

LB Tower Hamlets and KEMP meeting with Thames Water

6 June 2011 @ 7.15 pm

Town Hall, Mulberry Street, London E1

Present:

Tower Hamlets: Councillor Stephanie Eaton (Bethnal Green North) (Chair); Councillor Alibor Choudhury (Shadwell); David Farrell (Head of Environmental Health & Environmental Protection); Nigel Legge (Consultant to LBTH); Stephen Halsey (Director of Communities, Localities and Culture)

KEMP: Carl Dunsire (Campaign Chair); Emma Puosi (Campaign Vice Chair); Toni Davey (Community Liaison); Raihan Islam, Robin Millward (campaign supporters)

GLA: John Biggs, Assembly Member (City and East)

Thames Water: Phil Stride (Head of London Tideway Tunnels); Derek Arnold (Lead Project Engineer, East); Nick Tennant (Communications Manager)

1. Introduction

1.1 Councillor Eaton (SE) welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that everyone around the table was trying to achieve the same outcome, to create the infrastructure to clean up the river in the way which would cause least disruption to the community. Participants in the meeting should respect each other for the effort everyone was putting in.

1.2 There was a small window before Phase 2 of the consultation began. The meeting was partly about the consultation process and what would go into it. What the meeting hoped to achieve was to establish the process for what would happen in the second phase. The article posted on Thames Water's website, which looked very much like a press release, had not been helpful.

2. Exploring options

2.1 SE said that some of the material which Thames Water (TW) had published looked promising, but other parts caused concerns. Starting with the Heckford site, she would like it to be agreed and minuted that this would be taken on board as an alternative. The campaigners and the Council would like to see that option explored in the same detail as other sites which had been investigated, e.g., for a feasibility study, an environmental impact assessment and any other studies to be undertaken. Heckford should be an option or "the" option for Phase 2.

2.2 Phil Stride (PS) said that this was entirely possible and expressed regret that it had not been possible to explore issues around this option at the 3 June meeting but there were no problems with developing the Heckford option. That would mean more construction in the park, but the works might be more acceptable than the proposals for work on the foreshore and creating an access road. TW would have to look at where the interception shaft needed to be and whether it could be moved from the Memorial Stone to the tennis courts. There would also have to be an open trench or bigger excavation in the park to do a pipe jack. That was part of the Heckford package: does save our park mean dig more in the park?

2.3 Toni Davey (TD) asked if there would be any lasting legacy in the park. PS said that there would be very little if any legacy in the park except for concrete caps and some manholes at ground level, with a 4 m high ventilation shaft at Heckford. Other infrastructure would be below ground.

2.4 SE emphasised that the foreshore was not the preferred option locally and that it should be dropped. PS said that this would not be in line with their process: the “preferred option” meant that it was the option which had been consulted upon in Phase 1. To change the preferred option, there would have to be analysis to support the change. In answer to a question from John Biggs (JB), PS said that the same analysis would have to be carried out for the Heckford site to become the preferred site. As at any site, people who lived close to the Heckford site would have to be given the opportunity to give their views.

2.5 SE said that if after the studies on Heckford Street, this was the best site, suitable language should be used to make this very clear during the consultation with the community, the Council and other stakeholders.

3. Methodology

3.1 Nigel Legge (NL) asked what the technical process had been which led to the identification of the foreshore option as the preferred scheme and how it had been developed.

3.2 Derek Arnold (DA) compared the process to a funnel. After a broad analysis of sites, options decreased and not every site could be studied. As options became fewer, the amount of design work increased. For this interceptor, the foreshore site had been subject to the most work whereas the reports on the Heckford site were fairly high level and had been discarded some time ago. Heckford had been on the original list of 225 sites but had never been pursued.

Action: Phil Stride confirmed that the Heckford option would now be pursued.

3.3 PS said that the reason for building on the foreshore was that so much value had been placed on the park. SE said that people saw the foreshore as an important part of the amenity of the park even though this was not the technical way in which TW saw it. PS said that he was keen to listen and had heard what was said on Friday [the 3 June meeting] and would like to work on this together to get to a much better place. He confirmed that it would be possible to go to Phase 2 with just the Heckford option.

3.4 The September consultation (Phase 2) was likely to start nearer the end of the month. Several milestones had to be achieved for this to be possible: Government endorsement to proceed; DEFRA’s agreement in relation to the Development Consent Order, the IPC application and the S.40 Order. The timing of these was outside TW’s control.

4. Phase 2 / working together

4.1 Within limits, of which cost was one, TW was able to go forward with “anything we want as the preferred scheme” so long as the analysis was carried out and there was community support. TW was reluctant to go forward with two options and hoped by the time of Phase 2, they could opt for one or the other, “hopefully in a joint way”. This would be the same for all sites.

4.2 JB said that if he lived in Heckford Street, he would expect to be fully consulted and that the process had to be done properly. PS said that there were no plans for a consultation on the Heckford option at the moment. TW had responded to the KEMP alternatives and PS now needed to speak with other TW senior managers and to start a process “to go through exactly the same thing” for the Heckford option.

Action: Phil Stride to speak to other TW Managers to begin to organise local engagement for the Heckford Street Business Park alternative option.

4.3 Councillor Choudhury (AC) said that he understood that the Environment Agency (EA) and the Port of London Authority (PLA) both had concerns about the foreshore proposals. He would also like to have an idea of a timetable “with activities and other bits” for the Heckford option, “which would help us to see that you are serious about this”. Two weeks ago, he had been told that TW had started the local Environmental Assessment: can other activities start, too?

4.4 SE said that there were concerns about tunnelling beneath Victorian homes and people had to be reassured that their homes would be unaffected. The language used had to be straightforward and clear – technical information which could be understood by laypeople. Given that the consultation timescale was being evolved, SE asked that the Council, the GLA, Save KEMP be included in the construction of the consultation document and see the draft before it went out.

Follow-up point: it was not clear whether TW agreed to do this and it would be helpful if it could be confirmed. Query whether this is wrapped up in the agreement to have a joint working group with regular meetings.

4.5 DA said that the EA would prefer no works to the foreshore at all and would prefer works in the park “if that’s the choice”. TW had developed its layout to reduce the footprint for temporary works and the EA now appreciated that TW was trying to minimise the impact. The PLA and the Harbour Master had been concerned about the large temporary foreshore and it had been reduced to a size acceptable to the Harbour Master.

4.6 PS said that the next step on the Heckford option would be to sit down with Dr. Legge and explain TW’s conclusions and the technical aspects so that he could form a view. Nick Tennant (NT) said that TW had learned the lessons of the Phase 1 consultation and whatever is the preferred Phase 2 option, would welcome the involvement of local people, e.g., in agreeing the most appropriate meeting venues. SE said that this would be very welcome.

4.7 AC said that the Council would work with TW to avoid scaremongering. NT said that for Barnes & Putney and other sites, there were working groups which met every 3 months. He recognised that there had not been a dialogue on Friday [the 3 June meeting] and there were clearly things TW needed to do.

4.8 EP said that the reason for what happened on Friday was that TW had antagonised the community. Now it had sent the barge which was moored by the park and no one had been notified. No one had received the letters which NT said had been sent to everyone within 125 m of the mooring. CD said the Twitter comments had been taken very badly and that there was a lot of anger in the community over the consultation and the way matters had been handled in the press. “Now we should show that together, we can do something for the community” and a working group would be very welcome.

Action: a joint working group to be set up involving LBTH Councillors and officers; representatives of Save KEMP and Thames Water; and John Biggs.

4.9 At SE’s request, PS agreed that when a consultation letter was sent out, Save KEMP would be copied in. This would also mean that residents would know that they could check with KEMP if they hadn’t received a letter. NT promised “to get better at Twitter” and promised to invite the Council leaders, ward members and officers to a pre-briefing before the consultation process began formally.

Action: Save KEMP to receive copies of consultation letter and related documents from TW; Nick Tennant to arrange briefing session for Councillors and officers prior to the start of consultation.

4.10 NT said that as there were issues with the Royal Mail, TW was employing letter drop people at Chambers Wharf: TW had listened and learned.

4.11 David Farrell (DF) said that in respect of the rig, it would be helpful if a copy of any letters went to Save KEMP and the council officers with whom TW had engaged. It would also be helpful to have the list of addresses (the range) to which the letter had been sent. The S.61 application had shown the rig downriver from FTW but it appeared to touch the edge of Atlantic Wharf. For officers to assist TW, they would need to see in advance to whom the consultation / notification letters were being sent and copies of the letters "well in advance".

4.12 CD said that the campaign had informed more people than TW had done and there were some simple things the campaign could help with. TW should explain clearly what it planned to do at each stage of construction. EP said that the campaign was not looking to repeat the Friday meeting. The campaign had not treated TW in a bad way: Save KEMP had not been required to put out the engineering report, which was very detailed and professional. The campaign had not done any scaremongering and was at the meeting to work with TW. Suggesting that Save KEMP had proposed Kings Stairs as an alternative option was untrue and damaged the reputation of the campaign and of TW.

4.13 PS said that TW was equally committed to meet the needs of the scheme and accommodate the community.

4.14 JB suggested putting a notice board in the park. He also asked whether the Chambers Wharf option was being ruled out and whether works would, after all, be necessary in Butcher Row.

4.15 PS said that Butcher Row would stay on the plans until TW had been officially notified by the EA as to the outcome, and was very confident that this would change. Chambers Wharf had been raised in the KEMP report, as an option to take the flow from the KEMP outfall south. The calculations had to be tested and this would be discussed in detail with Dr. Legge.

4.16 NT apologised "if he had given the impression that KEMP had said that King's Stairs should suffer", but TW was not able to say that it was only considering Chambers Wharf. CD said that the options should be explained factually and that it should be clear that it was TW that was looking at King's Stairs. SE said that the language and presentation was really critical and should not make one group of residents look like NIMBYs.

Action: agreed that a notice board should be set up in the park which would keep residents up to date with developments. This will be co-ordinated between the Council and Thames Water (Councillor Choudhury / Phil Stride)

5. A green space at Heckford Street

5.1 AC said that in previous discussions with TW, the possibility had been raised that the 5,500 m sq of the site which would not be needed after works had been completed could be returned to the community as green space. This had been proposed by the LBTH Head of Strategy and Communications. TW had expressed some reservations but it had excited the Council and it was something which LBTH would like to see. AC had spoken with the Mayor and the Executive and the Council wanted to pursue this option.

5.2 PS said that there would be no problem in giving the Council first refusal to purchase [at the price at which TW bought it – *TW has asked that this phrase be deleted; review needed at 18 August meeting*]. TW had to achieve certain objectives for the scheme and in making the cost calculations for Heckford Street, it had been assumed that this land would be sold. SE suggested treating this as a S.106 planning gain.

5.3 AC said that the Council would like the whole area to be green but recognised that there would be a footprint. He asked for agreement in principle that this was “something that we want to do”; paying a large purchase price did not sit well with Government cuts. He hoped to say something about the proposal in East End Life and the messages had to be clear.

5.4 PS said that the 2000 m sq retained by TW could be integrated into a public amenity area with TW retaining rights of access. TW had to buy the additional 5,500 m sq for the duration of the project; as with Chambers Wharf, any residual value belonged to customers (not shareholders). OFWAT would not be happy for TW to give the Council “a significantly valuable piece of land to build on”. AC said that it would be a greenfield site and not redeveloped.

5.5 AC said that building on the foreshore would be very expensive. DA said that if there was no resale, the cost of the Heckford option would increase. PS said that it would set a precedent and the cost for the whole of the scheme would be over £150 million.

Follow-up point: Councillor Choudhury asked that the principle of green space at the Heckford site be agreed and this appeared to be left open for further exploration.

6. Reclassifying the park

6.1 CD said that at the Friday meeting, there had been discussion about reclassifying the park. PS said that the EA’s view was where there was building in the foreshore, it should be described as a foreshore site. In terms of a rough classification as to which sites are parks, foreshore, brownfield, For KEMP, the work would be done on the foreshore. In contrast, the Barn Elms works would take place in the park and it was classified as a park site. KEMP could be a split foreshore / park site.

6.2 JB said that as far as the community was concerned, it was a park.

PS said that the Heckford option, if adopted, would include work in KEMP and only the site in KEMP would be classified as a park scheme.

7. Next meeting

6.3 The participants agreed that it would be useful to meet in early July. This working group should be separate from the Cabinet meetings and other members’ meetings that were taking place.

Action point: Councillor Choudhury to ask his PA Kerry to organise a meeting date in the first part of July, taking into account the dates of other relevant meetings, and ensure that the agreed date is formally and promptly confirmed to all participants.

Action point: Phil Stride to provide the Council, KEMP and John Biggs with a timetable of its activities relating to the Heckford analysis and wider consultation.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

R. Millward

7 June 2011