

## **UPDATE ON THE RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT**

Dear Riverside Action Group (RAG),

### **Progress!**

You will be aware that last year the incoming LibDem administration announced its intention to revisit the whole question of the Riverside development and instructed the Council's staff accordingly. At the heart of its approach to this sometimes seemingly intractable issue, it decided to institute a competition for the design of the development, under the aegis and rules of RIBA (the Royal Institute of British Architects). A 'design panel' has been established to draw up the design brief for the competition and to manage the evaluation process according to the strict RIBA procedure. In addition, a process of consultation was begun with a broad-based stakeholder group which could feed views from the various active groups representing residents and local cultural and other interests into the panel.

RAG has been an active participant in the stakeholder group which has now met three times to consider in particular the main features which should be included in the design brief. Phase 1 of the RIBA procedure is the outline brief to which candidate architect firms are invited to respond. All ideas have been ventilated during this process, which has included a practical brainstorming of views on the core questions, during which all interests had a good opportunity to put their thoughts forward.

The design panel – which includes representatives of RIBA, independent professional experts and a spokesperson from the stakeholder group, as well as Council members – has agreed on its objectives and on the criteria and process for evaluating competition entries. We understand that the objectives of the outline brief focus on four main categories:

- Design and architecture
- Open space and environmental aspects
- Parking, access and movements of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists
- Uses of buildings and spaces on the site.

Those headings are broad, and we are told that the text of the brief under them is not, at least at this point, going to be prescriptive regarding specific aspects of the design other than to set out a few key contextual principles that should be taken into account, including:

- the importance of the location and history of the site
- the scope of the site, which covers the full area between Water Lane and Wharf Lane and between the water's edge and the service road running along the back of the buildings along King Street, with the proviso that it should also be compatible with the wider riverside area down to Champion's Wharf
- the need to preserve the open space of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens, currently held in trust, either in its present form or – if changed – in at least equivalent size and nature.

In parallel, the Council has commissioned a traffic and movement survey to inform the process.

As to timing, we understand that the Council is set to launch the competition and expressions of interest will be invited from architects during the course of this week. Entries will be assessed and reduced to a short-list of about five by May after which the selected candidates will be asked to produce more detailed concepts in the Summer. Following this, there is expected to be a further public consultation on these (we get the impression this would be rather like last time with display boards set up by the Council for all residents to visit and view), with further evaluation and decisions taken by November.

### **RAG's position and future working**

As you know, RAG has tried – over the last three years, throughout the recent consultations on the Riverside – to work with the other residents' groups which were active at the time and to pursue a balanced approach which married what our members considered to be in the best interest of Twickenham with what might be achieved in practice – we have regularly shared our objectives and invited comment and confirmation from you. Sometimes this has involved outright and strong opposition to the previous Council's proposals and more recently trying to work with the past and present administrations to obtain acceptable and practical outcomes.

The new, more open approach of the Council (and Councillors) to this issue is welcome and we hope it will bear fruit. It is important to maintain the momentum towards the right solution for the site – we are all keen to see an end to the current dereliction and its replacement by a development which will serve and be treasured by the people of Twickenham. We are therefore supporting the present process, since we find it both practical and (so far) positive in engaging us all in a realistic manner. Of course, all will depend on the innovative thinking which comes out of the competition!

As ever, it would be great to receive any thoughts or comments you wish to feed in. Even better, if anyone would like to get more involved in helping assess ideas as they come through the process, please get in touch! You may know that – after many years of really central commitment to the cause – Susan Burningham has now taken a back seat for personal reasons and we thank her very deeply for the energy and experience she brought to the campaign. But, in part, that does mean that it would be helpful to re-create a group on which we could draw for ideas and views, to guide the line that RAG should take on specific questions – this would be mostly in email correspondence but might also mean the occasional meeting (nothing onerous!).

Please consider joining us to add your ideas and energy. The next stage will be especially important in taking forward the first impressionistic designs proposed by architects and adapting/refining them so as to achieve a good result.

Either way it would be helpful to have an indication of your continuing support, if only in a one-line email!

**As ever, if you do not wish to receive further communication from us, please go to the bottom of this newsletter and click on 'unsubscribe'.**

Best wishes,

Mark, Peter and Marion