

TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE TRUST'S RESPONSE TO THE SCHEME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This response addresses the Scheme's Future Open Space and elements contained therein, with reference where relevant to the Existing Open Space, on the development site.

We explain why the Scheme should be viewed against the background of the total absence of any joint architect/client site visits and the detrimental impact that that has had. From March 2020 (when Hopkins was appointed) to June 2021 (when the Scheme had been finalised and all the material required for its submission to the LPA in August 2021 was accordingly being prepared) not one single representative of the Authority (i.e. the 'client') met its architects on site. Client/architect site visits would be taking place invariably once every quarter during the design process, perhaps more at certain key junctures. To not do it once is unheard of.

Even when the Scheme was controversially redesigned (introducing a 2.5m 'podium' on to Twickenham's Embankment following the Authority's belated decision to talk to the EA in July 2020) still not one single site visit took place. This is, therefore, a Scheme that has been largely designed 'in absentia'.

This riverside site, however, is all about location. Architecture at its best responds to its context, which is then layered with function. In spite of being offered the opportunity to view the site from the river, to approach from both upstream and downstream, neither the Authority nor the architects, to our knowledge ever conducted such an exercise. As with the absence of client/architect site visits on land, this represents a startling absence of rigour when it comes to fully assessing the context, impact and appropriateness of its Scheme and in our opinion has had a regretfully negative impact on the final design of the Scheme.

OPEN SPACE

In its Statement of Case, the Authority has introduced the following new terms to refer to Open Space:

DESIGNATED OPEN SPACE: Existing Designated Open Space, Future Designated Open Space

FUNCTIONING OPEN SPACE: Existing Functioning Open Space, Future Functioning Open Space

However, of the several Maps produced by the Authority to accompany its Statement of Case, the most revealing with regard to considerations of Open Space are Map B (Existing Functioning Open Space) and Map L (specifically, the red outlined area that is the TRT Lease/License Area).





Map B and Map L show most clearly the Existing Open Space v. the Future Open Space. They show Open Space as the public ‘experience’ it now and what it is proposed they would ‘experience’ in the future.

MAP L - AREAS OUTSIDE OF THE RED LINE

Regarding Future Open Space, the red line of Map L excludes (rightly):

- the ‘pay-to-play’ terraces of the pub and the café
- the Water Lane Building’s eastern/southern elevation (Retail) Walkway
- the Wharf Lane Building’s western/southern elevation (Service/Access) Walkway
- the Wharf Lane Building’s northern elevation (Service Road) Forecourt

TRT considers, for the reasons outlined in the full transcript of this evidence, that the areas outlined above rightly lie outside of the red line June 2021 Reprovision offered to

the Trust precisely because they do not represent Future Designated Open Space (or even Future Functioning Open Space).

This has been tacitly acknowledged by the Authority by the very fact that these areas lie outside of the Trust's June 2021 Reprovision of Open Space i.e. outside of the red line as shown on Map L.

We set out further details of this in our evidence.

FUTURE FUNCTIONING OPEN SPACE ON THE EMBANKMENT: REMOVAL OF PARKING (EXCEPT FOR SERVICING/DELIVERIES) FROM THE EMBANKMENT

The Planning Officer's Report states that "*The most significant improvement would be along the Embankment. The removal of the car parking to provide an attractive pedestrian priority area, linking the gardens to the river.*"

The Trust strongly agrees that the removal of car parking from the Embankment represents the most significant improvement to public realm of the proposed Scheme. This is a wellbeing that we support.

It is also an improvement to public realm that can already be delivered without any Compulsory Purchase of the Diamond Jubilee Gardens. The removal of parking is a matter that entirely concerns the lower Embankment area and is fully within the Authority's gift without the need to exercise such draconian statutory powers.

We share our thoughts on this issue in more detail in the full statement.

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT ON THE SCHEME: IMPACT ON THE FUTURE DESIGNATED OPEN SPACE/EXCHANGE LAND OF THE WATER LANE PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN ROUTE/WALKWAY AND THE TWO LOWER LAWNS OF THE TERRACED LAWNS

We also provide a detailed review of how the changes being made to Water Lane (and vehicular movement on it) will have a negative impact on the enjoyment of the 'open space' that the Authority is proposing to locate immediately next to it.

This includes reviews of the swept path analysis, concerns about the underestimation of the amount and nature of vehicular movement on the new two lane highway, the inappropriateness (for many reasons) of designating the Water Lane Retail Walkway as

open space and the concerns for amenity and safety arising from placing significant parts of the terraced lawns next to so much vehicular activity.

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT ON THE SCHEME: IMPACT ON THE PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN ROUTE/FUTURE DESIGNATED OPEN SPACE BEHIND THE WHARF LANE BUILDING

The statement also provides a detailed analysis of why the area we describe as the Wharf Lane Building Forecourt should not be treated as open space not least because it is predominantly devoid of any landscaped elements, is sandwiched tightly between the Service Road, the existing buildings to the north of the Service Road and the northern elevation of the Wharf Lane Building. We also compare the prospective use of this part of the Scheme to the use and amenity of the current open space in the same location.

WHARF LANE BUILDING (SERVICE) WALKWAY

The pedestrian walkway alongside the western elevation of the Wharf Lane Building is also identified as Future Designated Open Space. The statement sets out why this Walkway is more accurately defined as a “Pedestrian Route” (as it was in the Authority’s planning application) rather than open space since it lacks the amenity and qualities required to be considered as open space.

VARIOUS ELEMENTS PROPOSED WITHIN THE AUTHORITY’S SCHEME- PETANQUE/PLAYGROUND/SEATING PROVISION/EVENTS SPACE/PROXIMITY OF OPEN SPACE TO RIVER/PROXIMITY OF PUB TO OPEN SPACE

The statement then goes on to address (in various sections) our assessment of those elements of the open space within the Scheme that are to be found within Map L’s red line. These include:

- the inferior location of the pétanque area (sitting in the shadow of the Wharf Lane Building) compared to the open current riverside location beneath the dappled shade of the mature pleached plane trees;
- the size and inferior location of the re-provided playground and serious concerns about whether it complies with planning requirements;
- The (similar) sleight of hand regarding the Authority’s comparison of seating provision between the existing and proposed open space. In its calculations to

ignore existing low walled seating but then include similar walled seating for the Scheme is grossly misleading;

- A review of events past and present and how they work successfully within the current open space and an analysis of the suitability of the new embankment events space for similar or other events, given the constraints and conflicts brought about by its compromised location. It also provides a commentary as to how, by focusing almost exclusively on (occasional) events, the Scheme has failed to cater adequately for public recreation on the embankment open space outside such events times.
- The deleterious effect of placing a pub immediately adjacent to the open space/events space.

CONCLUSION

In the Trust's opinion, the Open Space, the space that is being reprovided on the Scheme does not provide the same amenity value to the public as that which is currently available.

Additionally, the removal of the car parking on the Embankment presents an opportunity to extend and enhance the open space that is already available and in doing so create a true "destination" that will both bring visitors to the town and promote their wellbeing, now and into the future.

Extending the open space already created and enhanced over the past 15 years on Twickenham's riverside, and in doing so the creating a genuine riverside park, is a goal that would win the support of many. There will no doubt always be the need to maintain some form of vehicular access along the Embankment. Similarly, this riverside site at Embankment level will always be subject to the unpredictable Thames, and vulnerable to climate change and other river-related factors (the implementation of large scale infrastructure projects such as the River Thames Scheme, for example, or the decommissioning of the Thames Barrier).

Which is precisely why the protection and extension and enhancement of open space that is currently not compromised as detailed above should be a priority for the Authority, not just for existing residents and visitors, but looking to the future also.

