

TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE CPO

INTRODUCTION

1. We support the CPO. We are making this submission as long standing Twickenham residents. We live a few hundred yards from the site and have visited it regularly over many years.

2. Our source documents are the lease to the Twickenham Riverside Trust (TRT), the management agreement with them, the various documents on their web-site and the report to the London Borough of Richmond (LBRUT) Planning Committee on the planning permission for the site.

BACKGROUND

3. Richmond Lido sprang a leak in 1980, 43 years ago. It was closed immediately. Much but not all of the site was demolished in 1986. In the subsequent 37 years most LBRUT administrations have put forward proposals to redevelop this iconic site. All have failed either because of lack of resources or local opposition. That opposition has never put forward alternative schemes which did not require unaffordable public subsidies. If the CPO fails then the proposed redevelopment scheme fails. There is nowhere else to go. Another decade of inertia beckons. We are in the last chance saloon.

OUR UNDERSTANDING

4. Our understanding is:

- The objection to the CPO can only relate to the land and property lying within the area designated by the CPO. It cannot relate to LBRUT's scheme as a whole, which received planning permission in November 2022.
- The land and properties in question are managed and maintained by the TRT. They were given a 125 year lease in 2014. The lease states that the landlord can forfeit the lease if any of its terms are breached.
- Aside from the lease there is a ten year Management Agreement between LBRUT and TRT. This allows LBRUT to subsidise TRT in the exercise of its responsibilities. TRT were given ten years to build up the income on their site, which could then cross-subsidise its management and maintenance activities. This has not happened. Once the Management Agreement expires, in May 2024, there will be no obligation on LBRUT to subsidise TRT.
- TRT's present site covers 2,483 square metres. Under LBRUT's scheme, they will be offered a site covering 3,635 square metres. Of this, 1,902 square metres is subject to flooding. This figure gives a false impression. 1,902 square metres being flooded is a one in a hundred year event.

In any event since the land subject to flooding will be hard surfaced, it will be available for use as soon as the flood subsides. The flood days are known weeks in advance.

CONSIDERATIONS

THE INTERESTS OF EEL PIE RESIDENTS

4. The opposition of Eel Pie Island residents to the LBRUT proposals is understandable. Parking opportunities would be reduced. Footfall and noise on the Embankment would increase.

5. There is however also a broader community interest. Thousands of local residents are frustrated that opportunities to redevelop an iconic Thames-side site have not been taken over a period of 43 years. Aside from providing new housing, shops and leisure facilities, the scheme would provide extra top quality open space with an uninterrupted link down to the river.

THE LEASE

6. There is no clause restricting the landlord from terminating the lease should circumstances warrant it. One such circumstance is the terms of the lease being breached. One of these terms is for TRT 'to maintain responsibility for the repair and maintenance (of the site), including replacement as necessary of all structures, surfaces, play equipment and planting'.

7. In the year to 30 September 2021 TRT's income was £420 (down from £9.4k in 2017, £2.89k in 2018, £3.86k in 2019 and £1.58k in 2020). Its 2021 spend was £3.27k resulting in a deficit of £2.85k. Unless LBRUT continue to subsidise the losses or income from the café or events rises markedly, there is little or no chance of TRT being able to meet its maintenance and upkeep responsibilities.

THE VALIDITY OF THE TRUST'S OBJECTIONS TO THE CPO

8. TRT make three substantive objections:

- First, 'There is no compelling case in the public interest [for the CPO] and that this [the CPO] is not an act of last resort'. This objection is not persuasive. It is in the interests of thousands of local residents and visitors to have this iconic site redeveloped. And the CPO is indeed an act of the last resort: if it fails the income generating new buildings on Wharf Lane cannot be built and the scheme fails. If the scheme fails then opportunities for new housing, offices and small shops cannot be taken.

- Second, 'The case has not been proved that the public open space has been increased or improved'. Again, this objection is not persuasive. The public open space is increasing in area, as noted above. It will be improved. It presently lies at the top of an embankment with parking and a road between it and the Thames. The public open space under the scheme will adjoin the Thames directly.

●Third, 'There has been an inappropriate use of section 19 of the 1961 Acquisition of Land Act. This section provides that there is no need for a special Parliamentary procedure if the Secretary of State is satisfied:

- there will be other land in exchange not being less in area and being advantageous to the persons,if any,entitled to the rights of common or other rights,and to the public;
- the land is being purchased in order to secure its preservation or improve its mananagement'.

TRT'S role and responsibilities will remain as is.The public open space will cover an area greater than now. Play space will increase from 187.5 square metres to 377 square metres. There will still be a (new) Café. LBRUT will continue to subsidise TRT. It is hard to conclude that TRT will be disadvantaged. The purpose of the CPO is to enable the redevelopment of the site thereby securing the enhancement and preservation of the public open space.

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