

RBKC/THAMES WATER MEETING – 23.11.10

THAMES TUNNEL DEVELOPMENT AT CHELSEA EMBANKMENT

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Present

RBKC: Peter Ramage, Kathy May, Patricia Cuervo, David McDonald, Jonathan Wade, Paul McCarthy, Barrie Maclaurin, Mike Gilroy, Geoff Burrage

TW: Dermot Scanlon, Clare Donnelly, John Pearson, David Dolan, Jan Kroes

2. Terms of reference

We will jointly examine the policy and operational implications of TW's proposed use of Chelsea Embankment to build a connection from the combined sewer overflow to the Thames Tunnel.

3. Disclosure of documents and minutes

All documents related to our discussions are disclosable. The Council will post agendas and minutes on its website.

4. Council's formal policy position

RBKC will assert its formal policy position in its response to the current consultation exercise.

5. Powers available to Thames Water [noted at earlier meeting on Cremorne]

DEFRA expect to amend s.14(3) of the Planning Act 2008 to designate this as a nationally significant infrastructure project. They expect the planning application to go to the IPC. TW expect to apply to the IPC for a development consent order. This order would give TW the power to purchase land compulsorily; it could include EA and PLA consents. A CPO would have to go to a Minister.

RBKC would be consulted on this by the IPC.

Agreed in principle that we would seek as officers to achieve negotiated solutions on land use and planning conditions rather than leave such matters to be determined by the IPC alone.

JW drew attention to RBKC's stated policy in its Core Strategy.

6. Cost and funding of scheme [noted at earlier meeting on Cremorne]

TW said the scheme would cost water rate payers an average of just over £1.00 a week by 2018.

7. Likely closure of lane on Strategic Road Network – TfL's views

DD said there was a sewer under the road, and this limited their choices. TW would have to gain access through the road surface. They were trying to set up discussions with TfL to review the implications; discussions with TfL to date had been limited. DS said TW were meeting TfL (Colin Mann) next week.

DD said there were many utilities including gas mains and EHV cables; these would almost certainly have to be diverted under Ranelagh Gardens. Discussion about that had not started. The utility companies may restrict TW's options. MG pointed out the risk associated with the Olympics in 2012, and the need to avoid diversion works during the Games. BM pointed out the risk to the annual Chelsea Flower Show in late April.

MG said RBKC would need to look at the traffic modelling of any lane or road closure to understand the likely impacts on Chelsea Bridge and surrounding areas. MG anticipated wide local impacts. RBKC would need to see a Construction Traffic Management Plan. RBKC would need to consider traffic signal adjustments, and whether waiting and loading restrictions should be modified. RBKC was concerned at the possible need for diversions. RBKC would seek assurances about the control of any construction-related risk to Chelsea Bridge.

DD said TW's third party infrastructure team had tendered professional work on bridges, and TW would come back to speak to RBKC on this issue.

DD said once TW had met TfL they would come back to RBKC. Early next year, perhaps in March, TW would dig an exploratory trench.

MG commented that Albert Bridge would be closed until August 2011.

DD said the projected start date on this site could be late 2013, with 2 to 2.5 years of work in prospect. DD thought the disruption in the road could last 6 to 9 months.

8. Spoil removal by river

DD was confident that spoil from the shaft could be taken out by river. Bringing concrete in by river would probably be very expensive. A preliminary view on the use of the river, and the costings, would be ready by the New Year.

DD said the EA were reluctant to entertain new structures in the river so building a concrete production plant on the foreshore was unlikely.

9. Impact on Ranelagh Gardens during works

DD said that cut and cover would be used to divert the utilities through the Gardens. BM pointed out that this was MoD land, although open to the public (except during the Flower Show). RBKC leases the south ground adjacent to the Gardens. BM said the site was extensively covered in protected trees, and anticipated a significant ecological impact from the works.

DM said the Royal Hospital were trying to intensify temporary uses, so TW would need to engage with them over timing. BM highlighted the great importance to the Hospital of the income generated by special events.

BM said the Embankment Gardens were TfL land. PR mentioned the persistent problem of rough sleeping in the area.

10. Long-term impact on embankment wall and on views of Royal Hospital

TW would leave a completed structure as part of the embankment; there would be kiosks containing pumps around 2m long and around 1.5m high. There would also be a 10m high stack. DM speculated about the scope for an architectural competition to design these stacks. CD said there was a dilemma. Should the stacks become prominent monuments, making a big statement about London all down the river, or obscured to avoid local objections at each site?

CD said the designs shown in the consultation document were not site specific, but generic indicative drawings derived from marine architecture. But the aim was to create new spaces and connectivity on the Thames as well as building the shaft.

The EA were not keen on there being anything in the river at all. English Heritage preferred a square design. The final design was not set. DD said TW were doing physical modelling of the impacts on river flow, but it did not seem to be a big issue at this location. BM drew attention to the risk of debris gathering in a corner at low tide if the design was square.

TW said the Embankment Wall was not listed at this point – DM said he would check that. The site was still a Conservation Area.

CD put the argument against a pastiche design. English Heritage wanted something 'contextual' and 'sympathetic'. DM stressed that RBKC would seek a high quality design.

BM said there was an opportunity to improve the northern bank to make it read as a more unified landscape, although he acknowledged the funding implications. BM did not favour putting a mini-Ranelagh gardens on the new Embankment site.

DM said RBKC would need to see the views to and from the Hospital modelled. CD said views would be tested from all sides.

The Museum of London were archaeological consultants to the scheme.

Agreed – DM/JP to liaise to set up a meeting of the Council's Architectural Appraisal panel.

11. Options for siting of works

DD said the shaft location was determined in part by the need to avoid land the safeguarded for the Chelsea-Hackney line (this was immediately to the west of the proposed site). The works could be moved closer to the bridge, but the closer the site got to the bridge the more the change of levels would impact on the structure. As with Cremorne TW would need access by crane around every ten years.

12. AOB

a. Agreed that both sides needed the right professionals in direct contact with each other over the EIA, but that the professionals should bring formal responses to the scheme through this joint group. Becky Brown to be invited to join us in future. PC to hold the ring on the RBKC professionals input.

b. When considering community benefit, TW might want to consider offering the community around Cremorne Gardens a kiosk to manage on the Gardens. RBKC advised caution over benches – TW should speak to the police about the community safety implications.

13. Date of next meeting

Doris Cook to arrange in late January 2011. Aim to meet around every 6 weeks.