



## Twickenham Riverside – Planning Application

A couple of centuries ago, Twickenham had the river as its focal point, like so many other settlements in the Thames valley. Goods were transported on the river, using warehouses next to the tidal beach close to the church, adjacent to the island that came to be known as Eel Pie island. Twickenham foreshore was embanked in the early 1880s, and that, the arrival of the railway with the building of the half tide barrier at Richmond in 1894 meant increased emphasis also on leisure boating locally. Over the years, Eel Pie Island was built on and eventually connected by a footbridge, but still retained some industrial activity. In 1934 an open-air swimming pool was built where there had previously been a large private villa.

There have been numerous plans for building on the 'pool site' on Twickenham embankment ever since the Lido closed in 1981. As with other key publicly-owned riverside sites, there is tension between maintaining public access, providing facilities for public use, and generating income from residential and commercial activity that makes an upgrading package affordable. This controversial issue has influenced the outcome of local elections, with incoming administrations (either Tory or Lib-Dem) tending to rubbish any progress by their immediate predecessors. There have been numerous plans and forms of consultation, and various part-solutions initiated, with acquisition of some adjacent properties so the site can be planned as a whole. Continued failure to reach a consensus means this remains one of the most significant areas of suburban riverside that some consider 'underdeveloped'. Like many other important riverscapes, it is in a conservation area.

There are yet another set of proposals now before the planners, promoted by the current Lib-Dem administration after another design competition and public consultation. This is a mixed-use development of shops, office, workspaces and social spaces, including a pub/restaurant. These are proving as controversial as previous plans, with the supposedly sacrosanct Diamond Jubilee Gardens reduced in area, a tall block of private housing close to the river, limited numbers of affordable housing units, and so much reduction in the current parking near the river that the businesses and residents of Eel Pie Island question how they could still continue. The RTS will be responding to this planning application [[Richmond 21/2758/FUL](#)], as it has done to the previous iterations and the consultations that preceded them. If any local members want to help inform the RTS response, please [contact me](#) by 18<sup>th</sup> October: the Council's planning decision is due 25th November.

Hilary Pereira 9<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021