcome the government's review of the business rates system and urge radical change, reviewing all the taxes and charges that retailers pay.

It would be far better for cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods, and for local and national economies, to reduce costs to retailers so that their businesses – the beating heart of each area – survive and continue to contribute to the national and local economies. It does, however, require a shift in thinking and in policy. Just as retailers have to be innovative to succeed, so should the government be when looking at business rates. Its thinking must go well beyond tinkering with the existing scheme. It is, of course, a difficult issue but the current review must look at all the ways businesses contribute to the economy, and the exchequer, and think ambitiously, as it did in its response to COVID-19 – for businesses, especially independent retailers, for our high streets and town centres, for our communities and for our way of life.

The scale of the problem was highlighted in 2017 when a 14 per cent net increase in rates was imposed on retailers in London (rateable values increased by 37.5 per cent).¹⁰ Given that businesses are so affected by changes in costs and cash flow, it is difficult to see how anyone could miss the fact that such increases in business rates present retailers with enormous challenges. No trader should ever be faced with such a high increase. Even with a system that allows for appeals and reliefs, this is an entirely unfair way to raise revenue and it must end. After all, the system of domestic rates was abolished 30 years ago.

Pilot a new system in Chiswick

We welcome the government's review and the early action it took during the COVID-19 emergency to give retailers and traders rate rebates. But whatever new system is introduced, we believe that Chiswick would be an ideal place to pilot a new system for retailers as it not only has a town centre but also includes areas that mimic parades in villages and has isolated corner shops. Similarly, it has household name chains and franchises; independents competing with those household names; and independents with no competitors. It is our contention that, if a new system works fairly in Chiswick, it will work fairly anywhere.

We urge decision-makers to:

- **Tear up the business rates system.** Look at simpler ways in which retailers could be taxed to create a fairer, predictable, cost-sensitive, cash flow-respecting tax regime that supports traders, local authorities and the government. It should incorporate a threshold below which there is no tax liability, so that businesses with low revenue levels are excluded. One option might be a turnover tax but this discriminates against smaller businesses operating with narrower margins. It is essential to end all unfair systems, not replace one with another. Any tax should be easy to understand, easy to calculate, and easy to justify.

If the government decides it cannot start from scratch, it must remove the worst aspects of the current system:

- **Introduce sliding scale changes to reduce uncertainty.** Businesses that depend on steady cash flow cannot be expected to meet sudden high financial changes. Rates should be adjusted, where appropriate, annually and by a sliding scale. Imposing sudden increases, as happened in 2017, creates extreme uncertainty and places an unfair burden on retailers. There should be no huge leap that jeopardises

¹⁰ Original business rate increases were set out in Table 1 of the consultation paper on the transitional arrangements for the 2017 revaluation:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555932/Transitional_Relief_consultation.pdf

Details of transitional relief are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/transitional-relief>

businesses or, as businesses will inevitably close, the income on which they, their owners, staff and suppliers, as well as local authorities and ultimately the government, rely.

- **Cap increases in retail business rates to protect retailers from out of control inflation.** Given that inflation is beyond the control of retailers, it is essential to have safeguards to protect retailers. Increases should be modest and be capped.
- **Allow business rates to be reduced or stand still during recessions or times of austerity or national financial crisis.** “The value of investments can go up or down” is a warning that appears on advertisements and offers for mortgages, pensions and savings accounts. Likewise, business taxation should be reduced in recessions or during times of economic austerity or crisis. This is effectively what happened with the COVID-19 emergency measures and we welcome it as a general principle.
- **Balance business costs against personal income tax and corporation tax.** Recognise that every cost to retailers affects profit margins and retailers’ personal incomes. A successful business owner will pay income tax. An unsuccessful business owner will not. Don’t impose such high rates and costs on retailers that they can’t contribute to HM Treasury through personal taxation. Recognise that limited companies will attract corporation tax. The balance between meeting tax obligations and earning an income must be considered. Currently, many independent businesses work to pay tax, not for a living or a life.
- **Change the way rateable space is calculated.** Currently, retail properties are divided into zones, each 6.1 metres deep, and rated according to an assumed value to the business. Space at the shop front has the highest value (Zone A), with zones B and C at lesser values and space further back, upstairs or downstairs, is called the remainder. However, in many retail properties in Chiswick, the entire shop is 6.1 metres deep and therefore rated at the highest possible value despite much of the space being of lesser value to the business. This method discriminates against an area’s architecture and its urban development – the geographical layout does not allow for anything else. While smaller retailers pay the highest rate for their lowest value space, advantages are given to larger businesses where valuations are the same throughout the space regardless of use. If zoning is retained, zone variations should be based on proportions not metres.¹¹
- **Introduce regional variations.** It is illogical to apply the same thresholds on businesses in London as for smaller cities, suburbs, towns and villages. Currently, business rates thresholds are based purely on fixed sums of money. For instance, businesses with a rateable value of £12,000 or less do not pay business rates and those with a rateable value of between £12,001 and £15,000 receive a sliding scale reduction.¹² Those businesses with rateable values of £12,001 to £15,000 in London will be in a small unit, in many places elsewhere far larger spaces attract the same rateable value, enabling much larger businesses to trade free of rates. The same is true of the £51,000 threshold – this represents a medium-sized shop in Chiswick but an enormous unit outside London. Introducing regional variations – raising the threshold in London – would recognise geographical differences in rateable values and help businesses survive. It would also halt the trend that we have seen in Chiswick for retailers to split their premises, reducing the rateable value of each section to £12,000 or less so they no longer have to pay business rates. Councils should lobby for regional variations as this will enable existing businesses to carry on trading and pay some business rates (or their alternative) rather than reducing the size of their premises to reduce their business rates liability to zero.
- **Balance differences between large corporates and independents and introduce fairness and parity to reflect the desirability of a location.** There are many peculiarities about the business rates system that leave independent traders at a loss to understand whether it is fair. Chiswick inevitably attracts major national businesses such as supermarkets many of whom occupy larger premises. Rateable values currently favour larger properties because, as is stated in the government’s explanation of how business properties are valued, “larger properties may have a lower value per square metre, in the same way that buying items in bulk will usually mean a lower individual price per item”.¹³ This is a wholly illogical

¹¹ Guidance on how the Valuation Office values retail property:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-non-domestic-property-including-plant-and-machinery-is-valued#zoning>

¹² The two-year reduction in rates announced in 2018 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer applied to businesses with a rateable value of under £51,000.

¹³ From the guidance on how the Valuation Office values retail property:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-non-domestic-property-including-plant-and-machinery-is-valued#zoning>

argument that gives large corporates an enviable advantage over independents. It is also an insidious and unfair form of discrimination. There is an argument that independent businesses should be treated more favourably, with a lower rateable value giving them a better chance to succeed. If that is not possible, then parity is paramount. There is no parity here, as the charts below show:¹⁴

Retailers' rateable value (RV) by location		
Business	Location	RV per sqm
Clifton News (closed)	North side Chiswick High Road, prime site	£1,500
Daniel Footwear (closed)	North side Chiswick High Road, prime site	£1,300
Lara (closed)	South side Chiswick High Road, secondary site	£1,100
Peppermint (closed)	South side Chiswick High Road, secondary site	£900
M&S	North side Chiswick High Road, prime site	£225
Waitrose	North side Chiswick High Road, prime site	£225

- **Set rates according to location.** As the above table shows, an independent business on the south side of the High Road pays more per square metre than a nationally known supermarket on the perceived to be more desirable north side. We recognise that there might be differences based on the type of business but the vastness of the gaps is astonishing. Business rates must be assessed against the desirability of a location, even along the same road. For example, along Chiswick High Road there are differences not only between north and south sides but also along stretches of it – the central area (between Turnham Green Terrace and Acton Lane) being seen as more desirable than sections on either side of it (from Acton Lane to Chiswick Road and from Turnham Green Terrace to Chiswick Lane) and much further along it (opposite Chiswick Business Park). Other areas, such as Acton Lane, Southfield Road/The Avenue and Strand on the Green, are different again and should be banded differently. Assessments must be validated to ensure that they reflect reality.
- **Assess rates by business type.** It is not surprising that we have lost all our central Chiswick newsagents. As the chart above shows, the cost of allocating shelf space to newspapers and magazines is far greater in independent newsagents than in supermarkets. The business rate system, or whatever replaces it, must be changed to make it easier for independent shops to compete.
- **End unfair “understandings” that significantly reduce business rates for some businesses.** Live-in guardians operators have an understanding with the Valuation Office that heavily reduces business rates for its clients’ properties. If the Valuation Office is open to reductions for one type of business, particularly one that is hugely profitable and that makes money from two sources simultaneously (its clients and its residents), it ought to offer reductions to the more vulnerable businesses, particularly independents.
- **Reassess and improve the appeals process.** If business rates, or their replacement, are set at reasonable levels, with changes pegged to inflation and capped, there should be much less demand for an appeals process with all its delays, frustrations and uncertainties. The current system is shockingly slow, with appeals from the previous phase continuing through the next phase which is then delayed. The appeals process must also be nimble and responsive, so that retailers can get on with the business of retailing instead of diverting time and attention to seeking redress. Government should invest in an improved service, make the changes necessary to reduce the number of appeals, and increase the number of people working on them.

Enable landlords to be nimble and responsive

Empty premises attract business rates after being vacant for three months (with a few exceptions). Landlords have, inevitably, found a way round this.

At Empire House, stuck in redevelopment/sale limbo, four large units and four smaller units lie empty, as they have done for over four years. This long, depressing, abandoned stretch of empty shops has significantly

¹⁴ Research checked against Valuation Office database, 1 July 2020 using online search engine:
<https://www.gov.uk/correct-your-business-rates>

affected footfall here, resulting in more nearby closures (such as Valentina's and Carpetright) and isolating one independent business from potential customers, affecting its success.

The Chiswick Shops Task Force met Empire House's then landlord, Lendlease, to discuss returning these units to productivity and bring this long section of the High Road back to life. As a prudent property owner, the landlord had stripped all but one of these units (a small marketing suite) of all services and fixtures so that they were considered by the Valuation Office to be under construction and therefore eligible for empty rates relief (i.e. paying no business rates).

Pop-ups can operate in simple, unadorned premises but to trade they need basic services (electricity and water) and basic fixtures and fittings. A business wanting to test the market, or a different part of Chiswick, might need more than the basics but only for a limited time. The cost of re-installing basic services is prohibitive for a retailer who might only use the premises for a matter of weeks or months. This is an unacceptable situation – based on the assumption that the business might trade and aim to avoid paying business rates so it must be prevented from doing so. It means that the units are not only unproductive as retail units but also unproductive as sources of revenue from rates.

Another unit on the High Road has not been stripped but is empty and generating business rates in the region of £120,000 a year despite being empty and not trading. That might be good for HM Treasury and Hounslow Council but not for their reputations among retailers. It is disastrous for the landlord and it is absurd.

Elsewhere in Chiswick, one shop has become a frequent pop-up with new businesses moving in for anything from two weeks to several months. The landlord is actively contributing to the community by keeping an otherwise empty space active, at least for some of the time. This would not have been possible if he had protected himself from a business rates bill by stripping his premises.

Change is good for high streets, reinvigorating interest in visiting them rather than resorting to shopping elsewhere or online. HM Treasury should encourage change by enabling landlords to keep their empty premises available instantly so they can be nimble, responsive and profitable. The current empty rates system is destroying communities.

We urge the government to:

- **End the need to strip premises of services to avoid business rates.** The emphasis should be on filling premises – short-term or long-term – by ensuring they can be brought back into use swiftly and affordably. This will increase income from rates by encouraging pop-ups and market testing and would keep an area vibrant and productive, bringing life to abandoned spots and restoring footfall
- **Extend the reduced rates scheme for empty premises.** Just as residents are liable for council tax on their empty properties (with some exceptions), so should landlords of commercial premises be liable for business rates. Instead of having to pay the full rate after three months, they should be reduced on empty commercial premises retained by the freeholder to a level low enough for the landlord to keep them viable and ready-to-use but high enough for them to seek tenants. Likewise, rates on empty commercial premises retained by the leaseholder must also be low enough not to drive them to bankruptcy while trying to sell their lease.
- **Introduce a fair, easy, straightforward retail tax system.** To an outsider, there is no logic to the unnecessarily complicated, unfair and unacceptably slow business rates system. It forces retailers to divert their time to a cumbersome and frustrating bureaucratic appeals process and years of uncertainty waiting for the outcome. With so many risks to bricks-and-mortar retailers, it is time to be bold and introduce a fair, easy, straightforward tax system that releases time, removes uncertainty, reduces anxiety and frees retailers from an obsolete tax system.
- **An Amazon tax is only a halfway house.** Given that so many retailers operate online and in store, it is wrong to penalise bricks-and-mortar retailers for moving with the times and embracing new ways of shopping. But there is a world of difference between huge, sometimes international, online retailers and shops on high streets with a secondary stream of income. An Amazon tax, potentially requiring

international co-operation, only partly deals with the gargantuan gap in the tax rates meted out to physical shops compared to warehouse-based traders. A dual approach, which both increases tax rates for online retailers and reduces tax rates on bricks-and-mortar retailers should enable our local retailers to continue being the heart and soul of our communities. It is important to remember that warehouse-based businesses and the chains have far greater purchasing power than independents. The cost of goods and services will be smaller to a chain and their profit margins larger. When there are glitches, the cost of absorbing bad debts or accommodating late payments could be minuscule to a chain but devastating to a small trader. Differences between the privileges and the penalties are not well understood by customers who have grown used to, and demand, the same options from all – keeping the chain or multinational in business while driving the smaller retailer out of business.

Chapter 4

Making shopping and socialising in Chiswick safe and welcoming

Tackling crime and insecurity

The ambience of our area as well as the range and diversity of shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants and other businesses attracts customers to Chiswick. If people feel insecure, or if the local environment is unattractive or poorly maintained, they will go elsewhere.

Chiswick has been targeted by gangs and individuals who come here for what they perceive to be richer pickings than elsewhere. There have been too many incidents of mugging, knife crime, robbers on mopeds and, baseball bat break-ins of shops. In the Turnham Green safer neighbourhood area (which includes much of Chiswick High Road) there were 3,070 offences committed between April 2018 and March 2020.¹⁵

Six significant factors are keeping shoppers away from our streets: lack of a police presence; poor street lighting; increased crime, including shoplifting; Mobikes/Lime-E bikes¹⁶; inadequate waste and recycling provision; and begging.

Shoplifting, especially in chains, is a daily occurrence with many chain stores reluctant to intervene in case it leads to violence or the use of knives. Drug dealing is everywhere, fuelled by crime. Our roads have become increasingly unappealing after dark since the dimmed streetlights policy was introduced. The presence of beggars is of concern and uncomfortable for everyone and frightening to some people.

The closure of the police front desk has not meant there is no longer a police presence in Chiswick. Chiswick police station is still operational and the nine-strong Chiswick team, of two PCs and one PCSO per ward, and the Brentford and Isleworth teams, are based there. We are grateful for police intervention and responses to retail crime, and their presence at two public meetings with a third promised. But more needs to be done.

We seek the following shifts in policy:

- **Install CCTV cameras in known crime hot spots.** There is scope for temporary CCTV cameras to be installed in hot spots to deter, identify and arrest criminals. The police have considerable intelligence about where crime occurs, including muggings and bike theft.
- **Support the installation of in-store CCTV systems.** There are several suppliers in Hounslow that provide systems specifically for retailers. The Chiswick Shops Task Force will be arranging a presentation from one supplier to traders. Given the contribution they make to retailers feeling safe, councils should provide grants for installing these systems.
- **Improve communications between police and traders.** We appreciate the efforts that Chiswick's ward policing teams are making to improve communications. There needs to be a greater push of the Online Watch Link system (known as OWL) to traders so that they all sign up to receive alerts and news from our police teams. In addition, Turnham Green ward police have offered to meet groups of traders regularly to discuss risks, prevention and actions. The same needs to be done for all three wards. The Chiswick Shops Task Force will gladly facilitate this.
- **Reinvigorate and extend the Shopwatch scheme.** Retailers face regular shoplifting. One large retailer loses an unfathomably large sum every year. In smaller businesses, shoplifting can be hard to spot making intervention impossible. Regardless of its value, shop theft causes anxiety and decreases morale; one theft can be devastating. Some Chiswick traders operate a Shopwatch system alerting each other to suspicious activity or actual theft. Although shoplifters are often highly accomplished and can sweep through an area before retailers can act, Shopwatch is a useful tool and should be extended to all retailers (including the chains) in Chiswick. The Chiswick Shops Task Force will gladly help with this.

¹⁵ SNT 070, Turnham Green, on the Metropolitan Police dashboard:
<https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/crime-data-dashboard/>

¹⁶ Dealt with in Chapter 7.

- **Encourage traders to report thefts of less than £50.** Local police have said that reporting individual thefts of goods of less than £50 in value will not be investigated, there are occasions when similar thefts take place in other shops which collectively add up to more than the £50 threshold. Reporting each theft allows them to identify shoplifters and take action so traders should be encouraged to report small thefts. The Chiswick Shops Task Force will gladly encourage this.
- **Review policies and legislation tackling shoplifting and retail crime.** Everyone is aware of the complexities of shoplifting and its causes. There is much less awareness of the differences in approach taken by larger stores (some have a policy of not intervening because of the risks of violence while others will intervene). Regardless of the store's approach, or its size, it is a fact that retail crime is not always reported. A recent Co-op research study *It's not part of the job* provides a useful summary of the issue and suggestions for change based on taking a public health approach.¹⁷
- **Increase evening patrols on shopping streets.** It is, of course, difficult to take police away from residential roads where there are also crime risks. However, patrolling shopping streets, especially during the evenings, would reassure local residents and encourage them to go out to socialise and boost the night-time economy. As more officers become available following the government's decision to expand the police service, this ought to be a local priority.
- **Bring in special constables.** We urge the Borough Commander to recruit, or transfer, specials to Chiswick. Their presence could improve local confidence in being out and about.
- **Publicise the fact that Chiswick police still work at Chiswick police station.** Many residents do not realise that the entire Chiswick team is based there (the only change is that the seldom-used reporting desk has closed). When at full strength, with two PCs and one PCSO in each ward, a total of six PCs and three PCSOs patrol our streets in shifts.
- **Plan ahead for the predicted closure of Chiswick police station.** We would like our police team to identify where else in Chiswick they would like to be based when the current building ceases to be a police station, and what they need to run efficiently, in case there are opportunities for them to move into an empty retail unit (if appropriate).
- **Look at crime and safety from our retailers' point of view.** The needs of retailers, big and small, need to be understood. It is sometimes suggested that all shops should have shutters but while this might prevent some types of crime it takes no account of the visual appeal of our area or of the cost to traders of installing them. External shutters stay shut, not open, and their presence implies the shop is in a high crime area. Shop fronts attract customers and, while we need to tackle crime, we need to consult independent traders before making recommendations.

¹⁷ Co-op research study: *It's not part of the job*:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/5ywmq66472jr/22QfMejeWYbimJ9ykX9W9h/0e99f15c0ed24c16ab74d38b42d5129a/It_s_not_part_of_the_job_report.pdf

Box 4: Support and encourage the night-time economy

As one trader said to us: “Why would anyone want to be out on the High Road when it’s as dark as this?”

Everyone knows that good lighting deters crime. Indeed, when Deputy Borough Commander Gary Taylor spoke at the first public meeting on the future of policing in Chiswick (in December 2018), he said he had looked for obvious concerns and cited lighting as an obvious crime deterrent and needing change. Good lighting also encourages people to go out, or stay out, to enjoy their neighbourhood. After dusk, the emptiness of our formerly buzzing streets is striking. It is easy to see why residents don’t shop or eat or drink out when it’s dark. Looking down on Chiswick High Road, and other shopping streets, it’s absolutely clear. Our roads, in dimmed light, look and feel unsafe and uninviting.

The change to LED lighting has had mixed results. Although they apparently throw a brighter light, it falls in a narrower span, leaving areas of darkness between lampposts. Walking along pavements at night can be an unnecessarily nerve-wracking experience.

Just as there should be no hiding places where criminals can wait to pounce, or dark routes where they can prey on others, there should also be no deterrent, because of poor lighting, to residents feeling safe and welcome outside at night. Given the London Mayor’s wish for everyone to turn first to active travel – walking and cycling – returning lighting levels to full strength would encourage walking and cycling to and from our independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants all year not just on light summer evenings. The saving (£60,000 a year in Hounslow’s Chiswick) from reducing lighting by 20 per cent from dusk to midnight and 50 per cent from midnight to dawn in Chiswick is a false economy. It has had damaging consequences amounting to far greater losses to retailers than the saving to Hounslow. Ealing council has made a similar change, reducing lighting by 25 per cent from 10pm and a further 25 per cent from midnight to dawn. This one-dimensional change – a financial decision – has had unintended consequences – reduced footfall and reduced business for retailers.

We recognise the importance of reducing costs, not wasting energy and not contributing to climate change, but a balance is needed. We can’t live our lives in the dark or at home – there are other ways to combat climate change.

These changes are essential:

- **Return street lighting to full strength during the evening throughout Chiswick.** Returning to full lighting from dusk until 1am (not midnight) reflects local peoples’ need to go out and get home safely. At the very least, it must be returned to full strength along all our shopping or entertaining streets and roads leading to or from train and tube stations and along bus routes. See Appendix 1 for our list of roads to which this would apply although, ultimately, this should be done throughout Chiswick and Hounslow.
- **Install more lighting along retail and night-time economy routes.** The need for better lighting is especially striking at the top of Turnham Green Terrace where at least one shop leaves its lights on all night to help those walking along the pavement from the bus and tube to residential roads. No shop should have to spend privately for public safety. We need more working lampposts.

Chapter 5

A better street environment

Improving the ambience and safety of our streets

The physical environment we live, work and shop in affects our behaviour. A dirty high street, with bags of rubbish, broken paving stones, pot-holed roads and a lack of greenery, is an unattractive place to visit. Address these problems, and customers will want to be out supporting traders so they stay in business.

Most of Chiswick benefits from a good urban environment. But, as with all urban areas, we have our share of problems. The frustration is that often these are not addressed in an holistic way by the local councils (let alone jointly by Ealing and Hounslow working together). In this chapter we consider what can be done to improve our local street environment.

If people have a pleasant journey, and can walk without worrying about tripping, cycle without dodging around potholes, or drive without damaging their cars, they will enjoy being out in their home town or, as visitors, return and spend their money here. These common-sense measures would make an enormous difference to improving the ambience and safety of Chiswick's streets:

- **Improve the maintenance of our roads.** A recent statement by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) highlighted the cost to businesses of disruption from potholes that cause traffic congestion and bottlenecks as well as damage to trade and customers' vehicles.¹⁸ Ealing received 397 complaints about potholes; Hounslow received 357 complaints, with Chiswick High Road cited as the worst road for potholes.¹⁹ Residents and traders do not need a survey to tell them our roads are neglected. Given that the Government announced additional funding to tackle the backlog of potholes this year, we now need to see an improvement in maintenance.²⁰
- **Increase and improve street cleaning regimes.** All councillors receive numerous complaints about the infrequency of pavement repairs and street cleaning and the slowness to respond. Detritus that becomes soggy or compacted on roads and paths and along the edges of our pavements deters walking, cycling and driving. Walking through Chiswick is often unpleasant and a deterrent to being out. Leaf fall was very poorly managed in winter 2019/20.
- **Improve and maintain planted areas.** The raised beds at and near the junction of Devonshire Road and Chiswick High Road need improvement and regular maintenance. The space at the top of Turnham Green Terrace has been renovated recently but, again, will need to be maintained long term. Compare these with the raised bed on the corner of Chiswick Lane and Chiswick High Road. This is maintained voluntarily by a local trader to enhance the area and sets a very high standard that should be emulated throughout Chiswick. However, we cannot rely on traders having the time or inclination to enhance and maintain our street scene. The council must allocate funds to maintaining planted areas in retail streets.
- **Install more, and improve existing, seating areas.** There are very few benches, or seating areas, in Chiswick. Most are in poor condition and, often placed next to waste bins, one looks out onto the Hogarth roundabout, far from attractive spots to sit. Our large, older population might appreciate the chance to sit for a few minutes. Others would value a pause while carrying heavy shopping. While some might like a break in a café, not everyone can afford to do this every time they are out. We need more benches, in attractive settings, along our shopping streets or nearby where pavements are narrow. Some councils are installing benches screened by attractive plants yet there is no vision for this in the heart of Chiswick or alongside our many shopping roads. Instead, our pavements are cluttered with ugly or

¹⁸ FSB freedom of information request to London boroughs, January 2019:

<https://firstvoice.fsb.org.uk/first-voice/regional-voice/all-33-london-boroughs-respond-to-the-fsb-potholes-freedom-of-information-request.html>

¹⁹ 'Chiswick High Road borough's worst for potholes,' *Chiswick W4.com*, 3 February 2019:

<http://www.chiswickw4.com/default.asp?section=info&page=conroad247.htm>

²⁰ Announced in the Budget, March 2020; see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/201-million-road-repair-fund-to-resurface-extra-1000-miles>

unnecessary street furniture including large advertising blocks. We will gladly work with the council – involving traders and residents – to make these changes.

- **Ban further advertising and remove existing advertising stands.** Chiswick is seen as prime advertising space. It has become a cluttered dumping ground for advertising as locals have noted. The targets are not Chiswick residents but people passing through. The offer by one major advertiser of free internet connections was a sham reason for installing advertising hoardings that had no relevance to our local lives. When one was installed recently, councillors were told that it could not be refused as it replaced a previous advertising stand. This weak attitude must be changed. It should be possible to refuse applications for advertising boards – street clutter by another name – to ensure that whatever is on our streets is relevant to Chiswick, residents and businesses, not just to benefit the applicant.²¹
- **Restrict advertising for non-local events.** An additional problem in Hounslow is that anyone holding a funfair or similar event, whether in Chiswick or beyond, can put up posters in Chiswick to advertise that event from 14 days before the event provided that they inform the planning department. This legal system, and illegal fly-posting, starts having an effect in late March/early April and lasts into winter with large banners on railings and fly posting on empty premises and street furniture. This raises numerous complaints from residents. Illegal posters are removed speedily (with some exceptions) by Hounslow Highways, which is much appreciated. Some improvements were made in 2019, following strong representations by councillors, but with only one funfair organiser. Councils should restrict advertising in Chiswick for events beyond Chiswick, prescribing the event locations for which advertising should be allowed.
- **Refuse applications that impede movement, visibility and views.** We thank Hounslow council for resisting the application from InLink to install large visually intrusive mock-phone booths that were advertising hoardings in disguise. More recently, as mentioned above, a large, bulky and intrusive advertising sign was installed on Chiswick High Road. The argument was that there had been one (much smaller, less intrusive) previously so there was no reason to refuse a replacement. There may have been legal difficulties in refusing permission but we urge councils to take every opportunity to improve the street scene and visibility. All applications for street furniture or services must be looked at in the context of the street scene, with a strong understanding of what is visually appropriate.

All these measures need co-operation between traders and the local councils and the involvement of residents to make them work most effectively.

Managing waste and recycling better

As one resident said in a recent forum discussion, “The litter and uncleared rubbish in Chiswick does not make it a pleasant environment. Richmond Council is well run and has an effective environment department.”

At times, residents feel ashamed of our streets. After shops close, our streets are littered with recycling and waste sacks put out for collection by traders’ private waste collectors. Walking with friends from outside the area is embarrassing, stepping over or past heaps of sacks and cardboard. Some shops have industrial-sized waste bins behind their premises that are abused by others, filling them with their waste or recycling, or fly tippers who dump waste near them. This is made worse by residents’ waste sacks littering our pavements, and overflowing public waste bins.

Part of the problem is that retailers have to pay for their recycling and waste to be collected. The result is that many private collectors operate here, with different collection rules, turning our roads into public waste sites. Meanwhile, Hounslow’s recycling and waste centre is operating under capacity despite its huge capital cost.

In Ealing, the arrangements for Pitshanger Lane (where almost all shops are independents) set a standard for Hounslow to follow. Ealing collects waste and recycling from retailers between 10am and 11am each morning which ensures that the streets are clean. Retailers take enormous pride in the road; litter is noticeably absent. The same could be done in Chiswick:

²¹ See Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advertisements>

- **Provide a daytime retail waste and recycling service.** As with Pitshanger Lane in Ealing, this should be at a fixed time during the day so that retailers know when to put out their waste and recycling, knowing it will be collected promptly, rather than leave it out overnight. Hounslow must first prove it will do this efficiently so the scheme should be piloted to prove that it will work. The trial must include an assessment of frequency; many retailers currently feel that waste bins are not emptied often enough. It must also include a clear-up service, immediately after collection, to ensure that our streets are not left littered with recycling and waste either dropped during collection or not properly collected. If it proves successful at trial, it should then be introduced for all free of charge, at least for the first year for each trader, to show that Hounslow recognises that it will enable retailers to continue trading and pay business rates. On the whole, traders feel strongly it should be free of charge. Ealing's is a pay by bag service.
- **Remove street cleaning and litter pick sacks on the day they are filled.** Turnham Green ward has street sweeps every other Friday. The sacks are then left on pavements and verges over the weekend for a Monday collection and all too often become an eyesore, particularly if the sacks are blown round by the wind or the contents strewn by vermin. Sacks must be removed on the day.
- **Redesign waste bins so they are attractive, used appropriately and deter fly tipping.** Bin stores could be installed to hide unsightly bins and reduce misuse. These would demonstrate the importance of good waste management and increase respect for it. We note that Hounslow has introduced tidy bin stores for flats above shops on Lampton Road near Hounslow Central tube.
- **Empty bins more frequently.** Overflowing bins are not only unsightly and speak of inefficiency, they also attract vermin and fly tipping. Increasing the frequency that bins are emptied would reduce the problem.
- **Run a pilot recycling and waste scheme in Chiswick.** Both councils could run a pilot recycling and waste scheme in Chiswick to see what benefits it brings. Accompanied by an education campaign and good communications, this would improve the ambience of our shopping streets and increase recycling, reduce waste and deter fly tipping.

A new policy on street furniture

As in so many places, street furniture has been placed on Chiswick's retail streets insensitively, restricting movement along pavements and making walking unpleasant. Applications for even more street clutter, that could also impede the view, have been received forcing retailers to spend time commenting on planning applications that ought not to see the light of day. This is unhelpful to the local retail economy.

As Hounslow Highways says on its website: "graffiti and fly-posting are criminal damage, anti-social, create a negative impression of the local neighbourhood and contribute to an increased fear of crime." Their prompt removal is essential.

There is more to be done, for example as follows:

- **Have a clear street furniture policy that is bespoke to each retail area.** Chiswick's strength and potential lie in its difference. That difference must be preserved and both councils must do all they can to ensure that it is achieved. For example, Transport for London's (TfL) Legible London wayfinder maps are helpful in central London where there are many tourists who need to locate landmarks. In Chiswick, which is not a significant tourist destination, they are rarely used. They have also been insensitively placed, blocking views and impeding walking.
- **Install road direction signs with thought and care.** Badly designed and wrongly placed signs appeared on Turnham Green Terrace and Chiswick High Road impeding pavement use, much to the irritation and derision of residents.²² It is hard to understand how they were approved. Direction and road signs should be placed sensitively and sensibly.
- **Graffiti and flyposting.** Hounslow Highways provides a highly responsive and reliable service to remove graffiti and flyposting, which is much appreciated. This must be retained.

²² 'Hounslow Highways agrees placing of new traffic sign is "inconvenient" for pedestrians,' *Chiswick W4.com*, 22 March 2019: <http://www.chiswickw4.com/default.asp?section=info&page=signpostobstruction002.htm>

- **Install banners, bunting, imaginative lighting and planters.** In Pitshanger Lane cheerful bunting is strung across the road giving it a welcoming party atmosphere that invites residents and visitors to stay a while. In Chiswick, bunting and/or fairy/string lighting across roads or wound around trees and along branches or above shops could encourage people to shop. Uplighting the magnificent trees on Chiswick High Road, and others elsewhere, would improve ambience and safety. Eye-catching banners could be installed all year round, changing regularly including at Christmas to revitalise interest. Councils should consult retailers on what would work well to enhance areas and encourage spending.
- **Establish a shop fronts' grant scheme.** Some shops have shop fronts that have evolved over many eras, meeting regulations that no longer apply. Given that a stretch of Chiswick High Road, as an example, is in a conservation area there is an opportunity to support shops to improve their out of date shop fronts. There should be some sensible design parameters, to encourage good design but also allow for individuality. Each installation would provide an opportunity to highlight a type of shop or a stretch of shops, encouraging custom.
- **Landlords must be required to enhance the street scene if their premises are unoccupied.** Landlords of empty premises, whether the lease has ended or the site is under construction, need to be more sensitive to the local area and install window displays or internal window covers so that their premises are less unattractive. Lendlease was willing and swift to do this at Empire House, when asked; this was much appreciated and caused a positive shift in public opinion. In another shop, where the words 'Closing Down Sale' were painted haphazardly on its windows and left up for months, an appeal to the landlord to remove them was ignored, much to nearby traders' dismay. If there isn't scope to put up attractive window decals, a low level of lighting would improve the streetscape and perhaps also improve the attractiveness of the premises to a potential lessee/buyer. Clearly, a balance has to be struck between the effect on the area of a dark empty unit and the cost to the landlord/tenant and, of course, environmental wastefulness but landlords have a responsibility to respect the area in which they have invested and to take steps to minimise the impact on the road and residents of their empty premises.

Chapter 6

Encouraging business success – improving the work of Ealing and Hounslow Councils

As one Chiswick trader with a very small shop space said to us: “I pay the council more every month than I pay myself”. Another hadn’t drawn any wage or salary from his business for over a year. These were typical comments and show retailers are working for the council’s benefit, not for themselves. Retailers provide employment and generate revenue for the government and local councils. They must be enabled to earn for themselves. This is fundamentally important now, after the impact of COVID-19.

There are many ways the two councils could help residents and retailers to improve our area and in the process promote economic growth. We would like to see the following:

- **Abolish, or at least significantly reduce, fees and charges including for A-boards and outdoor seating and introduce a pay monthly scheme in Hounslow.** At present Hounslow Council charges for displaying an A-board or outdoor seating. This is not a requirement; the Council has chosen to do this to secure additional revenue. We believe these charges are unnecessarily onerous and should be abolished or reduced. If retained, Hounslow should introduce a pay monthly scheme, as happens in Ealing, which allows for greater flexibility.
- **Revise the street trading policy to reflect local character.** Now that the rule that no street stall within 200m of a business can sell comparable goods has been deemed unlawful (but a new rule remains in draft), there is very little protection from street stalls. Street stalls are an issue because they take business away from bricks and mortar shops whose costs are far higher. They often block the view of shops behind them, denying those shops the chance to get value from their shop front displays. They can be inappropriate for other reasons such as outside non-food outlets where smells would detract from the service or products provided, or near flats/houses. The impact on shops of existing street stalls has been significant with traders a surprising distance away reporting much-reduced custom. For example, shops near the entrance to Chiswick Business Park have lost business from the stalls that trade beside their premises. Cafés much further along the High Road have lost business to them, too. Rather than approve applications for street stalls, councils should support and promote existing shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants all of whom significantly boost local authority revenue.
- **Apply the same licensing rules to council events as other events.** In Hounslow, traders and others wanting to hold an event must apply for a licence; events organised by the council face no restrictions. This results in council events being organised without adequate consultation locally and in direct competition with local independent shops. This is unfair; councils should be subject to the same rules and restrictions.
- **Protect Chiswick’s retail/commercial space through an Article 4 Direction.** Experience in other boroughs shows that allowing commercial space to be converted to residential or non-commercial use, through permitted development rights, severely affects the area. Maintaining a town centre or business base becomes a struggle. This affects footfall which then makes it even harder to trade as a retailer. Looking at it from another perspective, town centres are not compatible with ground-floor residential living (where residents will experience the worst effects of, for example, the night-time economy, HGV deliveries and other overnight disruptions). If properties are converted to residential, they are highly unlikely to be changed back to commercial use. If our shopping streets are not protected, Chiswick will become even less attractive to retailers, residents and employers who are already here and to newcomers.
- **Good urban design must be part of regenerating high streets.** Much of Chiswick’s charm as a retail destination can be attributed to the quirkiness of its design. Stretches of single storey shops, pubs in listed buildings, retail units under historically significant blocks – all add character and difference and enable individuality of approach among retailers. Rows of identikit chains, bland developments that look the same as any town anywhere, characterless shop fronts should have no place here. As councillors we will continue to oppose planning applications that threaten Chiswick’s uniqueness and success.
- **Improve the business rates discount for London Living Wage employers.** In Hounslow, businesses including retailers that are accredited with the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) are eligible to apply for a

one-off business rates discount of up to £1,000. The discount is graduated with employers who have 501 or more employees being eligible for the full £1,000. Smaller businesses, such as retailers, with up to 10 employees are eligible for a £50 discount. This is hardly worth applying for. Unsurprisingly, take up in Hounslow, which can make as few as 100 awards a year, is low. The scheme should be amended so that only independent traders can apply and that the full £1,000 is available to any independent business or retailer with LWF accreditation, regardless of its size.

- **Adapt the Future High Streets Fund.** In describing who this potentially hugely helpful £675m fund was for, the ministers said in their introduction, “we are looking to work with visionary local leaders who understand what their local communities will need in the years to come”. It then limited expressions of interest to local authorities. It is the local traders who interact face-to-face and day-to-day with their customers, anticipating and responding to demand, who are the visionaries. It is their ideas and proposals that are needed, not just those of council officers. This approach also allows councils to promote their political vision which is not necessarily beneficial to high streets and traders. In Hounslow, the council stated that it would apply to this fund – but not for Chiswick. The scheme should allow representatives of neighbourhoods – traders or those they choose to be represented by – to apply. When consultation or engagement takes place it should not be with favoured individuals or groups but with the relevant community or with genuine representatives of those communities.
- **Respect local knowledge and experience.** Decisions made by councillors who do not represent this area about Chiswick are frequently accompanied by the comment, “I don’t know the area” or “I do know Chiswick. I’ve driven along the High Road a few times”. These sorts of comments are insulting to residents and retailers many of whom have lived or worked here for decades. A lack of respect for local knowledge and expertise and a determination to make decisions despite what locals say is all too often obvious. This was noted in a recent Hounslow customer service survey: “Our recent residents’ survey indicated that our approach was aloof, out of touch and uncaring. Our interactions with our residents and businesses lacked personal attention and was characterised as being dismissive”. Implementing the policies in this retail report presents an opportunity for this view to be reversed. By listening to and working with, not against, Chiswick’s retailers the decline of Chiswick’s retail economy can be halted.

Reform the planning system keeping the retail economy in mind

The National Planning Policy Framework, the London Plan and Hounslow’s local plan all disadvantage local areas. There is more than irony in the description “opportunity areas” when they actively take opportunities from existing areas and businesses.

We need urgent change to the planning system as it affects traders. This may require action by national government as well as by our local councils. We believe the following are the most urgent priorities:

- **Ensure social connections are forged between new developments and Chiswick.** Massive high-rise developments are likely soon to separate Chiswick from the rest of the two boroughs in which it falls, driving a wedge between it and the areas beyond. This insensitive expansion of a long-settled low-rise town threatens Chiswick’s survival as an attractive and desirable neighbourhood. While these large developments lack the infrastructure they need, they are being developed with their own retail areas – likely to be dominated by chains – just when Chiswick needs more people to shop, eat and drink, and socialise in existing retail areas. Despite this point being raised in pre-planning discussions and at planning committee, neither planners nor developers are listening. This is a flawed approach that fails Chiswick and other areas. Developers should be encouraged to support existing retail economies. At the very least, they should ask existing retailers if they would like to trade in their retail units or work with the community to identify what shops or services the area lacks.
- **Use planning law to maintain local character, difference and diversity.** Far too many local authority and pan-London policies do not value local character or difference. Councils need clear policies for the development of their boroughs based on good urban design, and fair criteria for planning, licensing and change of use that support local difference. We need closer working between Hounslow and Ealing councils so that large developments that will impact on Chiswick are analysed for their effect on Chiswick’s retail economy.

- **Create zones where changes of use from offices or trade premises to residential cannot be granted.** In the quest to meet the London mayor's housing targets, office blocks in Chiswick have been replaced by residential blocks. As well as imposing additional strain on local infrastructure, these conversions adversely affect the daytime trade of local traders who report reduced lunchtime trade affecting the viability of their businesses. If a café, restaurant, service business or shop cannot survive without its daytime customers, it will not be available to residents in the evenings and at weekends. The impact of policies must include an understanding of the impact on the overall retail trade.
- **Create zones where there cannot be any changes of use that favour estate agents and charity shops.** There are several locations where there must be no further changes of use that favour estate agents, or charity shops. We ask Hounslow and Ealing councils not to allow any more changes of use in Chiswick without proper local consultation – and to listen to the views of independent retailers in particular.
- **Say no to more charity shops.** Charity shops are, of course, part of every high street but residents have said that Chiswick has reached charity shop saturation point. Further, registered charities who use their premises wholly or mainly for charitable purposes receive an 80 per cent reduction in business rates and can apply for a reduction of the remaining 20 per cent. This inevitably skews rents (with no rates to pay, they won't feel the same rent squeeze independent shops feel) and gives Chiswick a more corporate feel.
- **Say no to estate agents wanting shop front premises.** Several estate agents have shown they do not need shop front premises to thrive now that house hunting has moved online. When one estate agent moved from Chiswick High Road to Turnham Green Terrace, a nearby independent trader counted the number of people visiting it; only the estate agents' staff walked in or out the entire day. Ground floor premises should be set free for retailers who will bring shoppers and diners to the area.
- **Allow local traders to influence their area.** Enlightened landowners in other parts of London and beyond have shown what can be done to an area if it is properly curated, with thought given to what makes their area different and appealing. Thoughtless imposition has changed Chiswick already. We will host a public meeting asking residents and traders what they want of Chiswick, and what Chiswick needs, to influence landlords, agents and councils to enable Chiswick to fulfil its potential.
- **Consistency of decision making across departments.** One of the reasons given when refusing a national chain restaurant's planning application for additional outdoor seating this year was because C9 would be carved through the space the restaurant wanted to use. A few weeks later, a licensing application was granted for a street food stall on another stretch of pavement where C9 will travel. This inconsistency denied a restaurant that pays huge sums in business rates the chance to bring in more income (if granted, the business would have benefited from the late 2019 summer weather) while providing that opportunity to a street stall holder whose financial investment in Chiswick is a couple of hundred pounds. Decisions should be consistent.
- **Consult businesses and residents directly by letter, not by haphazard placement of signs on nearby trees or posts.** Poorly advertised licensing and planning applications are a constant concern. Recent examples include placing a licensing application on a tree so that it faced away from the pavement with the result that local traders didn't notice it. Traders need to be consulted directly by post or email so that they can object to changes that will harm their businesses.

Develop an innovative procurement policy following other councils' lead

Hounslow and Ealing councils should take the lead and encourage residents to shop at local independents by supporting local independents themselves. Other councils already do this, inspired by Manchester City Council's progressive procurement policies through which it buys locally, generating positive impacts for its local economy and residents as well as making significant savings in its own budget.²³ Their policies go further than the retail economy, and include services and other suppliers, as could those of Hounslow and Ealing. For the purposes of this strategy document, we look only at retail options. To boost the Chiswick retail economy, councils should:

²³ *The power of procurement II*, Matthew Jackson, Centre for Local Economies, February 2017: <https://cles.org.uk/publications/the-power-of-procurement-2/>

- **Introduce a policy that encourages local businesses to fulfil council contracts.** Small and medium sized local businesses should not be excluded from tender lists simply because they are small; they should be encouraged to bid for council contracts. For example, Hounslow council appointed Coffee Republic to run the café in Hounslow House basing its decision on its “ambition to find sustainable solutions on waste and recycling”. Independents may well also have ambitions about these important points; indeed, some might already fulfil them. They should be actively invited to bid for contracts and being independent should add weight to their bid. In relation to the café in Hounslow House, Hounslow council should invite independents in the borough to take up the space by rota. This would not only support the independent but also introduce variety which would increase the attractiveness of the café to staff and visitors. This local supplier rota must be introduced when Coffee Republic’s contract comes to an end.
- **Make the economic development team responsible for co-ordinating and managing independent suppliers.** The economic development team could be responsible for seeking bids from independents and co-ordinating schemes involving independents to encourage and enable independent suppliers to provide services. For example, Hounslow council’s choice of Halfords as its partner in the Cycle to Work scheme might mean it is easier to administer. But it denied valued, local independents, such as Fudge’s Cycles and Woolsey of Acton the chance to benefit from them and contribute to the local economy. Additionally, while several schemes include independents, some have proven to be very expensive for those independents (which have to pay more to take part). Councils should choose schemes carefully so independents don’t lose out. Training for economic development teams must include spending time with independent retailers to increase understanding, knowledge and the context within which independents trade.
- **National government should encourage local authorities to seek bids for contracts from, and award them to, local independents.** The government could provide a much-needed boost to local areas by encouraging councils to recognise the social value of awarding contracts to local independents. It should publish an annual score chart showing the number of independents who were awarded local authority contracts, the value of those contracts, the number of local employees working on those contracts, and other local benefits.

Enable and encourage residents and visitors to shop locally

A thriving high street provides a balance between chains and local independents. As we have seen in Chiswick, both are under pressure in the current retail climate – chains and independents have closed – and those pressures will have been increased by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both can be adversely affected by online shopping though many chains also operate online as part of their business model. The onus is on everyone in a position of influence to promote the value independents bring to an area and not just support the chains. We recommend that:

- **Ministers should lead by example.** It has been good to see them doing so as the pandemic lockdown restrictions have eased. After all, ministers are also MPs with local retailers in their constituencies. They should be seen shopping, eating, drinking, socialising, entertaining in and talking about their local independents, and using other services provided by independents, in their constituencies.
- **Councillors too should lead by example.** Councillors should also actively support local independents in their wards and boroughs. They should use every opportunity to make clear their support for their independents, not just the chains.

Work with traders on regulation, not against them

Making regulation effective has been one of the central aims of national and local government over the last 20 years. Successive governments have tried to make regulation better through a number of initiatives. These have often brought welcome reductions in red tape and improvements in consultation before regulations are implemented. But so often the problem is not the original regulation but how it is implemented.

Both Ealing and Hounslow Councils are criticised by local traders for insensitivity, a lack of understanding of business life and, on occasions, rude and aggressive behaviour. Most of the time the main problem is poor communication – whether written or oral. But there are other areas where substantial improvement is needed. We understand that, from the perspective of the councils, achieving a high standard of service in London is not

always easy because of difficulties in recruitment, language barriers and other issues. But we believe they can do better and in some areas need urgently to do so. Councils must recognise that actions that benefit a community bring social benefits well beyond any possible financial benefits.

Similarly, residents are critical of the council's approach with one saying recently, "Hounslow Council – once again acting against Chiswick. I can't believe that it is anything other than out of spite."

We seek the following:

- **Setting and maintaining high standards for outsourced services.** In common with other local authorities, Ealing and Hounslow councils have outsourced many services. While outsourcing can be appropriate for some services, an outsourced service is only as good as the initial contract and its supervision by council officers. Outsourcing is not simply about price; it is also about quality.
- **Require outsourced companies to recognise social value.** While Liberata, a Hounslow contractor, has a difficult job chasing debts, its pay-up-or-close approach to traders who, for example, miss a business rates payment date, makes traders feel not only as if they aren't valued but also as if they are criminals. Councils should require outsourced providers to build local knowledge, take it into account, respect local business owners' contributions to the community, and approach local traders with mutual respect.
- **Extend payment deadlines to accommodate public holidays and other factors.** Demands for payment must have time limits that take into account public holidays. Residents and retailers report incidents where reminders have arrived after the deadline for payment or the deadline could not be met as the council was closed. No-one, whether missing a payment for the first time or again, should feel threatened or anxious by factors beyond their control.
- **Breaches must be handled less heavy-handedly.** Breaches of regulations must, of course, be followed up and the trader given the chance to rectify. Currently, the attitude of some enforcement officers to what are, in reality, minor breaches (such as plant pots or A-boards outside premises) are treated as if they were the most serious criminal acts. This is unnecessary. Be nice, is the message from retailers.
- **In-house and out-sourced staff should visit local areas to understand pressures and circumstances.** New, and existing, staff – whether in-house or out-sourced – should be required to visit areas where they are likely to have to deal with issues, or when issues or opportunities arise, so that they understand the climate and circumstances facing those they are serving. This does not mean that, for example, late payments should not be pursued. It should, however, help those chasing payment to choose words that recognise the difficulties facing the people they are chasing. Similarly, staff who have had an explanation from one trader about difficulties should bear those in mind when chasing others. There is a corporate lack of understanding about – and empathy for - the retail sector and this needs to change.
- **Council staff should consult ward councillors before recommending actions or initiatives.** Local councillors know their areas well and may well know them better than officers. They should be consulted long before suggestions reach draft policy papers. Strong and positive collaboration is essential. Recent examples of problems of this kind included drawing up an events strategy based on false assumptions about what would work in Chiswick that, if implemented, would have adversely affected many existing retailers. The decision to go ahead with a dockless bike scheme came out of the blue and caused considerable irritation in the community. This was partly because of chaos caused by abandoned bikes on pavements but also because it involved Hounslow council giving one company the right to take up space on pavements that all other traders have to pay for. This was unfair. And now we have the imposition of emergency measures on our major shopping streets without any consultation and disregarding the very loud appeals from retailers. The community wants officers to ask first and avoid surprises; imposition should never happen.

Chapter 7

Walking, cycling, parking and public transport

Encourage walking not just cycling

The nine councillors for Chiswick in Hounslow recently published their walking and cycling policy making clear their long-held views that walking and cycling must be encouraged.²⁴ As that policy notes, because many of the journeys we all make are only for short distances, increased walking and cycling can help to reduce car use and ease pressure on public transport. This is particularly important after the pandemic as we risk a rise in car traffic from people seeking to avoid public transport. There needs to be a longer-term shift towards travelling on foot or by bike but that means traffic and cycling schemes that meet local needs.

In 2019 5,452 people signed a petition requesting Hounslow Council to reject Transport for London's (TfL) proposal for Cycle Superhighway 9 (CS9, now known as Cycleway 9 or C9), the largest number of people to support a petition to Hounslow Council that anyone can remember. The vast majority of independent shop-front business owners along the south side of Chiswick High Road opposed C9 because it is not a local cycling scheme. It is for through-route cycling and does nothing to bring residents or visitors to the High Road from the north or south. If Hounslow Council wants to improve its tarnished relationship with independent traders and residents, it should listen to their voices and work with them and Transport for London (TfL) to design a better cycling scheme for Chiswick. The temporary emergency measures proposed after COVID-19 do not meet that need. They are on roads where cycling is already easy, indeed so easy that cyclists cycle the wrong way, against the flow of traffic, along the one-way section of Devonshire Road.

Neighbouring Hammersmith and Fulham (LBH&F) council has negotiated with TfL to put through-route cycling on the A4 up to the boundary with Chiswick and local cycling along Hammersmith Road and King Street.²⁵ This approach should be echoed in Chiswick so cyclists can continue on the A4 rather than come to an abrupt end. A precedent has been set; Hounslow council should grab the chance to follow.

The delays to construction work caused by COVID-19 provide an opportunity for a rethink. The decision to proceed with C9 has been taken but that does not mean there isn't time to mitigate its worst effects. It is worth looking at the reasons why the proposals attracted such opposition:

- the fact that it would be a fast through route;
- because it would substantially reduce the pavement space on the south side of Chiswick High Road;
- that it would increase the risk to pedestrians of colliding with cycles;
- the loss of space would make loading vehicles and accepting deliveries difficult and reduce parking for shoppers and therefore retailers;
- it would also reduce space for retailers' and residents' recycling and waste collections;
- it would reduce space for A-boards and outdoor seating affecting the café culture for which Chiswick is noted;
- it would require the removal of some of the trees lining the road;
- it would turn the centre of Chiswick into a building site during construction;
- it would damage the viability of independent and other businesses during and after construction.

These problems, and the loss of character and charm, will deter local people and visitors who value Chiswick's wide, open, tree-lined pavements and who bring significant income to Chiswick and therefore the councils.

We have discussed the impact of cycleways with people in other parts of London where these schemes have already been implemented. The so-called mini-Holland scheme in Enfield, along Palmers Green, Green Lanes

²⁴ The text of the policy statement is available at: <https://www.brentfordandisleworthconservatives.org.uk/news/hounslow-conservative-councillors-welcome-new-government-policy-walking-cycling>

²⁵ 'Hammersmith & Fulham Council plan to redesign safer Transport for London cycling routes for the borough,' 8 August 2019: <https://londonnewsonline.co.uk/hammersmith-and-fulham-council-plan-to-redesign-safer-transport-for-londons-tfl-cycling-routes-for-the-borough/>

and Winchmore Hill, has devastated several businesses.²⁶ Others have seen significant reductions in trade having lost formerly loyal customers. Traders in Orford Road, in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, have experienced similar damaging effects. We must learn from other peoples' experience, and benefit from their hindsight, not rush headlong into a scheme that will seriously affect Chiswick and its retailers.

This is even more urgent given the impact of COVID-19 on the retail economy. They cannot survive an already tricky retail climate followed by COVID-19 then followed by the removal of parking and a prolonged period of construction during which they will see business all but disappear.

We urge Hounslow and Ealing councils to work with residents and retailers to:

- **Draw up plans for cycling in Chiswick that work for Chiswick.** Everyone in Chiswick wants safer cycling within the local area. The falls in traffic volume during the pandemic have encouraged more people to cycle though the extent to which it will be sustained is unknown. Opposing C9 is not, and never was, about opposing cycling. The recent shift in LBH&F has shown that alternatives are possible. Hounslow Council should do as LBH&F has agreed – put commuter-cycling on the A4 and develop a properly thought-through, researched and modelled local cycling scheme within Chiswick including a more sensitive and sensible plan for cycling along Chiswick High Road. We need a cycling scheme that encourages and enables residents to cycle north-south and east-west, given Chiswick's geographical layout – and not at the expense of parking and driving.
- **Review and reassess C9.** The awkwardness, and risks, when crossing C9 from local roads, and the reduced pavement space, will deter people from reaching and walking along the south side of the High Road. Retailers will see their businesses decline, as has happened elsewhere. A locally designed scheme would avoid these problems. C9 as proposed must be re-designed to avoid the damaging effects it will have on our retail and leisure industry. It must in any case be revisited as it will compromise social distancing if installed through pavement.
- **Upgrade the A4 with-flow cycle paths.** Very few pedestrians walk along the A4, mostly walking to the nearest underpass so they can cross it. The existing cycle paths should be upgraded, and screened from the road with thoughtful planting, to make them a pleasure to use.
- **Increase cycle parking near independent shops.** There is scope for more cycle racks to be installed at several shopping streets in Hounslow and Ealing (see Appendix 2).
- **Upgrade cycle parking.** Bike theft continues to be a problem in Chiswick deterring shopping by bike. There is an impressive cycle hub opposite Ealing Broadway station.²⁷ Ealing and Hounslow councils should collaborate to put in similar bike parking near tube and railway stations in Chiswick. Bike hangars are being trialled; we think their appearance could be improved.

Improve public transport to and within Chiswick

The long-running campaign for the Piccadilly Line to stop at Turnham Green station throughout the day has been reinvigorated by Nick Rogers (Conservative GLA candidate for 2021). He has also called for improvements at Gunnersbury tube station and step-free access at all our tube stations (currently the only local station with a lift is Acton Town tube station at the top of Turnham Green ward). The 27 bus route was recently curtailed; it now starts/ends at Hammersmith station missing Chiswick completely. The 94 bus brings visitors to Chiswick and this service must be maintained. The E3 bus regularly disappoints residents with long gaps in service then the proverbial three buses coming along at the same time. Engineering works on the District Line affects Chiswick for far too many weekends a year, the time when our traders need people to travel to Chiswick to shop, eat/drink and socialise here.

The reality is that both councils are currently controlled by Labour and are reluctant to lobby TfL or the Labour Mayor of London. They must listen to residents and take up their calls for improved public transport services including for the Piccadilly Line, improvements to Gunnersbury station, step-free access at Chiswick tube

²⁶ See Cllr Joanna Biddolph's report on her visit to Enfield:

<http://turnhamgreen.yourcllr.com/2019/03/08/empirical-evidence-from-enfield-shows-cs9-will-put-local-shops-at-risk/>

²⁷ Ealing Broadway cycling hub: <http://www.ealingcycling.org.uk/2017/09/ealing-broadway-cycle-hub-saved.html>

stations, more buses and more regularity of buses and engineering works to be undertaken overnight to enable easy travel at weekends.

Councils should recognise that parking is essential for some people

There will always be occasions when driving is essential – to do the big family shop or to drop off or collect awkward, bulky, fragile or heavy goods and for those with more limited mobility. Time after time, surveys reveal that lack of parking spaces and parking costs are disincentives to shopping. Recent comments from Chiswick residents in a discussion on the chiswickw4.com forum headed ‘Chiswick vs Richmond – shopping’ confirmed that for local people the ease of parking in Richmond is a reason to shop and socialise there rather than nearer to home. The Local Government Association (LGA) recognises the importance of parking to consumers:

“It is important to take a customer-led approach to parking and to understand the different needs of visitors, workers, local residents and pop-and-shop casual users. Parking provision and policy should be considered in terms of the way its quality, quantity, cost and convenience affects people’s access to town centre shops and services. New technology offers opportunities to provide seamless parking as part of improved journeys in to town by helping locate available spaces, providing cashless payment and flexible durations of stay.”²⁸

Councils must recognise that pursuing an anti-car ideology is actively destroying Chiswick’s retail sector. Numerous retailers rely on their customers being able to deliver or collect awkward, bulky, fragile or heavy items. Without adequate available and flexible parking options, and if parking is further restricted (in number of spaces, cost and ease of paying), more shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants will fail. Stop-and-shop spaces are needed near all shops.

We are consequently perplexed by Hounslow council’s statement that parking is essential for retailers and for shoppers given the action it has taken to remove all parking, including the hard-fought 30 minute free stop and shop parking, from Turnham Green Terrace and Devonshire Road and 16 spaces from Chiswick High Road alongside shops from the Firestation pub to the police station. We repeat our request for the remaining spaces here (for as long as they do remain) to include the 30-minute free stop and shop parking option.²⁹

Parking in Hounslow’s part of Chiswick

Currently, if residents want to shop at Chiswick’s main Sainsbury’s they can park there free of charge. This is a huge advantage for its business, demonstrating that driving to shop there may be essential. The car park is available to anyone for two hours if they spend at least £10 in Sainsbury’s but many don’t then walk far along Chiswick High Road or to roads such as Devonshire Road and Turnham Green Terrace or west to the shops and services between Acton Lane and Chiswick roundabout.

Free 30 minute stop and shop parking was available on Turnham Green Terrace and Devonshire Road until 15th June 2020. It will remain, we hope, on other shopping roads in Chiswick [see Appendix 2]. There is paid-for parking on Chiswick High Road, Dolman Road, Essex Place and elsewhere but this all now appears to be at risk. The Central Chiswick Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) allows free parking from 12.30 to 16.30 which undoubtedly brings people to our shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants.

Meanwhile, as the council is removing parking that supports the retail economy, and discouraging car use by not allowing parking in new residential developments, it has been busy promoting parking in certain car parks that it owns, such as on Bath Road at Stamford Brook, to businesses outside our area stating that: “Your business does not have to be local”. Hounslow council appears only to want people to park if they are not local. While it wants C9 to remove parking and loading bays along Chiswick High Road affecting local independent businesses,

²⁸ *Revitalising Town Centres: A handbook for council leadership*, May 2018 report.

²⁹ London Borough of Hounslow’s recognition of and commitment to the importance of free stop-and-shop parking: Cllr Hanif Khan supported by Cllr Steve Curran at Hounslow’s cabinet question time on 16th October 2019:
<http://www.chiswickw4.com/default.asp?section=info&page=cabinet002.htm>

it offers season tickets to residents and businesses who aren't local. This is breathtakingly hypocritical, does not match the council's own commitments on climate change and ignores the real needs of residents and retailers.

Parking in Ealing's Chiswick

In Ealing's Southfield ward, free stop and shop parking is available alongside independent shops on Ealing's Chiswick roads (see Appendix 2). Regrettably, three stop-and-shop spaces on South Parade opposite Bedford Corner have been replaced by electric vehicle (EV) charging points. EV parking is important and there is an opportunity here to have both EV and stop-and-shop parking. Ealing Council recently consulted on removing all its stop-and-shop parking; we are glad that this retrograde proposal was abandoned.

We urge councils to:

- **Retain and expand stop-and-shop parking throughout Chiswick.** Stop-and-shop parking must be extended to all roads with independent shops (see Appendix 2).
- **Continue free parking in the evening to support the night time economy and at weekends.** There must be no change to the current free night-time parking system.
- **Publicise stop and shop parking spaces.** Hounslow failed to publicise stop and shop parking when it introduced it. Even now, information in some places is limited to small print on ticket machines rather than being explained on nearby signs and widely within the borough. Signs, such as those in Ealing are inconsistent, confusing and self-defeating.
- **Increase free parking days and publicise them well in advance.** Hounslow has allowed free parking at Christmas, sometimes offering several free parking days, others just one (Christmas Eve in 2018). Retailers are not routinely told about these days but have been left to find out, denying them the chance to take advantage of it by promoting it to their customers. Free parking days could work well on certain days other than Christmas (see Appendix 3). Councils should publish, at the beginning of every year, the dates when parking will be free. Traders could then promote the dates as they approach.
- **Retain CPZs with free parking in the middle of the day.** The Central Chiswick CPZ, with free parking between 12.30 and 4.30, enables many people from other parts of Chiswick and beyond to support our independent traders and it should be retained. The same is true of the Gunnersbury Park CPZ (free parking between 11.30 and 15.30) and others with similar arrangements.
- **Freeze PayByPhone parking charges for at least five years with small increases from then.** In Hounslow, parking charges are currently higher than they were with RingGo. This step is retrograde and deters people from shopping in Chiswick. The benefits are far greater than the income from parking – residents and visitors who spend in the local economy enable businesses to continue to pay business rates, provide employment, add character, diversity and desirability to our area.
- **Allocate parking spaces to electric vehicle (EV) charging spaces.** EV spaces should not replace stop-and-shop parking spaces. Those that have been lost, such as on South Parade, should be replaced. Shared parking/charging bays can prevent EV owners from easily accessing a charging point and should be avoided.
- **Retain loading bays for retailers.** TfL's own kerbside guidelines say:
"deliveries are vital for a thriving and vibrant local economy. Without deliveries, there would be no goods to buy in shops; no home deliveries; no food or drinks in bars and restaurants; offices would have no stationery and waste would pile up. Without local shops and facilities, residents have to travel further for the things they need, increasing the demand for travel on already congested networks."³⁰
Yet, C9 will take away loading bays or, as we know in relation to funeral director WS Bond, move them from where they are needed. Councils must insist that TfL retains all loading bays to ensure that our independents have the means to run their businesses and succeed.
- **Be cautious about the workplace parking levy.** This, or something similar, must never be extended to shop-front businesses.

³⁰ *Kerbside Loading Guidance*, Transport for London, January 2017, p.3.:
<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/kerbside-loading-guidance.pdf>

- **Review and reassess the impact of C9 on parking.** C9 will mean the removal of all single yellow-line parking on Chiswick High Road. The effect on shopping will be severe. Currently, there are few times when there is more than the occasional parking space, with drivers hovering or driving round again hoping someone will leave. Free parking at weekends, especially on Sundays, means that our pavements are busy with people spending money in shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants. If the parking goes, inevitably shoppers will go elsewhere and our independent retail businesses will not survive.

Parking for retailers

Hounslow retailers pay between £600 a year for a commercial permit and £900 for a private permit to park in Chiswick but this does not guarantee them a space. They have access to designated business spaces or designated shared use spaces in CPZs but, if there are no free business spaces, or if residents are parked in shared use spaces, businesses have to park elsewhere in metered parking spaces – paying twice for parking. This is unnecessary and unfair.

A fairer system is needed, including the following:

- **Halve then freeze for five years the charge retail businesses pay for parking permits.** Hounslow council agreed in its 2020/2021 budget new parking rates that require owners of polluting vehicles to pay more, recognising the need to tackle climate change. The problem is that the existing charges are excessive. Given the council’s substantial income from business rates, there is no logic to charging businesses so much more to park than residents pay.
- **Designate more shared use parking spaces to meet demand or enable traders to park.** Retailers should not have to pay twice to park because there are no shared spaces available. Meanwhile, some roads have fewer cars parked in them during the day. There is scope for more shared use parking spaces. We ask officers to work with us, and traders, to identify where the need is greatest, and the scope for increasing the number of spaces, so that traders are helped to make their businesses successful.
- **The permit should be attached to the business, not the vehicle.** Sometimes traders need to use vans, for deliveries for example; at other times, they need to use a car. Parking permits should be attached to the business, not the vehicle, to recognise traders’ need to be flexible.

Recognise the reality of who spends money locally

Transport for London has commissioned research into town centres across London to examine the mode of transport used to access them and calculate the spend by mode in shops. In the 2013 report,³¹ research showed that the average spend per visit by mode was:

Mode	Day of the survey	Average per week	Average per month
Bus	£32	£73	£292
Car	£46	£62	£247
Cycle	£22	£48	£190
Train/Tube	£41	£48	£239
Walk	£25	£86	£346

The Town Centres report of 2014-2015, which included mini-Holland boroughs, showed:³²

Mode	Day of the survey	Average per week	Average per month
Bus	£30	£71	£284
Car	£47	£71	£283
Cycle	£25	£65	£259
Train/Tube	£47	£50	£201
Walk	£25	£92	£370

³¹ TfL Town Centres Report April 2013: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/town-centres-report-13.pdf>

³² 2016 edition: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/town-centres-report-2014-15.pdf>

In the 2014-2015 survey, incorporating mini-Holland boroughs, train/tube spend might well be lower because of the relative distance from, or paucity of stations near, the businesses surveyed (such as in Enfield, for example).

Contrary to the claims made by some, it is not true that cyclists spend more than car drivers.

Further, in Chiswick where so many people walk to our main shopping roads, or use the E3 and other buses, it is clear that, here, large numbers of residents already walk or use buses to shop. Given that so many people come to Chiswick to work, and that so many office and business spaces are along or very near our shopping roads, priority should be given to walking space and public transport space.

In addition, in the research information listed above:

- cyclists made up the highest proportion of respondents who shopped online at 71 per cent;
- none of the cyclists interviewed cycled when the weather was poor, when they had heavy bags to carry or were travelling with children;
- the majority of respondents across all centres used the bus;
- buses were the only mode used by all respondents, regardless of their most common mode;
- cycling was by far the least used mode;
- people visiting town centres who walked or cycled lived “very close” to the centre;
- walking was an option in all cases;
- bus users were more likely to be female, not working, retired, non-white and have lower household incomes;
- car users were more likely to be older, working and have higher household incomes;
- train and tube users were more likely to be younger and non-white;
- cyclists were more likely to be male and white;
- frequency of visiting has increased for walk and bus but decreased for other modes particularly cycle.

Mocking and anti-car prejudice are inappropriate and out of touch and must be stopped

Hounslow’s anti-car attitude is unnecessarily one-sided. So is the mocking criticism on the local forum and social media by the most vocal proponents of C9. We fully recognise that there needs to be a reduction in car use but there are also many reasons why people need cars and why they need to drive them when they do. Repeated criticism of single person occupancy is similarly inappropriate; there are many reasons why a car journey is needed with one person in the car. Prejudice against car drivers is insidious and inappropriate. Meanwhile, more and more people are using electric vehicles in response to the climate change emergency. Speeds on our roads have been reduced to 20mph. We urge councils to moderate their attitude, and anti-car residents to moderate their language and tone, to accommodate all modes of travel. Evidence shows that being able to drive and park benefits the retail economy.

Chapter 8

Balancing chain stores and independents

Chain store costs and benefits

Chain stores bring a great many benefits to our high streets, including:

- competitive prices;
- brands we trust;
- greater choice;
- employment;
- a multiplier effect that benefits other businesses;
- investment in our communities;
- and a financial contribution through local and national taxes.

But chain stores can also squeeze out independents, not least because their greater purchasing power gives them leverage with manufacturers so they can negotiate lower prices. Their greater size means they can often stock a larger range of goods than independents can manage. They can also negotiate discounts in other areas and the largest are often able to construct stores with parking which may give them a significant competitive edge over local independents. Increasingly, supermarkets have been expanding their non-food ranges, which has created significant competition with pharmacies, florists and clothing stores.

Balance social costs with rewards

Ideally, businesses should pay for the social costs they incur and be rewarded for the social benefits they bring. For example, a business which contributes to the economic activity of a road – such as by keeping the road lit and therefore deterring crime, bringing customers to it and other businesses nearby – should arguably pay less in business rates than an empty unit or building which detracts from the neighbourhood or a business that brings limited business to others. But in practice such a system is hard to achieve.

As noted earlier, some larger chain stores can receive discounted business rates which seems unfair on their independent competitors especially when the multiplier effect is uncertain.

A few years ago, Waitrose offered free coffee to shoppers, presumably to attract new customers and increase its market share. The consequence, whether intended or not, was an immediate decline in sales in local cafés. We understand their need to be successful, and we want Waitrose here in Chiswick, but we regret that their marketing competes with independent shops. We would prefer them – all our supermarkets – to fill gaps in our retail market.

We need significant anchor stores, just as any town does, and we value them, just as any town does, but the balance between rights and responsibilities is wrong. We suggest the following changes should be considered, perhaps as part of the wider review by government of business rates and the future of retail:

- **Chains should provide incentives for residents to support other stores.** We believe the multiplier should be improved to, at least in part, justify the chains' much lower rateable value, if these stark differences are to continue.
- **Sainsbury's:** Currently its two-hour free parking limit gives little time for shoppers to have, say, lunch at a nearby café. Could it extend its free parking time limit, perhaps at less busy times, so that its customers can park free for longer, encouraging them to visit other businesses in the surrounding area? Or could it provide a timed voucher that could be used for one hour's free parking elsewhere in Chiswick. Or could it allow parking when its store is closed?
- **Waitrose:** The return of Waitrose to Chiswick was much welcomed. Since then it has increased its competition with local shops and services, putting our uniqueness at risk. We would like to work with it to rebalance what it offers, perhaps introducing shelf space for goods for which there is no independent alternative and which residents wish were available here.

- **M&S Food:** Its shop front is covered in opaque vinyl. This adds little to the street scene beyond its name recognition. For some years there has been concern about national brands and shop front policies causing blight on high streets; councils need to have clear policies in place to address this.
- **The Co-op:** The Co-op is an example of a national store that has been responsive to the local neighbourhood. Nearby residents were concerned about shoplifting and its knock-on effects; the Co-op responded by hiring security guards for longer hours. Nevertheless, its presence seriously affected a small independent supermarket opposite though its owner is particularly innovative and has opened a different type of shop (not all retailers would have that ability).
- **Other chain stores that benefit from lower rateable values:** There is scope for others to be required to contribute socially beyond their presence, depending on the store and its potential to add value to the neighbourhood.

Recognising the value of supporting the Chiswick community

Every organisation that operates in Chiswick, or has an impact on Chiswick, has the potential to invest in it, not just exploit it, for the greater benefit of Chiswick and its traders, residents and workers. Whether they are council officers, outsourced providers, landlords, head offices of chains, office-based businesses and others, they can all contribute to the success of our retail economy. We ask them to take part in ensuring Chiswick remains a vibrant place to do business as an independent retail business.

Chapter 9

Listening to retailers

The overarching requirement – of national and local government – is to listen to local retailers, the individuals running one-off shops, cafés, pubs, restaurants and service businesses that reflect the needs of their local communities. For too long, national government in particular has listened to big retailers. It calls on well-known brands and individuals who run large nationwide groups to comment on retailing, the future of the high street, funding and more.

While we recognise that some might have started small, it is very easy for them to forget what it is like to be on your own running a business, putting on a good show for customers, opening up, making or buying the goods, serving the customers, paying the bills, dealing with essential bureaucracy, managing crises, locking up and starting all over again with renewed enthusiasm and vigour day after day.

Local retailers are the only people who know what it's like at local level. Their knowledge and understanding of business issues are second to none. Yet their voices are frequently overshadowed by the voices of big retailers. This must stop. The voices of local independent retailers must be sought, listened to and heard.

London's mayor must listen

We welcome the recent (14th January 2020) investigation, by the Economic Committee of the London Assembly, titled "London's retail sector: Keeping London's high streets open" and the evidence given by all those presenting to the committee.³³ It is regrettable that London's Mayor isn't listening to the advice given by Patrick Dubeck, his head of regeneration who stated, wholly correctly and after over six years of work at the GLA, on policies needed to regenerate London's high streets:

"We think that strategies, and really locally tailored specific strategies for high streets and town centres, are what is vitally important to help each individual town centre and high street adapt for future challenges," and,

"localised strategies that are really responsive to as well-defined areas as you can possibly get are the best way to address some of the local issues that these places are facing."³⁴

Chiswick's retailers would like London's Mayor to hear their voices on C9, parking, planning and policing policies all of which have a significant impact on the success of its retail economy. And we would like Hounslow to listen to Patrick Dubeck, too, and to retailers and other shop owners to learn about schemes they would like to see, instead of imposing on them schemes that will inevitably damage their businesses.

Councils must listen

How do our councils find out what is needed by local retailers to succeed? Attending receptions or meetings with chambers of commerce or organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) provides an incomplete picture. Many independent traders, particularly those who cannot afford to leave their businesses and who do not have spare time, do not attend these. The most successful businesses do. There is a large gap in knowledge, as evidenced by policy decisions or suggestions made that adversely affect our retail economy.

To enable listening, national government, local councils and London's mayor should:

- **Establish and support a national forum for small independent retailers to discuss the state of the independent retail industry.** The agenda should be led by small retailers. There must be agreed outcomes with deadlines and achievements that must be met. The minister for high streets must be present at meetings and report on actions taken since the previous forum.

³³ Public evidence session on 14 January 2020; available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPI9BGicVtY>

³⁴ Ibid.

- **Establish and support a local forum for independent retailers to discuss the state of the independent retail industry.** The Chiswick Shops Task Force is establishing a local forum to give traders a voice in discussions about Chiswick's retail future. This could look at policies across many council departments which currently do not appear to work together. They include economic development, environment, events, leisure, licensing, lighting, open spaces, parks, planning, recycling and waste, traffic/transport and others. It is essential that they work together and with retailers in each local area to support what retailers in each area consider would be best in each place. They must not work in isolation or impose a one-size-fits-all, or a picked-from-a-catalogue, approach everywhere.
- **Support events recommended by retailers.** Too often councils propose events that are obviously unlikely to support Chiswick's local retail economy and offer benefits to businesses from outside the area. We want new services and events that improve our existing retail economy and below make several suggestions for discussion locally.
- **Involve local Chiswick traders in the government's High Streets Task Force.** Too many decisions have been made with inadequate local consultation, or through favoured individuals or groups, and piecemeal or randomly without any overall vision or strategy. We invite the High Streets Task Force to involve Chiswick traders in its discussions and, as we have good contacts with local traders in Chiswick, we would be glad to host or organise meetings with a representative group of traders.
- **Work with the Chiswick Shops Task Force to support retailers.** The Chiswick Shops Task Force draws on the needs and suggestions of retailers and has many ideas for policies that will support our retailers. Council officers should be required to consult councillors involved in the Chiswick Shops Task Force when looking at issues, developing policies, sources of grants and other opportunities for retail or involving retail. The Chiswick Shops Task Force has no wish to override traders' opinions but does have good contacts with local traders and can be a useful conduit to them.
- **Support a public summit of Chiswick traders and residents.** Following the publication of this report, we would like to hold (when circumstances allow) a public summit with traders and residents exploring what they want from Chiswick as a home town and as a town centre. This will explore what Chiswick needs to support its residents and community; its retail economy; suggestions for events that would highlight what it offers; and ideas for additions that would enrich it and encourage continued success.

Adopt a mature approach that goes beyond playing politics

Our retail economy requires a mature approach to reversing the decline in the number of residents and workers shopping locally. The fact that Chiswick is represented by councillors from one party should not be a barrier to the council working with those councillors – who have been elected to represent Chiswick – and with the Chiswick Shops Task Force. Others involved in the Chiswick Shops Task Force support other political parties or none. It is deliberately broad and its priority is to stand firmly beside the owners of our independent shops, cafés, pubs, restaurants and service businesses – and beside our residents.

Chapter 10

Making more of our rich neighbourhood

There is a general consensus that, despite its undoubted attractiveness and appeal, Chiswick doesn't have it all. There is also the more general challenge to the high street seen not just in our community but in high streets across the country. Reviving the economy after the devastation of COVID-19 presents a whole new challenge for our retailers and other local traders. They need more support from government, nationally and locally, to reverse recent areas of decline and to deal with the economic fall-out of the pandemic but there is much we can do as a community to improve our town.

Seven ideals for a thriving retail economy

Experts are generally agreed that if high streets are to survive they must revert to their traditional role as mixed-use locations. They need a good mix of business, culture, retail/services (including public services) and tourism. A fifth category, housing, is being discussed more and more but with caution because of the potential clashes between the needs of the four categories listed above, and of residents who want a peaceful night's sleep. How does Chiswick rate against these seven ideals for a thriving retail economy?

- **Business.** It is a positive that Chiswick's shopping streets include a wide range of businesses on the ground floor and some have other businesses above them. But as noted earlier, a negative factor is that converting office space to residential accommodation has damaged our retail and service businesses because of the loss of day-time custom. In addition, place-making developments are being constructed all around, and now within, Chiswick but with their own retail and services provision, discouraging their residents from being part of the Chiswick community.
- **Culture.** The Chiswick Culture Compendium compiled in late 2019 by all nine Chiswick councillors shows the breadth and strength of current cultural activities locally. As we set out below, there is so much more that can be done.³⁵
- **Housing.** We score very highly on this ideal. Many business premises have flats above them. Apart from one short stretch of shops in single storey premises along Turnham Green Terrace, which add charm and quirkiness to that road, and one building on Chiswick High Road (which is to be redeveloped), housing and retail already live side-by-side as well as above and below in the same building.
- **Leisure.** There is a lot here for residents to do that takes them to our retail and service traders but it isn't enough. And it is mostly for adults and children, rather than teenagers (see below).
- **Public services.** We do better than some towns on this criterion. Chiswick Library is just off the High Road and Chiswick Town Hall, with some public services including the Citizens' Advice Bureau, is central too. Chiswick Police Station is the base for the three Hounslow ward teams (plus those for Brentford and Isleworth). We are lucky still have a Post Office in the centre.
- **Retail/services.** The diversity of our retail offer and the strength of our independent retailers are big pluses but this report is about what we can do to make it even better. In the current circumstances, we are struggling to keep what we have.
- **Tourism.** There is some tourism in Chiswick, partly because of the magnificent Chiswick House and its delightful grounds and there is broader interest in the area's exceptional architectural heritage, but this is an aspect that has not been fully developed.

The ideal town

Another approach to assessing what makes an ideal town was based on the notion of starting from scratch, putting every element where it should be. Although virtually impossible to achieve in an existing community, how does Chiswick fare on this approach?

³⁵ *Chiswick Cultural Compendium*, October 2019, available at: <http://turnhamgreen.yourcldr.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/425/2019/10/LBHBoroughOfCultureBidTheViewFromChiswick27Oct2019-1.pdf>

- **Anchor stores.** We no longer have a department store but we do have a large number of well-known household names from Boots to Robert Dyas, Majestic to Waterstone's and many others including an unusually good range of banks. We have lost some and more were at risk of closure before the pandemic, and will be even more at risk now, but there is much to be celebrated here. We also have an unusually large range of car showrooms including Citroen, Honda, Peugeot, Porsche, Tesla and Volvo – extraordinary in a borough that discourages car use.
- **Public open space or town square.** We have several public open spaces though they aren't in the precise spot an ideal town would dictate – in the centre. They are spread across Chiswick enabling residents to appreciate green space throughout our area. Current big events on Turnham Green, Acton Green Common and at Chiswick House tend to be self-contained, bringing people to them without encouraging visitors to explore, and spend in, the rest of Chiswick. We have listed, in our ideas section below, several events or activities that could be held on other open spaces, after consultation with residents and retailers.

Highlighting Chiswick: some ideas for discussion

Chris Parry, a retail expert at Cardiff Metropolitan University has said:

“What we have, especially with smaller high streets, is the heart of the community and there needs to be more engagement from communities about what works there. Every high street is different and every high street needs different solutions going forward. We need to be innovative”.³⁶

It is in that spirit that we have suggested numerous ideas that we think are worth debating. There is no wish to impose them, or exploit locations such as our open spaces, without full discussion and agreement including with Friends groups, residents' associations and local groups and societies. They all need community support at ideas stage and beyond and they must not cause inconvenience or misuse space. All these ideas respect what Chiswick already has and seek to maintain its character and charm.

- **Architecture.** Much more could be made of Chiswick's rich architectural history with its many listed buildings. Several local residents with special knowledge of specific areas within Chiswick have given local tours and talks; perhaps they could do them more often and more people could join in with other tours. Such walks and talks could also take in other aspects of what Chiswick has to offer including its shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants. More could be done to develop London Open House weekend in Chiswick, a wonderful opportunity to open up our architectural heritage and bring people shopping here.
- **Antiques, art and interiors.** From galleries to interior designers and home accessory shops, to lighting and paint shops, Chiswick could become a destination for visitors, and residents with an event programme of talks, walks and workshops highlighted as a festival or open weekend.
- **Awards and competitions.** Many towns and villages have annual awards, or take part in national competitions, but that hasn't so far involved Chiswick. Feltham in Bloom takes part in the London in Bloom initiative; could we have a Chiswick in Bloom? Other towns hold annual awards events, in which local residents vote, with categories such as outstanding customer service, most environmentally responsible, best shop front or window display, or for specific business types (food and drink, beauty and health, etc). We would like to explore this idea with traders aiming, of course, to develop awards that highlight the amazing range of shops and services we have here.
- **The Battle of Turnham Green.** There has been discussion before about commemorating this event, perhaps by re-enacting this famous part of our history. Although the date when this was fought (through the whole of what is now called Chiswick) is inconveniently in winter (13th November 1642) an event

³⁶ Chris Parry, Cardiff Metropolitan University, speaking on the BBC, 11 June 2013.

could be held at another time of year bringing the whole of Chiswick together as participants or observers in a community day. Retailers along the routes and nearby could be involved by providing food and drink of the era with elements of it being held on or involving our many green spaces. Issues such as noise would have to be carefully managed, especially where there are restrictions such as on Turnham Green (firing cannon here is unlikely to be possible). This might be an occasion when Chiswick High Road could be closed to traffic (subject to consultation with residents and traders, of course).

- **Beyond the border.** Picking up on the fact that people living south of the A4 feel cut off from the rest of Chiswick, this event would encourage Chiswickians to cross the border and explore a part of town they know less well, shopping and eating/drinking in the areas new to them.
- **Busking.** Buskers perform occasionally in Chiswick. Meanwhile, there are many musicians in Chiswick. What about a busking weekend with buskers playing at various locations where we have retailers, encouraging residents to listen to performances then shop, eat or drink nearby?
- **Cheese and wine plus beer and gin festival.** Chiswick and cheese are first recorded, around 1,000 AD, as “Ceswican” or a cheese farm. Dukes Meadows is thought to have been the location for an annual cheese fair. With three delis known for their cheeses, our world-famous local brewery Fuller’s, our new traditional gin distillery Sipsmith, four independent wine merchants/shops and several other off licences, plus cafés, pubs and restaurants that could collaborate, this would bring people to different parts of Chiswick. Or it could take place in a marquee with all relevant traders present, highlighting what they offer in their stores which residents new to them could then return to on another occasion.
- **Children in Chiswick.** Funfairs on Turnham Green and Acton Green Common, the Bedford Park Festival with its children’s competition, an annual pantomime, perhaps films to come at our much-wanted cinema, children’s clothes shops, our long-standing toy shop and fancy dress shop, our ice cream parlours ... we would like to develop an event, or programme of events, for families with young children to explore Chiswick and visit new-to-them family friendly places.
- **A Chiswick Show.** Many countryside locations put on an annual county or country show. Several famous towns put on local shows. Why not Chiswick? This could include all the competitions typical of these shows: flower decorating, biggest/ugliest vegetable, jam making, cake/biscuit making, etc, with prizes. This could tie in with Handmade in Chiswick. There would be opportunities for shops to have stalls and/or offer menu/drinks options at their locations that could be highlighted in publicity about the show.
- **Chiswick Town Hall.** This glorious building is something of a hidden asset even though it is widely used. It is now in need of refurbishment. We recognise the financial difficulties facing Hounslow Council but all options for financing a refurbishment need to be considered, including through lottery funds. It could then be used as a venue for exhibitions and events including many of those listed in this section.
- **Christmas in Chiswick.** So much more could be done to make Christmas a bigger event for local traders. While we welcome the support of the mayor at the annual switching on the lights ceremony, the display is very limited and crying out for change. We put forward some ideas in Appendix 5.
- **Faith in Chiswick.** With at least nine denominations or faiths in Chiswick, from Buddhism to Russian Orthodox, a day when all our places of worship, many of which are historically and/or architecturally significant, could be open for visitors and/or tours. This would be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the diversity of our community. It might take residents to new areas, visiting shops along the way that they might not know about.
- **Fashion.** An event promoting fashion has been suggested on the chiswickw4.com forum. With numerous fashion and fashion-related shops selling clothes, shoes, leather goods and accessories, and home-based

businesses (colour analysis, jewellery and scarves, etc) events could draw on the knowledge and expertise of our fashion retailers and makers.

- **Food and Drink Festival.** There have been several attempts at organising food and drink festivals but most have failed to bring people to existing food businesses. Instead they have brought new traders, with low cost stalls, directly competing with bricks and mortar businesses. We would like to explore the feasibility of two types of festival. One would bring together our existing businesses under one roof – in the town hall or marquees, perhaps on several open spaces simultaneously. The other would draw residents and visitors to existing stores, linked with other events for which traders might offer dishes or drinks aligned with the event, as mentioned above and below. Both could include demonstrations, workshops and talks. This could be an alternative to, or as well as, the cheese and wine plus beer and gin festival.
- **Healthy Chiswick.** The Super Saturday of Sport is focused on Turnham Green once a year. There is so much more than that here. An annual open day, or similar, would highlight our private Gunnersbury Triangle Tennis Club, Rocks Lane Sports Centre, the many gyms we have, pilates classes and teachers, yoga classes and teachers, meditation classes – all tied in with shops that sell herbal remedies or provide therapies as well as places to eat and drink healthily or where healthy options are added to the menu specifically for the event.
- **Horticulture and trees in Chiswick.** A London tree specialist has devised a tree walk in Chiswick. Staveley Road residents organised a street party for May 2020 when its cherry trees would have been in bloom – sadly cancelled because of COVID-19. The Chiswick Horticultural and Allotments Society members have knowledge that could be spread more widely. All these and others could be part of a programme that encourages residents to stay in Chiswick, learning more about what Chiswick offers and the connections between those activities and our retail economy.
- **International Chiswick.** Chiswick is home to many international food-based retailers. There is however, scope to extend it well beyond by linking them with, as an example, auctions of foreign artefacts, encouraging all who attend weekend private views, and mid-week auctions, to visit cafés, pubs, restaurants, services and shops with an international emphasis.
- **Late night Chiswick.** A common refrain among residents is that nothing (other than for eating and drinking out) is open late in the evening. That isn't wholly accurate and publicising what is currently open is part of the role of Independent Chiswick, a Chiswick Shops Task Force initiative to promote Chiswick. There is also scope for a regular (weekly?) late night or, for shops with little morning business, perhaps opening and closing later. We would like to organise a pilot (more than one night, to test long term viability) if traders, who work so hard and are on their feet for so long each day, and who have private lives to live, would consider this.
- **Literary Chiswick.** Chiswick already has a highly regarded and well-supported book festival and a cook book festival which bring residents and visitors to Chiswick. We would like our retail economy to be more closely aligned with them. Traders could then benefit from the presence of residents and visitors – there is scope for our cafés and restaurants to align menus with authors or locations of books in the festival. Beyond that, research by local resident Torin Douglas into authors connected with Chiswick provides opportunities for literary trails throughout the year, with retailers publicising special menus or events, for example, or simply being discovered by residents following trails through parts of Chiswick they haven't explored before.³⁷

³⁷ List of Chiswick authors available on the Chiswick Book Festival site:

<http://www.chiswickbookfestival.net/programme/chiswick-timeline-writers-books/chiswick-timeline-250-writers-listed-subject-1/>

- **Makers of Chiswick.** Behind closed doors numerous talented Chiswick residents make accessories, ceramics, cosmetics, foods, jewellery and more which they are keen to sell to residents and visitors. Some take part in Artists At Home but many don't. There isn't a natural event for them. Several have talked to councillors about setting up a shop (rents and rates, the need for security, staffing and safe payment systems are problematical). Why not bring them all together for a Makers of Chiswick day or weekend? We have no wish to clash with or draw attention away from Artists At Home which is a hugely popular event. We would like to do more to draw attention to the many other makers and give them a chance to attract customers. This could be held in the town hall, for example.
- **Maps and leaflets.** Many years ago, traders welcomed the suggestion of maps at strategic spots showing the locations of all our independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants. The recent road closures and parking changes have made such marketing methods all the more necessary as the changes have made many traders less visible to potential customers. Previous ideas were not progressed because of a lack of funding and the possibility (rarer then) of shops changing. The new Independent Chiswick website will provide a map that can be easily changed when shops change, and will include far more information than a simple geographical entry for each shop. Publicising this map and the website requires some funding which could be provided by councils. So could a leaflet with a map showing where all our shops are – a beautiful map drawn by a local artist or graphic designer – which could be distributed through doors including in blocks of flats. Delivery would have to be more than once and be repeated year on year.
- **Markets.** Some residents have advocated turning the parking area in front of Chiswick Police Station into an open space or market place and this idea was developed very recently for trialling a monthly Sunday flower market.³⁸ Markets are already a feature of our area with a farmer's market at Dukes Meadows and collectors markets regularly take place in Chiswick Town Hall. There is a balance to be struck with an open air market in front of the police station because of the consequent loss of even more parking centrally on one of the best days for shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants given that parking is such a fundamentally important part of the success of our retail economy. It is an idea well worth debating, including whether there might be a better site for it.
- **Nature in Chiswick.** Chiswick is home to the Gunnersbury Triangle Nature Reserve. South of the A4 hedgerows are full of birds not seen north of this road. Chiswick Business Park's lake has ducks and a visiting heron. Allotments, trees, our garden centre with plants and shrubs, our florist and our flower stalls could all form part of a nature trail, perhaps also linked with organic, health-related and exercise-related shops, cafés and shops that would add another dimension to Chiswick.
- **Photography.** There is much in Chiswick to celebrate in photographs. We already have an annual exhibition during the Bedford Park Festival and the paintings and photography exhibition run by The Chiswick Calendar but there is scope for more events, and greater integration with our retail economy. Photographers who run courses could provide springboards for competitions with themes connected with local retailers while also publicising the Chiswick Camera Centre and shops nearby as well as art shops, art galleries and framing shops. We would like to work with the Bedford Park Festival, the Chiswick Calendar, The Chiswick Camera Centre and photographers to develop retail-related themed events, exhibitions and competitions.
- **Riverside Chiswick.** For some Chiswickians, the river is a far distant asset, with many often saying to themselves that they must find time to stroll along it. Others live nearby and on whom it has a daily impact, for its beauty and power, not just at very high tides. In between, for some the annual Boat Race is a must-see. The Chiswick Pier Trust holds festivals, talks and other events which draw large crowds. We think there is scope for more, working with the Chiswick Pier Trust and others, to expose all that goes on along our stretch of the river while also involving our local shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants.

³⁸ Available at: <https://chiswickflowermarket.com/>

- **Signs to promote shops.** With the shocking imposition of limiting access to, and removing parking from, our main shopping streets, many independents are now invisible. We would like to have informative signs at or near entrances to shopping roads listing the shops along the road. The signs must be easy to change, when shops change, and be attractive and characterful reflecting Chiswick. Richmond provides an example with signs at the entrances to quaint side roads which are full of independents. These signs must be approved by traders, not just picked from a catalogue.
- **Sporty Chiswick.** This could tie in with Healthy Chiswick above or involve a separate event.
- **Teenage Chiswick.** Chief Coffee's pinball lounge is a valuable asset but, beyond that, there is little here for teenagers who don't enjoy sports. We have consulted local teenagers at Chiswick School about what they would like; their report is a significant and helpful contribution about the improvement of Chiswick for a generation which is significantly under-represented. The Chiswick Cinema has announced a student discount scheme; we suggest there is scope for a programme of films that appeal especially to young adults to be shown. If Chiswick Town Hall is improved as we suggest in our culture compendium, it could be used for annual comedy and/or music festivals for young adults to perform in and stage-manage which any Chiswick resident could attend. Could Chiswick accommodate a skate park, a bowling alley or an ice rink, for example? Any much-needed leisure activity is a chance for the next generation to take advantage of our retail economy, even though it might be limited by their spending power. Seeing teenagers enjoying Chiswick more will add much to our sense of community.
- **Thespian Chiswick.** With numerous residents who are performers, would a weekend of informal and formal readings and performances, each held in an independent shop, café, pub or restaurant provide a reason for people to book a table to be entertained as they eat or drink? As with other suggestions in this list, menus could reflect the theme of the performance or reading.
- **Tourist Chiswick.** Selling Chiswick as a tourist destination has not been fully explored. Some locals offer tours round Bedford Park as do one or two central London tour guides. Events such as Artists at Home bring people to Chiswick and within Chiswick but not necessarily to our independent shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants. We would like to develop a series of tours through Chiswick combining them with opportunities to spend locally and to encourage visitors back regularly. We would like organisers of Chiswick's major events also to collaborate with the Chiswick Shops Task Force by publicising what Chiswick offers. Promoting tourism runs through many of our suggestions but it could be a highlighted event in its own right, again tying in with our retail economy.
- **Village signs.** Many boroughs install village signs at the heart of their villages and we think there is scope for that in Chiswick. Village signs for Chiswick could be at or near main entrance roads. Others at the heart of their areas: Acton Green, Bedford Park, Chiswick Mall, Fauconberg, Glebe Estate, Grove Park, Gunnersbury, The Gunnersbury Park Garden Estate, Homefields, Strand on the Green, Turnham Green, Riverside. This should, of course, only be done after consultation with residents and will require collaboration between Hounslow and Ealing councils to create a commonality of sign (though individuality is essential; we do not want the municipal look that currently prevails) across Chiswick. These would engender pride in our unique area and elevate interest in it.
- **Visit Destination Chiswick.** All events are open, as is Chiswick, to visitors and will be publicised widely inside London and beyond to draw in visitors to support our retail economy. We see our sister initiative, Independent Chiswick, becoming Destination Chiswick to encourage visitors to come here.

Chapter 11

A shared vision for the future

“High streets are social institutions, the heart and soul of urban Britain. They must be helped to stay that way”,
Sir Simon Jenkins.³⁹

Working with the borough councils

Hounslow’s local strategic partnership, Hounslow Together, stated in its policy paper, *Future Borough Strategy 2018-2035*:

“Our town centres will provide a vibrant and differentiated leisure and shopping experience within an attractive environment that serves the local population but attracts residents from further afield”.⁴⁰

This matches our vision for Chiswick. In addition, Hounslow’s corporate plan proposes eight specific population-wide outcomes, ensuring that Hounslow is a borough where:

- residents are at the heart of what the council does
- people live in good homes and pleasant neighbourhoods
- people feel proud to live and work here
- businesses flourish and local people enjoy good-quality local jobs
- people are safe
- children reach their potential
- residents are healthy, active and socially connected
- residents receive the right help and support.⁴¹

These outcomes are without question linked to benefits that would be achieved if Chiswick’s retail sector were enabled to thrive. This report’s proposals comply with all of them.

We urge Hounslow council to fulfil its own statement and adopt these policies, proposals and strategies in full and with speed, enthusiasm and commitment. This would mean an end to adopting one-size-fits-all policies across the borough, and implementing schemes without proper consultation, as well as placing an emphasis on establishing a proper dialogue with traders and residents. We urge Ealing council to adopt those strategies on which it is not already in the lead.

We recommend that both councils look at applying these measures borough-wide as, although they have been designed to address the specific needs of Chiswick, many are relevant to all the town centres in the London Borough of Hounslow (Chiswick, Brentford, Feltham and Hounslow) as well as smaller shopping areas. They are also relevant to Ealing where community-led initiatives in Pitshanger Lane have demonstrated what can be done – and that example has outshone the two Ealing business improvement districts (BIDs).

National policy initiatives on high streets

Several policy initiatives have, in the last few years, been launched by central government to revive some of the most depressed shopping areas. The three most significant are:

- BIDs, where businesses establish a programme to improve the area funded by a levy on local businesses;

³⁹ Simon Jenkins, *The Guardian*, 17th April 2018:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/17/high-streets-heart-cities-web>

⁴⁰ Hounslow Borough Plan:

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20111/about_the_council/1392/hounslow_together/3

⁴¹ Hounslow Corporate Plan, adopted March 2019 :

https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20112/strategies_plans_and_performance/1388/corporate_plan

- Open Doors – a pilot programme in five deprived areas to bring empty properties back into use for community groups;
- The £3.6 billion Towns Fund, incorporating the £1 billion High Streets Fund – part of the government’s levelling up agenda, it has provided resources to invest in 121 failing high streets around the country with the emphasis on areas of deprivation.

The first of these policies, BIDs, has been discussed in relation to Chiswick but the other two are not relevant as Chiswick would not be regarded as sufficiently deprived.

This policy document doesn’t advocate creating a BID for Chiswick as the business community here has so far been split on the idea. While some, usually the most successful businesses, have tried to generate interest in one, others are adamant a BID would not be right. BIDs are funded by a levy on business. A ballot must be held; a simple majority is all that is needed for it to be approved. This would be extremely difficult when opinion is so strongly divided, and it is unlikely that the level of investment needed from traders would be affordable in the present climate. There would, too, be delays while establishing the BID remit, holding the ballot, employing staff and starting to generate change.

We acknowledge that in some areas BIDs have proved successful. Many are in towns with a high number of tourists providing a distinct target audience and a focus on where and how to market the town to visitors as well as to residents. Some BIDs have floundered, often because there are tensions between those leading them or because of a lack of ambition or will.

The initiatives contained in this document will support all Chiswick’s shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants, just as do BIDs. There is no lack of ambition or will. Traders who have seen this document have welcomed it, offering suggestions and information to refine and expand it and they want to see it implemented.

The truth is that BIDs appeal to local authorities because they are funded through a levy on businesses. We do not believe that approach would be fair in Chiswick. The relatively small spending proposals we have made in this report could and should be financed out of the multiple sources of income councils have already received from traders through business rates (we anticipate funding that replaces business rates), and from fees and charges, as well as from parking permit costs and other income sources generated by retailers.

The impact of COVID-19

We have purposely only briefly referred in this report to the impact of the pandemic on Chiswick’s traders. The situation has been constantly evolving since late March and, in mid-June, was disrupted by the sudden partial closure of Turnham Green Terrace and Devonshire Road, and the removal of parking on those two roads and Chiswick High Road, our three main shopping streets. Some points were already clear:

- almost all non-food retailers, and high street service providers, have lost a huge amount of business in a very short period of time;
- the hospitality sector has faced almost total shutdown with a catastrophic loss of business;
- government initiatives to support our traders have been extensive and valuable but short term; they have enabled many businesses (but not all) to survive but they are not a substitute for the longer term support our high streets need;
- millions of people are now without work and therefore have reduced incomes, with which comes reduced spending power that will affect our high streets for some time to come;
- economic forecasters have produced varying estimates of the impact on GDP of the lockdown; all of them suggest that the economic consequences of the pandemic will be very severe in the short term but even over the medium term are likely to mean that we do not return to the levels of economic activity seen in 2019 for three years.

Trends already seen in retail have been accelerated by the pandemic. Examples include:

- more online shopping;

- greater use of debit and credit cards rather than cash because of fears that cash can be contaminated by the virus;
- greater use of door to door delivery;
- the closure of less profitable businesses and/or branches.

The hospitality sector, already being squeezed by competition, rising costs and changing consumer habits, is unlikely to recover quickly and some well-known high street names have already gone under.

Throughout business, some patterns of behaviour established over a long period are likely to be challenged. For example:

- **operating within very narrow profit margins:** this will be less easy because of the additional costs (and loss of custom) resulting from the need to comply with social distancing and hygiene rules;
- **just in time delivery:** this approach to stocking has left many manufacturers and retailers unable to meet demand; the need to maintain larger stocks in future will push up costs and therefore prices to the consumer;
- **manufacturing offshore to obtain lower costs:** the UK in common with other western countries has arguably become over-reliant on China as the world's largest manufacturing centre; we may see some manufacturing returned from China to western countries;⁴²
- **maintaining larger offices in city centres:** the trends towards hot desking and home working may well accelerate after the pandemic as companies seek to reduce costs; this is both a threat and an opportunity for Chiswick's retail industry;
- **the wide availability of cheap food:** restrictions on movement have meant a reduction in the workforce in the UK agriculture and horticulture sectors which is likely to result in less choice and higher food prices; if the pandemic continues to affect production abroad as well as at home, this could turn into a longer term trend.

What will be the implications for Chiswick and the local economy? For a start, we have to recognise that 40,000 jobs in Hounslow are linked to Heathrow Airport. It is unlikely that the airport will return to normal for several months and may not return to 2019 levels of air traffic for the foreseeable future. This is going to affect the Hounslow economy very considerably. In addition, many local residents will have lost their jobs in other sectors including Central London retailers and service-based businesses. All this suggests that Britain's already precarious high streets, including our own, are likely to see further loss of trade with sadly more business closures and loss of jobs. Councils and councillors must do all they can to support our retail economy.

But not all trends may be negative. If companies in the western world reduce their dependence on imports from China, for example, this could lead to a revival of the manufacturing sector with the potential for the number of better paid and higher value jobs to increase. This would restore spending power in the workforce which would in turn benefit our retail sector. It may also be the case that the pandemic leads people to re-evaluate aspects of their lifestyle and encourages them to value more things such as the social aspects of work which may encourage more activity outside the home in people's spare time.

Although the tech sector has generally been a gainer from the pandemic, the limitations of what it has to offer have also been made clear. It is simply not possible without a profound change in the way our food sector operates, for example, for us to return to an era of widespread home delivery of groceries and other household goods. Video-conferencing has demonstrated its value to businesses and families but its very considerable limitations have also been exposed.

London, like most cities, has seen an astonishing fall in pollution and resultant rise in air quality because of the lockdown. Many will not want to return to the levels of pollution seen in recent decades. This puts online retailers under pressure because it is the demand for online goods that has helped to push up congestion and

⁴² China is the world's largest manufacturing centre with more than 28 per cent of global manufacturing output in 2018; the UK was in ninth place; see, 'These are the top 10 manufacturing countries in the world', World Economic Forum, 25 February 2020: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/countries-manufacturing-trade-exports-economics/>

therefore pollution in urban areas. A reduction in just in time delivery would also help to improve air quality. The revival of public transport in cities, seen in the investments in London over the last 30 years in the tube system, the Docklands Light Railway, the London Overground network and now Crossrail may well continue as millennials are already less likely than their parents' generation to own cars.

Financial implications of these proposals

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government's announcement that it is to review the business rates system, Hounslow council estimated it would receive £59.4 million in business rates in 2020/2021. Inevitably some of our proposals have a cost and, although the cost of these recommendations is very small compared to the business rates income (and income from other fees and charges levied by councils on business), all local authorities are facing a difficult financial situation after the pandemic.

Councils should establish a ring-fenced business support fund using a small proportion of the income they receive from business in the form of rates (or their replacement) and other fees and charges to pay for improvements that will support traders and enable them to prosper. The fund could also include some of the parking control income to be spent on relevant highway and transport projects. We list in Appendix 4 some of the projects councils could fund.

The central point for us all to remember is that investing in our high streets will produce a return – for councils and for our community as well as local business. Local retailers often say that they feel they get little or nothing from the councils in return for the huge sums they pay them. It is time for councils to value their local retail sector, encouraging and supporting retailers to success, not driving them out of business. Investing in Chiswick is vital to safeguard the best of what we have now and to turn its economy round, reinvigorate its attractiveness as a place to live, work, spend leisure time and visit, and in doing so, generate more revenue for both its councils.

Conclusion: work with retailers to enable them to succeed

Our independent traders give us, and Chiswick, difference, diversity, choice and variety and it's all based on their exceptional hard work, determination, diligence, persistence and resilience plus forward thinking and planning. They evolve as our wishes change and all the while dealing with the unexpected occurrences that feature in every retail operation that we may never know about. The Chiswick Shops Task Force celebrates that and is working to help them all succeed.

Traders have one over-riding message to all who have a potential impact on Chiswick's retail economy: work with us, not against us. This means promoting the wonderful things that Chiswick already has, promoting it innovatively and enthusiastically, and supporting traders through difficult times, not threatening their existence by making thoughtless decisions that benefit others and disadvantage bricks and mortar traders who contribute not only financially to Hounslow and Ealing councils but also to Chiswick's unique character.

Chiswick Shops Task Force
Councillor Patrick Barr (Hounslow)
Councillor Joanna Biddolph (Hounslow)
Councillor Gabriella Giles (Hounslow)
Councillor Anthony Young (Ealing)

July 2020

Appendix 1

Lighting

The following roads should be lit at full strength from dusk to 1am to allow residents to enjoy and feel safe going out after dark and to walk safely from bars, pubs, restaurants, tube and railway stations and bus routes. After 1am they should be lit at higher than 50 per cent to deter crime.

In Hounslow:

- Acton Lane
- Alleys between Devonshire Road and Chiswick Lane, Duke Road and Dukes Avenue
- Bath Road
- Bedford Park Corner
- Chiswick Common Road between Fishers Lane and Turnham Green Terrace
- Chiswick High Road from Kew Bridge to Ladbroke Grove
- Chiswick Lane
- Chiswick Lane South
- Chiswick Terrace
- Devonshire Passage
- Devonshire Road
- Elliott Road
- Essex Place between Acton Lane and Belmont Road/Terrace and Essex Place Square
- Fauconberg Road
- Fishers Lane
- Fromows Corner
- Goldhawk Road
- Grove Park Road
- Gunnersbury Lane
- Gunnersbury station path between Grange Road and Chiswick High Road
- Heathfield Terrace
- Station Approach Road
- Stamford Brook Avenue
- Stamford Brook Road
- Station Parade, Grove Park
- Strand on the Green from Kew Bridge corner
- Sutton Court Road from Heathfield Terrace to Burlington Road and round Chiswick Station
- Sutton Lane North
- Thames Road
- Turnham Green Terrace
- Turnham Green Terrace Mews
- Underpasses below the A4

- Wellesley Road
- Perhaps others inadvertently missed.

In Ealing:

- Acton Lane
- The Avenue
- Bedford Corner
- Bollo Lane
- Evershed Walk
- South Parade
- Southfield Road
- Perhaps others inadvertently missed.

Appendix 2

Stop and shop parking

In Hounslow

Current free stop and shop parking allows for 30 minutes with no return within an hour. This should be amended providing:

- 30 minutes (for a quick nip in) with no return within an hour and
- one hour (to allow a big shop by visiting several shops) with no return within an hour.

In the following locations, in some of which there is currently no stop and shop parking:

- Chiswick High Road in front of the police station – to be installed at all 50 spaces, all one hour
- Chiswick High Road from Sutton Lane North/Acton Lane going west – to be installed here
- Chiswick High Road opposite Chiswick Business Park – to be installed here
- Devonshire Road – reinstate all stop and shop parking
- Essex Place near the junction with Acton Lane – to be installed, all one hour
- Fauconberg Road – retain all 30 minute spaces
- Fromows Corner at the top of Sutton Lane North – to be installed, all one hour
- Heathfield Terrace outside the post office – to be installed, 30 minutes
- Grove Park Road outside the shops – install 30 minute free parking spaces
- Kew Bridge slip road – negotiate stop and shop parking with the freeholder
- Station Parade, Burlington Lane – to be installed here
- Strand on the Green – increase the number of spaces for free parking here
- Sutton Court Road near the junction with Heathfield Terrace – to be installed, all 30 minutes
- Sutton Lane North near the gym and pub – to be installed, all one hour
- Thames Road – to be installed in front of the post office and nearby shops
- Turnham Green Terrace – reinstate all stop and shop parking

In Ealing

Pitshanger Lane has 64 parking bays 32 of which are either one hour or two-hour bays; these are good examples of what works well for shops and must be retained.

- Acton Lane from the corner of Southfield Road – retain all 60 minutes, no return in one hour
- Antrobus Road corner with Cunnington Street – retain all 30 minutes, no return in one hour
- Brookfield Road corner with The Avenue – retain all 30 minutes, no return in one hour
- Chiswick Park Station – retain all 30 minutes, no return in one hour
- Gunnersbury Lane – retain all 30 minutes, no return in one hour
- Pitshanger Lane – has 64 parking bays 32 of which are either one hour or two-hour bays; these must be retained
- St Albans Avenue – retain all spaces (60 minutes, no return in one hour)
- Southfield Road corner with Acton Lane
- Southfield Road corner with The Avenue – retain all 30 minutes, no return in one hour
- South Parade outside Bedford Corner – reinstate three 60 minutes, no return in one hour.

Appendix 3

Free parking days

Sundays

It is imperative to retain (and reinstate where it has been removed) free parking on Sundays to encourage supporting shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants generally and on Sundays during celebrations including, for example, High Street Saturday and the Sunday before Christmas.

Celebration days

We recommend additional free parking days to encourage local shopping for specific celebrations. There may be others; this list is a starting point. They (including extra days at Christmas) should usually be the nearest Saturday before the day or, in some cases, on the day itself.

The dates must be published well in advance – at the beginning of every year – so traders can plan ahead and market those days and so that residents know they are being encouraged to shop local.

For 2020 the suggested dates were or will be:

- Valentine's Day: Saturday, 14th February 2020 for Saturday, 14th February 2020
- High Street Saturday: Saturday, 16th March 2019 (not repeated in 2020)
- Mothers' Day: Saturday, 21st March for Sunday, 22nd March 2020
- Easter Saturday: Saturday, 11th April 2020
- Easter Sunday: Sunday, 12th April 2020
- Independent Chiswick Spring Fair (or equivalent)
- Father's Day: Saturday, 20th June 2020 for Sunday, 21st June 2020
- Devonshire Road Street Party: Saturday, 14th September 2019
- Independent Chiswick Autumn Fair (or equivalent)
- Grandparents' Day: Saturday, 3rd October 2020 for Sunday, 4th October 2020
- Halloween: Saturday, 31st October 2020
- Black Friday: Friday, 27th November 2019)
- Independent Chiswick Christmas Fair (or equivalent)
- Small Business Saturday: Saturday, 5th December 2020
- Christmas: Saturday, 19th December; Sunday, 20th December; Monday, 21st December; Tuesday, 22nd December; Wednesday, 23rd December; Thursday, 24th December 2020.

Appendix 4

Business support fund

This new fund, from business rates income and ring-fenced parking income, could pay for:

- Banners across shopping roads and on lampposts advertising special events
- Benches and seating areas
- Bunting
- CCTV on shopping streets and security systems grants/subsidies for individual premises
- Christmas lights enhancement and extended to all shopping roads and
- Christmas tree trails
- Consultants' fees for services specific to Chiswick retailers (other than recycling/waste)
- Economic development department costs
- Flower beds, borders, planters and their maintenance
- Lighting at full strength from dusk to 1am and moderately reduced lighting from 1am to dawn
- Lights to enhance retail/entertainment roads (string lights across roads and in trees, up-lighting trees)
- Recycling and waste pilot project to test Hounslow's collection and clear up service
- Recycling and waste bin stores to make our streets more attractive
- Recycling and waste service for at least each trader's first year after switching
- Recycling and waste service subsidy for continuing contracts with retailers
- Shop front improvement grants scheme (perhaps up to the value of £5,000)
- Street sweeping year round and/or daily removal of sacks filled by retailers
- Special constables recruitment and training.



Bunting across Pitshanger Lane. It is also noted for the absence of litter; waste and recycling collected mid morning so it's not on the streets overnight embarrassing residents and satisfying rodents; and a strong community cheerfulness and spirit.

Appendix 5

Making more of Christmas

Much as local people enjoy the annual switch-on of Christmas lights, hosted at the George IV pub on Chiswick High Road, to describe them as underwhelming is an understatement. They look as if they are the least extensive possible from a catalogue that lacks interest or innovation. Our shopping streets deserve much better at this crucial time of year for retailers.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Christmas lights. Leicester Square's Christmas lights (see the next page) make the most of its trees and, as we said in an earlier chapter, similar ideas would work in Chiswick. Ealing's Haven Green lights – huge baubles in the trees – were much admired. There are numerous examples of excellent Christmas lights in other boroughs. Others such as Kew Gardens, provide examples of what could be done (see the next page). In addition to improving lights in Chiswick High Road, Devonshire Road and Turnham Green Terrace, we need to introduce the Christmas spirit wherever our traders are and in all areas of Chiswick, involving both boroughs. See examples on the next page of Christmas lights that have impact.
- Christmas tree trails. With no central focal point for shopping in Chiswick, we would like a trail of lit and decorated Christmas trees around our local shopping areas to encourage residents to explore other areas of Chiswick and find places locally to shop rather than buying elsewhere. The Chiswick Shops Task Force would like to work on this, and its other ideas, with officers, starting with Christmas 2020.
- Christmas events. Many traders make a big show of Christmas but their efforts are not well-publicised and many residents routinely shop elsewhere, not knowing the variety available on their doorstep. The Chiswick Shops Task Force would like to work with traders to improve awareness of all Christmas shopping opportunities throughout Chiswick.
- Promote local suppliers of Christmas trees. Despite the presence of several stalwart independent Chiswick traders selling Christmas trees, Ealing council has allowed an outside business to trade on Acton Green in direct competition with local traders. If this was intended to make it easier for nearby residents to buy their trees (despite free delivery offered by existing traders), or another resident-led reason, Ealing council could have invited a local business to take up the space. Councils should not favour businesses that have no vested interest in the local area. The starting point should always be to promote what we already have.
- Big switch on of the lights. We would like to make more of this event, while still retaining its community heart, by inviting a well-known Chiswick resident to turn on the lights. It could be a different famous face each year and there could be local switch on events (switching on the lights on the Christmas trees along the trail) wherever there are shops, each with their own famous face or locally-inspired event. The lights on Chiswick High Road currently cannot be seen from the George IV pub; with a Christmas tree trail, there is scope for the lights on a tree nearby to be in the spotlight for this event.

Christmas lights in Leicester Square December 2019: could be used in all Chiswick's shopping areas where there are trees



Christmas at Kew 2019 : could be the inspiration for one anchor tree in each distinct shopping area



Appendix 6

Retailer's costs

In addition to understanding the real cost of the retail pound it is important to know the liabilities retailers have, to gain a better understanding of where our money goes when we buy from a retailer.

The largest liabilities are likely to be:

- Rent
- Business rates (or their replacement)
- Corporation tax
- Income tax
- National Insurance
- VAT.

There are then many other costs that fall on traders, these include:

- Bank charges
- Cleaning and cleaning equipment to meet health and safety standards
- Council fees and charges for A-boards, tables and chairs outside
- Delivery bikes/cars/vans purchase, insurance, maintenance and running costs plus drivers
- Equipment
- Heating
- Insurance including liability insurance
- Laundry services
- Licences to serve alcohol, for events or late-night openings
- Parking permits
- Professional or trade memberships and subscriptions
- Pension contributions
- Point of Sale (POS) equipment for taking card payments
- Radio or music licenses (the Music Licence and PPL licenses must be paid by those who play music or the radio in their premises)
- Recycling and waste services
- Salaries/wages
- Security
- Skills training
- Staff recruitment and training
- Stock
- Supplies for service (crockery, glasses, jugs, cutlery, napkins, tablecloths)
- Supplies for services (for example, stocking lavatories for customers and staff)
- Trade events/shows attendance
- Utilities (electricity, gas, telephone, water)
- Website design, set up and maintenance including expensive shopping cart functions.

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