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Thames Tunnel

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Potential major construction in your area

Open letter to communities surrounding King's
Stairs Gardens and Chambers Wharf

February 2011

Dear Mr Mitchell,

Important update on the proposed Thames Tunnel - Chambers Wharf and King's Stairs Gardens

Drop-in sessions: Beormund Community Centre, 177 Abbey St, London SE1 2AN, Friday 11 March (10am–7pm) and Saturday 12 March (10am–4pm).

As you may know, on 14 January 2011 we completed our phase one public consultation for the proposed Thames Tunnel.

This major project is urgently needed to help tackle the 39 million tonnes of untreated sewage which overflows into the River Thames in an average year, when London's Victorian sewerage network becomes overloaded.

In phase one of the public consultation, which started on 13 September 2010, we invited feedback on our initial proposals for the tunnel's construction and operation. We highlighted our preferred route and sites for the project, including the proposed use of **King's Stairs Gardens** (Rotherhithe) as a major construction site.

Although the feedback facility for comments is now closed, detailed information on the background to the project is still available on our consultation website:

www.thamestunnelconsultation.co.uk

During phase one consultation an important change of circumstances emerged relating to **Chambers Wharf** (Bermondsey). Prior to the launch of our public consultation, we were aware that developers had secured planning approval for housing on this site. This had led us to discount it as a possible alternative to King's Stairs Gardens, as the developers had indicated work was expected to begin on site by summer 2010. We have agreed with the 14 local authorities potentially directly affected by the project that the tunnel's construction should not involve demolishing housing. With construction of the tunnel not due to begin until 2013, we had no power to block the Chambers Wharf development.

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The news in November 2010 that the owners of Chambers Wharf had put the property up for sale meant that we needed to review our strategy.

As a result, I can confirm that in conjunction with the property developers St James Group Ltd (part of the Berkeley Group) we have bought Chambers Wharf. This ensures that we can consider the site in detail as a possible alternative to King's Stairs Gardens.

Crucially, this process will involve having a dialogue with communities in the Chambers Wharf area so that we fully understand any concerns they might have. We are holding drop-in sessions for local Chambers Wharf residents and any other interested parties on **11 - 12 March** (see details overleaf). Our project team will be available at these sessions to answer questions and take note of any issues raised.

Ahead of the next phase of our public consultation for the project, due to start in September 2011, we will need to carry out technical assessments to understand the suitability of the Chambers Wharf site, similar to those already in hand for King's Stairs Gardens. These assessments will take place in parallel with our ongoing work to review all the project-wide feedback we received during phase one public consultation. We will publish our phase one public consultation feedback report this spring.

I must stress that this does not mean that we have discounted King's Stairs Gardens as a possible construction site for the Thames Tunnel. Our action is a prudent, responsible measure to make sure we are able to take forward whichever site proves to be the most appropriate, following our detailed process for identifying the most suitable sites. (This *Site Selection Methodology* is available on our website).

If Chambers Wharf proves not to be the most viable site for any reason, we would exercise our option to sell the land to St James Group Ltd.

The next phase of consultation will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on our updated plans for the whole project. We have made no decisions on what the preferred sites will be at that point.

The challenge we have is to ensure we meet the environmental objectives of the scheme at a cost affordable for our customers, while also keeping disruption to a minimum.

Yours sincerely



Phil Stride
Head of London Tideway Tunnels, Thames Water