

Hello everyone,

## **Twickenham Riverside Development – major events coming**

This to update you on developments relating to the proposed re-development of Twickenham Riverside, since we last wrote to you in mid-July (in two newsletters in rapid succession).

There is much happening of which you should be aware, including **key events** - highlighted below in bold.

There will be a **meeting of the Council's Planning Committee on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm**, at which the Council's planning application for the re-development will be considered. Since it is a major project, the meeting will be devoted to this application alone.

We at RAG will be requesting an opportunity to speak at the meeting, once the agenda has been published – alongside other local residents. We will wait to see to whom the Council accords slots.

If granted - as usual, the slot would be for just 3 minutes - we intend to focus on two of the four issues we highlighted in our first July newsletter: -

- **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): its height and mass (higher than the buildings on King Street) with 24 private tenure apartments; its closeness to the river; its over-bearing effect;
- **the 'fit' of the development, as proposed, with the particular characteristics of Twickenham riverside**: how would the Council's plan to build 24 private flats with some retail/office use on the ground floor, plus a 'public house/restaurant', with many paved areas, 'create an exciting destination...' 'championing the river' (the Council's words in its planning application)?

The impact of the proposed development on the Diamond Jubilee Gardens - the size of the 're-provisioned area' (split above and below the flood plain) and whether the proposed area would be 'of equal or better amenity value' as compared with the existing Gardens – is primarily for the Twickenham Riverside Trust (TRT), which is responsible for the Gardens under the 125-year lease granted to it by the Council in 2014. We understand that the Trust will also be seeking to speak at the planning meeting and will continue to argue that the redevelopment would cause a loss of equivalent, coherent public open space.

We do not know at this stage what the planning officer's recommendation will be in response to the 332 objections lodged by local residents against the Council's planning application in 2021 (compared with 231 comments in support). But there is a real possibility that these representations will not be heard and that the Planning Committee may decide to approve the Council's planning application at the meeting. The according of planning permission is a necessary prerequisite to the Council's intended next step of imposing a compulsory purchase order (CPO) of land and new rights on the riverside site, including of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens (the TRT has, as noted in our previous newsletters, submitted its objections to the CPO in letters addressed to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities). The Council's definitive 'statement of case' in support of the CPO should also be made public in the coming days.

In this context, **the TRT has issued a new petition**, available in a flyer and on-line:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-twickenham-riverside-public-gardens>

In the petition, you are invited to help save Twickenham Riverside Public Gardens, by supporting: -

'Improvements to Twickenham Riverside that will see the existing footprint of Diamond Jubilee Gardens remain free from development, the withdrawal of the Wharf Lane Building proposal, and the trees retained - so as to preserve and protect the Public Open Space on the Riverside for the benefit of the Public'.

We at RAG urge you to read the 'Why is this important?' section of the petition and, if you are persuaded, we recommend you sign the petition as an important new initiative – thereby adding your own voice to those which have been raised before.

As the TRT notes at the foot of the petition, 'together, we can achieve genuine improvements on the Riverside for future generations to enjoy'. We at RAG reiterate that our wish – together with presumably most everybody in the borough – is to see the current derelict area removed and transformed in a positive way.

As for the calendar for the CPO and public space considerations, there will be **a lengthy public inquiry in June of next year**, with the inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities holding sessions at Clarendon Hall, York House on the following days: Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June to Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June; Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June to Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June; Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June to Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June; and Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June to Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

Please note those dates in your diaries. The CPO/public space inquiry will be critical. The Council's proposed riverside development will not be able to go ahead without the CPO.

With strong participation by residents, we can make the best of these opportunities 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 push through a design which is flawed. The design was conceived pre-Covid and pre-the current cost-of-living crisis when economic conditions, nationally and locally, were different. What has not changed is the fact that the project as designed would be a big budget item (how much exactly, when increased materials and labour costs are included?). Would it represent value for our Council tax payers' money?

For the space by our riverside, surely a better alternative to the proposed scheme can be found.

As ever, we welcome your comments.

And, should you like to join us at RAG in monitoring events and working for a positive solution, please do contact us.

All the best

The RAG team