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'Weir furious'

Hotel threatens legal action over 'noisy' Ham Hydro plan

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The Lensbury has threatened legal action against Teddington and Ham Hydro's weir plans, claiming noise would spell an end to the hotel's lucrative summer weddings and put it out of business.

There were three hours of impassioned pleas for and against the plans and councillors changed their mind on the proposals three times before deferring for more noise assessment to be done.

Richmond Council's planning committee was recommended to approve plans for three reverse archimedean screw turbines and there was delight in Clarendon Hall when councillors initially voted five to four against.

Moments later cheers and applause turned to shouts and muttered dismay, when councillors were unable to agree a reason to refuse.

The committee, which met on Wednesday, April 15, was asked to vote on planning officers' recommendation to grant permission, but with a condition of a new noise assessment.

The application was refused for a second time and, more than three hours after the meeting began, councillors deferred the application.



Marriage rows: The Lensbury believes the Teddington Weir proposal could ruin its appeal as a wedding venue

Lacy Curtis-Ward, chief executive of the four-star Lensbury hotel and leisure facility, made an emotional speech urging the committee to refuse the plans.

She said: "This subject would have been covered in an individual impact assessment if one had been carried out. The planning committee comments the impact on the Lensbury is not considerable but this is simply not true. It is a highly noise sensitive site.

"£400,000 of summer weddings will simply not happen. The Lensbury cannot take this hit and Teddington local businesses would suffer in our absence."

The committee was also told the Lensbury, which is "currently breaking even", would submit a judicial review if the proposal was approved.

Councillor Gareth Elliott, speaking as an interested party, urged the committee to think about the impact of noise on the Teddington Studios site, which is due to be developed into luxury flats and was given "no consideration whatsoever".

He said: "Noise travels greatly along water and this area is very flat. It does not matter if it is 200 yards, the noise is going to go quite a long way along this waterfront.

The waterfront is going to be opened up once again when this development is built."

An Environment Agency spokesman said noise would only be heard at a distance of 10m to 15m, with water flowing through the weir masking noise 25m to 30m away.

Flood risk was also raised as a concern, with objectors noting the scheme was based on the 2010 figures for flood risk to properties near the riverside.

Ian McNuff said: "The documentation states the flood risk is small but why on Earth should I accept any risk at all? You should not approve it based on a dodgy dossier of evidence."

Members of Teddington and Ham Hydro said it would be a local asset, would provide much-needed clean energy and would not be detrimental to river users.

Chas Warlow, director at Teddington and Ham Hydro, said: "I crossed there today and walked over Teddington footbridge and imagined the turbines in operation.

"I put myself in the place of a person who was coming across the footbridge and seeing this scheme for the first time.

"I sincerely believe anyone seeing it for the first time would be impressed. They would be even more impressed to know it came from the community."

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