
Letters

TO THE FORE

In your leader in AJ 14.08.08, you weigh up the competing merits of the Allies and Morrison and Quinlan & Francis Terry schemes proposed for the site near Hampton Court Palace. You conclude that it doesn't matter which the local authority chooses: 'Both architects are just doing background.'

This is a misreading of the situation. With Ditton Field and Cigarette Island Park, this site forms the parkland setting of Hampton Court Palace. Excluding William Tite's listed Hampton Court Station and an engine shed (long gone), the site has never had buildings on it. Currently, visitors arriving at the station enjoy views across the river to the west front of the palace, a situation that would be improved if the station car park (put there in the 1960s on former railway sidings) was removed.

Network Rail, with developer Gladedale, wishes to foreclose this attractive possibility by building on the riverside and the station car park, some 150m or so from the palace itself. As well as blocking views to the palace, the new buildings will overlook the Pond and Privy Gardens. These, of

course, were always intended to be private gardens, and are something that visitors to the palace can still experience today. Gladedale's hotel, Modernist or Classical, will spoil this unique feature.

So the schemes by Allies and Morrison and Quinlan & Francis Terry are very much 'foreground' buildings, and are entirely misconceived, whichever style they are clothed in. Is it really the case that English Heritage (whose chief executive, Simon Thurley, was formerly curator at Hampton Court Palace) has withdrawn its objection? Historic Royal Palaces certainly remains opposed to the scheme, as is the Hampton Court Rescue Campaign.

The site should probably have been bought years ago (perhaps with millennium funds) to prevent harmful development of this kind. It is very much to be hoped, therefore, that Elmsbridge Borough Council will recognise the folly of allowing significant development here.

Keith Garner, London SW11

NOT FOR CARS

I'm grateful to the AJ for including my comments in defence of John Madin's