

Comment on a planning application

Application Details

Application: 23/1856/FUL

Address: The Boathouse Ranelagh Drive Twickenham TW1 1QZ

Proposal: Demolition of existing building and outbuildings to provide three residential dwellings including associated landscaping works, provision of parking and works to the public realm.

Comments Made By

Name: Mr. Trevor Carden

Address: 129 Haliburton Road Twickenham TW1 1PE

Comments

Type of comment: Make a general observation

Comment: Generally, I welcome the development of this site as the current building is not attractive.

However, there is a fundamental problem with the site. The corner of Ranelagh Drive is very low, and often floods at high tide. Depending on the astronomical conditions and/or the river flow, the flooding can block the main entrance to the property. Typically, I've seen a series of high tides over 2-3 days when the entrance floods for about 30 minutes on each tide, with several of these patterns each year. I have a photo (taken at 17:35 on May 10, 2020) where the flood water is lapping the bottom of the green pedestrian gate at the highest corner of the property nearest the entrance to Martineau Drive, at which time the main entrance to the property would have been flooded to a depth of about 0.7m. The tides don't often reach that level, but whenever the entrance is under water, pedestrian access through the main gates will typically be blocked for around half an hour.

The existing site has a pedestrian gate at the highest point, providing an alternative route for pedestrians when the main gate is flooded. The proposed design does not retain this gate, so pedestrians will not be able to enter or leave the premises whenever the main entrance is flooded. This needs to be fixed.

However, the frequent flooding of that corner of Ranelagh Drive and along the river-side path beside the building is a significant problem for the wider community in north St Margarets and Isleworth. The Richmond Lock footbridge provides pedestrian access to Richmond, its mainline railway station, Old Deer Park and the Thames towpath. I and many others access the footbridge via the Boathouse, either along the river-side path connecting to the Isleworth Promenade or using Ranelagh Drive. It is frustrating if access to/from the footbridge is blocked because of a high tide. During the vast majority of high tides, the rest of the route into Richmond usually remains open, with just the section by the Boathouse being flooded. It would be great if a joint development could be carried out by the developer and the council, raising the level of both the Ranelagh Drive pavement and the river-side path so that there are dry routes to the footbridge during 99% of all high tides. By also raising the level of the Ranelagh Drive roadway between Martineau Drive and the Boathouse, it could solve the Boathouse's access problem for cars too.

With rising sea levels expected during the life of the proposed development, the access issue to the footbridge is likely to get worse. If the Boathouse redevelopment goes ahead as described, it will be very difficult to retro-fit improved footbridge access at a later date. It would be great to find a solution for both problems now, ensuring that the footways on all sides of the property are at levels that avoid flooding during spring tides.

In summary,

- I suggest that the council should work with the developer and raise the riverside walk and the Ranelagh Drive pavement between Martineau Drive and the footbridge, to keep pedestrian access to the footbridge open during most high tides, as it will be very difficult to retrofit this at a later stage if the proposed development goes ahead.

- If the road level at the entrance to the property cannot be raised, then the separate pedestrian gate at its highest point needs to be retained to improve access when the main entrance is flooded.