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The Planning Inspectorate

**Ref Application by Thames Water for the Thames Tideway Tunnel**

**My unique reference number LR15991**

1 December 2013

This letter is a further submission to my previous objections to the Thames Tideway Tunnel project and the selection of Carnwath Road as a main drive site.

I would like to make additional comments after attending the Open Floor Hearing and understand we have an opportunity for a final say, something which has not been widely publicised or understood.

I have been a resident and owner of property at the Piper Building for more than 13 years, and live here with my husband and two young children. The Piper Building is mere meters away from the proposed site, Carnwath Road Riverside.

Along with my fellow Piper Building residents and members of the local community we have been actively engaged over the past years challenging the project as a whole and in particular the selection of Carnwath Road as a main drive site. I have progressively become increasingly disillusioned with the process and politics as it seems the local community has little or no impact on the outcome of the decisions being made for us. I hope you prove me wrong.

Even before the project had been granted planning permission and works have started, the effects on my family and my immediate community has been adverse. The prospect of such a major infrastructure project running for 6-8 years, of which 24/7 for 3-4 years, has been immense. Despite any proposed mitigation or compensation (of which we still have no concrete information), the project will have an adverse impact on the health, well-being and quality of life of residents such as my family. Not to mention the financial aspect with loss of property value and threat of being stuck with negative equity as we are unable to sell with the blighted conditions, limiting our options as a young family with an uncertain future. It has been very time consuming and stressful participating in

the various consultations and submissions. We are very anxious of the outcome of the final decision (which is another year away) and how it will affect our life and young children – and this is before the actual noise, light and dust pollution begins and the already bad traffic gridlock comes to a complete halt.

I strongly oppose the use of Carnwath Road for the proposed works as it will cause irreversible adverse impact on the health, well-being and quality of life of the densely populated community. The selection, especially compared to the previous preferred site of Barn Elms, goes against plain common sense. The threat of the negative impact on such a thriving community of thousands of residents, with close proximity of sheltered and disabled housing and schools, should outweigh any other site selection criteria in Thames Water methodology or your own considerations.

Yours sincerely,

Kirstin Sittard-Contaroudas

On behalf of the whole Contaroudas family

## **In further detail**

### **Carnwath Road vs. Barn Elms**

Having read countless literature, done extensive research and attended several of Thames Water drop-in sessions, I cannot understand how it could have been a fair, democratic process to select Carnwath Road as the preferred site. On Thames Water's website they state that 'Carnwath Road Riverside is our preferred site because it is a brownfield site and the presence of wharves at this site combined with the width of the River Thames at this point would allow the use of larger barges to remove material excavated during construction of the main tunnel. There would be much less conflict with the recreational users of the River Thames than at Barn Elms.'

Firstly, it is misleading to call Carnwath Road as brownfield/industrial/derelict. Whilst Hurlingham and Whiffen Wharf have been kept deliberately empty by its owners speculating on high value residential development, it is in the middle of a densely populated residential area, closely bounded by mixed housing and currently home to a thriving commercial business park providing some 150 jobs.

Secondly, to select a site above another as it would create less conflict with recreational users of the River Thames, is socially unjust seeing the massive conflict the other site would create to residents and businesses! Surely Thames Water cannot justify putting recreational use above people's everyday lives and livelihood! Or putting ecology of a green space such as Barn Elms above the impact on health, well-being and quality of life of residents at Carnwath Road! Ecology can recover but the impact on people will be irreversible.

Reviewing Thames Water's own published site selection criteria, I believe Carnwath Road is far less suitable for construction than their previously preferred site, Barn Elms. The financial cost (to Thames Water and its customers) and the human cost (to the local residential community affected) of using Carnwath Road are both far greater. Aside from the fact that part of the site is currently a safeguarded wharf (but one with no infrastructure), that there are no open space designators and that it allows access to larger barges, there is no upside in my view of using Carnwath Road versus Barn Elms.

The issue of urban green space – an emotive issue and this issue accounts for only 2 out of Thames Water 24 site selection indicators – is obviously important but in case of Barn Elms the area under threat is a very small proportion of the recreational space (a site of 18,000m<sup>2</sup> would take up to only 1.5% of the contiguous green area). But to assign it a disproportionately or overridingly high value over all other site selection indicators is socially unjust and with no legislative legitimacy. Any notional value assigned to green space must be set against the value of the daily, permanent quality of life reduction for up to seven years of a significant-sized local residential community. The lives of all residents next to Carnwath Road, of whom there are at least 1,200 within 175 metres, would be blighted in several ways for many years by needless noise and vibration, residential disruption, construction dust, loss of property value, traffic congestion and pollution. The impact of these would be particularly serious for those in the several social or sheltered housing blocks bordering the site and the junior school with 320 pupils within 90 metres of the site. Thames Water must place due weight on the number of and demonstrable concerns of those people whose daily domestic lives, or livelihoods, would be most badly and consistently affected.

Reviewing Carnwath Road Riverside against Thames Water community section under the site selection criteria, I fail to understand how it could have become their preferred site, especially as community is such an important category. So looking in detail against their assessment criteria:

- Proximity to sensitive receptors. Having looked up the definition of sensitive receptors within environmental documentation for councils who implement environment control, the receptors vary by disturbance – noise, dust, odour, air particulates, vibration etc. Carnwath Road produces ALL of these. There are none at Barn Elms.
  - Disabled residents are regarded as the most important of sensitive receptors especially when they have no ability to escape the various forms of disturbance. The Carnwath Road site has purpose built sheltered housing abutting it! There are a high number of people with asthma and other serious conditions
  - Children are another important group of sensitive receptors. And as a mother of two young children this is what concerns me the most. There are numerous families living the various residential housing in the immediate area of the site, as well as two nursery schools, a child's playground and numerous schools. In particular one school, Thomas's is 90m from the site in clear view with 324 pupils aged 4 to 11
  - The aged and infirm are also sensitive receptors. The Carnwath Road site is surrounded by sheltered housing for the aged and infirm, including a drop-in centre for these residents
  - Residential housing is a sensitive receptor. Carnwath Road, as repeated stated, is surrounded by residential housing (see below under social considerations)
  - Barn Elms has a primary school close by but well outside the significant impact zone. There is evidence that the distance to the Wetland Centre is enough not to disturb it, and the site is much further away from any residences, which are also shielded by a thick stand of trees.
- Social considerations
  - At Carnwath Road, more than 1,200 people live within 175 metres of the site. Within one metre or less from the site is housing which will be impossible to shield from the construction work – on one side of the site is a block of 16 apartments; on the other side a second block of 66 flats of a housing association development build especially for disabled residents. Within 90m of the site and with unobstructed sight are 36 sheltered housing units with 37 vulnerable residents
  - Barn Elms playing fields are popular with locals and occasional users, but only 1.5% of it would be used for the works. Again, some residences are close by – and only in one corner – about 30 to 40m and shielded by a thick strand of trees
- Economic considerations
  - At Carnwath Road, Thames Water would need to do a CPO of Carnwath Industrial Estate, thereby forcing the current business tenants to close and mean a loss of 135

jobs. The proprietors and employees may seek legal redress. Numerous other local businesses would be affected and might close/relocate meaning loss of lease and further loss of jobs, and potential legal redress – be it Energie Fitness Club opposite the site, Hitchcock and Kings etc. Adjacent to the site is The Piper Building, with 77 apartments and whose south wing is 10-15m from the site. These are private dwellings whose owners would suffer loss of property value and will be seeking redress under the voluntary compensation schemes, or seek group legal redress should the voluntary compensation scheme not prove adequate

- Barn Elms there are none known
- Health considerations
  - At Carnwath Road, according to our local survey (of which I understand you have a copy from another local resident, Ann Rosenberg), 16% of all residents living within 175m have a health condition that would be adversely affected by the construction. As stated above, there are a large number of infirm, disabled and immobile residents adjacent to the site. We understand the soil below the concreted Hurlingham Wharf may be contaminated, so there will be extra risk of toxicity of any dust raised during drilling or clearing of the site, even if the site is warehoused. The neighbourhood is already badly congested with traffic. Thames Water additional projected 33 lorries a day and the likely increased standing traffic, pose pollution worries, in particular for children. In additional, I have a health and safety concern of this increased traffic for the school children on their way to and from school, as in particular pupils from Hurlingham and Chelsea school on Peterborough Road come down and cross over Wandsworth Bridge.
  - At Barn Elms, the site is in a middle of an area used for playing fields, so care would need to be taken to ensure that dust did not cover the fields
- Equality considerations
  - The Carnwath Road site is at the heart of a residential area where people have no choice but to suffer the consequences of the site. The selection of this site is particularly poor choice given that it is adjacent to several blocks of specifically build for the disabled and inform. Many of the residents surrounding the site have limited mobility. The Council has confirmed that there is no available disabled or sheltered housing in the borough to which they can move these residents. This no matter what level of site impact mitigation Thames Water would be able to provide, all these special needs, vulnerable residents would not only be ‘trapped’ right next to a construction site which would significantly reduce their quality of life
  - The Barn Elms site is within a free access recreational zone and is an important facility for West London. But only a very small proportion of the whole of the recreational area (less than 2%) and of the playing fields (about 8%) will be taken up by the site. As opposed to Carnwath Road, the people walking their dogs in the fields

or using the playing fields are able bodied. They have a choice as to whether or not to use Barn Elms. The disabled living in Carnwath Road have no choice

From a personal perspective, if Carnwath Road was to be selected, I believe living in The Piper Building with a young family would become untenable with works taking place for seven years and at times 24/7. Our quality of life would be hugely impacted. Part of our apartment block is 10-15m away from the site. The sound proofing of this building is not adequate, and due to the L-shaped formation of the main wing facing the construction site, and the predominant western winds, it would mean that we are exposed to the construction dust and noise. As the building is well insulated and as the residential units have no air conditioning, windows need to remain open. We currently already suffer noise and light pollution from the limited activity currently on Hurlingham and Whiffen Wharf. Any mitigation to replace our windows and provide air conditioning to each apartment would be extremely challenging, disruptive and costly. Thames Water seem to have partially admitted the adverse impact of the works, suggesting that they might need to relocate local residents during peak works. I fail to understand how this would work in reality.

If despite all the evidence, the selection of Carnwath Road over Barn Elms is upheld, I think the decision would be perceived as political – effectively placing a higher value on what in fact is a very small area of green space than on the quality of life of at least 1,200 people.

So far I have focussed my letter on the selection of the site. I could continue to write an equally long letter about the actual need for the Thames Tunnel and viable alternatives, which could be compliant with EU directives and less costly and disruptive to Londoners. I will not go into these except to say that I understand there is merit in a two drive shaft project or green alternative to deal with the problem – which in essence is a problem of storm water, not sewage.