

## **NOTES ON DRAFT BW STRATEGY FOR BRENTFORD**

The Strategy document introduces the intent as “*reflecting the vision of the partners and stakeholders in the strategy*” [pg 2]. As we are all undeniably stakeholders in the area, this should be strongly emphasised to BW. Without significant input from the Brentford community, the assertion quoted will be a sham. It is a matter for grave criticism that we should be approached only at this late stage, and anyone with ideas and suggestions outside of the published draft at this stage should ensure their contribution by forwarding them to [waterways@brentfordcc.org.uk](mailto:waterways@brentfordcc.org.uk) - no matter whether the comments and suggestions are or are not directly responsive to this document.

It is further unfortunate that the research by the team responsible has, as a result of failing to consult with knowledgeable locals, fallen into factual errors in their introductory pages on Brentford’s history. It is signally indicative when they even fail to understand where the Old and New Brentfords are actually located! [p6]

There is, however, a great deal of thought and effort evident, which should be acknowledged and worked with, although, while the facts may sometimes be correctly reported, the aspirations are necessarily reflective of a major land developer’s profit motive – necessarily so as BW are the single largest riparian landowner here of undeveloped riverside with all of Commerce Road to thrust upon us as recently lodged with Hounslow in outline form. The Strategy has been formulated with both the ISIS development in mind, and that of any future prospective High Street developer.

The resource Review on page 10 should be analysed carefully. Some things are unnecessarily slanted – e.g. the quoted 4 hour tide window is simply a blanket imposition by BW [and, moreover, does not apply 24/7, it only applies within “normal” working hours as they dictate]. At high spring tides the “window” could be extended considerably, and a suggestion should be made for the lock to be manned and accessible at all times. In the same vein, BW should be called upon to re-instate the self-opening sluice gates at Johnson’s Island with an accompanying swing bridge to replace the temporary fixed bridge. This would allow access at all times at suitable tide heights without the requirement of attending personnel. The comment on the impact of the Hanwell flight is a sad perspective – having locks to traverse adds greatly to the interest of any canal trip, without which cruises could easily become boring. The various locks should be touted as a desirable feature not an impediment. The greatest impediment to navigation between the Thames and the non-tidal section is actually the High Street road bridge. Nothing can be done about that and, once again, the nature of the tidal hydrodynamics should be utilised as an educational bonus of practical interest.

Page 12 is another curate’s egg, with muddled facts. There are at the moment for example, no long term moorings occupying the offline facilities of Ridgeways Wharf! [thanks to they and their partners efforts]. Combined with later plans, it is odd that they promote “new” moorings e.g. alongside Marvin Architectural, when those have been in place for years. Appropriate visitor mooring ARE important, as we emphasised during the first planning battle with ISIS.

Alternatives to the Strategy suggestions should be forthcoming. BW have in fact improved matters around the Gauging Lock considerably over the past 5 years.

Page 20 deserves a close look for the listed “structures with heritage value”. Hopefully these could be added to, especially in the light of the Brentford High Street vision.

Page 23 speaks of abandoned allotments. Inquiry should be made in this respect, as Hounslow have a long waiting list for these, and it is highly improbable that this statement is true.

Page 24 is another ill-informed piece of reporting. Inundation of the towpath occurs at all very high tides even without rain events upstream. The same applies to headroom under the High Street bridge – any tide sufficient to raise levels by 18” or more [frequent at spring tides] will result in inadequate headroom, the situation is not confined to “times of flood”.

Page 28 speaks of under-utilised waterway arms and basins. Indeed there are, through the fault of no less than BW themselves, but it is heartening to see a sea-change in attitude, if that is genuine. Care needs to be taken when reading of characterisations that BW impose unilaterally – the overhanging warehouses are not intrinsically redundant, they have been deliberately made so. That approach needs to be examined in the context of any vision for the area that is not hidebound by the property developer profit-only drive.

Page 30 should be looked at in for more detail than is evidenced. This deals with the important context of national planning guidance, much of which is excellent, but which is not discussed in other than very general terms here. That is something that should definitely be corrected.

Page 31 deals with regional and local planning policies, embracing the London Plan BRN’s; the BAAP and the High Street Community vision. This is an opportunity to bring to the fore all the relevant policies so they can be examined and applied. That has not been done and is one of the greatest failings of this draft. We need to see detailed policies and aspirations examined, and specifics as to how those can be applied.

Page 32 deals with freight potential in a curiously guarded and ambivalent way. The proposal to identify “nodes” for transshipment interchanges is welcomed, but the particulars and extent need examining also. In light of the damning evidence given by BW to the Planning Inspectorate and the High Court, a philosophical dichotomy is inevitable Ideas here would be most welcome and the vacillation polarised.

Page 49 is an example of mapped out details suggested, some of which are poor in their omissions and elsewhere plainly bad in what they positively suggest. For example any form of lock-gate across Ridgeway’s entrance is going to lead to even greater silting than it presently suffers – the basin should be dredged if permanent water level is to be maintained as it is on the outside – it is all the same river. Raising the level permanently likewise will inhibit the greatest feature of the site for boat repairs, which have always relied on the tide height differential as the most ecologically sound method of “beaching” boats for hull work on the tidal grid. Apropos of that of course, it is notable that no mention or suggestion is

made regarding refurbishment of the boatyard for such purpose – directly contrary to the BAAP that is supposedly endorsed.

A final note for consideration and comment has to do with page 51, which should concern us all. While the suggestion of increasing visitor moorings is welcome, they should utilise the otherwise sterile industrial land that has been bulldozed on the Commerce Road site for these. It is entirely unacceptable to remove a considerable portion of our public green space in Robin Grove for the purpose instead! At the first Commerce Road Inquiry we criticised the too-small “finger docks” that took away visitor mooring space for insufficient value. A greater area given over to a visitor’s marina and waterways centre would greatly enhance Brentford as a waterways destination and assist with a special flavour to surrounding development.

The above are notes arising from a quick glance through this comprehensive document. If we are to promote an informed and useful contribution from the Brentford community then everyone should be encouraged to download the Draft and see what could be improved or added to in a way that reflects Brentford’s aspirations, not those of a disinterested team working for a party with limited focus.

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