

Hello everyone,

Twickenham Riverside Development: the most recent news - and the next stage

This is a further update regarding the proposed re-development of Twickenham Riverside.

The meeting of the Council's Planning Committee which we highlighted in our newsletter earlier this month was held last week, on Thursday 24th November, with the committee of local Councillors and Council officers considering the Council's planning application for the Riverside (a special meeting for this major project).

We at RAG requested an opportunity to speak at the meeting, and one of us was granted that (one of the 3-minute slots), alongside other local residents presenting arguments against the planning application (as well as for).

As described in our previous newsletters, the design of the proposed new building for 25 private apartments on Wharf Lane (on the south west corner of the site) with its height and mass (higher than King Street) and location close to the river would be over-bearing and inappropriate for Twickenham Riverside with its particular characteristics - in what is a Conservation Area.

The Wharf Lane building would be constructed on half of the existing Diamond Jubilee Gardens. The trustees of the Twickenham Riverside Trust (TRT) - which is responsible for the Gardens under the 125-year lease granted to it by the Council in 2014 - explained to the committee what would be the impact of the proposed development on the Gardens in terms of a loss of coherent public open space which can accommodate a variety of usages.

The [recording](#) by the Council of the meeting shows those presentations (in the first part of the meeting before the webcast had technical problems) (at the very start of the meeting, when the Chair is beginning his opening remarks, the sound takes some seconds before coming on).

Despite those representations, the committee decided to approve the application - by unanimous vote.

The Council has, therefore, obtained planning permission for its proposed development.

Normally, at this stage, the Council would be authorised to go ahead with the building BUT, in this case, the Council is seeking to take land – the Diamond Jubilee Gardens, in the middle of the proposed construction site - away from its current owners, the TRT. The Council cannot, therefore, proceed without its intended next step of imposing a compulsory purchase order (CPO) of 'land and new rights' on the riverside site, including of the Gardens.

In other words, the according of planning permission is a necessary prerequisite to application of the CPO, but it is not sufficient. The key issue still remains to be decided of 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.

As noted in our previous newsletters, the TRT submitted in November 2021 its objections to the CPO in letters addressed to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Secretary of State has ordered for there to be a **public inquiry in June of next year**. The inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will hold sessions at Clarendon Hall, York House on the following days: Monday 6th June to Thursday 8th June; Monday 13th June to Thursday 15th June; Monday 20th June to Thursday 22nd June; and Monday 27th June to Thursday 29th June, 2023.

Please note those dates in your diaries. The CPO inquiry will be critical. With strong participation by residents, we can make the best of that further opportunity to voice in public the questions and concerns raised by the Council's proposal for the Riverside.

The Council seems determined to pursue the position that it has adopted, to push through a design which is flawed - with all that continues to involve in terms of time and cost - to us as council tax payers.

In the 2 weeks since our previous newsletter, 2,636 people (at the latest count) have signed the **TRT's petition**. Here it is again, in case you would like to add your name or share it with local friends/residents:-

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

The petition invites you 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".

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 stated before the Planning Committee our wish – together with presumably most everybody in the borough – to see the current derelict area (on the north west part of the site) removed and transformed in a positive way.

Regrettably, the design as currently proposed by the Council would not do that.

We are not objecting to the whole scheme, but the Council's plan needs to be withdrawn and the proposed Wharf Lane building substantially re-thought. For the space by our riverside, surely a better alternative 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