

RETHINK ON THE RIVERSIDE

A DISCUSSION PAPER

Prepared for the Twickenham Society Group of Local Societies and Individuals

SUMMARY

Recipe for failure. During the last 20 years, several attempts have been made to build on the Twickenham pool site a large facility for public use enabled by commercial development. In each instance the scheme proposed has failed to satisfy one or more of the three basic requirements: (a) acceptable profit for the developer, (b) compliance with planning guidelines and (c) expectations of the public.

The time has come for a radical change in approach.

This paper is intended to provide a basis for an informed discussion of the possibilities for the pool site. It is based on the views expressed at many meetings and on the detailed consideration given to the Alsop Zogolovitch scheme and variations by working parties of the Council to which our members made significant contributions. It covers:

- **The basics.** What we have learnt from experience about the constraints of the site and the problems encountered in its development (**pp 3-6**)
- **Fresh thinking** Getting away from the mindset of the last 20 years (**pp 7-9**).
 - Ideas are put forward for a prime riverside site that is much visited by families
 - Alternative reliable ways of funding a riverside site that do not depend upon either an enabling development or cash from the Council.
- **Guidelines and recommendations** A set of guidelines for a fresh approach and recommendations for action (**pp 10-11**).

The basic choice is between:

(1) A low-scale, river-related scheme with modest funding requirement

The advantages claimed for a low-scale, river-related scheme are:

- It can be done immediately
- There are a range of funding options
- The site remains available for future development and land value is maintained
- A well-designed scheme will attract families and visitors to the riverside. Their spend within the town centre will help revitalise the town centre
- Contentious traffic and parking problems are minimal compared with a large scheme
- Security problems may arise but are manageable

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- A modest river-related scheme is the first choice of many people within the Borough

or

(2) A modest development around a public facility, such as a river museum, funded by an individual donor or charitable organisation.

There is a potential sponsor for a river museum, and this possibility needs to be explored.

INTRODUCTION

The new Council has decided to terminate negotiations with Dawnay Day for the redevelopment of the Twickenham Pool Site, mainly on financial grounds. The scheme has been called in by the Secretary of State to review the decision to grant planning approval.

Dawnay Day seem set to join Mecca, Marks & Spencers and Alsop-Zogolovitch as developers who have failed to put forward a scheme that simultaneously is (a) profitable for the developer, (b) complies with the planning guidelines and (c) satisfies public expectations for the site.

The conclusion must be that it is a waste of time to attempt yet another scheme that aims to provide a substantial public benefit funded by enabling development on the same site.

A major rethink is required and Cllr Arbour has indicated how radical that needs to be by proposing a Jubilee Gardens as an immediate step whilst other proposals are devised and considered. Local groups have been asked to put forward their views and this paper is put forward for discussion as a contribution to the rethink.

It falls into three parts:

- **The basics**

What we have learnt from experience about the constraints of the site and the problems encountered in its development

- **Fresh thinking**

- It is necessary to change the mindset of the last 20 years and to get away from the assumption that it is possible to fund a major public cultural or leisure facility benefit by enabling development on the site. Some ideas are put forward for features for a prime riverside site that is much visited by families.
- It is necessary to find a reliable way of funding a riverside site that does not depend upon either an enabling development or cash from the Council. Several options are noted.

- **Guidelines and recommendations**

A set of guidelines that will lead to a revised brief for the developer, preliminary recommendations for action and an indication of schemes that are worthy of further consideration.

Throughout the last 20 years, the Twickenham Society, Eel Pie Island Association, The Environment Trust of Richmond upon Thames, Friends of Twickenham Green, The Marble Hill Society, The Strawberry Hill Residents Association, The Terrace Garden Group, residents of Thames Eyot, The York House Society and numerous individuals have made constructive proposals about the development of the site and have assisted the Council to draw up the Unitary Development Plan and briefs for development. On occasion we have opposed a particular scheme, and recently have worked together under the umbrella of the Twickenham Society to oppose the Dawnay Day scheme. For the purposes of the Public Inquiry, the label "Twickenham

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Society Group" has been adopted. A Steering Group has been set up to coordinate that effort and to prepare for the Inquiry.

This Steering Group is responsible for the preparation of this paper which is for consideration by each of the above societies and associations. It is designed to act as a stimulus for discussion. It is hoped that discussion will result in a consensus about the guidelines that will underpin a revised development brief for the site and the sort of schemes that are favoured.

THE BASICS

1. CONSTRAINTS OF THE SITE

Many of the problems encountered by would-be developers have arisen from the constraints imposed by a small riverside site situated in a conservation area in the midst of a thriving community of small businesses, boat clubs and residents.

a. **Physical**

- i. Modest site area, difficult access/egress junctions and limited road network and subject to flooding
- ii. Small site, with restricted access
- iii. Any development along the rear of the pool site will seriously reduce value as "open space "

b. **Planning**

- i. Policies, proposals and plans in the Council's Unitary Development Plan, Original site brief which incorporated the issues arising from the 1991 Inspector's Report on the Marks and Spencer scheme, Policies from the Thames Landscape Strategy, GLA, Environment Agency and Twickenham Riverside Conservation Area Study
- ii. Development could take place on the existing car park site as a component of a larger scheme for rear of King street
- iii. Development of rear of King Street needs to be set out in Planning brief.

c. **Traffic flow, access and parking**

- i. Must satisfy requirements of access for emergency vehicles, local businesses and clubs and existing local residents. Long, vehicles are in frequent use
- ii. Must satisfy parking needs for customers of local businesses, members of boat clubs and existing local residents
- iii. Wharf Lane and Water Lane are narrow and the service road does not connect the two

d. **Environmental**

- i. Environmental Impact Analysis required

e. **Ownership** eg. Service Rd entrance from Water Lane

2. LESSONS LEARNT

a. **Scale & massing**

- i. A large scale, mixed use development will not work
 - Three developers have failed to make it work
 - Public are hostile
 - Amount of enabling development required to support any reasonable public asset pushes development above planning guidelines, or requires underground work or both

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- ii. A modest development avoids planning problems and reduces financial difficulties
- iii. The public are amenable to a modest development
- iv. Develop the site using more than one architect/designer to avoid the "homogenized" solution - this will bring variety to the site and help integration into "village riverside" Twickenham.

b. Public open, Space

- i. Forget the King Street link. The riverside is a haven, not a shopping experience!
- ii. Break through from King St is popular, but expectations are not met by the plans. Sight lines show a river view from King St is severely restricted
- iii. It is up to Dawnay Day's to work out ways in which their shopping parade in King St is easily accessible to those who visit the riverside. A prescribed solution should not form part of the brief for the pool site
- iv. Public open space and the highest quality of landscaping is essential
- v. Advocates of Open space include:
 - Janet Knox, former Town Centre Manager, "There is no point in shops on that site, it's a dead area. What I desperately want is open space for markets and other activities"
 - Arts Advisory Group at meeting June (?) 2000 were very enthusiastic about possibilities of an outside space designed to support outside events
 - Jackie Ellis former LBRuT Tourism Officer, " completes link with Richmond via riverside walk, attracts visitors in own right - boost for tourism and support of existing businesses"
- vi. Seek imaginative pedestrian routes through and around the site to continue the riverside walk ambience and the "village" Twickenham appeal.
- vii. There should be innovative uses of water on the site

c. Finance

- i. Going underground is not an answer. It is very costly and risks the floodplain
- ii. Avoid low rental uses in basement areas - ditto large "black box" volumes, i.e. cinemas
- iii. Profit is income minus costs. A small scheme with low costs can produce as much profit as a large scheme with high costs. The financial models used for evaluation of schemes by Donaldsons support this view.
- iv. Low-scale development has low-scale costs. The lower the cost, the easier to raise funds.

There is an order of magnitude difference between the cost of a mixed use development; more than £20M for Dawnay Day's scheme compared with less than £1M for the Terrace Garden scheme.

d. Traffic flow, access and parking

- i. Let the service road be exactly that.
- ii. Much of the character of the area derives from the Church St shops, Eel Pie Island boatyards and boat clubs. There is need to support access for customers and members of these as well as local residents
- iii. Blanket pedestrianisation of the Embankment causes many problems and is not the best environmental option when all factors are taken into account.
- iv. Limited application of additional paved surfaces, bollards and planting could establish the Embankment and Water lanes areas as pedestrian areas where the car is tolerated

e. Environmental

- i. It is a conservation area. The character intended to be enhanced is that of a small historic waterfront town with asymmetrical intimate interlocking spaces and mixed uses. Scale and massing is key. It should remain a haven within the town centre.
- ii. It is opposite a working waterfront ("it is unusual to be so close without getting in the way"). We need to provide an environment in which standing or sitting and looking is a primary activity, but which also accommodates the needs of the community working on the water and providing that focus. The character of a "seaport in miniature" should extend to the site, with at least chandlery and boat hire. The successful mix, which exists at Richmond, could easily do so here.
- iii. It is opposite two nature reserves. It is an important environment for wildlife with birds, bats etc. The standing and looking/duck-feeding zone at the river's edge should be wide enough not to be overwhelmed by the activities on the site, and noise and lighting should be kept at a distance from it. There should be an overlap of the Eel Pie character onto the Twickenham side. It is the stark change of character between the two banks, emphasised by MJP's scheme, that is a most alarming. The site should form a buffer zone between river and town
- iv. If the Thames Landscape Strategy is read intelligently and taken seriously, it is obvious that Twickenham's waterfront is one of this Borough's 'string of pearls'. With Arcadia in The City looking set fair to win its Lottery grant, and the potential for the Hill and View to become a World Heritage Site, the importance of finding a sensitive solution which emphasises the unique qualities of this site becomes all the greater. The future of tourism in the area is only beginning to be realised, and the uses of the site should be forward-looking.
- v. Keep aims modest with any enabling development, should that be necessary, also modest and back from the river.

f. Minimal development will create least disturbance and achieve public access most quickly

g. Public opinion

i. The public support:

- Self-sustaining development (i.e. enough to pay for itself and no more)
- Self-policing development
- Small development
- Open space, benches, trees, grass, childrens' play area
- Small performance space
- Riverside access
- Parking around the site
- Markets, etc.
- Doing something with the site, soon

ii. The Terrace Group collected 1300 signatures by in support of their scheme at stalls in the street and at the Twickenham and St Margaret's Fairs.

h. Community/Leisure use

i. The public perceive the site as public space available to families due to previous amenity and historical use.

ii. Ensure future flexibility of any communal uses so that should future demand change, they can have other community uses without resorting to commercial use/"pressures".

iii. Community accommodation (HANDS) exists on site and should be catered for

iv. Need for proper, big, well-refurbished loos

v. A café/ teahouse and/or juice bar.

i. River-related

i. If the river drives what is done to the site, its heritage will be preserved, the existing river-related uses will be respected, and it will have a distinctive character that will attract visitors and refresh residents in a way no shopping centre could

ii. Make whatever uses relevant to the riverside; any commercial "balancing finance" uses should not occupy the prime locations/vantage points unless they can be proved to reinforce the community uses by their location.

iii. Facilities should grace the site and relate to the river; avoid facilities that can be equally well accommodated on an inland site.

iv. Install a pontoon to promote tourism

3. KEY ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

a. **Service Rd.** This is barely adequate to service the shops of King St parade. Without widening and removal of trees it cannot take traffic and parking

displaced from the Embankment. It ends in the car park behind Abbey National, so the question of how to achieve a through route from Water Lane to Wharf Lane arises.

- b. **Car park behind Abbey National.** This is owned by the owners of the King St Parade, at present Dawnay Day. It has proved a stumbling block in several proposed schemes. The developer of the pool site has wanted it, but the Council has refused a compulsory purchase, so the owner of it has been able to charge an extortionate price.
- c. **Redefinition of the development brief.** This will be necessary to define the guidelines for a low-scale river-related scheme. It can be based upon the existing T1 brief.
- d. **Parking: amount, distribution.** This has to be taken into account with the management town centre traffic and parking
- e. **Traffic access for servicing needs of existing community.** This has been a severe problem for the schemes Alsop-Zogolovitch and Dawnay Day. The Traffic and Parking working party make practical proposals for resolution of the difficulties.

FRESH THINKING

In order to think afresh about the options for the site the following assumptions are made:

- The basic choice is between a modest, low scale scheme with modest funding requirement or a public facility funded by an individual donor or charitable organisation.
- There are numerous ways in which a desirable scheme can be funded that do not involve a developer
- The development should relate strongly to the river

4. IDEAS FOR FEATURES

During the recent public discussions of the site several ideas have been put forward as features that would be appreciated by the public:

- a. Water feature e.g., one that provides visual display of the state of the tide
- b. Viewing tower "Twickenham Eye". The site is on view lines laid out in the Thames Landscape Strategy, e.g., from the site, along Chestnut Ave in Bushy Park to Hampton Court
- c. Camera obscura
- d. Bridge and viewing platform linking the site to the Embankment, if it is necessary to continue to use the Embankment for traffic
- e. Serpentine hedge to separate pedestrian and vehicles on the Embankment is preferable to the current linear hedge
- f. Baths site to remain OPEN space
- g. Arches below the retained Terrace available for boat repair, boat hire. Modest boat repair facilities. Provision for river-related events: tickets etc
- h. River Museum. There is a generally acknowledged need for a record of the working life of the river in the form of a centre to show the wherries, eel bucks, fish keddles, flash locks, punts, western barges, peter boats etc and to fill the gap left between the Docklands Museum and the Henley River and Rowing Museum -and there is a known local benefactor ready to put money into one. This might be the place and the moment to try,

5. FINANCIAL

The M&S scheme failed to meet the planning guidelines. Both Alsop-Zogolovitch and St George considered the revised brief of April 2000 and then withdrew, because it did not provide sufficient return. The Dawnay Day scheme has been declared non-viable and has been called in. "Funding the development from within the development" no longer looks to be a solution.

The time has come to test the financial viability of a small-scale scheme and to explore the numerous funding options that do not rely on a developer.

The time has also come to acknowledge that the regeneration of Twickenham town centre is greatly assisted by a riverside site that attracts visitors, who subsequently spend money elsewhere within the town, thereby supporting existing businesses. The determination of "best value" should not be left solely to the judgement of accountants. If little is spent to achieve great public happiness best value has been obtained.

a. Alternative approaches to funding

The following is a list of ways in which funds have been raised for schemes of great public interest:

External funding

If the Council is supportive and is willing to make the site available at a peppercorn rent, charitable bodies will see this as "matching funds". This gives rise to numerous possibilities:

- i. **Petersham Meadows model** - Management and responsibility is delegated to a Local Group, who is able to raise funds because LBRuT has provided "matching". Several Charitable bodies and members of the public will contribute on this basis.
- ii. **The scheme to fund Bath Spa** is an example of a public/Council/Developer initiative to secure funding for a major project. Funds are being raised from several sources, which spreads the load and brings in to the scheme a range of important stakeholders
- iii. **Tontine** - A scheme used to fund the building of Richmond bridge; a sound scheme with lottery appeal. Money is raised through sale of life assurance policies, but there is only one pay out. Policies are rolled over so that the longest-lived gets the proceeds from all of the policies.
- iv. **Sponsors** - All of the thinking so far has been Arts dominated. If a genuine river-related or leisure feature were put on the site, a new range of potential sponsors opens up, e.g., Sport Heritage, The Fountain Society, RFU, Hampton Fields, charitable foundations, individuals, etc Numerous local initiatives have been supported by these and other sponsors.
- v. **Public purchase** - Purchase of the site by the public as in the Coin St development
- vi. **Evolutionary development** - The development takes place gradually. The site is cleared and some desirable feature is put in place, e.g. a water feature Other features are added in due course, each one being viewed as a separate project. In financial terms the process is via a series of small projects that can be funded relatively easily, with easy budget control. In community terms, what is added is what is wanted. The option for a major feature remains a possibility that can be explored, whilst the public are deriving pleasure from the existing low scale development.

Income from use of the site

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- vii. This does provide a “safe” way of raising funds, but it takes up space on the site, and the use must be publicly acceptable.
- viii. “Enabling” must be “secondary” and “complementary” to the main scheme. Suitable retail outlets or markets may be better for the scheme even if they do not provide as much income as housing. For example a cafe or occasional markets will enhance a garden/open space scheme and a business like Mark Edwards on Richmond riverside enhances a river-related scheme.
- ix. Real problem with luxury housing developments that they tend to creep, e.g., Tough’s boat Yard. Affordable housing to match Water Lane or sheltered accommodation is preferable

Sale of assets

- x. The sale of assets owned by the Council is a straightforward way of raising funds. The money generated from sale of Water Lane car park was sufficient to clear and landscape the poolsite.
- xi. The sale of housing plots along the route of the once-proposed service rd behind Church St would provide funds for a low scale development. They have already been earmarked for the redevelopment of the pool site.
- xii. There are community concerns about the sale of assets, so this approach needs to be treated with care. The community, in general, do not, in general, favour the sale of open spaces, but may approve the proceeds from the sale of the above plots being used to support a pool-site scheme

Patronage

There is good reason to believe that there is a patron available locally who wishes to endow a river museum that will be complementary to the one at Henley. Why not explore the possibility?

b. Regeneration of Twickenham town centre

Improvement of the site will make a contribution to the commercial activity of the town centre

i. Tourism to support existing businesses

- In 1999, the Tourist Department of LBRuT estimated that annually 50,000 visitors came to Twickenham and spent £24+ per head; 2000 pa walked from Marble Hill to St Mary’s church out of 12, 000 visitors to Marble Hill House; in addition 500,000 attend matches at the RFU. A riverside haven, close to the town centre has the ability to attract tourism to Twickenham and provide additional income to existing businesses, many of which are owned and run by local residents.
- Given that a considerable proportion of these tourists will arrive on foot, by public transport and maybe the river, the additional trade is not expected to add significantly to the parking problems

ii. Markets

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- Markets are proving popular and would be better located in an open space where there was reasonable access for trader's vehicles

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GUIDE LINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

a. Overall

- i. Treat the pool site as a vital riverside site and let the redevelopment of King St be the focus of the commercial regeneration of Twickenham Town Centre
- ii. The site stays in public use
- iii. Something 'appropriate' to the area should be built.
- iv. Clearing and landscaping the site to create an open-space or garden in the first instance retains the option of building in the future a new community building that is appropriate in use and size to the location.
- v. The Council needs to develop a brief for King St and the car park behind it, in order that the development of the river-related and town-centre aspects of the whole area are dealt with in an appropriate manner
- vi. Scale & massing
 - There should be some 'development' on the site and that development should be much, much smaller than that proposed by Dawnay Day
 - The spirit as well as the letter of the Inspector's report from the 1991 Public Inquiry should be respected

b. Public open space

- i. Forget the break through from King St
- ii. The public open space should be of high standard and suitable for the use of the whole community

c. Finance

- i. An imaginative scheme for finance and management to involve the community as a partner with the Council

d. Traffic flow, access and parking

- i. There should be adequate parking for people living and working in the area and adequate roads to allow traffic circulation
- ii. There should be adequate access for people living and working in the area, customers of local businesses and members of the Rowing and Yacht Clubs on Eel Pie Island
- iii. There should be adequate provision for parking and access to the area for visitors, and in this respect the site needs to be considered within the context of the traffic and parking regime of the town centre
- iv. No development should lead to an increase in traffic flow of greater than x%

e. Environmental

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- i. It is a conservation area. The character intended to be enhanced is that of a small historic waterfront town with asymmetrical intimate interlocking spaces and mixed uses. Scale and massing is key. It should remain a haven within the town centre.
- ii. Trees should be retained
- iii. The site should act as a buffer zone to protect and conserve wild life and the nature reserves on Eel pie Island

f. River-related

- i. If the river drives what is done to the site, its heritage will be preserved, the existing river-related uses will be respected, and it will have a distinctive character that will attract visitors and refresh residents in a way no shopping centre could

g. Leisure use

- i. Adequate space is to be provided to accommodate leisure/sports activities that are suitable and available for family use and that are appropriate for a riverside site

7. DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEMES THAT WOULD FIT THE GUIDELINES

At this stage, it is premature to discuss individual schemes. The necessary next steps are:

1. Agree the guidelines
2. Revise the development brief that the Council, in its role as owner of the site, draws up as a statement of what it wants any would-be developer of the site to provide. In addition, in its role as Planning Authority it has in place a planning brief with which any development must comply ("The T1 brief").
3. Consider schemes that may be offered to or invited by the Council.

If the above guidelines were agreed, the sort of schemes that might then be considered would include

- The Terrace Group Scheme, which has planning permission and is available. It has been the subject of public discussion for more than a year and many suggestions made by the public have been incorporated
- Jubilee Gardens as proposed by Cllr Arbour
- A river-related scheme which Twickenham Society Group team are producing as an outline scheme for discussion. It is a low-level, open-space scheme that makes use of the Embankment with traffic and parking being displaced to the rear of the site.

8. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- a. Go for low scale development of the site (no underground work)
- b. Respect the M&S Inspector's report

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- c. Let the river drive what is done to the site, its heritage will be preserved, the existing river-related uses will be respected, and it will have a distinctive character that will attract visitors and refresh residents in a way no shopping centre could
- d. Permit the separate development of King St parade as the primary commercially-driven means for regeneration of Twickenham Town Centre
- e. Think imaginatively about funding options
- f. Think about a partnership with the community as an alternative to partnership with a developer
- g. Carry out an Environmental Impact Study
- h. Explore a range of options
- i. Develop a revised brief that reflects the new priorities