

## ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

**CABINET – 26 APRIL 2007**

### REPORT BY THE BOROUGH VALUER

#### DISPOSAL OF CHELSEA CREEK

This report seeks Cabinet approval to the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in part of the tidal part of Chelsea Creek on the terms that have been provisionally agreed.

**FOR DECISION**

#### **1. HISTORY**

- 1.1 Chelsea Creek was a small river known as Counter's Creek which emerged into the River Thames close to the location of the present day creek. In 1828 the route of Counter's Creek was widened and straightened to form the Kensington Canal which ran inland for two miles. The canal was beset by problems with silting and mud making navigation difficult, especially at low tide (see plan).
- 1.2 In 1859 an extension of the railway south from Kensington resulted in the closure of a part of the canal for use as a track bed. Only a short stretch of canal remained and continued to carry traffic principally to the gasworks at Imperial Wharf until 1967.
- 1.3 On 14 June 1982 the Council purchased the freehold interest of the section of the creek south of the King's Road to the river Thames from British Waterways Board. Shortly afterwards that part of the creek between lying to the west of Lots road was infilled to provide storage accommodation for the Council's building contractors (see shaded area on plan).
- 1.4 This part of the former creek has now been safeguarded to provide

space for contractors site huts and plant storage for the Chelsea/Hackney London Underground scheme due to commence in 2015.

- 1.5 The remainder of the creek is a man-made canal and remains tidal and is 357m long from its mouth on the River Thames to its end adjacent to the West London Railway Line. The creek is approximately 25m wide, widening to 37m at its mouth and narrowing to 12m under Lots Road Bridge. The creek extends to the west side of Lots Road Bridge to form a basin.
- 1.6 The Council's freehold interest extends to the bed of the creek only.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON ADJOINING LAND**

- 2.1 Circadian Limited, a joint venture development company formed by Taylor Woodrow Capital Developments (TWCD) and Hutchinson Whampoa Property (HWP) have obtained planning permission for a residential development with some commercial and community use on a former industrial site extending either side of the tidal part of Chelsea Creek and includes the former Lots Road Power Station site and the land to the south of the creek located in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
- 2.2 Recently, HWP has purchased the remaining part of Circadian Limited that it did not own from TWCD and owns 100% of Circadian Limited.
- 2.3 As a result of an objection from the Environment Agency a number of conditions were placed on the planning permission, including:
  - i) the proposals shall not result in a net loss of tidal flood storage volume
  - ii) no development shall be commenced until a scheme for the enhancement of the riverside to include residential terraces alongside the creek has been approved by the planning authority
- 2.4 Following discussions with English Nature, the Environment Agency, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham a design scheme for the revitalisation of Chelsea Creek has been agreed which features a fully tidal solution.
- 2.5 The proposed design involves a reduction in the height of the creek walls and the formation of a series of terraces within the creek,

together with a 10m wide channel in the base of the creek. The terraces will provide a substrate, upon which intertidal plants can be established and will provide a vertical transition of a range of habitats.

- 2.6 The landscape design of the proposed development focuses on the "Creekside Park" which aims to revitalise Chelsea Creek and its connection with the River Thames. It is envisaged to incorporate the remodelled creek as a central feature. The walls of the creek will be developed into a series of planted, hard-paved and gravelled terraces form to shallow gradients with each performing a distinct function in terms of pedestrian access, planting and ecological value. The upper terrace will provide continuous pedestrian access and will link the creek with the River Thames Walkway and the Chelsea Harbour/Lots Road junction. The path terrace will allow increased access to the waterside.

### **3. CHELSEA CREEK BASIN**

- 3.1 This comprises that part of the creek that lies west of the Lots Road bridge and south of what now is the Car Pound site.
- 3.2 The current state of this site can only be described as dilapidated and an eyesore, the current state of which will become more prominent as the surrounding area is developed.
- 3.3 It is not recommended that the freehold interest in this property is sold because:
- i) it is not part of the curtilage of the former Lots Road Power Station development site
  - ii) It may have value to the Council as landowner in the future as part of the adjoining site to the north which is owned by the Council
  - iii) it may have value to the Council as a recreational or ecological centre in the future
  - iv) Any sale of the remainder of the tidal part of Chelsea Creek would have a reserved access right to the Basin from the River Thames
- 3.4 However, it would be possible to grant a licence to the developer to include the Basin in the Chelsea Creek revitalisation works.

#### **4. TERMS PROVISIONALLY AGREED**

4.1 See Confidential Appendix Part B.

#### **5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL, PERSONNEL AND/OR DIVERSITY ISSUES**

5.1 The Group Finance Manager, Corporate Services, has been consulted.

5.2 The Director of Law and Administration has been consulted and the legal implications are set out in the report.

5.3 There are no personnel issues.

5.4 There are no diversity issues.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATION**

6.1 The Cabinet is recommended to approve the sale of the Council's freehold interest in Chelsea Creek on the terms provisionally agreed and detailed in Confidential Appendix Part B.

**Ian Doolan**  
**Borough Valuer**

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DATE: 13/02/2007 MAP REFERENCE: TQ2677SW

Grey Shading - Current RBKC Ownership  
Cross Hatched Area - Freehold Interest To Be Sold  
Hatched Area - To Be Licensed For Revitalisation

