

# NOOKS and CORNERS

**T**HE proposal to build a large hotel and other accommodation on the south bank of the Thames opposite Hampton Court Palace was described by David Starkey as not only "a national scandal but an international scandal" (*Eyes 1033 & 1231*).

Yet despite the opposition of Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) and the vigorous campaign of the Hampton Court Rescue Campaign, Elmbridge borough council gave planning permission for the latest scheme in June, after the developer, Gladeale, agreed to pay £3m as "planning gain" under a section 106 agreement.

The hotel is to be built in front of the railway station, designed in a rather more tactful Tudor style by Sir William Tite in 1849. Flats and accommodation for the Star & Garter Home are also proposed on the former railway land at the side of the station – part of a flood plain which last flooded only six years ago.

But there is still hope. A legal challenge has been launched by Keith Garner, an independent architect who once acted as a consultant to Historic Royal Palaces. He went to the high court when he found HRP was not planning to bring a legal challenge despite the effect this gratuitous development will have on the setting of the Tudor palace.

Garner claims Elmbridge council failed properly to consider the impact of the scheme on Hampton Court Palace and failed to follow procedures regarding flood protection. He also argues that the hotel site, once occupied by a long-derelict pub called the *Jolly Boatman*, should be landscaped as an open space and that any new development should be further west.

So controversial a scheme should, of course, have been called in for public inquiry. HRP asked for one, but was not supported by English Heritage which performed one of its now familiar *voltes-face* and failed to oppose the development last year, although five years earlier the chief executive, Simon Thurley, rightly called for the site to be acquired by public subscription and landscaped. (CABE, needless to say, is in favour of anything new.) Ian Taylor, the local Tory MP for Esher and Walton, wrote to the then secretary of state for communities and local government, Hazel Blears, urging her not to call in the application. (Mr Taylor, incidentally, is standing down following the revelation that he claimed £23,000 for a second home in central London which was used for business purposes and by his son).

The involvement of the Star & Garter Home also helped ease the grant of planning permission, although questions still need to be answered about the unpopular decision to abandon its magnificent purpose-built home on Richmond Hill and to move disabled servicemen to a site liable to flooding (*Eye 1230*).

And then there is the architecture. The first

design for the hotel was by Allie & Morrison, but they were dropped in favour of Quinlan & Francis Terry who propose something tasteful and Georgian. There was hope that Francis Terry might be a more interesting architect than his father, who has made a lucrative career producing inept and derivative Palladian mansions for millionaires. But the design for Hampton Court suggests otherwise.



The Quinlan & Francis Terry proposal

Here was an opportunity to design a grand Classical front facing the Thames, to vie with Wren's additions to the palace. The Queen's Hotel at Cheltenham or the Regent Hotel at

Leamington Spa come to mind. But no: all Terry *père et fils* can come up with is a brick façade like a terrace of ordinary Georgian houses, articulated not with pilasters but by prominent down pipes. The design is pedestrian, unimaginative and crass. It should not be built.

*ALTHOUGH the city they misgovern is home to the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television and has been declared the "City of Film" by UNESCO, the party political dinosaurs who control Bradford metropolitan district council are determined to demolish the Odeon, one of the last Art Deco supercinemas in Britain (Eye 1217). This is despite strong public opposition – 2,000 letters of objection were sent in but somehow mislaid – and the campaign by BORG (the Bradford Odeon Rescue Group).*

*The cinema is now in the neglectful hands of Yorkshire Forward, a regional development agency based in Leeds, which wants to build a shopping centre and offices on the site. The council claims no other buyer could be found, but when BORG found one who was ready to pay £3m, the offer was declined. Other lies told by the council include the presence of asbestos in the building, which has been used to keep people out; yet the asbestos was removed in the 1980s.*

*On 23 September the seven councillors charged with deciding the building's future had a tour of it and were minded to vote 5-2 to keep it. Then a solicitor told them how much it would cost if a thwarted Yorkshire Forward were to sue. They then voted 4-3 in favour of demolition. Yorkshire Forward subsequently says it would not have sued.*

*The people of Bradford have been betrayed by their council (again), and by English Heritage, which has U-turned over the merits of the Odeon [Eye 1242]. In protest Bradfordians have no option but to take to the streets (which they did last month) and to the internet (see [www.savetheodden.wordpress.com](http://www.savetheodden.wordpress.com)).*

'Piloti'

## YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

It all sounds very exciting!

I wouldn't go that far

No, nor would I. Near Liverpool, isn't it?



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