

INTRODUCTION TO THE TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE TRUST AND ITS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE RIVERSIDE

(please see accompanying photos also)

1. **The Trust**
2. The Twickenham Riverside Trust was founded in 2011 with the primary purpose of preserving the public open space on Twickenham Riverside for the enjoyment of both local residents and visitors to Twickenham.
3. Formally, our charitable objectives are:
 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
 2. To provide facilities there for public recreation and community activities
 3. To advance the education of the public in the history and environment of the area”.
4. The Trust had emerged following a extensive campaign by local residents (including in a petition of over 8,500 signatures presented to Downing Street) to protect and preserve the public open space on Twickenham’s riverside. It was formed with the support and encouragement of, and in close consultation with, Richmond Council.
5. The Council had – over the preceding years, across successive administrations – been developing and implementing its policy for the unique Twickenham Riverside site incrementally. This included, amongst other riverside improvements in the Twickenham area, the re-establishment of an area public open space above the working waterfront opposite Eel Pie Island, as a park – the Diamond Jubilee Gardens.

1. The preparation and adoption of the 2013 Twickenham Area Action Plan (TAAP) was the consolidation of this direction of travel. The setting-up of the Trust with its broad mandate was a key component of that policy.
2. A specific driver for the formation of the Trust was the Council's 2010 intention to grant a lease and control over the Diamond Jubilee Gardens to a Trust made up of local residents for the longterm future, which would impose an obligation on both Tenant and Landlord "to maintain the property as Public Open Space" for 125 years. In 2014, two years after the Diamond Jubilee Gardens were opened, a lease with respect to a substantial demise within the gardens was granted and runs until 2139. The then Leader of the Council stated that it had been granted to the Trust "in perpetuity for the people, so that never again can any other Council come forward with a plan to sell [the former pool site] off to a developer".
3. The Diamond Jubilee Gardens are situated on what was the swimming pool that formed part of the larger site of the Twickenham Baths, some buildings of which remain, to this day. Several of the pool buildings were in use up until just under 10 years ago (for example, the Bath House was occupied HANDS, a local charity), but now all lie derelict. The popular open-air pool, opened in 1935 for the Silver Jubilee of George V, had closed for repairs in 1981 and never reopened. The pool site lay derelict until 2005 when the Jubilee Gardens was opened on part of the previously entirely boarded-up site. The creation of the 2005 Jubilee Gardens and the subsequent extension of public open space that resulted in the 2012 Diamond Jubilee Gardens are detailed further below.
4. **The Trustees**
5. We trustees are an eclectic group of nine local residents (including one Council appointee) – all from different backgrounds and with different interests, but all with a shared love of Twickenham's riverside.

1. The Trust and Trustees are a-political and dedicated to fulfilling the charitable objectives. We do so as unpaid volunteers, with busy lives outside the Trust, and are solidly committed to meeting our fiduciary duty – by ensuring that the open space on the Riverside remains available for residents and visitors alike and that the Diamond Jubilee Gardens continue to be a central and active part of that space in future, as planned.
2. We are flexible and responsive to local suggestions for both facilities and events. It was in that spirit that the Trust was open in 2019 to be part of the process launched by the Council to work up new proposals for Twickenham's riverside which have led to the present Scheme. The Trust agreed in good faith to consider any proposals to integrate its demise within the Diamond Jubilee Gardens into a 'whole-site' design, provided that it found them to be in line with its objects, and a set of 'Principles for Development' that Trustees considered reflected those objects.
3. We believe that the wider area of Twickenham Riverside, of which the development site of the Scheme is but a part, can help our town become an even more vibrant community, whose continuing use and enjoyment of the river and riverside areas of open space by all ages can improve our physical and mental wellbeing.
4. Six new trustees (not counting the Council representative) were appointed in October 2020. Founding Trustees had served the Charity-Commission recommended nine years, and were required to stand down. Within two weeks of the new Trustees' appointment, and just six years after the start of the lease, the Trust was faced with the explicit threat of a Compulsory Purchase Order on the Diamond Jubilee Gardens.
5. Also, the situation was not made easier by the practical restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid pandemic. All new Trustees had been interviewed

exclusively online, and there were no face-to-face meetings of Trustees for almost a year. Indeed, when one new Trustee stood down from the Trust (due to a work relocation to Wales), it was the first time he had met several Trustees in person.

1. There were also no face-to-face meetings between new Trust (as a body) and the Council's Project Team until April 2022, with no face-to-face meetings having taken with the pre-October 2020 Trustees since March 2020, a gap of almost two years.
2. Trustees were able to make site visits during critical stages of the process but not always as a whole Trust. However, no site visits took place with the Architects or the Project Team during the entirety of the Scheme's design process (March 2020 to June 2021). Just as significantly and more concerning, the Trust would argue, no representative from the Authority (officer or elected councillor) met with its Architect during the entire 14-month design process. There was not a single architect/client site visit.
3. **Location**
4. Nothing survives by accident and local activism spanning two centuries has served to protect this beautiful and historic stretch of the river, of which the Trust is the most recent manifestation. It features a number of very popular and well-used amenity spaces: York House Gardens, Orleans House Gardens, Champions Wharf, and the Diamond Jubilee Gardens, several of which have children's play areas.
5. As well as being of amenity value year round, a number of regular outdoor events are already hosted in various locations during the warmer months, all of which increase footfall to the area – for example, with the annual Shakespeare play and outdoor cinema in York House Gardens, the various markets and year round (weather permitting!) al fresco dining in Church Street, mini fun fairs at

the top of Church Lane, puppet shows in the 'square' outside Tsaretta Spice, and of course the calendar of events on Diamond Jubilee Gardens.

1. Twickenham's riverside also provides residents and visitors with many opportunities to interact with the river (eg at the White Swan beach, Ferry Cottage slipway, the Church Lane and Water Lane slipways, the various watermen's steps, the Eel Pie Island Bridge).
2. It is important therefore to see the Scheme site in the context of the wider Twickenham Riverside and the full length of this section of the Thames Path.
3. Twickenham and Richmond are connected by a riverside path that larger consists of a 'towpath' directly adjacent to the Thames. Let us join the towpath about a five-minute walk from Twickenham's Embankment, on the river frontage of the early 18th century Marble Hill House. The riverside walk from Marble Hill House to Twickenham's Embankment showcases so much that is characteristic of Twickenham's riverside, as one initially passes Hammerton's Ferry (one of the last remaining foot ferries on tidal Thames) and take in the view of 17th century Ham House on the opposite bank. Wooden rowing boats can also be hired at Hammerton's Ferry.
4. The towpath then runs alongside Orleans House Gardens, expansive public open space once the riverside frontage of the nearby early 18th century Orleans House (now a gallery) with its iconic Octagon Room. Substantial riverside steps (in front of the children's playground) allow access to the river for inflatable craft, or offer a mooring up point in order to use the facilities (ice cream or otherwise) of the popular Orleans Gardens Cafe, with its outdoor seating occupied year round by dog walkers and parents whose children are enjoying the large playground. The area is surrounded on all sides by magnificent trees. There is also an attractive Stables Cafe in Orleans House Gallery.

1. One leaves the towpath to join a road called Riverside. The actual riverfrontage is now occupied by houses or the gardens of houses which sit across the road from the river. One is walking down a public right of way (originally for the herding of animals and for access to grazing land) that is mentioned in the Domesday Book. One goes past the 18th century Grade II listed White Swan public house, with its adjacent pebble 'beach', much used by locals and visitors to gain direct access to the river. There is also an adjoining slipway which, whilst privately owned (by Ferry Cottage), is nevertheless used by the public to launch river craft of many sizes and descriptions.
2. Off Riverside is the early 18th century Sion Row, York House Gardens (with its Naked Ladies) and St Mary's Church. Church Lane and its slipway (much used by leisure users of the river) is the first of many little 'village' lanes that lead off the riverfront towards the newly pedestrianised Church St that runs parallel to the Embankment. There is vehicular access to this slipway so that larger, motorised craft can also be launched, as well as the paddleboards/canoes that one sees also launched from the White Swan Beach and the adjoining Ferry Cottage slipway.
3. One continues along the Embankment promenade with its many benches and landscaped flowerbeds, past the Barmy Arms pub with its extensive outside seating area, to arrive at the slipway at the bottom of Water Lane, just next to the bridge to Eel Pie Island.
4. Along the Embankment front between Church Lane and Bell Lane, there also are several sets of 'waterman's steps' giving direct access to the river from the Embankment promenade. These are also used as informal seating when the river is at the maintained level (for typically 16 hours out of every 24).

5. The Water Lane slipway is used for the launch of all manner of craft, as per the other three slipways in the immediate area (White Swan, Ferry Cottage, Church Lane).
1. Slipways allow, by their very nature, sloped or staggered access into the water. This is by far the easiest way to enter the water, especially for inexperienced or differently abled users. A pontoon that was recently installed at Kew Bridge has proved to be very unpopular/unsuitable for paddleboarders. Access off and back onto the pontoon has proved to be challenging, with the users much favouring a sloped access, as per the existing slipways to be found along Twickenham's riverside.
2. Whilst a pontoon is included in the Authority's Scheme, no detail is provided as to who and how it will be used. For the vast majority of the time, it will sit on the bottom of the river alongside the Embankment, as it rests in the low-level water of the maintained level alongside Twickenham's Embankment. No details are provided as to who the user groups would be. It is difficult to envisage who would prefer to use to pontoon over the many slipways in the immediate area.
3. Past the Water Lane slipway, one continues along the Embankment and one is now in front of the Embankment-level Jubilee Gardens, with the raised Diamond Jubilee Gardens overlooking the river.
4. Connecting the existing raised gardens to the lower level Embankment would undoubtedly represent both an enhancement and an extension of the existing open space in this location, creating the 'destination' of a riverside park after one's amble along Twickenham's riverside. Locating a 5-storey building towering over the riverside would not.

1. Because it is the scale and the variety and the history of all these different elements, finishing up in and below the existing Gardens, that underpin the compelling uniqueness of Twickenham Riverside.
2. **Diamond Jubilee Gardens, and Jubilee Gardens**
3. The 2012 Diamond Jubilee Gardens marked the extension/enhancement of a smaller Jubilee Gardens that had been opened in 2005. The Jubilee Gardens were created on a smaller section of the previously fenced-off pool site, and included the current playground, cafe, and the Embankment-level area that sits across the entire frontage of the existing Diamond Jubilee Gardens, right up to a garage located on the Embankment.
4. Some three years later, that part of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens that now forms the petanque area was also opened and incorporated into Jubilee Gardens. It was known informally as the “Secret Garden” as it lay beyond a gate to the east of the cafe.
5. The gradual increasing in size of Jubilee Gardens, with additional ‘pockets’ being added to its footprint, was all part of the incremental ‘opening up’ of the derelict pool site in order to re-instate the public use of Twickenham’s Embankment, as first envisioned when Richmond House was bought by the Council in 1924 and a Lido/Public Baths were opened in 1935, in the Silver Jubilee Year of King George V.
6. The Jubilee Gardens exists to this day, and consists of the original Embankment-level gardens. However that part of the Jubilee Gardens that contained the playground, cafe, and the raised terraced planting area between the playground and the Embankment
7. Prior to the Twickenham Lido, in 1924, the land between the River Thames, King Street, Water Lane and Wharf Lane was purchased by the Twickenham Urban

District Council with the sanction of, and a loan from, the Ministry of Health. This was for the purpose of providing public walks and pleasure grounds. Richmond House, which was on part of the site, was demolished in 1928 and some land was sold for commercial properties in 1929. In 1937, the King Street Parade shops and flats were built, with a service road at the rear.

1. Some 20 years after the Lido was closed in 1981, as already mentioned, decisions were taken and work began on the site in stages, to restore it to use for public recreation and leisure use by the whole community. Deep differences of opinion as to what should follow the Lido meant that progress was bound to be both complicated and slow. But what became clear was that successive administrations from the early 2000s onwards were committed to gradually reinstating the area as public open space reflecting and complementing the riverine character of this unique stretch of the Thames.
2. The Diamond Jubilee Gardens today are an all-year-round, multi-use area of public open space where individual sections are used for different purposes by different community groups, in a safe location above the flood zones. They are used daily by nursery school groups and carers with young children, both in the secure enclosed playground and more widely from both free play and organised activities across the Gardens, and they also include a large separate sandpit. All ages use the three main areas – two lawns of artificial grass all-weather surface and the paved hardstanding beyond – for all manner of leisure pursuits, from picnics and just relaxation, to ball games, scootering, hopscotch and use of other play equipment (hoops, tunnels etc) that users bring on to the Gardens. The two pétanque courts are also used for other pastimes including gym, martial arts practice and general free play by children.
3. There are many vantage points offering excellent views of the Thames, both up and down river. And the many benches and low-walled areas within the Gardens are used, at lunchtime for example, by people who either work or are active in

the town centre. Similar use extends into the evening, when the nights become shorter and the weather improves.

1. In terms of the environment, the present site enjoys a largely open aspect and supports many mature trees, as well as bushes and hedgerows, all of which – together with the view over towards Thames Eyot – guarantees a sunny and green aspect to the Gardens. The use of artificial grass ensures that the Gardens remain green and usable through all seasons, including at times when a natural grass surface would otherwise be worn, tired and dirty.
2. All the sections of this multi-use open space come together to provide an excellent, safe, large and flexible area for hosting events – for both the enjoyment and education of visitors. These range from the High Tide festival, “Emergency 999” meet-the-police and other emergency services, Lunar New Year celebrations, the Big Screen for Wimbledon, Meet the Gruffalo, children’s Hallowe’en and Christmas discos, Arcadian walks along the Riverside, and other community events such as the annual dog show. Most recently, in April 2023, the Turkish community held a very successful fundraising event in aid of the Turkish and Syrian Earthquake victims. Many of these events are successful in drawing visitors not only from the wider borough, but also from across London and beyond.
3. Some events are part of a wider festival taking place across multiple outdoor ‘event’ locations in central Twickenham – with Diamond Jubilee Gardens the venue for one of the main attractions. The best example is our hosting of the Jazz stage of the High Tide festival, now in its fourth year and continuing to expand, with the other large stage erected outside the Civic Centre. Both are a natural extension of Church Street and the venue of the Gardens works perfectly. The same will apply too to the Taste of Twickenham festival, to be held for the first time in July 2023.

1. **The wider context**

2. It is difficult to define the ‘centre’ of Twickenham, which is built up around several main roads. The main centre seems to be at the junction of five of these – King Street, Church Street (the original high street), York Street, London Road and Water Lane leading down to the river. There is no obvious facility for open space or a ‘town square’ there because of the layout of the streets. Hence in part the Council decision in 2015 to purchase the three retail properties on the corner of King Street and Water Lane, known as the Santander block, together with the privately held car park behind them. This was intended – alongside the wish to develop the derelict former Lido buildings – to create an opportunity to open up a closer linkage between the centre and the river, with greater access to and use of the riverfront between Water and Wharf Lanes.
3. The reference in the TAAP 2013 to the potential use of CPO powers was undoubtedly in readiness for their potential use in connection with the intended purchase of the Santander block two years later. Indeed, earlier versions of the CPO being sought now included orders also on the short leases relating to those properties.
4. The row of private properties immediately adjoining the Santander block (3-33 King Street, under single ownership) were also sold around this time, when the early iterations of the last scheme for the Riverside were under consideration. The sales brochure referred to the scheme then in preparation and also included concept visuals on how the rear of the row might be developed. This scheme came close to planning approval in 2017, but was withdrawn by the new incoming administration in May 2018.
5. More recently, this row along King Street has seen considerable ‘activity’ – replacement of windows, repointing of brickwork, replacement of roof tiles, new retail frontages, an application to improve public realm to the front, a mural on the Iceland wall on Wharf Lane, and a ban on ‘For sale’ signs on the frontage.

1. The impression given is that the row is being readied either for a further sale or for new development at the rear if and when the new Council Scheme comes on stream. If the Scheme goes ahead with the present permission to go to 5 storeys on the riverside, any development of this row is likely to follow suit, with the knock-on implications of a severe ‘sense of enclosure’ for the area of public open space in the Scheme, which would be surrounded by tall buildings on three sides.

2. **Some myths**

3. There are a number of misleading and over-simplified/anecdotal assertions in the Statement of Case, which seek to create a negative impression of the present state of the Riverside and the existing Diamond Jubilee Gardens. The Trust would like to correct these head-on and upfront in this Introduction. (While these references are frequent, only sample references are included here.)

1. The Gardens are **underused** and not well known to residents. The Trust queries what unit of measurement has been used to assess this. Our experience is that they are – on the contrary – well used by a wide range of residents. The Trust has concrete evidence on its general leisure usage in video footage covering the same weekend in February going back for the last 4 years. In addition, it is clear that for several of the events the Gardens are completely filled.
2. “The Existing Designated Open Space has been **subject to anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, substance misuse** ... over the years, in part because [it] is underused, next to vacant buildings and badly connected to its surroundings which does not allow for natural surveillance” (Para 8.42, and also 10.22–10.23). These incidents are rare and no more frequent than in other similar local spaces. Mentions of squatting and arson are more connected to the derelict buildings adjoining

the Gardens. Nothing of note has been reported to the Twickenham Riverside Ward Police Liaison Group regarding the Gardens for many months.

3. The existing Gardens seem tarred with the same brush as is used to call out the derelict unused buildings and the disused carpark behind the Santander block. The Trust stresses that the Gardens are not part of the **dereliction** and are in constant use, both for their general purpose of recreation and leisure purposes and for events.

4. The new 'gardens' within the Scheme would have better **views out over the river** than the existing Gardens, because the latter "are separated from it by a significant change in level created by the large retaining wall with railings and a long linear stretch of car park that sits at Embankment level" (Paras 8.11 and 10.23). The Trust considers that the change in level would apply equally to most of the Scheme Land and the views up river would be more restricted from parts of the open space. The present Gardens and Embankment promenade have excellent views of the river, which would of course be broadened and improved by the removal of the derelict buildings and opening up the south-west corner. As indeed would public access and accessibility.

5. The **artificial grass** in the central section of the existing Gardens is in some way inferior to natural grass (Para 8.41). The Trust's view is that the Gardens currently benefit from an all-year-round, all-weather surface which works well and retains its functionality without deteriorating into mud in winter or dust in summer.

6. The **events space** on the existing Gardens is smaller and not as useful as the proposed events space on the Embankment. The Trust notes that the Gardens are a multi-functional space above the flood zone and

unencumbered by a highway and cycle routes, whose primary purpose is for daily leisure uses and enjoyment. A growing number of highly successful and well-attended events are organised there by the Trust, either independently or in association with other organisations, but there is no specific events space as such. All the separate sections of the Gardens combine very flexibly to create an excellent, very safe, and effective events venue for all ages.

1. **The Trust's important management role**
2. The Trust is in many ways the guardian of this section of Twickenham Riverside and is exercising a regular 'estate management' role outside of its demise. Our role is not simply to put on events in accordance with our agreement with the Council, but Trustees are also very involved in the practical management and maintenance of the Gardens for the benefit of the public.
3. This requires liaising across various Council departments. Under a Management Agreement, the Council is currently responsible for the maintenance, but the Trust is scheduled and preparing to take increased responsibility for a number of maintenance aspects, for when that will come into play in 2024. However, the Trust already monitors and actively draws attention to various actions that are necessary to keep the Gardens in good order and functioning smoothly (eg repairs, removal of occasional graffiti). We have also pressed for and secured improvements both on the Gardens and the Embankment, including the replacement of benches, upgrading to more suitable waste bins, and repairs to the extensive ground-lights system in the Gardens (still extant).
4. Trustees are also directly involved in their care through obtaining plants and planting, watering, general tidying, etc.

1. **The Trust's overall position and approach to the CPO challenge**
2. From the Trust's perspective, the lack of genuine engagement and dialogue between the Council and the Trust on certain core issues over the past three to five years has been a missed opportunity.
3. What has emerged and what the Council is now seeking to impose on the Trust through the CPO is a Scheme whose Public Open Space is more space between oversized buildings than the space envisaged in the current Local Plan (the TAAP) as a "riverside park". Evidence will follow on comparisons of the size of that open space and on the Trust's claim that the Exchange Land is not of equivalent amenity value.
4. Much time, effort and money has been spent as a result on a Scheme which has a fundamental flaw on the western/Wharf Lane side, which requires building on land for which the Trust has legal title through its lease until 2139. The Trust contends that, despite the granting of planning permission, insufficient attention has been paid to whether the Scheme is in compliance with the TAAP – the Trust is adamant that it is not.
5. The Trust welcomes public scrutiny of the situation in the forthcoming Inquiry, at which our views (and those of other members of the public) on the core issues relating to the Public Open Space on Twickenham Riverside can be considered in their own right – and not subject to a timetable which at times has appeared to be driven by political imperatives (including elections) or by an insistence by the Council on pressing through preconceived ideas just to 'get it done'.