

MAYOR OF LONDON

John Biggs

Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
London E14 2BG

Date: 27th September 2017

Dear John,

PLANNED BRIDGES IN FISH ISLAND - H14 & H16

Over recent months you have written to me twice to express your concerns about the proposed Fish Island Bridges. Subsequent to your first letter dated 17th July 2017, we discussed these issues following the LLDC board meeting on 25th July. We also discussed whether it would be useful to arrange a further, more formal meeting, but agreed that it would not be beneficial to what was ongoing consideration of issues that were well understood by all sides. You wrote again on the 17th August 2017 reiterating your objection to these bridges in relation to the planning application for the upgrade of the Roach Road bridge.

Unfortunately, our informal conversation has been misinterpreted as my having ignored your original request for a meeting and has highlighted the need for me to make a formal response to your concerns, in addition to any response you have received direct from LLDC.

As you know, the LLDC board has taken the decision to support the Eastwick and Sweetwater development, along with the H14 and H16 bridges that stitch these new neighbourhoods into the wider area. Given that planning permission has been granted and that LLDC's planning committee made its last decisions on these matters only very recently and by a significant majority, the threshold for reopening these decisions must be relatively high. LLDC has operated within the policy and planning framework and relevant legislation, and undertaken all the relevant and required processes, so it is difficult to conclude that any such threshold has been met.

The benefits sought from these two bridges – three, including Roach Road – include pedestrian and cycle connectivity, facility for a potential bus route, and the only practical and justifiable means of extending the QEOP district heating into Fish Island. The bridges will connect communities to each other – including future neighbourhoods to be built – to wider forms of public transport, open space, new schools, healthcare facilities, universities and cultural facilities, and the economic opportunities that surround them.

In terms of bus provision, I understand that a new H14 bridge would provide the flexibility to run a bus service to include Fish Island, but that there are currently no confirmed proposals for this. Any new plans would need to go through a public consultation led by TfL, as part of which TfL would engage with Tower Hamlets and LLDC to assess the suitability of the neighbouring road network for supporting an amended bus network.

In relation to air quality, I understand that the impact on air quality from the operation of the bridges was assessed in the 2012 Environmental Impact Assessment for the Legacy Community Scheme masterplan and the assessment concluded there would be no adverse impact. I also understand that the issue of air quality was considered again in the report to the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee on the reserved matters.

With regards to traffic modelling impacts, officers at LLDC have confirmed that additional traffic modelling information (as an update to that prepared for the Legacy Community Scheme planning application) was submitted as part of the reserved matters planning submission. This was reviewed by the Planning Policy and Delivery Team and TfL and set out in the report to the Planning Decisions Committee on the reserved matters.

Nevertheless, the Mayor has asked TfL to work with LLDC to review the traffic modelling and options for operating the bridge, in light of his new draft Transport Strategy.

As I said when we discussed the matter previously, it is my understanding that if and when Tower Hamlets adopts the H14 bridge it could, subject to addressing extant planning requirements, manage its future use so as to prevent vehicular traffic or limit vehicular traffic to buses only.

I hope this goes some way to addressing your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jules Pipe', with a horizontal line underneath.

Jules Pipe CBE
Deputy Mayor,
Planning, Regeneration & Skills