

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (Twickenham Riverside) Compulsory Purchase Order 2021.

Statement in Support of the Compulsory Purchase Order of Land and New Rights in Twickenham Riverside

Public Open Amenity Space

Good morning/afternoon - my name is Deon Lombard. I am an Architect and Urban Designer with over 40 years' experience, largely in mixed use, residential and commercial projects. I have lived with my family in Twickenham since 1991, and am a member of a loose affiliation of Twickenham Residents who support the CPO for our Riverside. I wish to put forward our argument as to why it is necessary to include the land currently occupied by the Diamond Jubilee Gardens into the approved scheme in order to provide a much larger Public Open Amenity Space of greater quality and public benefit at the heart of the site proposals.

My involvement with Twickenham Riverside goes back to the beginning of 2016 as a founder member of the Twickenham Riverside Park Team with the primary objective of promoting a 'whole site' solution for our Riverside. In 2018 we approached the Council with a proposal that a professional brief be drawn up that reflected the aspirations of a majority of Twickenham residents, followed by an architectural competition that best met the requirements of the brief. A rigorous process has been followed, culminating in a proposal by Hopkins Architects that encapsulates the requirements of the brief, and which obtained full planning consent in December last year.

The essence of the proposal is the large public open space at the heart of the site. The requirement of the competition brief, agreed and finalised with eleven resident stakeholder groups, including the Twickenham Riverside Trust, was that the public open space should comprise a large public events space, public gardens and facilities which are coherent, complementary and easily accessible. These objectives have been achieved in the approved design.

A key objective of the brief is to attract the public to this riverside location. To provide sufficient space at the scale required to accommodate a large number of people, it is necessary to combine disparate areas of the site into a public open space that works as a coherent whole. These would include the areas currently occupied by the carpark, the riverside through road, derelict buildings and Diamond Jubilee Gardens. It would not be possible to deliver the benefits of the proposed scheme in a holistic solution were the large area currently occupied by the Diamond Jubilee Gardens to be excluded from the site.

The complementary relationship between the events space and gardens is essential to the working of the public open space as a whole. The combined size of the gardens and the events space would have the flexibility to allow for the participation of far more people than is currently possible given the inherent restrictions on the existing site. As the slope of the gardens away from the events space

would be barrier free, spectators would not only have access to the tiered seating provided, but would have a view of the events space from any location within the gardens.

It is only with spring tides that the lower part of the events space nearest the pedestrian bridge will have minor flooding mainly occurring during the winter months (as is currently the case). As spring tides are entirely predictable, taking place twice a month (and not only at weekends), this means that if planned around the timing of these relatively infrequent tidal events, public events could take place on many more than 26 weekends in a year – far more than have ever been achieved during the tenure of the TRT and at a much larger scale if desired. For the remainder of the time tidal flooding will not impact on the events space. Furthermore, smaller events such as are currently hosted in the restricted DJG could still take place in the garden area above the events space.

Were the Diamond Jubilee Gardens to be retained in their current form, they would remain cut off from the remainder of the site and restricted by the surrounding wall. Capacity and flexibility would be restricted. A large portion of the site would be bisected by the high retaining wall facing the riverside. It is unclear how the remaining area occupied by the carpark and through road could successfully be combined with the retained Diamond Jubilee Gardens to accommodate the requirements set out in the brief – providing a coherent unified public open space of sufficient size, amenity and access that would be an improvement on the validated scheme. The public space would at best be subdivided and separated by retained barriers instead of forming a comprehensible coherent accessible whole.

Were the area currently occupied by the DJG to be incorporated into the overall site area, the public open space and amenities provided would be of a better quality and larger scale as befitting a new town centre. A stipulation that an area at least equivalent to that of the current Diamond Jubilee Gardens be re-provided with amenities at least commensurate with existing site facilities has not only been achieved but exceeded, for the following reasons:

1. An integrated area of some 3,811 square metres would be provided in exchange for an area of some 2,510 square metres on adjacent land, being over 50% larger and of no less quality than the current area;
2. Incorporation of the current DJG site into the overall site area would enable the removal of existing barriers on the current DJG site (retaining and enclosing walls and steps) allowing step-free access to and across the whole public open space; a person in a wheelchair would be able to access all parts of the site (more about this by a fellow supporter); the removal of these barriers would not be possible without the incorporation of the current DJG site into the approved scheme, thus providing an overall improvement;
3. Incorporation of the current DJG site into the overall site area would enable the removal of redundant concrete and masonry structures below and above ground that limit the growth

of trees and vegetation on this site (refer to the Arboricultural Reports submitted as part of the Planning Application), allowing an increase in soil volumes, rooting medium and quality of planting. As well as enabling the planting of selected trees of value, the concreted areas with fake grass would be removed. Lawned terraces and vegetation and of a higher value would be provided over a much larger area, increasing the ecological value of the site and bringing about a biodiversity net gain (more about this by a fellow supporter); an overall improvement in the size and quality of the garden area, trees and vegetation would not be possible without the incorporation of the current DJG site into the approved scheme;

4. Incorporation of the current DJG site into the overall site area would enable the smaller, restricted events space with no infrastructure to be replaced by a larger, more bespoke events space with greater capacity, flexibility and infrastructure, and the existing events space to be incorporated into the new garden area. An overall improvement in the size and quality of the proposed events space would not be possible without the incorporation of the current DJG site into the approved scheme;
5. Incorporation of the current DJG site into the overall site area would enable the creation of a more accessible and much larger children's play area with more activities, doubling the size of the existing play area from 187.5 to 377 square metres; this would not be possible within the confines of the existing gardens without a reducing the area of the already small existing events space;
6. Incorporation of the current DJG site into the overall site area would enable the creation of a more accessible and much larger family café with a view over the gardens and towards the play area; this would not be possible within the confines of the existing gardens without a further reduction in the area of the already small existing events space;

The size, range and quality of public amenities provided in the approved scheme cannot be provided in any other location within the London Borough of Richmond. All possible alternative sites were thoroughly explored as an essential part of the planning application process, but none were found. However, this condition can only be achieved if the land currently occupied by the DJG were to be included in the scheme.

For the reasons provided above, the proposed scheme with the gardens and events space at its heart, meeting the brief as agreed by residents, planning and EA requirements, could not be implemented without the inclusion of the land currently occupied by the DJG. We would thus urge you to uphold the CPO of this land to bring about a much-improved public open space at the heart of our new town centre for the overall benefit of the majority of our residents and our many visitors.

Thank you.