

FRIENDS of FURNIVALL GARDENS

CHAIR: JOHN KING • VICE-CHAIR: UNA HODGKINS • SECRETARY: JANE SKINNER

TREASURER: CLIVE WREN

35 MALL ROAD, HAMMERSMITH, LONDON W6

Nigel Pallace, Director of Environment
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
LONDON
W6 9JU

3 August 2010

Dear Mr Pallace

TOWN HALL: KING STREET REGENERATION

We draw your attention to our concerns about the above proposals, which were presented recently by the developers and their agents to local groups and the public.

BACKGROUND

The Friends was established at the instigation of the Council in October 2009. Its objects are:

1. To secure for the public benefit the preservation, protection and improvement of Furnivall Gardens as a place of historic and ecological interest;
2. To facilitate access to Furnivall Gardens for recreation, by all members of the community, and to encourage an inclusive and participatory community spirit;
3. To assist in the positive management of Furnivall Gardens;
4. To represent the interests of Furnivall Gardens users in consultation with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and other bodies;
5. To provide the principal point of liaison for communication with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham in order to communicate park related queries and information;
6. To promote equal opportunities by being positively committed to opposing all direct and indirect discrimination in all its activities and services.
7. To encourage and promote biodiversity and conservation.

Furnivall Gardens is an important and well-used area of public open space, owned and managed by the Council, located next to the River Thames in the Mall Conservation Area. It adjoins several historic buildings, enjoys views of many other notable buildings, structures and the river landscape and has strong historical associations with Hammersmith.

Our main concerns are:

LOSS OF SPACE

Much of the NW corner of the Gardens, which is presently used as a kick-about area and to pitch stalls at events in the Gardens, would be lost to the extensive ramps and embankments required to provide access to and from the proposed footbridge. The height and scale of these cannot be readily appreciated from the model displayed to the public, but become more apparent when seen on elevational drawings, and they are the greater in the Gardens because levels are dropping towards the River.

ACCESS

The clearance required for the proposed footbridge to cross the A4 (more than 6 metres/20 feet) would pose a significant obstacle to pedestrians, especially those less able and using pushchairs or wheelchairs. Although the present subways are not entirely satisfactory, the climb involved is only approximately half that required to negotiate the proposed footbridge.

In contrast, the proposals to provide surface-level crossings, published by Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea Councils, the Mayor of London and TfL in 2005, would radically improve pedestrian access, not only between Furnivall Gardens and the proposed new development, but between the whole of the riverside and King Street and Hammersmith Town Centre. They would also avoid the loss of space to ramps.

We recognise that reduced traffic speeds would need to be enforced between Barons Court and the Hogarth roundabout as part of these proposals. However, it seems they would result in overall greater safety for both pedestrians crossing and vehicles joining the A4, as well as reducing noise and air pollution and carbon emissions, to the benefit of all the community, including prospective residents of the new development.

SETTING & VIEWS

The proposed footbridge, ramps and embankments involve the felling of many trees which together with its bulk would impact severely on the setting of both the Gardens and the adjacent Sussex House, listed Grade 2*. They would also sever views from the Gardens of the Grade 2 listed Town Hall, especially from the Dove Pier, which lies on its central axis. This is a particularly important connection since, after the culverting of Hammersmith Creek in 1936, the pier was built by the Council in 1951 to celebrate the Festival of Britain, and known originally as Hammersmith Pier.

We appreciate that the proposed embankments would reduce noise from the A4 in part of the Gardens. However, this could be achieved with a less space-consuming barrier, only 2.5 to 3 metres high. If road speeds were reduced and/or the latest quieter surfacing installed, noise would be less of a problem anyway.

The proposed 14-storey residential towers would destroy the setting of the listed Town Hall as seen from the Gardens (as well as from everywhere else around). They would also radically alter the backdrop to the Gardens, which presently punctuates the transition between the upper western leafier section of the north bank of the River Thames, and the more densely urban eastern section downstream of Hammersmith Bridge.

There are many planning policies and legislation to which reference could be made to underline our concerns, and of which you must already be aware. We hope you will use your influence to bring about a fundamental rethink of what is presently proposed, or, failing that, recommend refusal of the eventual application.

Yours sincerely

Clive Wren

D Arch (Kingston) RIBA

On behalf of the Friends of Furnivall Gardens

Copies to:

Cllr Michael Cartwright – Hammersmith Broadway

Cllr Steve Cowan – Hammersmith Broadway

Cllr P J Murphy – Hammersmith Broadway

Cllr Lucy Ivimy - Ravenscourt

Cllr Harry Phibbs - Ravenscourt

Cllr Charlie Dewhirst - Ravenscourt

Adam O'Neill – Conservation Officer, LBHF