



London Borough of Hounslow

Stakeholder Forum April 23rd

Approximately 60 people attended

Jura Consultants made a presentation of the options appraisal and questions were invited from the stakeholder Forum.

Some present wanted to give an opinion or statement rather than a question but with regard to the limited time available we tried to restrict this to questions only.

Opinions given ranged from the thought that this was *a very credible and well thought out solution* to those who thought selling parts of a public park was just *'not acceptable'*.

The following are a note of questions asked. Jura Consultants, Richard Gill and members of the Stakeholders Forum made the replies.

Consultation methodology

Could the length of consultation be extended?

The current Consultation from June to the end of August aims to explain the need for action to be taken, the costs and benefits of each option and the consequences if no action is taken. It hopes to help shape what the next step will be. Any project developed will have further opportunities for more consultation and participation.

Addendum: Subsequently the consultation was extended to the end of September

Is a questionnaire sufficient for proper feedback?

We would hope to elicit a response to the options appraisal through the questionnaire. An analysis of the results may require further consultation. It is proposed that the results of the questionnaire be displayed in an exhibition through which we might capture more memories and emotions of the park.

Addendum: Subsequently the questionnaire had a free text section added to enable comments suggestions and opinions that could not be accommodated within questionnaire format.

Has any value management been considered?

The Options Appraisal has been carried out in line with the Green Book guidance. It does cover aspects of value management i.e. achieving a balance between the needs of the stakeholders and the resources need

to satisfy them. This will be further explored during the consultation period and ultimately should be debated by bodies such as the Stakeholders forum and the governing body of the park.

Why do the press use scare tactics? What controls do we have on the press?

An aim of the consultation is to ensure that the correct information is available. We have no control over the press but would hope to release information to them on a regular basis to keep the public informed about the project.

Will we ignore a petition not to build on the park?

No. A petition will be considered along with any other comments that the public make during the consultation period.

Options Available

Are you sure you have looked at all the options?

Yes. The Options Appraisal brief asked the consultants to look at all possible options that were in line with the CMP. We hope to make the Options Appraisal available at the end of May for comment and would welcome any input.

The shortlist also includes the 'Do nothing' or 'Continue as existing option' so that the benefits and consequences are clear if no other option is taken.

Can we have the costs of the do nothing (or continue as is) option?

It is impossible to accurately predict the costs of this option. The costs will depend on whether repairs are made to the buildings and landscape. If repairs are not made soon these costs will increase with an increasing likelihood of further consequential or unforeseen repairs. There is currently an insufficient budget to carry out the required repairs so a choice between meeting increasingly large and unexpected bills, or accepting the decline of heritage and visitor facilities will have to be made at some point. Neither situation would encourage future governance arrangements, partnerships or investment.

What would it cost to deal with the repairs only?

A definitive answer would require detailed surveys, which were not part of this study. Previous surveys undertaken on the two mansions and previous experience suggests about a third of the restoration costs will be spent on repairs. This in itself would not provide a suitable option as it would not provide a sustainable use for the buildings.

Is it possible to save the park but let the buildings go?

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is the touchstone of this Options Appraisal. No option should set out to have less than we have

now and options, which do not secure the heritage assets, are not considered viable.

The CMP makes it clear that the significance and value of Gunnersbury lies in the number of listed buildings and richness of landscape features. This supports a wide range of visitor attractions and events. A decline in the significance would not encourage investment leading to a decline of facilities and value. The major grant-giving bodies would not support this approach.

Why were we not consulted about the CMP?

There were public meetings and an exhibition with a questionnaire to consult about the CMP. Articles were placed in '*around Ealing*' and '*Hounslow matters*' to advertise this.

Are the stables worth saving?

The stables are listed buildings Grade II and Grade II* and are irreplaceable. Their loss would make Gunnersbury less significant. Enough of them can still be saved if we act soon and much partnership funding may depend on their being part of a holistic solution. In the option recommended by Jura they also form part a vital of the jigsaw of new uses that will secure their long-term viability.

Can we retain the big picture but carry out repairs and improvement on a self-funded and continuing basis?

The problem with this is the sheer scale of repairs needed. Current budgets are insufficient and increasing revenue without major investment will be a slow process. Uses currently able to be found for buildings (in their current condition) might not be the best use for that building in the long term. Because investment is unlikely to be maximised Heritage assets are likely to be lost and this would not fit with the CMP.

Why are the buildings not used as much as they were previously?

The options appraisal is a process to identify the best uses for the buildings. It would be wrong to arrange new tenancies or leases before this process is complete as it may prevent good solutions from being implemented.

Why are the refurbishment costs of the small mansion different in each option?

The option to relocate the Museum to the small mansion would be more expensive than restoring it for some other purpose. Relocating the museum would though release the large mansion for a wide range of events and activities that would make the overall scheme more viable

Why have the costs gone up?

Initial figures, used by the press not by the study team, considered costs to refurbish the two mansion houses not the estate as a whole. The figures quoted in the Options Appraisal are realistic.

Funding the recommended option

Why do we have to sell part of the park?

The recommended option attempts to deal with all the problems of the estate. This brings an inescapable cost for repairs refurbishment and building new facilities. All possible funding opportunities have been explored and a large funding gap identified. If we want to deliver this scale of investment we need to identify a realistic option to raise the funds.

The consultants have recommended that the most realistic option is to consider 'enabling development'. This means looking at the assets you have and releasing some for other purposes.

Three sites were considered able to provide the scale of funding required. The proposal is the one likely to have least impact on the significance of the estate

Do we have a developer lined up for this?

This is absolutely not the case. Indeed until a development brief is developed for the site we would not be able to consider the type of development that might be appropriate.

How many of the trees will be lost if the Lionel Road Development goes ahead?

No development brief or detailed plans yet exist for the site so this is not known. Any loss of trees and their would be considered in devising such a brief and then in evaluating any future planning application for this site.

Will we ignore the existing legal and planning protection on the land?

No. Consideration of how the park is protected is a core objective of the project. The options appraisal aims to secure the significance of Gunnersbury for future generations.

Will we ignore the covenant?

No. The covenant was put in place to ensure the continued existence of Gunnersbury as public open space. However it must not be an obstacle to ensuring the future of the estate.

Why has sponsorship not been included in the anticipated funding?

Sponsorship cannot be guaranteed in the current economic climate although some may well be available. The park does not have the national profile that Chiswick House Gardens has and that project has struggled to raise the required sponsorship in better economic times.

The funding indicated will cover the core requirements of the project. Sponsorship could provide the added value on top of that over a longer period of time.

Future Governance

What would be the anticipated governance of the park on completion?

The project will consider appropriate management vehicles such as a trust like the one established at Chiswick House and Gardens to ensure that responsibility can be properly owned. It is unlikely that external funding organisations would offer grants if the present arrangements continued.

How do we know they will spend all the money received on the park?

The enabling development is proposed only to fund the project. But there will be other funding partners involved. It is likely a funding coalition with such assurances and contractual requirements will have to be in place before other partners confirm any grant offer.

What guarantees are there to ensure that further parts of the park are not sold?

A legal agreement will be entered into by the funding coalition to ensure that this will not take place. Organisations such as the National Trust for example have taken on management responsibilities of properties allowing only sufficient enabling development to fund the restoration with legal requirements that further development cannot be allowed.

The adoption of a robust business plan will be a requirement of any partnership funding. It will ensure all management, repair maintenance and investment costs are within the budget and that income is sustainable. It will be an essential tool to ensure that this does not need to be considered.

Certain land uses, for example, playing fields can also be protected by particular legislation

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