

## **Protest Against Building A Gas Works On Dukes Meadows 1918**

Chiswick Residents protest against the acquisition for the erection of Gas Works by the Brentford Gas Company of the unique Thames Riverside Area in Chiswick of 200 Acres know as The Dukes Meadows

A brief statement prepared and issued in 1918 by the following Chiswick Residents Committee formed to represent public opinion in Chiswick with regard to the 1918 Scheme of the Brentford Gas Company for acquiring the Duke of Devonshire's riverside property.

Just when all Housing and public welfare proposals are held up by the full strain of the war, the development of a unique Thames side area of nearly 200 acres in Western London in a residential district is threatened with a menace of Gas Works which was rejected just before War broke out.

By a Bill which offers no reduction to consumers in the price of it's gas, the Brentford Gas Company, which is a potent industrial corporation seeking further financial powers from Parliament, is ingeniously and unfairly scheming to slip in a repeated attempt to acquire the area in question when thousands of the inhabitants whose homes are affected are absent on War service, and the War is for a time arresting all Town Planning and Housing development. The Gas Company for commercial reasons is seeking it's new powers just when Exchequer conditions are withholding financial facilities from all projects of public welfare outside the War.

The Company's previous proposals for erecting works on even half the site were rejected by Parliament in March of 1914, upon the overwhelming opposition of the local authorities and public and private interests affected.

After several years of careful negotiation with the Duke of Devonshire as owner of the site, the Chiswick Urban District Council in 1917 took the first step for obtaining a Town Planning Scheme over the area under the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909, and thus anticipated the wise plea of Government through the President of the Local Government Board that Local Authorities should prepare for state-aided housing after the War.

But for the War, which obliged the Chiswick Council to rest inactive on it's first Town Planning proposals in 1915, Chiswick projected Town Planning Scheme might by now have been an accomplished fact.

But for the War, the Gas Company would have had little chance in 1918 of slipping into the acquisition of a site which, but for the War, the Duke of Devonshire would not of have wanted to sell to the Gas Company in view of the Chiswick Town Planning application.

Members of Parliament and all concerned for the fair and prudent conduct of public and municipal affairs are urged to consider the flowing Memorandum, and to observe that the unusual railway, tramway and traffic facilities of the district all point to the preservation of the area for housing and other suitable development, and to the justice and wisdom of saving it from the selfish ends of a Corporation which does not offer to produce cheaper gas and has an alternative site to develop.

The House of Commons is asked to prevent the Gas Company from taking an unfair advantage of the War in aiming once again at a site which has nothing to do with it's alleged grounds of national importance, and to protect the unanimous wishes of the neighbouring local inhabitants whose life and homes are affected and the authoritative opposition of the Middlesex County Council and Urban District Councils of Chiswick and Barnes.

The crises of War should not be exploited for the profit of an industrial Company. The whole future of a settled community, desiring to develop the area on suitable lines for the general good, should not thus be jeopardised.

If Gas Works have to be on the banks of the Thames, they should be set east of London Bridge and not west of Putney Bridge.

## **MEMORANDUM**

### **The Area**

The area (apart from some adjoining vacant lands which it might be desirable to include in a Town Planning Scheme) consists of about 184 acres lying south of the developed area of Chiswick to the south of the High Road leading from Hammersmith to Kew bridge, and is bounded on its south border by nearly one mile of a beautiful bend of the River Thames opposite Barnes and Mortlake.

The accompanying London Map shows the open situation of the area. The coloured Plan shows the projected development, which is threatened by the monstrous proposal of the Gas Works. The Plan also shows the new main arterial roads recommended just before the War by the Conference of Local Authorities and the Traffic Branch of the Board of Trade for the relief of London Traffic. These roads would be stultified by the Gas Company Scheme.

The panoramic photograph shows the area as it is. The General View which, with the plan, has been prepared by an expert of high authority on Town Planning for the Chiswick Residents Committee in touch with the Chiswick Urban District Council, shows the area as it might be.

A visit to Brentford would show what the Brentford Gas Company seeks to make of this site on a far larger scale.

The area lies in almost equal portions on either side of the London and South Western Railway (loop line) crossing Barnes Bridge.

It now consists of agricultural and Market Garden land, with mature orchards, the only buildings now on the land are a farm house, some farm buildings and a boat house.

The whole area is now definitely on sale by the owner.

The area is one seventh of the whole of Chiswick, which in 1911 had a population of 38,772 and has a rateable value of £284,297 mainly due to the residential character of the District.

The healthiness and clean atmosphere of the District are attributable to its access to the sunshine and prevailing South Westerly winds, which come from Richmond Park and Surrey, and to the scour of a tidal River.

The area in question has owed its singular immunity from spoliation to its single ownership, its market gardening leases and its proximity to the famous Manson and 70 acres of beautiful Park of Chiswick House.

## Chiswick Residents Committee

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