

Land opposite the Gaucho restaurant, Riverside, The Towpath, Richmond,
London, TW10 6UJ
Giomi (UK) Ltd
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OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT
PROPOSED TEMPORARY, SEASONAL USE
OF A DISUSED PART OF THE PIER AS AN
AL FRESCO RESTAURANT WITH
ASSOCIATED DEMOUNTABLE FURNITURE
AND STRUCTURES

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared to accompany an application for planning permission for the temporary, seasonal use of a disused part of a pier, known as the Richmond Landing Stage, as an *al fresco* restaurant, together with the associated demountable furniture and structures.

1.2 The Statement is set out in nine sections and comprises:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Site Description & Surrounding Area
- 3.0 Proposals
- 4.0 Relevant Planning Policies
- 5.0 Open Space Assessment
- 6.0 Conclusions

2.0 Site Description & Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site is formed from the disused part of a pier, known as the Richmond Landing Stage, adjoining the pedestrianised towpath and the River Thames itself. The disused part of the pier is located directly opposite the Gaucho restaurant at Riverside, The Towpath, Richmond, TW10 6UJ.
- 2.2 The disused part of the pier is currently enclosed by low metal railings, which include access gates. The disused part of the pier currently has a metal bench fixed upon it. The pier is surfaced with concrete and projects out over the River Thames.
- 2.3 Beyond the disused part of the pier which forms the application site, to the south-east, is moored a cruise hire boat. To either side, but beyond the site boundary, are steps down to the river. A wide pedestrianised towpath adjoins the landward side of the application site and across from this is the existing Gaucho restaurant building and its external area.
- 2.4 The local area along the Riverside itself is characterised by a mix of uses, comprising public open space, some commercial food and drink uses, including Gaucho, Steins and Tide Tables Café nearby, and the River Thames itself, which is used for a variety of purposes, including leisure cruising. Behind the Riverside itself is Petersham Road, which sits in an elevated position. Petersham Road comprises a busy road route with a mix of residential and commercial uses occupying a variety of building ages, sizes and styles.
- 2.5 The application site lies within the designated Metropolitan Open Land, the Thames Policy Area and a protected view (from Richmond Hill to Asgill House).

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 This planning application proposes the temporary, seasonal use of a disused part of a pier, known as the Richmond Landing Stage, as an *al fresco* restaurant, together with the associated demountable furniture and structures. Initially, temporary consent is sought for the Summer (May to September inclusive) only. The accompanying applicant's Operational Statement provides more detail about the nature of the application proposals, but it is the longer term intention to use the disused part of the pier for the months of May to September every year. The proposed restaurant would be stand-alone and self-contained on the application site, except for toilet provision, which would be accommodated through the shared use of the toilets at the Gaucho restaurant opposite. The restaurant would trade the hours of 1100 to 2300 hours daily, May to September.
- 3.2 Demountable furniture and structures would be utilised to set-up the *al fresco* restaurant each day, with these demountable items being stored overnight within the Gaucho restaurant building opposite. The demountable furniture and structures are illustrated within the accompanying application drawings and would comprise tables, chairs, umbrellas and a gazebo for the kitchen/staff area. An electric generator would be used for power. Staff would set-up the *al fresco* restaurant from 0930 hours each trading day and take down the demountable items from 2255 hours each trading day.
- 3.3 The applicant's proposal would provide a further food-led facility for Richmond's residents and visitors to enjoy during the summer months, which would better utilise the attractive riverside location that the site offers. It would also bring back into beneficial use a disused part of the pier and allow managed public access to this part of structure. This proposal would also provide a further boost to local employment and economic activity, to enhance the existing vitality and viability of this part of Richmond during the summer months.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

- 4.1 The 2019 Framework requires planning policies and decisions to promote social interaction and opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other (paragraph 91). The 2018 Framework adds that in order to provide the social and recreational facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and meeting places, such as meeting places, cultural buildings and public houses (paragraph 92).
- 4.2 The 2019 Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (paragraph 124). Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive; are sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change; create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks; and create safe, inclusive and accessible places that do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience (all paragraph 127).

Development Plan Policies

- 4.3 The Development Plan for the application site comprises the London Plan (2016) and the Richmond Local Plan (adopted 03/07/2018 and 03/03/2020, due to two legal challenges). The London Plan is the statutory Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, prepared by the Mayor of London in accordance with the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (as amended) and associated regulations. The current 2016 plan remains the adopted development plan, but the Draft London Plan is also a highly material consideration in the planning decisions, given its very advanced stage. The Mayor has now formally approved a new London Plan, called the 'Publication London Plan' in December 2020 and the Secretary of State has been formally notified and has up to 6 weeks to decide whether he is content for the Mayor to formally publish the Publication London Plan or apply for a further extension. Once formal confirmation of content from the Secretary of State is received, the Mayor will proceed with the final stages to publish the final London Plan. The Publication London Plan therefore carries significant weight.
- 4.4 Policy 7.4 of the London Plan addresses local character and requires development to have regard to the form, function and structure of an area, place or street.
- 4.5 Policy GG1 of the Publication London Plan concerns building strong and inclusive communities and this requires growth to be inclusive and seeks to ensure that changes to the physical environment achieve an overall positive contribution to London. Good quality community spaces services and amenities are encouraged to strengthen communities, increase active participation and improve social integration. Specifically, Policy GG1 seeks to ensure that streets and public

spaces are consistently planned for people to move around and spend time in, in comfort and safety.

- 4.6 Policy GG2 of the Publication London Plan addresses making the best use of land. Included within its aims is the protection of London's open spaces, including Metropolitan Open Land. This policy also seeks to maximise opportunities to use infrastructure assets for more than one purpose, to make the best use of land and support efficient maintenance.
- 4.7 Policy D8 of the Publication London Plan concerns the public realm. The management of the public realm needs to be based on an understanding of how it functions and creates a sense of place during different times of the day and night and times of the year. In particular, it should demonstrate an understanding of how people use the public realm and the types, location and relationship between public spaces in an area. Management of the public realm needs to ensure that both the movement function of the public realm and its function as a place are provided for and that the balance of space and time given to each reflects the individual characteristics of the area. Management of the public realm should ensure that there is a mutually supportive relationship between the space, surrounding buildings and their uses, so that the public realm enhances the amenity and function of buildings and the design of buildings contributes to a vibrant public realm. Buildings should be of a design that activates and defines a public realm and provides natural surveillance. Ensuring appropriate shade, shelter, seating and areas of direct sunlight need to be taken into account, in order to encourage people to spend time in a place. LPAs are specifically encouraged to explore opportunities for innovative approaches to improving public realm, creating an engaging public realm for people of all ages, with opportunities for social activities during the daytime, evening and at night. This should include identifying opportunities for the meanwhile use of sites to create temporary public realm.
- 4.8 Policy S1 of the Publication London Plan addresses the provision of social infrastructure. Supporting paragraph defines social infrastructure as comprising a range of services and facilities that meet the local and strategic needs and contribute towards a good quality of life. This includes recreation provision. Policy S1 itself supports high quality, inclusive social infrastructure and those which make the best use of land, including the public-sector estate. New social infrastructure facilities should be easily accessible by public transport, cycling and walking.
- 4.9 Policy G3 of the Publication London Plan addresses Metropolitan Open Land, which is afforded the same status and level of protection as Green Belt. It should be protected from inappropriate development. Supporting paragraph 8.3.4 states that proposals to enhance Metropolitan Open Land, such that they provide a range of benefits for Londoners that are appropriate within the Metropolitan Open Land, will be encouraged, including improving public access for all and improving recreation facilities.
- 4.10 Policy SI 14 of the Publication London Plan addresses the strategic role of London's waterways, including the River Thames. LPAs should seek to maximise their multifunctional social, economic and environmental benefits.

- 4.11 Policy LP12 of the Richmond Local Plan addresses green infrastructure, including Metropolitan Open Land, and seeks to protect the integrity of the green spaces and features.
- 4.12 Policy LP13 of the Richmond Local Plan specifically addresses Metropolitan Open Land, stating that it will be protected and retained in predominantly open use and inappropriate development will be refused unless 'very special circumstances' can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm caused. Appropriate uses include public and private open spaces and development will be supported if it is appropriate and helps secure the objectives of improving the Metropolitan Open Land. Exceptional cases for inappropriate development, such as small-scale structures for essential utility infrastructure, are recognised. Improvement and enhancement of the openness of the Metropolitan Open Land and measures to reduce visual impacts will be encouraged, where appropriate.
- 4.13 Policy LP18 of the Richmond Local Plan concerns river corridors. The natural, historic and built environment of the River Thames corridor is protected and development adjacent to the river corridor will be expected to contribute to improvements and enhancements of the river environment. Development proposals within the Thames Policy Area should respect and take account of the special character of the area and the associated planning policies and guidance. Development alongside and adjacent to the River Thames should ensure that they establish a relationship with the river, maximise the benefits of its setting in terms of views and vistas, and incorporate uses that enable local communities and the public to enjoy the riverside, especially at ground level fronting the river. Public access should be retained and enhanced where possible. All development adjacent to the River Thames public riverside walk are required to provide a public walkway and cycleway, where they do not already exist. The loss of river-dependant and river-related uses that contribute towards the special character of the River Thames, including slipways, jetties, piers and stairs, is resisted. Development along the river is functionally related to the river and includes river-dependent or river-related uses, where possible, designed to embrace and enhance the river.

London-wide Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 4.14 The Mayor of London has published relevant SPG advice on the Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid SPG (March 2012).
- 4.15 The Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid SPG includes the aspiration to conserve and enhance the Thames riverside spaces. Paragraph 4.58 states that the Thames Path National Trail and towpaths provide routes and connections along the riverside, stimulating access and recreation. The SPG locates the application site within Green Grid Area 9, the Arcadian Thames. Paragraph 5.112 adds that the character, scale and quality of the open spaces throughout this GGA are closely linked with the heritage, views and relationship with the River Thames. The river meanders through a landscape of historic and royal parks (already of the highest standard), heritage sites, a variety of wildlife habitats and residential and employment areas. Important views can be found from the parks and open space of the Thames and towards landmarks in central London. The identifies opportunities for this GGA include: to promote

recreational riverside improvements along the River Thames that enhances the experience, making it legible and accessible to pedestrians, and where appropriate cyclists, through resurfacing of the towpaths; to enhance key heritage features and the landscape character of the arcadian Thames such as at Richmond Park, the Old Deer Park and Kew Gardens and develop the area as a destination for tourism in order to improve the local economy; and to conserve the network of formal and informal views and panoramas that criss-cross the arcadian Thames landscape.

5.0 Open Space Assessment

- 5.1 The application site lies within the designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and the Thames Policy Area. The London Plan and the Richmond Local Plan both seek to protect MOL (see Policies GG2 and G3 of the Publication London Plan and Policies LP12 and LP13 of the Richmond Local Plan, as rehearsed in Section 4.0 above). MOL is to be protected from inappropriate development. Supporting paragraph 8.3.4 of the Publication London Plan is clear that proposals to enhance MOL, to provide a range of benefits to Londoners that are appropriate within the MOL, will be encouraged, including the provision of improved recreation facilities. Policies LP12 and LP13 of the Richmond Local Plan seeks to protect MOL for 'predominantly open' uses.
- 5.2 The application proposals would utilise fully-demountable furniture and structures that would be set-up and taken down each trading day. The proposed restaurant facility would also be for a temporary, seasonal period only; May to September. The proposed restaurant would therefore be an ephemeral and temporary feature, which would have no lasting, nor long-term, implications for the openness of the MOL. Indeed, even throughout the proposed seasonal, temporary trading period of May to September, the site would be fully cleared of restaurant furniture and associated structures outside the trading hours of each trading day.
- 5.3 The proposed restaurant would also enhance the recreational use of this part of the MOL, through the provision of rest and refreshment facilities for members of the public already utilising this part of the MOL; thereby enhancing the recreational use of the MOL and helping to encourage longer visits by the public to this part of the MOL.
- 5.4 The applicant is seeking to operate this temporary, seasonal restaurant to assist with their economic recovery from the implications and fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated impacts upon the leisure and hospitality industry. In line with this industry's advice to Government, reflected within the Government's temporary relaxation of the consent requirements for such, flexibility for the use of external areas for *al fresco* customer seating is required until at least 30/09/2021.
- 5.5 The provision of this temporary, seasonal restaurant facility at this site over the Summer of 2021 will enhance the applicant's provision of *al fresco* customer seating and dining, during their post-Covid recovery period. With the on-going importance of providing a COVID-safe environment for both customers and staff, the creation of this temporary, seasonal restaurant facility is now more important than ever for the economic wellbeing of the applicant's business. It is therefore hoped that the LPA will therefore use its best endeavours to help the applicant's businesses to survive the current severe economic challenges; for the good of the future vitality and viability of their business and the wider local area which it serves.
- 5.6 The established roles of the River Thames are also protected by the London Plan and the Richmond Local Plan. Policy SI 14 of the Publication London Plan seeks to maximise the multifunctional social, economic and environmental benefits of water transport. Policy SI 16 of the

Publication London Plan addresses the use and enjoyment of the waterways and seeks to protect and enhance waterway infrastructure, including existing moorings and access points (see Section 4.0 above). Policy SI 16 also seeks to protect and enhance inclusive public access to and along the waterway front and explore new opportunities for extended, improved and enhanced access. Development proposals are required to improve and expand the Thames Path and towpaths, enhancing them as a walking route. Policy SI 17 of the Publication London Plan requires the protection and enhancement of all of London's waterways, with development proposals required to support and improve the protection of their distinct open character and heritage and their settings. Policy LP18 of the Richmond Local Plan seeks to protect the natural, historic and built environment of the River Thames corridor and development adjacent to the river corridor will be expected to contribute to improvements and enhancements of the river environment. Development alongside and adjacent to the River Thames should ensure that they establish a relationship with the river, maximise the benefits of its setting in terms of views and vistas, and incorporate uses that enable local communities and the public to enjoy the riverside, especially at ground level fronting the river. Public access should be retained and enhanced. Policy LP18 also resists the loss of river-dependent and river-related uses that contribute towards the special character of the River Thames, including jetties, piers and stairs. The general approach within the Richmond and Richmond Hill Village Planning Guidance SPD reiterates the protection of the riverside environment. The Mayor of London's Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid SPG also includes the aspiration to conserve and enhance the Thames riverside spaces. The identifies opportunities for the Arcadian Thames (GGA 9) include the promotion of recreational riverside improvements along the River Thames that enhance its experience and to develop the area as a destination for tourism in order to improve the local economy.

- 5.7 The application proposals would not be in material conflict with the protection of the Thames riverside environment, character and function. The existing pier structure would be retained and the access steps either side of the proposed temporary, seasonal restaurant would be unaffected. The mooring of, and access to, the existing, adjacent cruise hire boat would be retained. The openness and use of the adjacent towpath would be unaffected by the temporary, seasonal restaurant. No furniture nor structures would be placed upon the towpath and the temporary, seasonal restaurant would be self-contained and fully managed, to minimise any potential conflict with users of the towpath. The only functional links to the Gaucho Restaurant opposite the site would be for the storage of the demountable furniture and restaurant structures, the deposit, storage and uplift of temporary, seasonal restaurant's waste and recycling, fresh and waste water handling and the use of the toilet facilities by customers and staff. The applicant will fully manage these elements of the operation of the temporary, seasonal restaurant, in order to minimise any potential conflict with passing users of the towpath; and the operation of the temporary, seasonal restaurant would be fully cognisant of the requirements of Publication London Plan Policy D8, in terms of its management of the public realm. The temporary, seasonal restaurant will provide a mutually supportive facility for pedestrians and cyclists using the towpath and provide a place of

rest and refreshment, for those that choose to; thereby helping to contribute towards a vibrant public realm.

- 5.8 One key wider benefit of the application proposals is that they would provide a place of rest and refreshment for residents of, and visitors to, this part of Richmond; providing a highly sustainable place where they can meet-up, eat and be refreshed. The proposed restaurant facility would also provide a direct link between the local community and the River Thames, through providing a place of rest and refreshment that would encourage longer dwell-times by residents and visitors to this part of the Thames riverside. The importance of such facilities for the social cohesion of communities is recognised within the 2019 Framework (paragraphs 91 and 91); Policy 3.16 (and paragraph 3.86) of the London Plan; Policies GG1 and S1 of the Publication London Plan; and Policies LP28 and LP30 of the Richmond Local Plan; as well as within the guidance and aspirations of the Richmond and Richmond Hill Village Planning Guidance SPD and the Mayor of London's Social Infrastructure SPG (see Section 4.0 above).
- 5.9 The application site lies within a protected view (from Richmond Hill to Asgill House) as designated upon the Local Plan Policies Map. Policy HC3 of the Publication London Plan and Policy LP5 of the Richmond Local Plan seek to protect such views and resist developments that interrupts, disrupts or detracts from these views. Given the low level and modest scale of the furniture and associated structures associated with the proposed restaurant, and given their fully-demountable, temporary and seasonal nature, there would be no resulting harm caused to this protected view.
- 5.10 Policy 7.4 of the London Plan, Policy D4 of the Publication London Plan and Policy LP1 of the Richmond Local Plan; together with the guidance of the relevant parts of the Design Quality SPD and the Richmond and Richmond Hill Village Planning Guidance SPD; all require that local character and visual amenity be protected and appropriately enhanced by development proposals. Given the low level and modest scale of the furniture and associated structures associated with the proposed restaurant, and given their fully-demountable, temporary and seasonal nature, it is considered that there would be no significant harm caused to local character and visual amenity of the local area by the proposed restaurant. The restaurant would, in reality, be an ephemeral and temporary feature, which would appear at the start of each trading day and disappear again at the end; and solely for the Summer period. Whilst *in situ*, the restaurant would provide appropriate visual interest and suitably enhanced pedestrian activity at the site, to the benefit of the visual vitality and vibrancy of this part of the Thames riverside. For these reasons, there is considered to be no material conflict with these policies and guidance.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The applicant is seeking to operate this temporary, seasonal restaurant to assist with their economic recovery from the implications and fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated impacts upon the leisure and hospitality industry. In line with this industry's advice to Government, reflected within the Government's temporary relaxation of the consent requirements for such, flexibility for the use of external areas for *al fresco* customer seating is required until at least 30/09/2021. With the on-going importance of providing a COVID-safe environment for both customers and staff, the creation of this temporary, seasonal restaurant facility is now more important than ever for the economic wellbeing of the applicant's business. It is therefore hoped that the LPA will therefore use its best endeavours to help the applicant's businesses to survive the current severe economic challenges; for the good of the future vitality and viability of their business and the wider local area which it serves.
- 6.2 The application proposals would utilise fully-demountable furniture and structures that would be set-up and taken down each trading day. The proposed restaurant facility would also be for a temporary, seasonal period only; of May to September.
- 6.3 The proposed restaurant would therefore be an ephemeral and temporary feature, which would have no lasting, nor long-term, implications for the openness of the Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and the environment, character and function of the Thames riverside at this location. Indeed, even throughout the proposed seasonal, temporary trading period of May to September, the site would be fully cleared of restaurant furniture and associated structures outside the trading hours of each trading day.
- 6.4 The proposed restaurant would also enhance the recreational use of this part of the MOL and Thames riverside and help enhance access at this part of the Thames riverside, and specifically the towpath, through the provision of rest and refreshment facilities for members of the public utilising this part of the MOL and Thames riverside; thereby enhancing the recreational use of the MOL and the riverside and helping to encourage longer visits by the public to this part of the MOL and riverside. This temporary, seasonal facility would therefore assist with meeting the adopted policy aspirations to enhance the recreational use of the Thames riverside.
- 6.5 The application proposals would not be in material conflict with the protection of the Thames riverside environment, character and function. The existing pier structure would be retained and the access steps either side of the proposed temporary, seasonal restaurant would be unaffected. The mooring of, and access to, the existing, adjacent cruise hire boat would be retained. The openness and use of the adjacent towpath would be unaffected by the temporary, seasonal restaurant. No furniture nor structures would be placed upon the towpath and the temporary, seasonal restaurant would be self-contained and fully managed, to minimise any potential conflict with users of the towpath.

- 6.6 Given the low level and modest scale of the furniture and associated structures associated with the proposed restaurant, and given their fully-demountable, temporary and seasonal nature, there would be no resulting harm caused to the designated protected view.
- 6.7 Given the low level and modest scale of the furniture and associated structures associated with the proposed restaurant, and given their fully-demountable, temporary and seasonal nature, it is considered that there would be no significant harm caused to local character and visual amenity of the local area by the proposed restaurant. The restaurant would, in reality, be an ephemeral and temporary feature, which would appear at the start of each trading day and disappear again at the end; and solely for the Summer. Whilst *in situ*, the restaurant would provide appropriate visual interest and suitably enhanced pedestrian activity at the site, to the benefit of the visual vitality and vibrancy of this part of the Thames riverside.
- 6.8 Taking all of the above into account, it is therefore considered that there is no reasonable, material conflict with the adopted planning policy for Metropolitan Open Land and Open Space.