

Notes of Meeting on 30 July 2008

RG gave introductory talk

Introduction

Although Gunnersbury is a fantastic place you don't need to look too hard to see that it is in decline and the longer this is allowed to go on the harder it will be to put right and the more it will attract anti social behaviour.

It's hard to manage a park built by a millionaire on a municipal budget. We stand at a crossroads and have to make a choice:

- Do we reduce the park down to the available budget or
- Increase the budget to restore the park to the national treasure that it is.

It's not really a question of increasing the budget from the two councils; this may be possible in some small measure but will never be able to tackle the problems that Gunnersbury has.

- We need to add public and private funding to that budget from other sources.

To ensure that any funding initiative does not alter the character and significance of the estate a conservation management plan has been commissioned by the Regeneration board.

What is the Regeneration Board?

This board replaced the previous joint committee last year. It meets about 8 times a year and is composed of three members from both Ealing and Hounslow with Officer support. It is seen as a temporary stepping stone to look at issues of the regeneration project including setting up a suitable management vehicle for the long term management of the park.

What is the Conservation Management Plan? (See Handout 1)

This document has two main aims:

- Firstly to understand the importance of Gunnersbury
 - Heritage of national importance
 - Sport and Open Space of regional importance
 - Wildlife and local amenity
- Secondly to help us do something about it.

This plan has looked at the issues and developed a set of Policies to direct the future estate management. A number of priority actions come from these one of which is the options Appraisal.

What is an Options Appraisal?

This research is the logical progression from the CMP. Having discovered what we have what are we going to do about it.

- It is an analysis of the feasibility of various uses for the buildings and different parts of the estate.

The Regeneration board recognises that park users will be concerned by changes to the Gunnersbury Park Estate. To understand and give voice to these concerns the board asked for a Stakeholder group to be established.

What is Stakeholder Group?

Gunnersbury is a nationally important historic park but it's also a local park too; used by local business, footballers, visitors to the café, museum or play area, or used informally to jog cycle or walk your dog. We hope that representatives of all these groups and more will join the group to give a wide representation and points of view.

What will it do (minimum)

- Provide a community voice to the regeneration board.
- Initiate community projects and events
- Initiate and support applications for funding
- Invigorate and network with existing community groups

How will it be elected?

Advertisements in council magazines and articles in local newspapers have augmented a request to known stakeholders to become involved. A Public Meetings was also held on 9th April and Many Individuals and groups have expressed an interest.

RG will contact those who can attend regular meetings and want to represent a particular issue, interest, expertise, or user group to be part of the stakeholder Group.

We will be limited by our venue as to how many people we can accommodate but these meetings are not meant to be exclusive and will be open to the public.

We recognise that we are only at the start of the process and some issues or priorities will not have been voiced yet. As a way to start this process James Wisdom of the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum facilitated an exercise to look at the priorities** from the CMP to see what is important for everyone.

**NB. The CMP has not expressed that these priorities are in order of importance.

Priorities

The audience sat at 6 tables and were asked to discuss the priorities given in the CMP (Handout 1) and try to agree a top priority and if anything was missing.

Policy G

Continue to offer a variety of safe, secure and inclusive opportunities for visitors in a high quality environment.

This policy was identified as the most important* by 3 groups and issues were raised relating to aspects of it by all 6 groups:

- Some Quick Hits should be identified such as; graffiti, loos and security which improve the park.
- Security and cleanliness are real issues for all users including youth (seen as the trouble rather than vulnerable in their own right)
Consider:
 - CCTV
 - Suitable changing accommodation and loos
 - covered litter bins
 - Park security Park keepers
- This *environment* should be open to the public (free?)
- Horticultural excellence should be explicit in this *environment*
- There is no mention of Sport or Supervision (training?) in sports
- Potential *opportunities* need to be explored
 - Potomac for urban fishing pond

* 8 Policies were raised as the most important by the six groups

Policy A

Decisions relating to the management, conservation and enhancement of the park should respect and develop its significance whilst being committed to the principles of sustainability.

This policy was identified as the most important by 2 groups and issues were raised relating to aspects of it by most of the groups:

- No specific mention if *sustainability* in this context is financial.
- The Economics (*sustainability*) of the park needs to work
- Potential activities need to be explored (link to Policy G)
- Exploitation of the sports facilities.
 - Need new energy efficient changing facilities
- No explicit guidance on over commercialisation of the park
 - Do we have to be profit making?
- No explicit guidance on stopping new Buildings
- Any development of existing buildings should not be *commercial*
 - Could be suitable for conference or wedding venue?
- Business in the park does not appear to contribute.

Policy C

Conserve and enhance the park's built heritage assets.

This policy was identified as the most important by 2 groups and issues were raised relating to aspects of it by most of the groups:

- Buildings should be well used and open to the public such as:
 - continuation of the museum
 - Consider historical use of buildings e.g. farm
 - Restaurant
 - Sports Hub
 - Consider use of Orangery as Restaurant

Policy H

Provide clear, high quality and consistent message and interpretive vision that links the whole park and its different components.

Aspects of this policy were identified as the most important by 1 group and issues were raised relating to aspects of it by other groups:

- Needs a formal adoption of the CMP
- Needs a non political champion. (top two from Priority Actions, not policy)
- No mention of Master plan (it's a priority action, not Policy)
- Don't limit the master plan (what does this mean?)
- Lets make the vision long term (Vision, not Policy)

Policy F

Ensure the long term conservation and development of the collections

Two groups specifically mentioned the Importance of the Museum.

Policy I

Conserve and enhance the park's nature conservation

One group felt there should be a mention of Biodiversity.

Policy B

Conserve and enhance the historic landscape character and structure based on the significance and needs of individual character areas.

No Group mentioned this policy specifically although it is implicit in much that was discussed. Activities and Opportunities may be appropriate in some parts of the park but not in others.

Policy D

Conserve the archaeological remains and potential of the park.

No Group mentioned this policy specifically although it is an essential requirement of any development or HLF funding Bid.

Policy E

Recognise the historic associations of the park.

No Group mentioned this policy specifically although one of the historical associations of the park is being a Public Park with the history of community Involvement.

Missing Policy

There is no policy which directs the involvement of the community. All groups raised aspects around this requirement.

- Create a gardening group or other volunteer activity
- Link with Capel Manor involvement on site
- Involve local groups
 - Local football clubs can access external funding
- Make links/connections with other similar estates Kew Gardens and CFS
- No mention of Events
 - Mela needs to be reviewed and or (income) ring fenced
 - Consider more events

Next Meetings

Generally it was felt to have been a useful exercise and further meetings have been set up as follows:

- Saturday 25 October 2008 10.30-12.30
- Saturday 24 January 2009 10.30-12.30
- Thursday 23 April 2009 7.30-9.30
- Thursday 30 July 2009 7.30-9.30

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