



# **S174 Appeal: Pontoon and land adjacent to Richmond Pier, Riverside**

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**Landscape and Visual Impact Proof of Evidence: Summary**

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## **Personal Qualifications**

My name is Liz Simes. My qualifications include a BA (Hons) degree and post graduate diploma in Landscape Architecture and post graduate diploma in Urban Design. I am a member of the Landscape Institute and a Chartered Landscape Architect (CMLI).

I have over 25 years post qualification experience in landscape planning and design. I have prepared landscape and townscape and visual impact assessments either as standalone documents or co-ordinated as part of environmental statements; and both the outline and detailed design of a range of residential, commercial, mineral and waste development projects throughout the UK. I have stood as an expert witness on both landscape / townscape and visual matters.

I have visited the Appeal Site and its surroundings and have examined the relevant plans and documents for this Appeal.

The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this Appeal in this report is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institute and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This proof of evidence deals with the landscape and visual impact matters relating to reasons b, c, e and f of the enforcement notice (principally relating to the change to the solid areas above the pontoon, the number and colour of the umbrellas and the plastic enclosures), relating to MOL, character, openness, views of the River Thames and effects on night-time character. The methodology employed for the landscape and visual impact assessment is contained at my Appendix 1; plans illustrating background plans and documents, the current situation and a series of photos are contained in my Appendix 2; and with photos of the Appeal Site in 2024 showing the scheme associated with the enforcement notice are included in my Appendix 3. The November 2025 Appeal Scheme and alternative options are contained in a series of plans submitted with the Appeal (drawing no's TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1002- 1010, P01 and TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-RP-9002-VolumeStudy-P02).
- 1.2 The Appeal Site comprises a floating pontoon on the tidal part of the River Thames, fixed between two piles located north of Richmond Bridge. The pontoon comprises modifications to the elements sitting on top of the pontoon that existed pre-2021, resulting in a varied stepped outline above the water. On top of this stepped profile sits railings, tables, chairs and umbrellas (the latter on the downstream end only) reflecting the 2025 Appeal Scheme. The use of the pontoon is mixed and includes river related activities.
- 1.3 The immediate context to the Appeal Site is that of the Jesus Barge restaurant, the Riverside (the promenade, the terraces, the workshops and large scale buildings of the town centre) to the north / north-east; the busy transport corridor of Richmond Bridge (listed building) to the south; the River Thames with the residential area of Twickenham beyond to the west (filtered through intervening trees); and the River Thames, to the west / north-west. Building grain broadly follows the historic movement corridors and the orientation of the River Thames. Buildings are predominantly of larger scale, mass and density to the north-east and around the primary road corridors. To the west of the River the pattern is more aligned with the north-east to south-west orientation of the route to Richmond Bridge, again, with the larger scale and density of buildings associated with that main route. Buildings typically front on to the Riverside to the north / north-east of the Appeal Site and back on to the south-west / west. Building heights vary in the local townscape up to 5 storeys (on the western bank, including rooms in roofs), with the tallest buildings located to the north / north-east of the Appeal Site

between Water Lane and Richmond Bridge being again, up to 5 storey (considering rooms in roofs). In terms of pontoons and moored boats, the size and scale of these varies considerably along the eastern bank of the River, adding variety and interest along the promenade and Riverside.

- 1.4 With regards to published character assessments, the Appeal Site lies within Reach 9: Richmond and Character Area F: Richmond and Richmond Hill. These assessments describe the townscape context to the Appeal Site which is one where *'landing stages bring added activity to the extremely well used promenade'* and where *'cafes along Richmond Promenade provide magnificent havens to escape the hustle and bustle of the towpath'* making *'for a lively scene in good weather'* and where *'boats, boat houses and activity on the river create a recreational water frontage of much interest and setting to the important buildings'*. The combination of the promenade and the commercial enterprises with their range of outdoor activities and dining spaces all creates activity and vibrancy to the Riverside both during the day and at night. The movement of boats along the River adjacent to the Appeal Site creates a degree of activity and interest to the townscape and riverside. The mooring of a range of craft along this part of the River (either side of Richmond Bridge) off piers is a characteristic element.
- 1.5 In terms of landscape / townscape related designations, the Appeal Site lies within Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and the Thames Policy Area associated with River Corridors. It lies adjacent to designated public open space to the north-east / east relating to the Riverside. Relevant extracts from the NPPF, London Plan, Adopted and Draft Local Plans are provided in Section 3. There are overlapping themes relative to MOL, Character, Green Infrastructure and Views and as such a response has been provided relative to these themes.
- 1.6 The field survey was carried out in November 2025 at both low and high tide, but also at night to understand the night-time character of the River, the riverside and the local townscape setting to the Appeal Site. The scheme as enforced against at October 2023 included the extension of the raised area at both downstream and upstream ends, with an additional minor increase in height at the upstream end, 6no. blue umbrellas at a height of 8.37m, plastic enclosure around the pontoon hanging from the umbrella's, 13 tables and associated chairs across the entire pontoon and railings around the pontoon (refer to drawing refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1002-P01) and the photos included in my Appendix 3 reflecting the scene in January 2024.

- 1.7 A series of alternative Options are proposed for consideration and have been assessed in landscape and visual terms against the baseline scenario of the Pre 2021 situation, as shown on page 6 of the Matthew Allchurch Architects Volumetric Study (October 2025). The Options comprise the following (all of which could be controlled through suitable conditions if necessary):
- The scheme as it currently exists at November 2025, which includes extension of raised area at both downstream and upstream ends, with an additional minor increase in height at the upstream end (to enable access to below deck storage area), 13 tables and associated chairs, 3no. umbrellas (with heights reduced by 1.2m to 7.17m) and changed to a neutral colour (oyster white) and railings around the pontoon (refer to drawing refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1003-P01);
  - Option 1: Extension of raised area at both downstream and upstream ends, with an additional minor increase in height at the upstream end (to enable access to below deck storage area), 4no. umbrella's 7 no. tables and associated chairs and railings on downstream and middle sections only (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1004-P01);
  - Option 2: Extension of raised area at downstream end and minor increase at upstream end (again, to enable access to below deck storage area), 4no. umbrella's, 7 no. table and associated chairs on downstream and middle section, railings across the whole length (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1005-P01);
  - Option 3: Extension of raised area at downstream end, 2no. umbrella's and 7no. tables with associated chairs and railings on downstream end, with railings extending across middle section (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1006-P01);
  - Option 4: Extension of raised area at downstream end, 3no. umbrella's and 7no. tables with associated chairs and railings on downstream and middle section only (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1007-P01);
  - Option 5: Extension of raised area at downstream end only, 7no. tables with associated chairs and railings on downstream and middle section only (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1008-P01);
  - Option 6: Extension of raised area at downstream end, 7no. tables with associated chairs and railings on upstream and middle section only (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1009-P01); and
  - Option 7: Extension of raised area at downstream end for the kitchen below deck only (refer to drawing TUK03-MAA-XX-XX-A-1010-P01).

1.8 The landscape and visual impact assessment reveals the following insignificant effects:

- a) Minor adverse effect on the character of Richmond Riverside relating to the November 2025 situation and Options 1-4 and negligible for Options 5-6 and neutral for Option 7;
- b) Neutral effect on green and blue infrastructure relating to all the alternative scenarios;
- c) Minor adverse on night-time character relating to the November 2025 situation and Options 1-6, with neutral effect relating to Option 7;
- d) Minor adverse to neutral effects on a range of visual receptors (with options 5 and 6 being negligible and option 7 being neutral) and with all schemes being negligible on those at their place of work; and
- e) Minor adverse effect on the visual dimension of openness relating to the November 2025 situation, with negligible effect relating to Options 1 - 7.

1.9 A summary of the landscape and visual response to policy is set out in the following paragraphs.

#### Green Belt Purposes and MOL

1.10 The nature of the 2025 Scenario and the alternative Options:

- a) do not result in urban sprawl, as it remains fixed between two piles.
- b) do not physically result in the merging of Richmond and Twickenham. All the alternatives remain clearly distinguished from and between the built-up areas, albeit that it sits adjacent to an urban context.
- c) do not result in the encroachment into the countryside, as it remains fixed between two piles. The nature of that change relating to either the 2025 Appeal Scheme or the alternatives is insignificant in terms of the overall effect on the sense of the openness of the MOL and where the pontoon forms just over 0.20% of the MOL parcel 29 and 0.11% of the MOL covering the stretch of landscape / riverscape north of Richmond Bridge (MOL parcels 29 and 30). The 2025 Appeal Scheme or the alternative options do not interrupt, block or close down views of or across the River or open spaces in a significant way. Option 7 further reduces these limited and insignificant effects. Furthermore, the Appeal Scheme provides open air leisure and recreational uses and therefore maintains the 'open use' of the MOL.
- d) does not alter the setting of an historic town (considering the effects on the Conservation Area as described by Mr Collins).

### Local Character and Distinctiveness

1.11 The 2025 Appeal Scheme Scenario and alternative Options all:

- a) form part of the floating riverside scene which is already varied and adds movement and further vibrancy to the area and is therefore compatible with the Riverside, set against the dominant built form backdrop and provides the transition between the Riverside and the River. The pontoon itself is already permitted and therefore forms part of the riverside scene. The alternative Appeal Scheme options will not alter the dominance of the Richmond Riverside buildings providing the gateway to the town from the west.
- b) follow the grain and orientation of the River and Riverside.
- c) do not harm the individual natural landscape or built townscape elements and is compatible with the Riverside location, considering the varied activity associated with this part of the Riverside, allowing the appreciation of the Riverside from the River.
- d) do not close down or significantly interrupt views of Richmond Bridge and does not significantly affect views of the River. From the Riverside, adjacent to Richmond Bridge, the 2025 Appeal Scheme and options 1-4 at high tide will obscure views of Twickenham Bridge temporarily.
- e) form a small part of the wider character area and does not alter the special character of Reach 9 of area F relating to Richmond and Richmond Hill, continuing the use of landing stages, tables and chairs which all add a level of vibrancy as mentioned in the published character assessment documents.
- f) form part of the character of floating boats and boathouses, accessed off the Riverside, forming part of the activity on the river and recreational water frontage, creating interest.
- g) result in an extension of the solid elements of the pontoon to varying degrees and the range of elements above deck effects character, however the extent of these are limited to a such a small geographic area and therefore the effects as described are insignificant and reduce further considering the character area overall.
- h) is located within an area that is already influenced more readily by a range of lighting, which adds to the vibrancy of this part of the Riverside at night. As such the lighting associated with the Appeal Site is consistent with this existing established night-time environment. The additional night-time effects arising from the Appeal Scheme can be further reduced by a suitable planning condition.

#### Openness and Character of Views of River

- 1.12 As set out in the visual impact assessment, the effects of the 2025 Appeal Scheme and the alternative options:
- a) are insignificant on the character, amenity or openness of the view of the River;
  - b) are insignificant on the views of the River;
  - c) will not alter public access along or adjacent to the River;
  - d) will not alter the river related uses;
  - e) will not alter the visual envelope associated with the Appeal Site; and
  - f) will not be apparent in views from Richmond Hill.

#### Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 1.13 The Appeal Scheme alternatives will not change the network of existing green and blue infrastructure.

#### Lighting

- 1.14 The Appeal Scheme alternatives will result in a minor increase in lighting within the local area, in a localized area, but will not significantly alter the night time character of this part of the Riverside. The nature of the lighting can be addressed by condition.

#### Conclusion

- 1.15 In light of the evidence, I find that the alleged detrimental impacts relating to the 2025 Scenario and alternative options are not correct.