

Diamond Jubilee Footbridge

in the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Hammersmith & Fulham

planning application nos. 2012/5261 and 2012/03582/FUL

Strategic planning application stage 1 referral (new powers)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008

The proposal

Full planning permission is sought for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Thames, adjacent to the existing grade II* listed Battersea Railway Bridge (applications submitted to Wandsworth and Hammersmith and Fulham Council).

The applicant

The applicant is **Palace Investments Ltd** and the architect is **one-world design**.

Strategic issues

The principle of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge in this location is strongly supported. There are, however, outstanding **transport** and **inclusive design** issues.

Recommendation

That Wandsworth and Hammersmith & Fulham Councils be advised that while the application is generally acceptable in strategic planning terms, on balance the application does not yet comply with the London Plan. The reasons and the potential remedies set out in paragraph 38 of this report could address these deficiencies.

Context

1 On 23 November 2012 and 7 December 2012 the Mayor of London received documents from Wandsworth Council and Hammersmith and Council respectively notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until 3 January 2013 to provide Wandsworth Council with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. A response to Hammersmith and Fulham Council is required by 17 January 2013. The Mayor may also provide other comments. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what decision to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 2C of the Schedule to the Order 2008: "*Development to provide— (h) a crossing over or under the River Thames*"

3 Once Wandsworth and Hammersmith & Fulham Councils have resolved to determine the application, they are required to refer it back to the Mayor for his decision as to whether to direct refusal; take it over for his own determination; or allow the Councils to determine it themselves.

4 The Mayor of London's statement on this case will be made available on the GLA website www.london.gov.uk.

Site description

5 The site is immediately adjacent to the existing Battersea Railway Bridge. It spans the River Thames between Imperial Wharf and Chelsea Harbour in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham on the west bank of the river and between Oyster Wharf and Groveside Court in the London Borough of Wandsworth on the east bank. It is approximately 0.12 hectares in area.



Details of the proposal

6 The application seeks full planning permission for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Thames. The bridge design is a three span solution, comprising a small central arch flanked by two larger outer arches, supported by four piers. The maximum height of the bridge is 18.41m AOD, rising approximately 4.5m above the existing railway bridge. The primary structure

will be constructed of painted structural steel and the deck will be shared between pedestrians and cyclists.

Case history

7 There have been general proposals in the past to construct a pedestrian bridge alongside the railway bridge, but none have been progressed as planning applications.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

8 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Transport *London Plan; the Mayor's Transport Strategy;*
- Urban design *London Plan;*
- Inclusive design *London Plan; Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment SPG; Planning and Access for Disabled People: a*

9 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plans in force for the area are the Wandsworth Core Strategy (2010), Site Specific Allocations Document (2012) and Development Management DPD (2012), the Hammersmith & Fulham Core Strategy (2011), the saved policies of the Hammersmith & Fulham Unitary Development Plan (2011) and the 2011 London Plan.

10 The following are also relevant material considerations:

- The National Planning Policy Framework and Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework
- The Hammersmith and Fulham Development Management Development Plan Document (Submission version)
- The draft Revised Early Minor Alteration to the London Plan

Principle of development

11 The principle of a new pedestrian and cycle river crossing in this location is supported by local and strategic policy. Hammersmith & Fulham's South Fulham Riverside SPD (second consultation draft, March 2012) recognises that "*a pedestrian cycle bridge link provided over the River Thames, where the existing rail bridge is located would make an improvement to connectivity for the regeneration area.*" Whilst the Wandsworth local development framework does not specifically identify the need for a new pedestrian and cycle river crossing in this location, the Core Strategy supports the creation of new walking and cycling routes. London Plan policy 6.4B states that the Mayor will work with strategic partners to improve the public transport system in London, and identifies a number of measures for increasing public transport capacity, including by providing new river crossings.

12 The nearest existing road based river crossings are Wandsworth Bridge (over one kilometre west) and Battersea Bridge (one kilometre east). The proposed bridge will improve north-south connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists across the River Thames, specifically between Clapham Junction and Imperial Wharf, and is supported in principle.

Transport

13 The nearest existing road-based river crossings of Wandsworth Bridge and Battersea Bridge form part of the Strategic Road Network and the Transport for London Road network respectively. The northern landing point would connect directly with Townmead Road, a local road within the South Fulham Riverside regeneration area. The southern landing point would connect with Lombard Road, a local road within the Clapham Junction town centre regeneration area. Both Lombard Road and Townmead Road are key bus corridors.

14 On the north bank, the site is served directly by the C3 bus route (between Clapham Junction and Earls Court), and on the south bank by bus route 170 (Victoria Station to Roehampton). The south bank landing point is just over 1km from Clapham Junction station, the busiest station outside the main London termini, providing access to mainline rail and London Overground services. On the north side the site is within 200m of Imperial Wharf station providing access to London Overground services. Riverboat services are available from Chelsea Pier 50m east of the northern landing point.

15 The current public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of both landing points is 2, on a scale where 1 is low and 6 is high. The proposed bridge could increase the PTAL rating due to increased connectivity between Imperial Wharf and Clapham Junction; a distance of less than one kilometre, with a total walk time of approximately 15-20 minutes.

16 The application is accompanied by a design and access statement and an environmental report, but without the benefit of a standalone transport assessment or EIA. Some of the detail that would normally be expected in a transport assessment is contained within the business case document produced by SKM Colin Buchanan on behalf of Wandsworth Council in early 2012. The assessment uses both population data and trip generation statistics of surrounding committed developments to establish the impact of a new crossing in this location. This highlights that the crossing has the potential to divert a number of walking and cycling trips from surrounding routes and to shift a number of car journeys to walk and cycle trips. Further discussions with the applicant over the trip generation and distribution by mode is necessary in order to understand more about how the bridge may affect the wider highway, cycle and public transport networks, in some cases positively.

17 As the proposed bridge will accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists, the applicant should consult the London Cycle Design Standards to assess the detailed design of the deck structure to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians can use the bridge safely and that any potential conflict is minimised through the design. Further discussions with the two local authorities and the applicant are necessary to consider how the bridge could complement TfL's existing cycle strategy for the area and wider London. The areas around the landing points could be considered for cycle hire docking stations due to the additional demand and interest created by the bridge. Further assessment is needed to understand the ability of the wider highway and cycle network to accommodate the increased demand and impact of cyclists using the bridge and on the highway network.

18 Public realm improvements will be necessary to successfully integrate the bridge landing points on both sides of the river. The lifts should be available 24 hours a day and a maintenance arrangement should be in place to ensure a continuous link for all users in line with London Plan policies 6.9 and 6.10. TfL requests clarification as to whether the footway on the bridge will be adopted and maintained by both local authorities or if it will be retained as a private crossing. In any event a condition is recommended to ensure that the bridge is open 24 hours a day unless exceptional circumstances prevail.

19 The Thames Path runs past the site and provides a continuous walking route on the north bank. On the south bank, the Thames pathway currently diverts inland and rejoins the river east of the railway bridge. As the bridge is expected to increase pedestrian flows in the area, TfL encourages Wandsworth Council and the applicant to investigate improvements to the legibility and quality of this walking route and to the capacity of the footway on Lombard Road to accommodate increased demand in line with London Plan policy 6.10. Further assessment is required to understand the demand and impact of pedestrians using the bridge and how these could be accommodated within the existing pedestrian and highway network.

20 In order to improve legibility from the site, Legible London signage should be installed at either end of the bridge. This should be secured by way of a section 106 agreement.

21 A construction management plan (CMP) should be secured by condition. This should address the need for vehicle movements to remove spoil or other materials or to deliver materials to the site. The submission material indicates that the majority of materials will be transported by barge in line with London Plan policy 6.14; this is welcomed. As there are likely to be a number of construction projects taking place in this area simultaneously, care should be taken to ensure safe use of the river. Coordination of these construction projects should ensure that the number of barge movements do not give rise to safety issues on the river for other users in line with London Plan policy 6.14. TfL has provided details of the other construction projects to the applicant and requests that a mechanism be devised through the CMP to ensure that construction programmes are co-ordinated, and any remedial measures taken to ensure safe use of the river.

22 Notwithstanding the above, the impact of the proposed bridge on navigation for river buses is likely to be acceptable and it does not impact on any safeguarded wharves. The Port of London Authority has confirmed that it has no objection to the bridge.

23 In order to effectively plan the necessary closures of the rail bridge and suspension of London Overground and other rail services to enable construction of elements of the footbridge, the applicant should continue to consult with Network Rail. The construction of this crossing and the additional trips are not expected to cause an unacceptable impact on the local bus network.

24 The submission indicates that the bridge has an estimated construction cost of £22 million, which is proposed to be met through private sponsorship. It should be noted that TfL has no plans to invest in a river crossing in this location.

25 In summary, the principle of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge in this location is strongly supported and in line with London Plan transport policies. However, a number of issues need to be addressed before the application can be considered to comply with the London Plan. These include further assessment of the impacts on pedestrian, cycle, bus and rail networks, discussions around the design of the crossing, construction management matters and the legibility and connectivity of the bridge through improved signage. It should be noted that at present no funding mechanisms are identified by TfL. TfL welcomes future involvement in the discussions on this application.

Urban design

26 The design of the bridge is generally supported. It closely references the adjacent listed bridge whilst becoming an individual element in its own right. The three-span approach makes the bridge visually permeable allowing views of the adjacent five-span bridge and creating a distinctive interplay between the two. The tapering section of the arches towards their crest provides an elegant and delicate appearance which is also particularly welcomed.

27 Careful attention will need to be given to the underside of the bridge, as this will be visually prominent on the approach from the river banks. The two lift shafts at either end of the structure are also very prominent and a clear design intention for them needs to be set out.

Inclusive design

28 The design and access statement explains that options for incorporating ramped and lift access to overcome the unavoidable level change to the bridge were considered before the final design solution of a lift and stairs at each end of the bridge was arrived at. The use of external lifts is not generally encouraged because if they break down, the bridge becomes inaccessible for people who require step-free access. However, it is appreciated why it is not possible in this instance to provide a ramped approach at either end of the bridge. The lift option is therefore acceptable.

29 The design and access statement also explains that *“A 1 in 20 ramp reduces the vertical height somewhat before reaching the ends of the deck, but there still remains a height difference of 5.9m from the east bank and 4.6m from the west bank.”* It is unclear why the ramps are necessary, when lifts are provided at each end of the bridge. They could be an additional barrier for some users, which should be avoided. If possible, the surface of the bridge should be flat and level.

30 The information submitted explains that the steps will be designed in accordance with the standards in Approved Document M of the building regulations, and will incorporate tactile paving and contrast nosings, which is acceptable. It should also be ensured that the step risers will be closed (and not open).

31 Details regarding the lift size and design should be provided. It is not considered appropriate for a structure of this type to incorporate the minimum size of lift available. Large lifts which a variety of users will be able to use with ease should be provided. There should also be an appropriate maintenance, repair and breakdown contract in place, to minimise the amount of time they could potentially be out of use, as reliance on lifts means that if either lift were out of use, the bridge would be inaccessible for people who require level access. Unrestricted access to the lifts should be provided 24 hours a day, and the applicant should explain how this will be guaranteed from the outset and in the future.

32 The lighting scheme should ensure that the surface of the bridge will be consistently lit, avoiding any dark areas or shadowing, as these can cause significant difficulties for a range of people including blind and partially sighted people. Unnecessary variation in lighting should be avoided as it can be mis-interpreted as a change in level, can be confusing, disorientating and a barrier for some users. Details regarding how the lighting scheme will be suitable for a variety of users including blind and partially sighted people should be provided.

33 Colour/ tonal contrast between the surface of the bridge and the edge upstands would also assist some users in way finding and navigating the bridge.

34 The provision of handrails along the full length of the bridge is welcomed. However, the handrails appear to be set in from the edge of the surface of the bridge, which could cause difficulties for blind and partially sighted people navigating using a cane to detect the edge of the bridge at surface level, which would provide inaccurate information regarding the location of the handrail above. This could be overcome by incorporating a low level tapping rail (no more than 150mm from the surface of the bridge), level with the upper edge of the handrail. Further information on low level detection can be found in BS8300:2009 + A1:2010 and the DfT's 'Inclusive Mobility'. Details regarding how this issue is to be addressed should be provided.

Local planning authorities' position

35 As yet unknown.

Legal considerations

36 Under the arrangements set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor is required to provide the local planning authority with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. Unless notified otherwise by the Mayor, the Council must consult the Mayor again under Article 5 of the Order if it subsequently resolves to make a draft decision on the application, in order that the Mayor may decide whether to allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged, or direct the Council under Article 6 of the Order to refuse the application, or issue a direction under Article 7 of the Order that he is to act as the local planning authority for the purpose of determining the application and any connected application. There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's statement and comments.

Financial considerations

37 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

38 London Plan policies on transport, urban design and inclusive design are relevant to this application. Whilst the application is strongly supported in strategic planning terms, it does not yet fully comply with the London Plan; the reasons and the potential remedies to issues of non-compliance are set out below:

- **Transport:** the principle of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge in this location is strongly supported. There are, however, outstanding issues including the need for further assessment of the impacts of the bridge on pedestrian, cycle, bus and rail networks, construction management and the legibility and connectivity of the bridge through improved signage. Further information and conditions are therefore necessary to ensure full compliance with London Plan transport policies.
- **Urban design:** the design of the bridge is supported and represents a high standard of architecture in line with London Plan policy 7.6.
- **Inclusive design:** outstanding issues relating to the ramped approaches to the deck, the lift size and design, lighting scheme and design of handrails should be addressed in order to ensure compliance with London Plan policy 7.2.

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