

Hi everyone,

MOVEMENT ON THE RIVERSIDE?

We hope you've had a good Christmas (as far as lockdown has allowed) and we wish you all the best for the coming year!

In our latest newsletter in November, we noted that the wider consultation of residents on the redevelopment of the Twickenham Riverside scheduled by the Council had been postponed. As you may have seen, the Council has now fixed the timing: it intends to carry out its virtual consultation on its proposals during January, on-line through its website. Details are given below. The Council has confirmed its purpose in organising the consultation, namely 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 (the overall site design).

There was a flurry of activity in the run-up to Christmas, including another meeting of the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) on 15 December (with RAG attending the meeting). The activity included interaction between the Council and some residents' groups, as well as (it was stated) the Environment Agency and the Port of London Authority (see further below).

The present state of play on the Council's website can be found [here](#), but this will be added to in the next few days. As reported by the Council to the Stakeholder Reference Group meeting, proposals for revisions to the overall site design will form the heart of the consultation, seeking public endorsement of that overall design.

Essentially the consultation and new design proposals are expected to:

- reflect the negotiations with the Environment Agency which has set stringent conditions for the site (much of which is in the floodplain) including – most contentiously – the need for a high flood defence wall in the southwest corner of the site, at the bottom of Wharf Lane, between the Embankment and the Wharf Lane building;
- widen the entrance to Water Lane and the lane itself by slimming down the long building leading to the Embankment in a manner that seems sensible;
- widen Wharf Lane (to little or no advantage in terms of gained space) and pull the Wharf Lane building back from the riverfront behind and above the wall required by the EA. Despite some minor adjustments to its shape, this building would still remain rather bulky with the 'winter garden', which was an attractive part of the original design, not included (as noted in our previous RAG communications);
- reduce the overall building volume on the site by about one-third.

Importantly too, they are expected to propose a re-think of the roads on the site, in order to resolve the access and servicing issues relating to supplies to and from residents and businesses on Eel Pie Island and in the new development. This would involve making the top of both Water and Wharf Lanes two-way, keeping the 'service road' behind the King Street parade much as it is now (ie entered only from Wharf Lane), and providing for very constrained and occasional use of the Embankment by the largest lorries. This is made possible by the removal of the pay-and-display parking spaces from the Riverside and the expectation that the consequent number of vehicle movements in and out of the area will be massively reduced.

This would also have the advantage of securing broadly same-level pedestrian access to the site from King Street with a gradual incline down to the river as now.

In our last newsletter, we reported on the Council's decision to embark on compulsory purchase powers to underpin its ability to develop the site and that it will revisit this aspect at the next Finance Committee meeting on 18 January. RAG understands that the situations involving both the Port of London Authority (the current owner of much of the Embankment) and the Twickenham Riverside Trust (leaseholder of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens) are close to being resolved.

The consultation will be for four weeks starting on Wednesday 6 January and there will be two 1½-hour public Zoom meetings – in the evening of 6 January and morning of Saturday 23 January. You can register for these at [eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and search for Twickenham Riverside event (1) or (2). Consultation will be via responses and comments gathered through an on-line questionnaire and various direct consultation engagements are planned with local schools and youth groups and with the local business community.

While the recent activity has seen some new design features (noted above), RAG supporters will wish to see precisely what the Council is proposing when the consultation is launched before taking a view. While some of what we expect is contrary to views we have held to date, this seems to be a time when the community will need to consider whether the time has come for compromise on some specifics. There are two main areas which are likely to stand out for us:

- The success of the southwest corner of the site in allowing and encouraging the connection with the river that we believe is essential to optimise the community 'look and feel' of the project. This relates to the nature and positioning of the Wharf Lane building (for decision now) and to the way in which the landscaping and the encouragement of riverside and waterfront activities (e.g. boat houses) are carried forward (to be decided in the coming months). Ensuring the right connectivity to the river has been a key principle for RAG throughout.
- The degree to which the two-way systems at the top of Water and Wharf Lanes can be made to work. While we have opposed this in the past, it may well be that – with a big reduction of traffic on these roads – this can become part of the solution, subject to safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

These decisions and our overall view will inevitably be influenced by a number of critical financial factors, particularly at a time when local government finances were always going to be challenged, even before the impact of the Covid pandemic. It is good that the current administration remains firmly committed to resolving finally the longstanding issue of the derelict area on the riverside – at the SRG meeting, the Council reiterated its commitment in principle to the Riverside development which it wants to take forward as a priority. As to how the financial viability of the scheme evolves in practice, RAG will watch with attention. Based on what the Council representative said at the SRG meeting, the Riverside development will be implemented in phases starting at the Water Lane side and moving across incrementally which presumably means that financial commitments to builders will be made in stages.

Above all, it will be important to ensure that, whatever design is finally decided upon, there are no compromises in its implementation in terms of the quality of the design and materials for the buildings themselves or of the re-provision in the site of equivalent value for the reconfigured Diamond Jubilee Gardens, compared to the much valued open space they currently provide.

Do please let us know your thoughts either before or during the consultation.

All the best and Happy New Year ... Tier 4 permitting!

Peter, Marion and Mark