

Mr Robert Moran
Chief Executive
Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre
High Street
Esher
Surrey KT10 9SD

2nd December 2011

c.c:

1. Richard Morris, Head of Planning Services
2. Clare Smith, Heritage, Landscape & Tree Preservation Manager, Planning Services
3. Marianne Hayes, Committee & Member Services Manager, Executive & Member Services

Dear Sir

East Molesey (Kent Town) Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals.

As members of the Kent Town Conservation Appraisal Working Group, we have been notified that the proposed amendments to the consultation document will form a recommendation to the Council at its December Meeting. **The undersigned request that this letter be presented to Council on 7th December as “Late Material”.**

The undersigned are opposed to adoption of the proposed document in its present form and recommend that it be revisited. Our objections concern primarily that part of the Conservation Area to the east of Hampton Court Way around the Jolly Boatman site and Hampton Court Station, and its relationship with the other parts of the conservation area and its setting with the river and Hampton Court Palace . As far as this area is concerned, the document proposed for adoption is essentially the same as the draft document originally tabled by the Council for discussion by the Working Group and we submit that our comments have not been given proper consideration and certainly not taken on board in the report considered by the Planning committee on 15th November. The updated document does now include a bland statement *“This area is recognised as being of particular significance and sensitivity due to its location and surroundings.”* but the measures recommended by working group members to actually protect the location and its surroundings have not been included.

Our requests are as follows:

- 1. The significance of the setting of the conservation area with regard to the riverside and Hampton Court Palace has been undervalued. For this reason the Appraisal should not be adopted in its present form but should be revisited;**
- 2. Consideration should be given to splitting this excessively large and diverse character conservation area into two areas per the attached plan (CA Revised Boundaries A), the western part containing the residential area only and the eastern area containing the areas of mixed use character. The majority of the areas identified as negative and with potential for enhancement fall within the eastern sector and should be subject to further analysis and appraisal, including a Dynamic Visual Impact Study as recommended in English Heritage Guidance Seeing History in view (May 2011) to ensure a better understanding of the setting of this area;**
- 3. Historic Royal Palaces should have been consulted as the largest landowner in the area and given the significance of Hampton Court Palace on the border of the Conservation Area. The Appraisal should have referred to the Landscape Conservation Management Plan for the Palace and its environs - some 700 acres, and also the Palace's Views Management Plan which covers both views, to and from the conservation area. Similarly there is no evidence that English Heritage or Thames Landscape Strategy were consulted;**
- 4. The 1999 Planning Brief for the Hampton Court Station & Jolly Boatman site should be withdrawn immediately, and should not be condoned in any adopted Appraisal as it is out-dated, and should not be a material consideration in the event that a new planning application is submitted for the site;**
- 5. The 2009 Planning permission should not be referenced in any adopted Appraisal;**
- 6. The Council should be presented with a report on the future of the Hampton Court Station & Jolly Boatman site which considers options for the site including both private development and public adoption as an open space with the use of its Compulsory Purchase Order powers, and full investigation of running a campaign for grant assistance and charitable funding of such a scheme.**

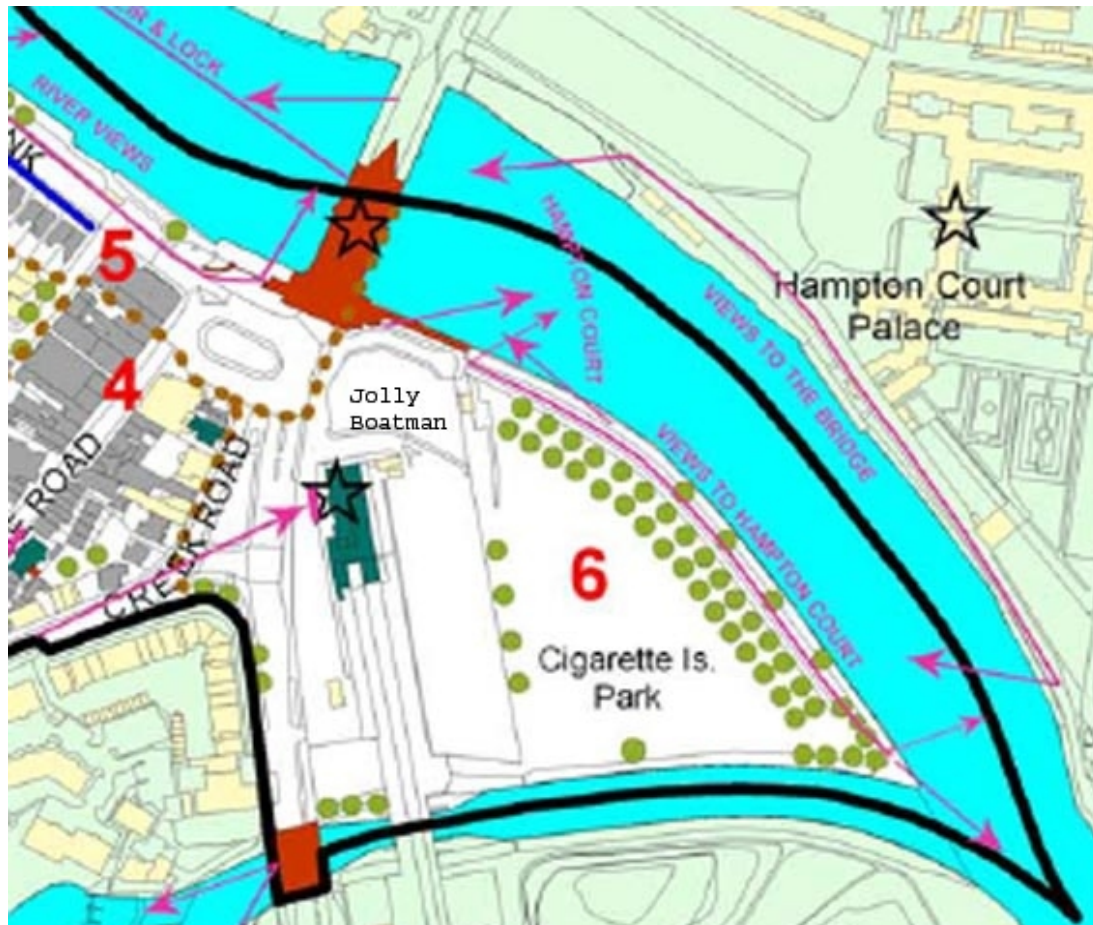
To demonstrate one of many concerns about the document proposed for adoption the following example is illustrated below, which has been aired by the Working Group:-

The most direct view of Hampton Court Palace and the River Thames seen by visitors as they walk past the Jolly Boatman site towards Hampton Court Bridge is not recognised in the document as an "Important View" even though it was recognised as such in the 1999 Development Brief. This issue was raised at the Working Group Meeting on 28th June 2011 but Council officers amazingly disputed

that Hampton Court Palace could be seen from this location although the photograph below shows they were quite wrong.

It is difficult to find any reason for this glaring and deliberate omission other than to obscure the fact that that this very important view will be ruined by the building of the proposed hotel on the Jolly Boatman site.

Immediately below is an enlarged section extracted from the Townscape Analysis Map in the consultation document, with red arrows representing "Important Views". Note that there is no arrow from the western edge of the Jolly Boatman site pointing towards Hampton Court Palace.



The photograph below was taken on 25th November 2011 and shows visitors' view of the Palace across the River Thames as they walk past the Jolly Boatman site towards Hampton Court Bridge.

This site should have been landscaped years ago but the Council has allowed the Developers to keep it as a rubbish dump as a cynical tactic for getting planning consent for an over-intense development.

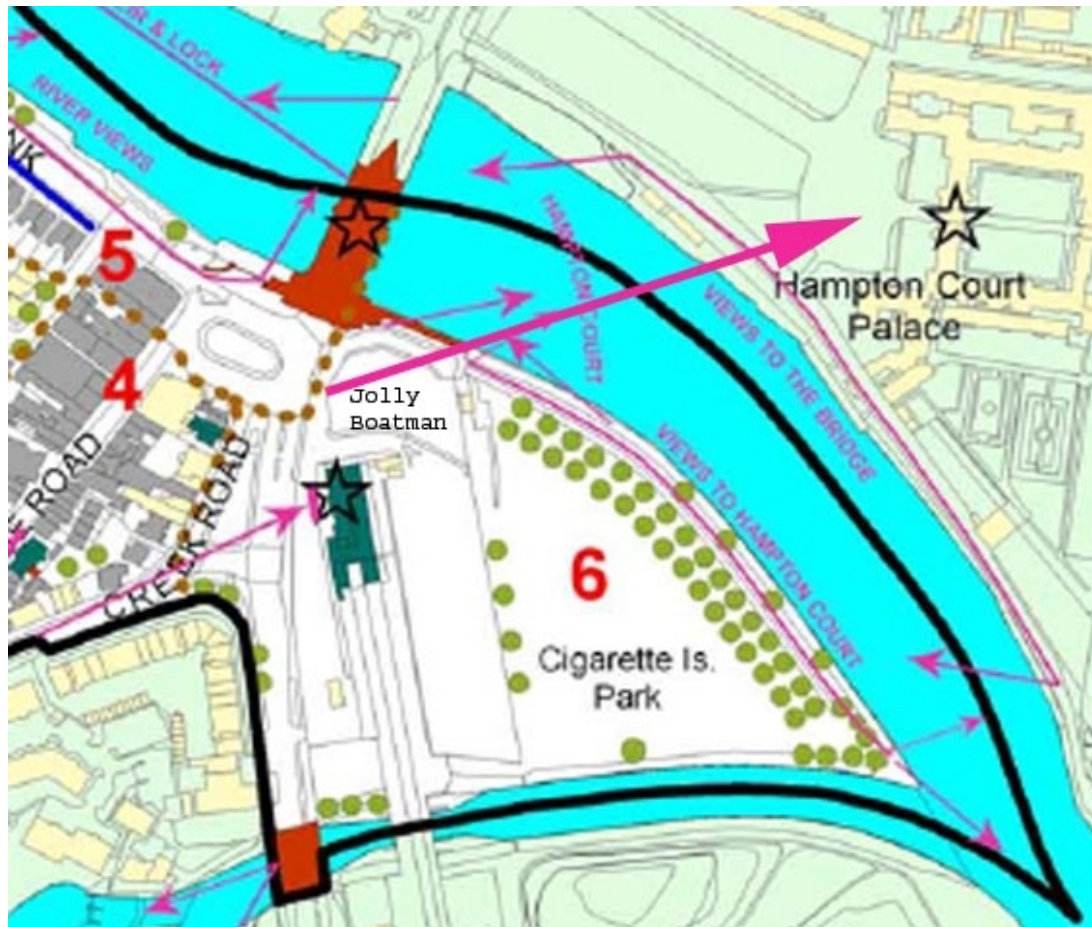
Hampton Court Palace



Strangely, the following photograph taken from a similar viewpoint (Figure 71) is included in the updated consultation Appraisal, and the complete outline of the Palace can be identified but is not transposed into an Important View in the Townscape Analysis.



It is requested that when the Appraisal is revisited, as per our principal request above, that the Townscape Analysis Map should be amended as shown on the following extract from the Townscape Analysis Map to recognise the importance of this view, and the need to enhance it by landscaping.



We believe our objections to the document proposed for adoption would be supported by London Parks and Gardens Trust who have recently identified the site as a potential candidate for the English Heritage “Heritage at Risk Register” and issued the following press statement:-

“The Jolly Boatman Site

Hampton Court Palace (in LB Richmond upon Thames), the historic Tudor and Baroque royal palace, set in a grade-I registered historic landscape and a major international tourist attraction, has the misfortune to look across the River Thames to the Surrey Borough of Elmbridge.

For the last ten years and more Elmbridge has been encouraging the construction of a four-storey hotel and flats on the site of the former Jolly Boatman (a small inconsequential modern café building destroyed by fire some years back) and the car park adjoining Hampton Court Station. The station building (unlisted but in the conservation area) is a potentially attractive building of red brick, designed in 1848 by Sir William Tite to complement the palace, to which it still delivers a steady stream of trippers.

The unwanted but regrettably approved riverside redevelopment with its dull neo-Georgian motel facing Hampton Court has not happened and seems increasingly unlikely to happen, and the developers have allowed the site to become an eyesore, cynically refusing offers from Historic Royal Palaces to landscape the site pending any development. Next year, if the predictions are to be believed, the eyes of the world will be on London and the Olympics - so what will the Japanese, Americans, Russians, whoever, who find their way from Stratford to Hampton Court think when they leave the station (after a slow, desultory and expensive journey from Waterloo) and are faced with a disgraceful rubbish tip of broken concrete and discarded food wrappers and tins and bottles? They will think that the developers deserve a boot up the backside and that the local planning authority needs to tell them to show some civic pride.

When at the beginning of the last century the adjacent downstream area had become a motley hutment known locally, and one supposes ironically, as Venice on Thames, it was seen as a reproach and acquired by the Ministry of Works and cleared of development and turned into a public park to protect the setting of the palace and its gardens. By publishing a planning brief encouraging excessive development of the sensitive Jolly Boatman site, Elmbridge Council has inflated the land's 'hope value' and made its public or private philanthropic acquisition as open space an unlikely if not impossible dream."

Sir, for the reasons given above, we urge that adoption of the consultation document at the December Council Meeting be withheld pending it being revisited and reviewed in the light of the above emboldened requests.

Yours faithfully,

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Conservation Area Working Group Members