



Borough View

Excuse me young fellow, but could you please show me the way to St Paul's? wrote Theresa Watson after taking this picture at Richmond Park. Do you have a picture you wish to share with readers? Email lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk.

Ham Close plan changes caused by Budget cuts

Sir – Proposals to redevelop Ham Close are not new (Mrs Machalepis' letter Petition to fight Ham Close Redevelopment Plans).

Better homes for Ham Close residents and improving the area has been one of the major projects in the council's uplift programme since 2011.

In 2013, Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) and the council commissioned the Prince's Foundation to undertake a consultation with the community.

This took the form of an enquiry by design approach, including workshops with residents and businesses to create design concepts, and a public meeting.

The Prince of Wales came to visit Ham Close in March 2014 to discuss our ideas and the Prince's Foundation report was published later that year.

In January 2015, the council's cabinet endorsed the recommendations of this report, including five key principles of a future vision for Ham Close developed

through the community consultation and together with RHP agreed to engage architects to develop an options appraisal on the future development of Ham Close.

It was also agreed to set up a Ham Close Community Forum (HCCF), which would be independently chaired and include representatives from Ham Close residents, local amenity and community groups and traders to ensure that the views of the whole community were fully considered during the options appraisal process.

Initial proposals drawn up by the architects included five options for consideration: total redevelopment; partial redevelopment and remodelling; remodelling; refurbishment; and, do nothing.

In the days before the public meeting, the impact of the changes to social housing announced in the Budget, including a one per cent reduction in rent by housing associations, became clear. RHP had to revise its investment plans, including Ham

Close. This meant it could no longer afford to deliver any of the refurbishment options.

Rather than cancel the publicised public meeting we felt the most honest course of action was to go ahead and explain the position.

The priority has always been to improve homes for Ham Close residents and that has not changed, but if we are to work with the community then it is right for people to know what is deliverable.

We still believe it is possible to design a viable scheme, through opportunities for external funding support, and a scheme that keeps the village feel and adheres to the five key principles set out by the Prince's Foundation.

Ham Close residents have told us it is important for them to remain on-site during the construction phase if the development goes ahead, and I think we should be sensitive to this.

The council has a successful record of delivering

uplift projects in partnership with the community. Ham library and community room is a great example of this.

I can understand why people are attached to it.

The architects have already suggested some changes in response to early feedback and we will, of course, listen to the views of residents and businesses during the next phase of shaping the scheme with the Ham Close Community Forum.

We are ambitious for Ham and there is still a lot of work and consultation to be done.

There will be another public drop-in or meeting later this year and in the meantime I hope people will continue to view the website and participate in the consultations at the library to let us have their views.

COUNCILLOR PAMELA FLEMING
Cabinet member
environment, business & community

Residents have right to complain over rugby issues

Sir – Could we please lay a few tired old Rugby Football Union myths and slogans to rest?

Any resident who is less than convulsed with joy at the thought of the World Cup, is told:

1. To be proud that the RFU has chosen us to host its stadium.

This sentiment is earnestly echoed by the RFU's indefatigable PR department. Why, exactly? Was there a competition? Did we beat off other boroughs?

From this comes the assertion that it is a small price to pay, to deal with and pay for crowds of often antisocial fans, gridlocked traffic, noise, mess, a council that has undying loyalty to the RFU and so on.

2. That we should "embrace" the RFU. Wanting limits set and the RFU treated like any other licensed business? You killjoy. Boo.

Now, you might not be having fun walking through booed fans, urine and mess, but the point is that the fans and the RFU are.

Indeed, one of your correspondents seemed to think we should all be very happy that free tickets and corporate hospitality worth thousands of pounds were offered to Lord True and co – and they accepted.

Why worry about the allegations of our elected representatives.

They are happy, and we should be happy too as we look up at them, in their

comfy free seats.

There are some interesting websites for rugby union fans in which the residents of Twickenham are heavily vilified for "spoiling the fun" and putting any restrictions on their antics at all.

Anybody who believes the rugby union crowds could care less about our area might want a look.

3. The final tired old riposte is: "You knew it was there when you moved here. If you do not like it, go."

This is used for Heathrow too.

It is rubbish.

If you choose to live near a big business you have not signed a blank cheque to for it to act as it wants with

no limits.

You might live near a pub. Would you really feel you had no right to ever want limits on its hours, the licensing conditions or the behaviour of its punters? You probably live on a road.

Would you really think you had no right to protest no matter how many new lanes it opened or how noisy they were?

The wool is very much over the eyes of anybody floating about in a haze of gratitude towards the RFU.

However keen you are on the game, we are paying for all this policing and clearing up.

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

Comment on car racing

Sir – I recently found out in passing that an application has gone in to hold yearly "MonsterJam" events at Twickenham stadium.

These events feature huge souped-up trucks and cars screeching about a track in clouds of smoke, loud music and commentary (it must be heard over the noisy trucks) and gatherings of truck and

car enthusiasts around the venues.

Drag racing is often part of these events too.

If any residents want to comment on the application it is number 15/2734/FUL and it is open for views now.

SALLY BARRETT
Poulett Gardens
Twickenham

Delay airport decision

Sir – At the risk of being morbid, and given the numerous aircraft crashes in the UK and around the world, and the major concerns associated therewith, it seems possible that David Cameron may extend the time gap between these and the south-east airport expansion decision.

This should especially be

the case if his choice is Heathrow, which is an area surrounded by millions of people.

We will have to wait and see just how crass Mr Cameron can be in his choice and timing.

DAVID R GRICE
Oaklands Road
East Sheen

Talk about dementia

Sir – Churches need to welcome everyone, and the UK has some 850,000 people with dementia, including 40,000 younger people.

Churches Together around Hampton (CTaH) has invited an expert on involving such people in Christian congregations to speak about his work.

Dr Trevor Adams, who has lectured in psychology

at Surrey University, will address a CTaH forum at All Saints' Church, the Avenue, TW12 3RS, at 7.30 pm on Tuesday, September 22.

The forum will also discuss plans for a food bank in Hampton.

PAUL DANON
Assistant secretary
CTaH
Sunbury

Big 'no' to Turing House

Sir – No, no no. Nobody in the area has been consulted, zero regard has been given for residents of Whitton and how this will impact our homes and lives or indeed the pupils now faced with a horrendous commute every day.

Turing House was a school for Teddington. It should be near Teddington, not several miles away with no adequate public transport between the two. We already have a secondary school in Whitton, which is under capacity. Another school 10 minutes walk away will destabilise it.

We have four primary schools within walking distance of the site as well.

There is no parking, no public transport and no access to the site that does not involve

either buying out a plant nursery and building a dangerous entrance over a blind railway bridge or ploughing over playing fields used by residents.

We will lose the horse sanctuary and all the animals within, including charity therapy ponies, who will be homeless. What about all the wildlife thriving in that green area? It is meant to be protected land.

It is utterly unacceptable that this has been done behind everyone's backs.

Whitton neither wants nor needs this school, and parents of pupils do not want that commute for their kids.

JENNA O'CARROLL
by email