

Hi everyone,

Our last newsletter provided details of Richmond Council's consultation on its proposals for the redevelopment of Twickenham Riverside and our understanding of the latest position on the various outstanding design and legal issues. To save repetition, this can be accessed [here](#).

**The consultation is now more than halfway through and will end at close of play on Wednesday 3 February, so please get your comments and thoughts in by then.**

The detail of the project and the survey can be seen on the Council's website [here](#). You can also view, on these pages, the two public Zoom presentations and Q&A sessions (the 23 January one yet to go up) which have been held.

In our last newsletter, we mused that we were all having to decide whether the time has yet come for compromise between perfectionism (if that's possible) and the wish to 'get something done' on the site – at a time when, even at this stage, there are still a lot of questions unanswered.

As we see it, we are all having to weigh up the following considerations (with RAG's thoughts in italics):

- Will the proposals meet the basic objective of creating an active and distinctive destination space which will act as a draw for both residents of Twickenham and visitors and also help regenerate the town of Twickenham? *RAG: The jury on this is out and will very much depend on people's views on, and likely use of, the new open space which the site would provide. This space would be split between a smaller area on the upper level and more space available on the lower level on the Embankment.*
- How successful will the reconfiguration of the open space on the riverside – that is currently provided both by the Diamond Jubilee Gardens and by the existing walkway and seating along the riverfront on the Embankment – be in encouraging enjoyment and active leisure usage by residents and visitors and in creating the right community 'look and feel'? *RAG: This is a similar question, but more explicitly focused on whether we feel that the park/garden aspect of the space has been maintained and, if not, whether what is offered in its place 'does the trick'.*
- Do we feel that the lay-out of the development as currently proposed will ensure the right connectivity to the river and optimise the use of the river and the pursuit of river-based activities? *RAG: This is a critical consideration. The whole value of the redevelopment is to improve public access to and engagement with the river itself. No doubt much can be done to realise this objective through facilitating and organising activities on the riverside (upper and lower) – we are aware that the Council and the Twickenham Riverside Trust (see also below) are well attuned to this need and that the provision of boathouses and river-based activities has been the subject of questions at the two on-line presentations. However, the layout and nature of the public open spaces either makes this possible or not, according to your judgement. Our thought is that it probably would – with careful attention to detail as the planning process proceeds – but the question is then how optimally?*
- What will be the impact of the Wharf Lane building as proposed – its mass and its position, the consequent need to widen Wharf Lane (to little benefit), and the influence it would have on the public open space provided in the development? *RAG: This is also a crucial consideration. The Council has refused consistently to open itself up to new thinking on this,*

*which means that the site is subject to stricter Environment Agency flood defence requirements. It also means less open, usable space on the upper level of the riverside and that this is substituted by the changes on the Embankment. One way of remedying this would be to reduce the size of the Wharf Lane building (or even remove it altogether), which would clearly also have an impact on the cost of the project (see further below on the issue of the Council's finances).*

- Do we think that the widening of the pavement and slimming down of the building proposed for Water Lane (leading from the Santander corner to the Eel Pie Island bridge) will encourage people to go down to the riverside? *RAG: We think this works well and will improve pedestrian access to the riverside and the site as a whole. As to the look of the Water Lane building, the detail of its design and the materials used will be important.*
- Do we think that a pragmatic solution has been found to the contentious access and servicing aspects of the proposal? *RAG: We have always been opposed to two-way traffic on Water and Wharf Lanes, but there are a number of reasons which might justify compromise here. These include the very substantially reduced number of vehicle movements expected to result from the removal of the visitor parking on the Embankment. The present proposal is probably the best available solution put forward to date – provided that the largest lorries can be dealt with differently and that the ability for them to continue to use the Embankment mixed-use space is subject to genuinely strict limitations on access with availability at very limited times (e.g. a system has been proposed of retractable bollards, lowered/raised according to careful controls). The balance to be struck here is between that limited intrusion across the car-free space, greater safety for pedestrians at the bottom of Water Lane and, importantly, the needs of industry and other businesses on the Island which must be protected.*

As highlighted by RAG at the most recent Stakeholder Reference Group meeting in December, a key factor looking to the future will be how the proposals fit with the Council's future finances, particularly when seen against the proposed uses for the new buildings on the site and the severe pressures on local government finances at the present time (both generally and in the context of Covid). We continue to appreciate the current administration's commitment to resolving the longstanding issue of the derelict area on the riverside, but that must of course be subject to financial viability. We will watch with considerable interest the Council's reports on the financial status of the scheme, as it progresses to planning (and thereafter during the chosen sequence of construction phases).

Finally, as you may know, the Twickenham Riverside Trust – which has direct responsibility for the Diamond Jubilee Gardens and also the mandate to protect and preserve the riverside and its environs – is required to undertake a survey of residents' opinions on the changes to the Gardens and the wider riverside development. This is expected to be issued soon and we will let you know when it is published. We would encourage you and all people interested in the future of the riverside also to take part in that survey.

Many thanks for all your comments to date and for your attention. As ever, we will be very happy to receive your views.

Our best wishes to you at this difficult time – please stay safe!

Peter, Marion and Mark