

Hello everyone,

## **Twickenham Riverside Development - latest news**

This is to update you on events relating to the proposed re-development of Twickenham Riverside.

Our last newsletter of 3<sup>rd</sup> December reported on the Council's launch of a compulsory purchase order (CPO) of land and new rights on the riverside site, including of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens, and on the response of the Twickenham Riverside Trust (TRT). The Trust, which is responsible for the Gardens under the 125-year lease granted to it by the Council in 2014, had submitted its objections to the CPO in letters addressed to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities.

The case presented by the TRT drew on an independent surveyor's assessment that the quantity and quality of public open space that would be 're-provided' by the Twickenham Riverside Development in the form proposed by the Council would not be as good ('equally advantageous') as that which is currently provided by the Diamond Jubilee Gardens. As we reported to you, the detailed reasons were (in the TRT's words) that:-

1. No compelling case has been established for a CPO at this stage and it is not an act of last resort.
2. The Council has not proved its case that the public open space has been increased and improved – either in the re-provisioned gardens or in the scheme itself.
3. The trustees are duty-bound to contest the CPO.
4. The Council has not yet secured planning permission for its proposed development of Twickenham Riverside.
5. The acquiring authority is unable to demonstrate that it has the funds required in order to implement the scheme being promoted by its CPO.

The TRT called upon the Secretary of State to reject the CPO on the Gardens, based on the terms of its lease and on the objects of the Trust as set out in its articles, namely 'to preserve, protect and improve, for the benefit of the public, the riverside and its environs at Twickenham'.

Other representations to the CPO were made by local residents to the Secretary of State, including many objections.

The planning permission referred to in 4. above has still not been secured. It is not known when the decision of the planning committee will be issued.

**The latest news of the CPO procedure is that the Secretary of State has called for a public Inquiry on the CPO, to be held in November.** There will be three sessions (over up to eight days in all), at which members of the public will be entitled to be speak.

We described, in a previous newsletter in September, issues raised by the Riverside Development scheme as proposed by the Council:-

- the proposed new building on Wharf Lane (on the south west corner of the site, to be built on half of the existing Diamond Jubilee Gardens): the size and shape of this building would be taller than anything on King Street, with 24 private tenure apartments, public toilets, and a 'public house/restaurant';
- vehicular access to the Embankment: at what specific times would access be available, e.g. for refuse vehicles, large articulated lorries and other vehicles servicing Eel Pie Island (e.g. during weekdays)? How compatible would that be with the leisure use of that area by pedestrians and with the intended events space on the Embankment (to which the Council sometimes refers as the 'town square')?
- the size of the 're-provisioned area' (split above and below the flood plain): would the area proposed be 'of equal or better amenity value' as compared with the Diamond Jubilee Gardens, or would there be, as cogently argued by the TRT, a loss of coherent public open space?
- overall, the 'fit' of the development, as proposed, with the particular characteristics of Twickenham riverside: how would the Council's plan to build many flats with some retail/office use on the ground floor,

plus a café and a 'pub/restaurant', with many paved areas, 'create an exciting destination...' 'championing the river' (the Council's words in its planning application)?

Most – if not all of us who live in the borough - would like to see, after so long, removal of the derelict areas close to Water Lane: the car park and the old pool buildings. RAG observes that these areas are all currently the responsibility of the Council. But, does what is being proposed by the Council for the site represent the best that can be done?

The public Inquiry will be an opportunity for local residents to express their views on the CPO and the Council's plan for this important public space on Twickenham riverside.

**Please note that, in preparation for the public Inquiry in November, there will be a meeting called a 'Case Management Conference' convened by the Inquiry Inspector.** This will be held on-line at 9.30am on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July to 'set up and agree a clear understanding as to how, procedurally, the Inquiry is to be managed and programmed'.

As for the Inquiry itself, the dates *provisionally* reserved for the sessions are:-

- 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> November (starting at 10am on the 1<sup>st</sup>);
- 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> November; and
- 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> November.

Please note them in your diaries (subject to confirmation).

We will communicate the locations of the sessions when that information is available.

It is our hope and wish that the Inquiry will - with strong participation by residents – be the opportunity to discuss openly in public the above issues raised by the Council's proposal for the Riverside. The Council cannot reasonably pursue the position that it has adopted, to compulsorily force through a design which is flawed. For the space by our riverside, surely a better alternative can be found.

As ever, we welcome your comments.

Best wishes,

The RAG team