

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Joanna Vincent](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Public enquiry - CPO Riverside Development, Support
Date: 14 June 2023 18:34:34

Dear Ms Vincent

I had understood that though I wished to express support I had missed the deadline. However I see letters are still being logged so I would like to set out my reasons.

I have lived in Twickenham since 1997 and in that time have been involved in a number of activist groups that were mobilised from the community to object to Council proposals. It has been a feature of Twickenham life that these groups have had a considerable degree of active public support and indeed two took the issues to Judicial Review. Proposals for the development of the Riverside has been one of those issues and between 1997 and 2016 I responded to numerous consultations and been involved with organisations opposing proposals, especially the process that led to the unpopular 2016 plan. The scrapping of that plan and implementation of a professional rigorous process to develop a plan that met the needs of the community creatively, whilst being financially and environmentally feasible was a welcome development for me. Whilst compromises have been inevitable I believe this is the best opportunity we have seen, arising from our input, to create the best open space and social housing solutions to optimise the amenity of this site, too long wasted, for our community. I can no longer see how objecting to this is in the public interest, and would not be adding to that long term waste / damage to our amenity

I have also bought up two children in central Twickenham and whilst they have made many lovely memories in the green spaces further afield the Riverside has always been somewhere we passed through on the way to them. It is a shame that this beautiful site offered nothing better to them on their doorstep. By the time the Jubilee gardens opened in 2012 the playground though undoubtedly well used, was too young for them, and the sad prospect of a few boys having a kick about on astroturf not attractive. I have also walked dogs through there almost daily for over 20 years so I am very familiar with the character of the area especially at night when without a dog I would feel unsafe, and indeed have experienced harassment. I have attached some photos taken at 3pm on the first bank holiday Monday in May to illustrate how whilst the pedestrianised Church Street has become popular and busy the rest of the site met the needs of a few boys kicking a ball on astroturf, their parents in the cafe, a small group on the riverside and a lot of cars.

My reasons for support are as follows:

1. The Hopkins plan is not the one I voted for but I can see the merits of it in terms of the brief. In particular the high quality of the design of the buildings (understanding development to meet housing need is required), the extended and flexible open space meeting a wider range of needs, and the improvement to the environment with diverse planting and a better connection to the river and softening of the riverbank via pontoons for both access and planting. I was always concerned that the previous 2016 plan of an already mediocre dense design was going to be worsened when it came to actual development because it was not subject to a rigorous professional development process. I am all too aware of the mistakes made in new developments in Cambridge where without adequately detailed development developers cheapened and worsened a good design (by Foster and Co I believe) on cost grounds reducing everyone's amenity to the point it is no longer, as a result of wind tunnels and spaces conducive to anti social behaviour, a popular place to live. The current plan is I feel one that reflects the compromise between what the community wants and economic and environmental feasibility, so that it is proofed against being watered down.
2. I am a gardener and member of the RHS, as such the environmental improvements and introduction of more diverse planting in the current plan are important. The retention of plastic grass on a barren infill, and the glorification of hard landscaping in the TRT environmental case is indefensible. Plastic grass should be banned on the grounds that it is environmentally damaging and especially because of the impact along with hard landscaping on flood risk and wildlife. The TRTs assertion that current pollution risks in the Thames make the welcome planting of a pontoon a waste of time is ignorant. The presence of marginal and water plants on a pontoon will actually help to reduce pollution, the swimming pool in another of the proposals was going to use planting for filtration. It should be self evident that if Thames Water put faeces in our water one of the few beneficiaries would actually be certain plants!

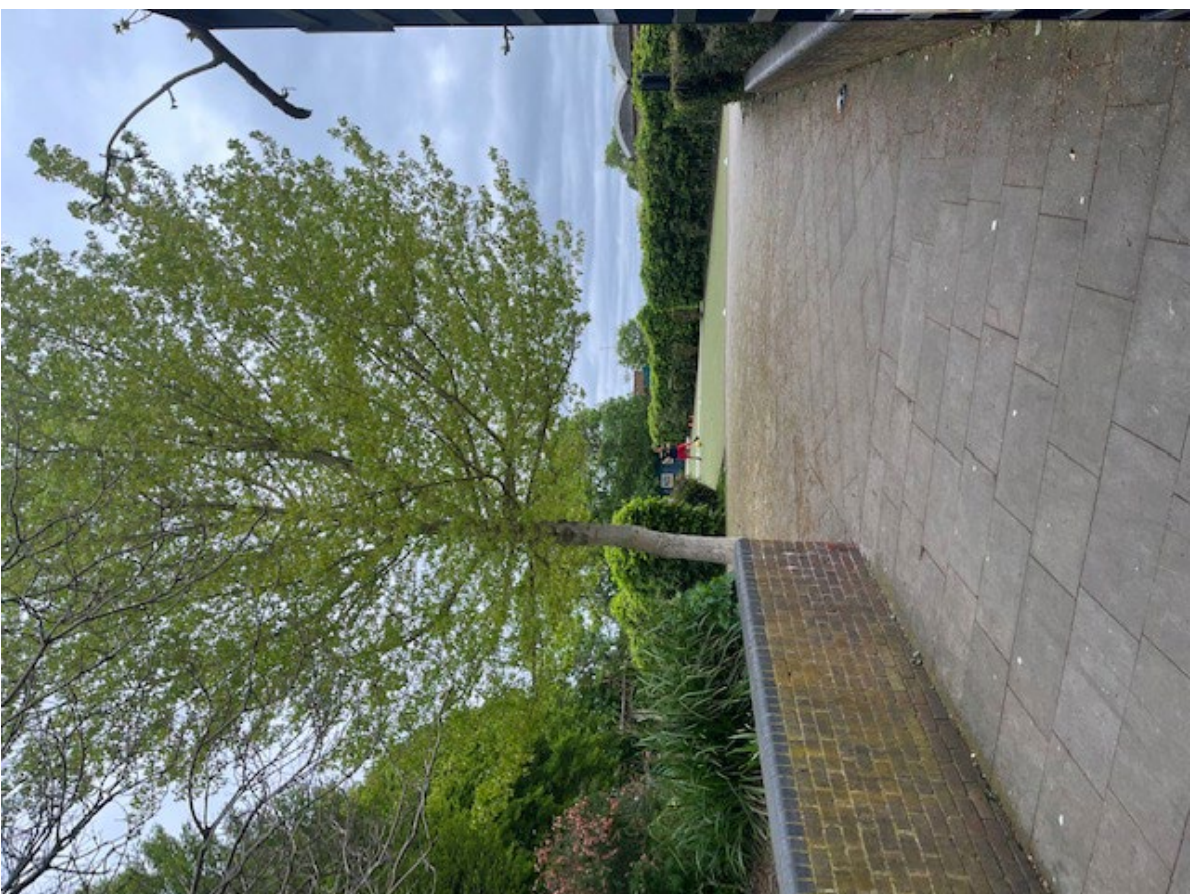
3. I would not want to overstate the politics as this is a planning issue concerning the public interest. However I would suggest that determining the public interest should be for the wider community, and I have been really quite puzzled as to how a few people who actually championed (and it seems still do) the unpopular 2016 plan have emerged claiming to represent the community's interests in opposing it. Where is their popular support? Previous issues have seen the community come together in crowded public meetings, with armies of volunteers who have trudged the streets to deliver leaflets, provide professional services and develop constructive plans. We even have a parent founded thriving school as a result of addressing one of those community issues. The TRT have been unable to mobilise anything like that response. Their petition garnered signatures based solely on opposing the current plan without making any constructive proposal. This was quite possibly because they knew the 2016 plan they supported, and seemingly still do, was shown in countless consultations, not to attract public support. Indeed when in our street the petition was raised by newer residents clearly misled to be thinking they were signing a petition against open space being "grabbed" and putting up buildings, represented in the worst possible light, purely for profit, long standing residents were quick to point out the context, both history and the reality of the planning framework. Few communities have been more consulted or are more aware of planning issues!

Previous groups were funded, even to Judicial Review, by many individual donations. The funding of the TRTs campaign which included paying for both production and delivery of campaign material is very opaque. They claim it is the £400 approx they have raised through events but as a committee member in a community group that is completely at odds with our experience of the actual costs (and we had the benefit they do not of no creative or delivery costs). Against a background of no evident wider public support the costs being incurred to us by this CPO and public enquiry, are a source of widespread community frustration.

Regards

Julie Courtis







Sent from my iPhone