

UDP INQUIRY - February 11 2004
Former Pool Site - Conservation Issues
Bill Double, Eel Pie Island Association Planning Sub-committee

Sir:

While we applaud the Leader of the Council's public statement in support of the UDP Inspector's Modifications Report to bring "rapid improvement to a heavily vandalised and dilapidated area in the short term" , we are pragmatic enough to follow the Inspector's apparent view that " the final resolution of this problem will take quite some time". We are concerned that this present Administration's current and unsure future tenure of office may prejudice not only the short-term but also the long-term objectives for this scheme and the site as a whole. In other words: does the present Administration have enough time in office to implement the short-term scheme and "undertake the essential research and planning" to kick start and complete a worthy long-term scheme?

The Council seems to have adopted the view of the Inspector in the 1991 Inquiry Report that "it is better to take a long term view, making temporary steps for temporary uses which do not preclude a satisfactory form of development at some future time". While we support the idea that an element of short-term is acceptable within the longer-term, we must ensure that it conforms to the high standards of a Conservation Area and prime riverside site.

The recommendation by the Inspector in his UDP Modifications Report re-iterates much of what the Marks and Spencer Inquiry Inspector's recommendations in 1991 particularly with regard to the site's wider landscape context of the River Thames, the massing of buildings on the site responding to the domestic scale and character of the riverside and Conservation Area and the enhancement of public access to the riverside. Furthermore, the UDP Inspector concludes, among other matters, that "the building should not remain in any scheme" With this we concur, particularly as it is of little architectural merit and its demolition will remove the blight which has impacted so destructively on this part of the River for over twenty years. Our reservation, however, is that the building's removal must not be detrimental to the long-term development of the site as a whole.

We have always argued that the site is a riverside site and acts as a buffer to the Town Centre. It is arguable whether its long-term or, indeed, its short-term development will greatly add to the Town's "apparently stable and successful nature of business" . As a riverside site it is clearly river-related and is the subject of several of the Thames Landscape Strategy's objectives for Twickenham Riverside and falls within the scope of GOL's Blue Ribbon network proposals. We must ensure that the Council remains constant to its commitment in the up-coming UDP for "increased opportunities to enjoy the riverside" in both the short-term and long-term schemes.

Insofar as it falls within a Conservation Area we have no particular view about the short-term proposals, although we do have reservations. The scheme neither advances the objectives of the Thames Landscape Strategy and Blue Ribbon network proposals nor does it preclude their implementation in a future long-term scheme.