

**The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (Twickenham Riverside) Compulsory Purchase Order
2021
(and application under section 19 of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981)**

Statement in Support of the CPO by LBRuT

From: Sam Kamleh RIBA MA (Arch) MBA Dip (IC)

Chartered Architect and former Trustee of Twickenham Riverside Trust

Dear Mr Rose,

I understand that the CPO process relates to detailed technicalities regarding exchange land offered, amenity and financial values of the existing land, as well as other matters raised in the surveyors' reports. I am also aware of issues, real and imagined, raised by the objectors to the CPO with regard to the proposals now approved at Planning Committee.

In this statement, I do not wish to expand on planning application matters; building height, flood plain, traffic movement and housing, beyond the supporting statements made at the Planning Committee in November 2022, and beyond stating that, as an architect working extensively in Richmond Borough, I have found the Planning department to be rigorous in its enquiries into the impact of any development on its environment. As this proposal has won approval at Officer level and at Planning Committee level then we can be confident that all planning criteria with regard to neighbourliness, traffic movement, flooding and the relationship of buildings to their eco-environment, the wider context and the river, are acceptable under the Local Plan, the London Plan and the NPPF, not to mention other Statutory body regulations such as those of The Environment Agency.

My statement is largely regarding matters that impact the CPO process that might not, perhaps, be regarded as "technical details" but are, rather, matters of principle, relating to my understanding of duties common to Trustees of the Twickenham Riverside Trust. As the TRT mobilised the objection to the CPO during my tenure, under the premise that we Trustees had a duty to oppose the CPO whether we object to the proposals or not, I believe that it is relevant to contest the foundations of their objection.¹

I believe that the Twickenham Riverside Trust is acting contrary to its Charitable Objects in opposing the CPO and the exchange of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens for more open land. The Trust's first Object states:

1. **TO PRESERVE PROTECT AND IMPROVE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC THE RIVERSIDE AND ITS ENVIRONS AT TWICKENHAM IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES (AND SUCH OTHER AREAS AS THE TRUSTEES MAY FROM TIME TO TIME DECIDE);**

After much reflection and discussion within the Trust and since, I believe that the TRT's main opposition to the development and the CPO are based in a self-interested requirement to retain the Diamond Jubilee Gardens as a self-contained, fenced off area that the Trust manages – what they term to be a 'cohesive' space – and to retain the parking for the residents on Eel Pie Island, in spite of their statements to the contrary. It is not a coincidence that the majority of the remaining Trustees are either residents of the Island, former or current, or have family connections on the island². It is also not surprising that almost all of those who spoke against the proposal at the Planning Committee meeting are also residents of Eel Pie

¹ CPO objection: Voted on at TRT meeting of 3rd November 2021. TRT meeting minutes 18 Nov 2021. Followed a meeting with Surveyors (Carter Jonas) and Lawyers (BD Pitmans) that advised that the only way to get the Surveyors' report submitted to the CPO hearing is for the TRT to formally submit an objection. Meeting minutes are available if required.

² Of the current 8 Trustees (LBRuT representative not included), 2 are former residents, 1 with family members on the Island, representing other local groups against the Riverside development; 3 are current residents.

Island³. It seems that the DJG and the riverside are seen by those residents as the property of Eel Pie Island, and this, in itself, presents a contradiction to the Objects of the Trust. The objects are to preserve and improve the riverside and its environs for the benefit of the public, not to protect the gardens and the parking for the benefit of Eel Pie Island residents.

During my time as a Trustee, LBRuT officers set up a legal team to negotiate the lease, a design team to discuss the design with the TRT as well as other engaged local groups. They paid for the valuation and revaluation of the land without having the option to see the resultant surveyors' report and have continued to make efforts to discuss and negotiate with the TRT since my resignation.

It is worth noting that the Hopkins' proposal was unanimously agreed by the Trustees in office when the RIBA competition was won. Some of the same Trustees remain within the Trust although seem to have changed their view. During my time on the Trust, and due, in part, to perceived conflicts of interest on the part of some of the remaining trustees, 4 of us who supported the proposals resigned. One of whom was the former chairman, resigning a few days before the end of his tenure to ensure that his vote on matters of conflict of interest would not be misused⁴. Another trustee who was moving away, also resigned early, resonating with the points made in the former chairman's email.

Early on in my time as a Trustee, a main voice within the Trust supported and was keen to publicize and gain support for a proposal put forward by another architect – another resident of Eel Pie Island.⁵ Rather curiously, the argument put forward by the Trustee and the architect friend was that the scheme was an improved version of the Hopkins' proposal, retaining the Wharf Lane building and adding back the Winter Gardens, lost post the competition entry. When the same Trustee subsequently based most of the objections and garnered support for opposition to the Hopkins proposal, it was surprising to see that this was largely based on the presence of the Wharf Lane building.

It is unfortunate that the expiration of tenure of the original Trustees came during the detailed discussions with LBRuT. Had this not been the case, this CPO is not likely to have become necessary as both parties appeared to be working collaboratively towards offering the residents and visitors of Twickenham Riverside an improved environment.

It is important to note that both the professional advisors to the TRT, paid for by LBRuT, recommended negotiation and discussion with the council for the benefit of the public. The legal advisor suggested that the Trust should accept if the offer on the table was to the benefit of the public. The Surveyors also suggested that their report could be used in further negotiations with the council to improve their offer. The surveyor's report took into account the café, whose lease would not generate the income projected⁶ by the Surveyors even if it did revert to the TRT, and could not take into account the replacement amenities that are, technically, not within the boundaries of the exchange land, although are nonetheless, improved facilities that will be available to the public.

³ Five of the seven speakers against the proposals are current or former residents of Eel Pie Island. The other two are members of Riverside Action Group, one of whom is a member of TRT. By contrast, those who spoke in favour live in different parts of Twickenham. Committee hearing video 24th November 2022 https://richmond.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/720029

⁴ Email from Martin Cox resigning one week earlier than planned due to concerns over a conflicts of interest vote and a vote on the Council's position. Email of 24 September 2021. Former Chair Hugh Brasher resigned on 24th September earlier than his end of tenure on 29th September for the same reasons. This is confirmed on the Companies House website.

⁵ Meeting with Henry Harrison of Eel Pie Island group 'DP3' on 3rd November 2020 Both Celia Holman and Mark Brownrigg Turner were supportive of this proposal. Sketch by DP3 sent in email from Mark Brownrigg on 2 November 2020 and attached to this document.

⁶ This is according to Adrienne Rowe, a founder Trustee and restaurateur, who previously ran the Sunshine Café on the DJG and ran Arthur's on Twickenham Green for many years.

It is my belief that the opposition to the exchange land is not due to the height of the Wharf Lane building, which has nominal adverse impact both socially and architecturally on its surroundings; nor is it due to the exchange land being partly in the flood plain – something the Trustees accepted very early on in the proceedings and something that organisers of events on the Riverside know how to negotiate; nor is opposition due to the value of the land, as the Trust has refused to accept any financial offer in addition to the exchange land, and neither is it based on genuine belief that the DJG offers a better or more accessible area than the more open, landscaped parcels that are now offered in exchange. The new open areas will enjoy a far better connection with, and benefit from the singularity of the river, and promise more eventive and accessible places for all to enjoy.

It is also my belief that beyond the narrowed issue of the values associated with the specific parcels of land to be exchanged, the proposed scheme provides unmistakable improvements to the wider Twickenham environs – most obviously, better links with the High Street and Church Street, getting rid of an eyesore car park and removal of some architecturally meritless buildings on the High Street.

The riverside is there for all to enjoy and a town centre, brownfield site should be properly utilised to avoid urban spread. Providing a mixture of housing, commercial units and open space is the right answer for the most important site in Twickenham and for future generations, who will not thank us if the result of this short-sighted challenge to the CPO leaves us with an Astro-turf surfaced former swimming pool that offers little connection with its location and in fact, could arguably be anywhere in Twickenham, and gives nothing back to the wider town.

I would respectfully contend that it would seem to be entirely unreasonable for a small group of residents, mostly representative of themselves and acting contrary to the Trust's founding principles and, therefore, the wider interests of local residents, to deny the benefit of the proposals to others.

Thank you.

TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE

S-W-CORNER OF SITE

- No building on flood plain (other than)
- Removable boathouses
- River-related activity on embankment
- Retain narrow wharf lane
- Retain 'winter garden'
- Inter-tidal terracing to river edge

