

# MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING OF LOTS ROAD NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM


on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at the offices of the Worlds End Studios.

Richard Jacques opened the meeting and welcomed the Rt.Hon. Greg Hands MP, and also Laura Burns, Sonia Zvedeniuk, Cllr. Cem Kemahli with apologies from Cllr. Gerard Hargreaves.

He turned to Lots Road South, the biggest issue on the Forum's agenda.

### Lots Road South

- RBKC and the developer are undertaking detailed feasibility work on potential changes to the scheme.
- Assessing the provision of social housing and commercial spaces and their impact on the overall size of the development and the heights of buildings.
- Lots Road Auctions have moved to significantly larger premises in Fulham and will not return to Lots Road at same scale, if at all.
- Expectations of another round of public consultation before the summer holidays and a planning application by December.



Mount Anvil had stopped active work and were holding meetings with RBKC on feasibility studies of changes they may make, particularly in view of the feedback from the community.

They have landed on this courtyard design with a podium space.

They are now in the hard yardage of talks with both RBKC and Hammersmith and Fulham about heights, level of social housing, also the provision of commercial space, since it's in the only employment zone in the area.

There's a complex set of moving parts there. MA are negotiating both with RBKC, the commissioners of the whole project, and Hammersmith and Fulham, who will have purchase on the scheme through the planning process.

Lots Road Auctions have moved out of their premises and every indication is that they are very happy in Fulham and won't be coming back in scale to Lots Road. They may possibly return to a small non-bespoke premises as a sort of showroom, but not as an auction house. This changes many of the dynamics of the scheme first envisaged.

The developer is hoping to come to agreement with RBKC by the end of May and will be in a position to get back into public consultation with the Forum and the rest of the community in early July, that will then have a revised planning application in December.

Peter Barratt said that in a recent meeting with MA, the only person acting as a go-between H & F and RBKC councillors is the developer. The Councillors do not talk together.

Richard Jacques said the Forum would have to consider where they thought the trade-offs could be. It is desperately opposed to high buildings? Perhaps other people want to see quite a lot of commercial provisioning? Some people like social housing and some people are less enthusiastic. While the Forum has been pretty consistent to date in highlighting the key problem the overall amount of development proposed for the site, if there are changes the Forum will have to decide

where the balance of its interests lays. He wanted the MP to know this was one of the reasons this group came together as a Forum.

Next is the plight of the houseboats.


### Plight of the Houseboats

- Planning Applications Committee met on 27<sup>th</sup> February and ordered that enforcement action commence to remove the three apartment boats from the mooring.
- RBKC officers have argued that since one of the boats is in dry dock the PAC needs to consider whether two boats are unlawful and merit enforcement action. CYBC has also applied for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development (CLUED) for the mooring.
- PAC met on 7<sup>th</sup> May and resolved that two boats are unlawful and should be removed, and that the same would apply if only one boat remained. They instructed officers to respond to the CLUED on this basis. We now await both the enforcement and the CLUED decisions.
- Owners of CYBC have in the past said they will appeal these decisions to the Planning Inspectorate.

#### Council vows to take action against 'mega barges' in Chelsea in win for houseboat owners

Houseboat residents have battled developers for years

Jack Phillips



Boats on the river along Cheyne Walk and Chelsea Embankment

ESALEX LENTATI

A London council has vowed to take enforcement action against "mega barges" amid fears they will squeeze out houseboat owners near Battersea Bridge.

Houseboat residents in Chelsea Reach feared developers would evict them and replace them with "super boats" that can be rented out for huge profits.

A group has battled property developer Andrea Moffat since February 2016 when he bought the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company (CYBC), which owns moorings between Battersea Bridge and Lots Road.

A regular feature on the Forum agenda and one which everyone is passionate about. He said we thought we were home and dry because on 27<sup>th</sup> February the Planning Application Committee decided they were going to enforce against the three mega apartment boats. Since that decision it was noted that one of the boats was missing, and it was decided not to issue the enforcement notice. It was reviewed on 7<sup>th</sup> May and the Councillors were determined to do the right thing and gave clear instructions to the officers that either two or one mega boats were still a problem and the planners should proceed with enforcement. A member of the audience said enforcement orders had been issued. Richard Jacques said this was progress. The Forum expected the owners to appeal. If they don't appeal they have 8 months to comply with the enforcement.

Richard Jacques then moved to the proposals from TfL to make safe the other three crossings at Battersea Bridge.

### Chelsea Alliance for Safer Transport (CAST)

- A number of interested and directly affected resident associations, including The Chelsea Society, The CWT and the LRNF, have formed a Chelsea Alliance for Safer Traffic (CAST)
- CAST welcomes TfL commitment to make safe the three unimproved arms of the Battersea Bridge Cheyne Walk junction, the reduction in dedicated bus lanes on Chelsea Embankment/Cheyne Walk and the commitment to no further change over the next five years.
- CAST's objective is to now explore traffic management options that would enhance safety and traffic movement for all modes within and through Chelsea. Specifically, with fair and equitable treatment of traffic distribution across and through the borough rather and avoiding simply displacing volumes from one area to another.
- CAST will work with RBKC, to obtain updated and current traffic count data for the riverside and north/south roads connecting with Chelsea. There is a strong feeling that the pattern of post covid and indeed neighbouring borough LTN plans is not at present well understood.

People were still not satisfied particularly with the North South streets, and a member of the audience said CAST – the Chelsea Alliance for Safer Transport had been formed, including Cllr. Cem Kemahli. The data is very much out of date and the RBKC have agreed to an up to date set of traffic count data. This will enable a reassessment of the kind of solution. TfL have agreed to meet with CAST.

Richard Jacques said Giso van Loon was meeting with RBKC transport planners about the structure of that count and what they should be looking at.

Peter Barratt asked if the traffic count could also include the Chelsea Waterfront area, because it was one of the problems of the development of Lots Road South.

The count will take about two months.

A member of the audience asked if it would include the possible solution expressed at the previous meeting of the York/Lombard Road. Another member of the audience said TfL had said this was out of date and no longer viable.

Richard Jacques said the key point was delivering safety to the other three junctions. This traffic count would enable up to date assessment of the whole of the South Chelsea area.

Lastly Richard Jacques turned to the question of Jaks wishing to extend their licensing hours from Thursday to Saturday.

**Jak's extended weekend hours application**

Jak's the bar and restaurant at 533 King's Road have applied to extend their opening hours on Thursdays to Saturday to 2am

LRNF, LVC and Westfield Close RA have already objected to the additional late-night noise and disruption this will cause.

Public consultation open until Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May. Comments can be made at: [www.rbkc.gov.uk/PP/24/01315](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/PP/24/01315)



A number of residents have already made their feelings clear, but it is still open until 17<sup>th</sup> May for those that feel they are affected to express their views.

A member of the audience said this would be going against a successful restriction obtained thirteen years ago.

Richard Jacques then handed over to the Rt.Hon. Greg Hands, MP for Chelsea and Fulham. He said two members of his staff were in the audience.

He said he'd been at Imperial Wharf Station at 7.00 a.m. that morning, handing out his latest survey for improving tube and railway services. He said it's an interesting area where Chelsea meets Fulham. It's also an area with its own challenges. He said he always thinks that public transport in this area can be improved – for example he ran a campaign when Crossrail 2 was being debated wanting Imperial Wharf to be on the Crossrail 2 line to help increase connectivity. He said this area was under the flight path of Heathrow and his campaign against what he believes are unnecessary night flights which benefit only a few thousand far eastern travellers, compared with hundreds of thousands of residents, continued. 16 flights a night allowed between 4.30 a.m. – 06.00 a.m. There's a government consultation at the moment and he urges people to get in contact about that.

He mentioned that the impact of the FulhamTraffic scheme had been quite bad on local residents in the neighbouring areas, particularly Chelsea and the inability of people to get through Fulham. The Fulham Council have voted to make it permanent.

He mentioned the successful campaign to save the buses. The Mayor of London had wanted to axe the C3, 11, 14 which would have been disastrous. People power successfully caused a U-turn.

On Battersea Bridge and the Embankment again in conjunction with the Council against aspects, particularly the bus lane. He argued that bus lanes were useful where there were a lot of buses, but Chelsea Embankment had only one single decker bus, the 170 – the frequency of which has recently

been cut – TfL wanted a dedicated bus lane each way which would take half of Chelsea Embankment capacity which he felt was ridiculous. He worked with Cllr. Kemahli and acknowledged there are definitely improvements that need to be made at the Battersea Bridge junction.

Richard Jacques then invited members of the audience to ask questions.

The first was about the failure of either the RBKC or the H & F councillors to talk to each other about the Lots Road South Development as reported by Peter Barratt. Greg Hands was asked in his capacity as our representative to get them to talk to each other, because it was not satisfactory that the only communication was by Mount Anvil who are a major contractor to H & F on the Townmead Road project. It was noted that the same problem existed on the Earl's Court Development.

Mr. Hands said he would use his good offices to bring people together.

Cllr. Kemahli said the H & F council officers work to the Council Leader. The feeling of the RBKC officers is that they're not allowed to engage with us. You have to remember that a scheme of this nature has to be referred to the Mayor of London as well. The GLA is involved not necessarily at the outset but are a factor. He would say the officers are closer than the political leaders are.

The questioner said not to muck about, we need the principal decision makers in RBKC and H & F to talk about the problem that affects the problem in Lots Road South, because the philosophy of H & F is to have as many houses as possible and that has added to the bulk which we have a problem with.

Mr. Hands said this was right. H & F's insistence on all the social housing being on their side has dialled up the number of homes that has to be provided on the whole site.

He said he was very happy to try and bring the two sides together. He said he would like to add that he had a very long track record of opposing...while being very pro housing in general because he thinks London needs more homes...of opposing developments based on height. He is very opposed to some of the tower blocks proposed for Earls Court. Also twenty years ago he was opposed to the very tall buildings that have now been delivered at the Power Station. At the time he asked John Prescott, the minister then in charge about the 39 proposed tower in Lots Road. He said he wasn't paying much attention and waved it through. He believes this should not generally be a tall building part of London. Height should be under reasonable control. He said he would undertake bringing them together.

He will happily write to the councillors concerned and suggest they should get together and would inform Richard Jacques with any results.

He reminded the meeting that as MPs they do not have a role in the planning process. He confirmed he would try and bring people together, particularly when it was in the interests of residents, but wouldn't ordinarily and seek issues to try and bring them together.

A member of the audience asked about how the building of tower blocks could be affected by resisting, because they were built anyway.

Mr. Hands reiterated that planning is a local authority matter. He noted that the height of many buildings had been brought down by campaigning of residents. The towers may be too high, but the threat of them being even higher.

Mr. Hands said in his job you had to campaign to get the best for your residents.

He confirmed that the proposed tower block on the other side of Battersea Bridge was very much on his radar.

Kush Kanodia wanted to ask Mr. Hands for his involvement in his 3 year campaign into reasonable adjustment for disabled people for the Ultra Low Emission Zone. He had been successful in winning

for disabled people receiving DWP disability benefits for up to 280,000 disabled people, with wheelchair adapted vehicles grants extended from 2,000-10,000. Also provision for carers and helpers. The Mayor currently exempts Blue Badge holders – there's approximately a quarter of a million blue badge holders in London and Birmingham and Bristol have replicated the original disability from London for their cleaner air zones, but they haven't replicated any of the recent adjustments. He has written to Mr. Hands' office. Felicity Bouchon has helped the campaign and supported writing to the Dept. of Transport...the Council has really helped. He has managed to get it into the Disability Action Plan in the Cabinet Office. But he wanted to ask Mr. Hands help in supporting the implementation of national policy and legislation to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people for all current and future clean air zones in England.

Mr. Hands said he would be very happy to have another look at that. LTN's and ULEZ...

Mr. Kanodia said LTN was a separate issue. He thinks that Blue Badge holders are not exempt from LTNs.

He asked for a meeting to share his work.

Mr. Hands said he would be very happy to have a meeting. Mr. Hands' team confirmed they had Mr. Kanodia's details.

Mr. Kanodia mentioned a previous successful campaign to abolish car parking payments for disabled people in hospital car parks.

A member of the audience asked if he had a view of the character of this area. It had been an employment zone for some time but this was being whittled away over the years. The character obviously for fashion and design industries. And it's been controversial for the scheme for Lots Road South because of the concern for height; bulk; traffic – and as sacrificial lambs seems to be the character of the area. Does he have a view of that.

Mr. Hands said in general he is a supporter of it being an employment zone. We have some great and successful employers locally – Chelsea Harbour has got a great many places in terms of being a magnet for creative industries – as has Lots Road. He is broadly supportive of it being an area for employment but not necessarily the business of zoning everywhere. He does not think it's the business of going round saying "that must be an employment zone, this must be residential..." but in general he likes to think of himself as supportive of business. He thinks ultimately we should all be encouraging business – because that pays the wages and taxes for public services. In terms of where specifically an employment zone should be something best left to the local authority. But in general very supportive of the business environment around here.

A member of the audience talked about increased utility charges in insurance and said was there anything around the river... and what was he doing about that.

Mr. Hands replied that the biggest impact would be when Tideway comes on stream in the next year or two. It had been a very controversial project. That is going to alleviate flooding risk in London considerably. He says his water bill has gone from £200 to £600. Inflation has certainly not tripled in the last few years. He shares concerns about water bills, and the viability about Thames Water which we don't know about. It is in a difficult position. In terms of what the Government might do, there is not a position on that.

He said the monitoring on discharge is much more acceptable than 20,10, even five years ago. So the fact that data will show there's a lot more discharge doesn't necessarily mean there is a lot more discharge. Clearly there is too much discharge into the Thames, but the tunnel will be a good part of the solution.

But in terms of insurance he would be happy to look at any specifics on that and take it up.

A member of the audience asked how he felt about Ben Coleman MP's comments about him on X Twitter? And was he confident about beating him?

Mr. Hands said he liked to be positive. He takes the view he's been elected five times as MP. He never takes anything for granted. He has been getting up at 5.30 a.m. all that week going to all eight tube stations. Ultimately he believes people will judge him on his record...defending our local area.

He never gets riled about anyone putting something on X or Twitter. It comes with the territory.

A member of the houseboat community said houseboats were a problem nationwide. Maybe something could be typed onto the renters' bill. The Moffats saw the possibility of making a fortune by getting rid of all the owner/occupier boats there and putting their own boats in. If he does that and lets them out he will make a lot more money than by letting the individual moorings to owners. Even though in his licence it says it must grant leases to boatowners – he's taking no notice of that. Once a property developer finds a loophole, that's what they're going to do. You couldn't do that in a block of flats. You can't moor boats anywhere else. So if you can't stay there you would have to pay to get it scrapped. This business model needs to be addressed nationwide.

Mr. Hands said he had not been at the Planning Meeting. He doesn't have rights to speak, but he can be an influence behind the scenes. He felt the RBKC Councillors would be more inclined to pick up a call from him. So in terms of the influence that could be brought to bear on this – and he's glad the councillors made the right decision to go for enforcement.

A motion from Gerard Hargreaves had cross party support. Greg Hands support would be valuable.

Greg Hands said that the specific reference to the Planning Minister was coming. She said that the amendment which was tabled in the House of Lords was defective, but she did commit for the Government looking at how you could make legislation that would be effective. Mr. Hands thought it a sensible commitment to make.

The houseboat owner talked of the urgency, because by the time it was got around to the houseboat owners would all be gone.

Mr. Hands said what he would take away to speak to the Planning is just to see where the work is.

The houseboat owner said it would be lovely if the PLA enforced the original agreement. In the Moffat's agreement he has to grant licences to moor boats there.

Mr. Hands said in his experience the PLA was not a very responsive body. He said it was necessary to see what could be done in terms of a legislative framework that the Planning Commission. He suggested coming back to the houseboat owners.

The houseboat owner said static caravans had more rights than houseboats.

David Waddell said the problem was that legally houseboats were chattels, and fall outside all the provisions that apply to leasehold and freehold property.

The original questioner said nevertheless they all paid.

A questioner asked about policing. He said that there was a rotation of sergeants. The number of officers here were very few and 90% of their time is spent on the Worlds' End Estate leaving the rest of Chelsea Riverside pretty neglected. Paulton Square had had to hire their own security services. He said Mr. Hands had run some very successful and good crime summits and was interested to hear what the results of those had been. Also he wanted Mr. Hands' help in slowing down the sergeant rotation, because they had no time to understand the area or the people understand them, and the police officers are so few in number and so overwhelmed. They spend an awful lot of time being taken out of the area for demonstrations.

Mr. Hands said the good news is that crime overall is down in the last 15 years by about 50% on a like by like basis. A member of the audience said that was because it wasn't reported

Mr. Hands said this was reported crime. The bad news within that is that violent crime in London has risen. Like the Sydney Street hammer attack, the high profile crimes. It has been a problem this year. We do have record numbers of police officers in London, but equally he appreciates that people don't see that on the streets, and the Met. needs to work on getting the police out on the streets. He believes that is the key thing. He said there was another of his crime summits on 7<sup>th</sup> June at a venue on Kings Road and is a chance for all residents to come together and quiz the Met police, a senior councillor from RBKC.

He mentioned teenage phone muggings. He has worked with police down in Fulham with extra patrols in Bishops Park? and has done that in Chelsea as well, north of Sloane Square. He has gone on patrol with the police and made sure police are aware - like deploying mobile CCTV. He is very happy to do that in Chelsea Riverside ward in conjunction with councillors and local police.

The original questioner said the two priorities was retaining the sergeants and increasing resources. He felt it was necessary to pay these people more money and get the right individuals, and to slow down the retention so that the junior management understand the area and the area understands them, rather than this massive merry-go-round. It's also a training programme. He had worked three months here, three months there in terms of gaining experience.

Mr. Hands said it was a very valid point. The previous night the police did a big event in Chelsea Old Town Hall where they introduced all the safe neighbourhood teams right across the Borough. He agrees that rotation is too much. He doesn't know how, as an MP, he can influence the frequency of that rotation. He mentioned Mimsy from Stanley Ward, save the neighbourhood – who has been doing it for a long time. That sort of community police officer I think should be the model, rather than the constant rotation, but he doesn't have any easy answers.

The original questioner asked if he understood that Mr. Hands that he didn't have the appropriate influence to either reduce rotation or to increase the police head count in Chelsea Riverside.

Mr. Hands said he felt that was an HR operational issue for the police summit and raise that question.

The questioner asked if he had any behind the scenes insight?

Mr. Hands said his insight should be that that should be a key priority. He said he was here as a legislator, not to run police deployments or how long policemen stayed in a particular ward. He said they would both agree that the longer the police could stay in a particular ward the better for us. There are record number of police officers in London, back to about 37,000 from the top of his head.

Peter Barratt asked, with Mr. Hands' American connections he had any insight as to whether the Baltimore Bridge might be built before Hammersmith Bridge?

Mr. Hands said it was a disgrace what had happened to Hammersmith Bridge. It has been closed for 5 years and it's quite obvious that Hammersmith and Fulham who own the Bridge don't want to re-open it. TfL's own figures showing the increased traffic going over Putney Bridge, Wandsworth Bridge, even Chelsea, Albert and Battersea Bridge has been significant, as well as Chiswick Bridge. The whole five mile of the Thames is uncrossable. It's not just cars, it's emergency vehicles, buses.

Hammersmith and Fulham have just sat on it and they have done various proposals and studies and so on. Mr. Hands' proposal is to remove ownership from Hammersmith and Fulham to TfL. TfL do have incentives. The Council won't say this, but they think most people in Hammersmith and Fulham don't use the Bridge – it's used by people coming from further out to come into London.

There used to be five bus routes going over that road. It's a major road, the A309. An A road. And TfL the strategic body in London Mr. Hands thinks should take over. The Government has put in money £10m. so far for various studies. But he thinks the key thing to unlocking the problem would be a change of ownership. The Government won't fund the whole thing. It is a disgraceful situation.

Richard Jacques thanked Mr. Hands, and mentioned his fighting for the Chelsea Bun, a campaign as someone with a sweet tooth he was wholeheartedly in favour of. He thanked Mr. Hands for dealing with so many wide issues.

The meeting closed at 18.10.