

Hello everyone

We last wrote to you regarding the Twickenham Riverside project in early October, following the meeting of the Council with the Stakeholders' Reference Group (SRG) on 30th September. This is a further update.

The first news to report is that the wider consultation of residents scheduled by the Council for November has been postponed. The Council has said that this consultation will still take place, but has not yet fixed a date. When it happens, the consultation may be on-line. The Council's stated purpose in organising the consultation will be to present for approval a revised design for the Riverside development with a view to beginning the formal planning process soon after. The effect of that would be to fix – effectively to freeze debate on – the buildings-footprint and general layout of the development.

Among the stakeholders' groups there was – as described in our October newsletter – a consensus that the design, as proposed, was *not* ready and that the Council's design team and Hopkins (the architects who won the design competition last winter) should allow more time for proper reflection on the layout of the development and the footprint of the buildings. This should include engagement with the three independent architect experts who had served on the design panel (the 'DP3', of whom 2 were chosen by the Council and one by the Stakeholders' Reference Group) as well as other stakeholder representatives. At the 30th September meeting, Hopkins had described the significant constraints they faced as a result of the Environment Agency's requirements relating to flood defences. Those EA requirements, coming nearly a year after the design competition, had the effect of re-writing the project brief, thereby leading to a substantially changed Hopkins design as compared with its design which won at that time – a *revised* Hopkins design which, in the stakeholders' view, had lost much of the attractive look and feel of the *original* Hopkins design.

In the past 6 weeks, what developments have there been?

From the stakeholders' side, there has been a continuation of the effort by the DP3 to engage constructively with the Council and Hopkins on ideas for increasing the attractiveness of the design, particularly opening up the south-west corner where the Embankment meets Wharf Lane, including more dynamic connection with the river.

- From the Council, there have been mixed messages: expressions of openness and flexibility on the one hand, with, on the other hand, preparations for a procedural measure which, if applied, would mean quite the opposite:—On 4th November, Stakeholders received an 'update on the design development' aimed to be a response to 'concerns' expressed by stakeholders, but which is vague in many respects. It announced the deferral of the November consultation. It is clear that the Council and Hopkins are working on a further iteration of the design, but the detailed definition of the content of the development – which will determine how our future Riverside will look – remains unclear and, largely unimproved, at least as yet. The Council has indicated too that it is now considering a suggestion by its traffic consultants to make Water and Wharf Lanes, or just Water Lane, completely two-way. We wait to see where the promised new approach will lead.
- On 16th November, a report was made on the Riverside development to the Council's Finance, Policy & Resources Committee which included a proposal to take compulsory purchase powers which it could use to take control of the land on the Riverside, including that owned

or leased by commercial interests on King Street, the Port of London Authority – PLA (much of the Embankment – the current parking area and the road), and the Twickenham Riverside Trust – TRT (the Diamond Jubilee Gardens). The Gardens were leased to the Twickenham Riverside Trust by the Council in 2014 for 125 years. At the meeting, the Trust – whose objects (its legal duties) include ‘to preserve, protect and improve for the benefit of the public, the Riverside and its environs’ – indicated that it would resist any such application and called explicitly for more and urgent ‘conversation and consultation, not confrontation’ to find solutions to outstanding differences.

The use of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) would herald a striking departure from the Council’s stated listening and flexible approach towards the development and could mean a shift to one of absolute control of the development as well as significant public expenditure (according to the Council, several hundred thousand pounds). In the event, after a wide-ranging discussion, the Committee adopted the proposal, but excluded the Gardens from the order pending a further discussion at the next meeting in January.

RAG would like to see the Council act on the expression of flexibility in its 4th November update and take steps to resolving the outstanding issues relating to the development in a genuinely open and constructive way in the spirit of conversation and consultation proposed by the TRT.

There were signs of openness by Council officials at the Finance Committee Meeting and there is now a real hope that this will happen over the next few weeks. That entails arriving at a revised proposal for the development which, in design terms, meets the EA flood requirements and also is compatible with PLA policies – while at the same time being interesting, attractive and appropriate to Twickenham Riverside and also solving the servicing/access issue. That could surely be done by drawing on the creative talents of both Hopkins and the local architects. RAG intends to continue to work with other SRG members to push for that.

In summary, there have been some further interactions relating to the development, but as yet little or no progress on improving the design or resolving the issue of access and servicing for Eel Pie Island. The underlying design challenge remains as it did when we wrote to you last ... but hopefully things are about to move.

As ever, comments welcome. And stay safe and well!

Marion, Peter and Mark