

Dear RAG supporters,

This is a quick update on the Riverside front, following a meeting between RAG steering group representatives with the Council (Pamela Fleming and Mandy Skinner) on 10 January.

A first set of responses from the Council latest Consultation has just been published, please see the link

<https://cabnet.richmond.gov.uk/documents/s65640/Enc.%202%20for%20Twickenham%20Rediscovered.pdf>.

The Council confirmed that the analysis of the open questions – which is the heart of this Consultation - is still being processed and will be published within the next few weeks, so please look out for this on the Council website in the Twickenham Rediscovered section. The true picture of the Consultation will only emerge when part 2 of the Consultation is published.

As per our last newsletter, RAG put out a suggested approach to the way forward following the launch of the recent consultation which suggested that the Council seemed to have moved considerably from its starting point and that Option 1 or possibly also 2 – both with necessary further adjustments – might offer a reasonable starting point for the future and continued to insist that Option 3 was so close to the original as to be absolutely dismissed.

RAG mentioned to the Council that it had received a few responses, some of which thanking us for the report and endorsing the general direction and then a similar number which wanted to go back to the starting point albeit referring to the value of the workshops.

The Council stated that the summary report was about to be issued and committed itself both to publishing the fuller report by the end of January and to continuing to engage fully with the three local groups (EPI, DJG trust and RAG).

The Council emphasised that this is a special development and stated that there would be 'no compromise' on such things as the quality of the materials used for the buildings, the need for community space, and the mix of uses (yet to be determined). It said that it had 'big ambitions' for the site (including for community space e.g. Eel Pie Island Museum) while acknowledging that those ambitions might not bring in great revenue; this relates to the delivery mode – where the Council retains control. It will be best able to deliver those ambitions – RAG said that the people of Twickenham want ambitions that are solid.

The Council said that there would inevitably be retail space and restaurant/café's which would naturally occupy parts of the site, behind which space for e.g. start-up businesses could be provided (less location specific). The Council was confident that the economic return/viability was manageable, even though many elements (e.g. the viability or not of underground parking) had still to be addressed.

RAG understands that other local groups Diamond Jubilee Gardens and Eel Pie Island Group have also met the Council and voiced their views in a similar direction.

RAG has been communicating with other groups and will keep a close watch on the next stage – in particular with regard to the 'viability' of the scheme, and the mixed usage of the building, with a priority for community space, e.g. the Eel Pie Island Museum.

Those most involved recently in developing and carrying forward RAG's strategy favour the approach suggested – on the basis that the Council appears effectively to

have abandoned the original proposal (and the success that this change represents – following everyone’s efforts – should not be under-estimated). We believe that options 1 and 2 (with adjustments) are moving significantly in the right direction both of creating far better links to the river and acknowledging the need for more and real public space.

Taking those options as a new starting point, we consider that the major focus should now be on ensuring continued engagement with representatives of the local community (which was a key component of the ‘referendum’) – through the further design development stages all the way through to implementation.

What next?

There is a ‘Question Time’ event organised by the Council this evening, 18 January, at The Member’s Club House, The Stoop Rugby Ground, Langhorn Drive, Twickenham from 6.30 to 8.30pm. The first hour of the event will consist of pre-submitted questions to ensure a spread of issues is discussed. The second hour will be opened to the floor.

We – no doubt like all of you – are waiting to see the full analysis of the Consultation’s open questions and the next stage of the proposal, which should be out within 3 or 4 weeks, according to the Council. After that we propose to call a meeting of the RAG steering group to consider the way forward, including any the need for wider consultation with supporters.

Thanks for your continued support. Of course, as ever, your thoughts on the above will be welcomed.

Good wishes from the Riverside Action Group team