



London Borough of Hounslow

Stakeholders Forum Thursday 30th July

The Stakeholder's forum on Thursday 30th July 2009 was attended by 78 people. 14 had not attended a stakeholder meeting before. *These notes are grouped by topic rather than chronological meeting order.*

Previous studies

Richard Gill began an overview of the project to date. An outline was given of previous studies including most importantly the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) which recognizes that Gunnersbury is of national importance but that this significance is declining and will continue to do so unless action is taken.

[There was no disagreement with this statement.](#)

Discussions with Potential Partners

Discussions had been on going with English Heritage, the government's statutory advisor on the historic environment in England. The park has 22 listed buildings of which nine are on the English Heritage (EH) 'at Risk register' and two no longer exist. EH have named Gunnersbury one of the top 12 'at risk properties' in England. EH is a valuable partner having previously provided grant funding and would be able to offer a significant contribution to the project when the right strategy is agreed.

Initial discussions have also been held with The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) this is the body most likely to be able to award major grants to this project. They have indicated they are very interested but available funding is likely to continue to decrease so there is an urgency to make an application.

[Forum Comment that:](#) we do need to get an application in as soon as we can since this is a lengthy process.

What is the purpose of the Consultation?

[The opening presentation was interrupted by an individual, insisting that the alternatives in the questionnaire were false and demanding to know how the information from it would be fed back.](#)

[Forum Comment that:](#) the questionnaire had 'leading questions'.

[Forum Comment that:](#) peoples views would probably not be noted.

[Forum Comment that:](#) consultants should not handle the questionnaire and the Electoral Reform Society should become involved.

RG: The alternatives in the questionnaire are the result of an Options Appraisal by an experienced, independent consultant commissioned by Ealing and Hounslow Councils. Since only one option was recommended the questionnaire asked 'do we consider this option or continue as existing?'

A full report of the consultation will be put to the Executive of Hounslow Council and the Cabinet of Ealing Council and is likely to be a public document. The information from this Stakeholders forum will also form part of that consultation.

There must be more than one option?

[Forum Comment that:](#) There must be other options that should be considered.

[Forum Comment that:](#) Amazed that Jura even managed to find one viable option, many expected the only future was a private sale.

[Forum Comment that:](#) there must be some middle ground between the two extremes of "do nothing" versus a 21.5M project.

Addendum: The Options Appraisal does present other options. Generally these do not fulfil the brief and in particular the vision CMP. However if the option considered viable by the consultants is not possible we may have to look again at some of these alternatives such as mothballing and selling or leasing buildings for private use.

[Forum Comment that:](#) asking for further reports, means these proposals would slowly lose their viability as the valuations change and we would end up doing nothing.

Why not carry out repairs the buildings only?

[Forum Comment that:](#) the buildings were not in that bad a repair and the project could be a gradual improvement of the buildings through investment provided by a variety of uses rather than a major regeneration project tackling everything.

RG: Previous studies and the CMP confirm that all buildings need considerable investment now. Some buildings have only an estimated 2-3 years before becoming irrecoverable.

[Forum Comment that:](#) we cannot patch this any more, we need to restore in order to keep valuable public access.

RG: Finding the best possible use for the buildings is the aim of the Options Appraisal. A change of use and gradual improvement may be possible for some of the buildings but Regeneration (making them able to accommodate new appropriate uses rather than just repair) although more expensive, will provide a sustainable solution with far more revenue potential than any use possible in a building under constant repair.

Forum Comment that: some of the buildings could be mothballed for future use rather than having to do everything now.

Addendum: This might well be a solution to some of the buildings if funding is not identified for a regeneration project, or an appropriate use has not yet been identified within the Options Appraisal (e.g. Boathouse)

Are all the buildings worth saving?

Forum Comment that: Maybe some of the buildings (Stables) were not as worthy of saving as others and that some that the buildings could go and we would still be left with a valuable green space.

Forum Comment that The stables are Grade 2* listed if they can be saved they should be. The council has a legal obligation to look after these buildings.

Addendum: The loss of Heritage is contrary to the CMP. It would reduce the significance of the park which is currently of national importance. It would also weaken the support of EH and lessen the interest of HLF in funding the project.

Should we continue as existing?

Forum Comment that: project should be driven from the available budget, not from what someone dreams of spending.

Forum Comment that: if we just spend the minimum, the buildings will all end up like the Stables.

RG: Using only the available budget is the carry on as existing or 'do nothing' alternative in the questionnaire. The available budget could only ever cover emergency repairs and initiating low revenue generators.

Forum Comment that: The councils are only likely to increase funding if significant funding is made available from other partners such as EH and HLF.

Could the project be phased?

Forum Comment that: Does the project need to be done all at once? Could the project be phased?

Forum Comment that: It is unlikely that EH and HLF would agree again to a project which had only identified funding for a first stage. (A previous HLF grant tackled only the first phase of the landscape with the mansions to follow. This second stage never materialized.)

Forum Comment that: Neither HLF or EH wants a project which tackles only part of the estate or cherry picks individual buildings for which a solution has been agreed. The project offered for consultation is therefore a holistic solution dealing with the whole estate.

Should the Proposals be partly funded by enabling Development?

Forum Comment that: This project should be supported. It needs to raise the funds. Even the National Trust will sell land to invest in restoration and preservation. This could be the last chance we have.

Forum Comment that: Once parkland is sold you can never get it back, the park was inalienable

Forum Comment that The enabling development is to stop the irreplaceable loss of buildings, heritage and significance of Gunnersbury. Other projects have used enabling development for just these purposes.

Forum Comment that: a holistic plan which included housing development should not be considered.

Forum Comment that: housing might not be economically realistic at the moment.

Addendum: The funding raised by enabling development has been professionally assessed in the Options Appraisal but would be independently reassessed before a decision was made.

Forum Comment that: each person's experience of a park is so personal it is hard to get general agreement and we may need to compromise in order to restore the park.

Has Nature Conservation been considered?

Forum Comment that: the landscape was undervalued and the buildings were being over-emphasised and that no environmental impact work had been done.

Forum Comment that: The loss of trees and amenity was unacceptable

RG: The importance of Gunnersbury in terms of Nature conservation is recognized in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), this is the document

which guides development in the borough. The Importance of conserving and enhancing the Parks nature conservation value is recognized as Policy I within the CMP.

The Proposals to date are not sufficiently detailed to enable an environmental impact to be useful. The project would identify further survey work in the future.

Could we sell Carville Hall Park North Instead?

Forum Comment that: Other sources of funding should be found without selling the park including Carville Hall Park North.

Forum Comment that: Carville was less valuable and would generate insufficient income.

Forum Comment that: everybody wants a project which works, but against losing land because of the carbon impact, even Carville.

RG: Carville Hall was not included in the Options Appraisal brief. Carville is owned by LBH, Gunnersbury is jointly owned with Ealing, and selling such land might not be simple. But this Option might be looked into.

Other sources of funding need to be investigated.

Forum Comment that: European funding should be considered.

RG: European funding will be considered.

Forum Comment that: there are other viable alternatives (such as Ealing giving the £50 cash-back to Gunnersbury).

Forum Comment that: the councils should consider a levy raised specifically for the Gunnersbury Project.

Forum Comment that: Both councils are committed to keeping rates down, and would be unpopular politically

RG: This was not considered within the Options Appraisal as Jura were told no such funding would be possible

Forum Comment that: new sources of funding such as sponsorship from companies should be considered.

RG: Jura had considered this type of funding but felt that it was insufficient to provide the core funding. It would be useful once the core funding was identified.

[Forum Comment that:](#) the restaurant should be leased out to avoid selling land.

RG: The study considered existing on site business and the revenue provided by the new business of the restored buildings. This would be sufficient to help sustain the maintenance of the park but not provide the large amount of capital required to fund the initial works.

[Forum Comment that:](#) Other council projects should be looked at to see how these were funded. E.g. Pitshanger LBE and Boston Manor LBH

The Museum

[Forum Comment that](#) the Acton History Group are very interested in developing the museum, and income generation. They recognise this is the only viable option and we need to move quickly to make it happen.

Sport

[Forum Comment that:](#) do we have to do the sports facility at the same time as the rest of the restoration?

[Forum Comment that:](#) the farm building should be restored, and external managers should be used (see Rocks Lane) for sport

RG: Sport could be considered a separate project, financed by sports bodies and could run independently. It would remove £15 million from the overall costs but only £3 million from the shortfall to be identified by enabling development. (£14 million would still be required)

Restaurant

[Forum Comment that:](#) figures for the business plan of the restaurant are required so that we know it will work.

RG: The Options Appraisal gave working models of similar enterprises such as Pembroke Lodge so we know there is a market for this activity. The Business plan would have to be worked up before the proposal was worked up in any further detail.

[Forum Comment that:](#) a restaurant in the large mansion is inappropriate.

[Forum Comment that:](#) a restaurant in the large mansion would be welcomed

What is the future governance?

[Forum Comment that:](#) the park has been historically mismanaged and the new solution needs to be effective in the long term.

Forum Comment that: need to use the free text section of the questionnaire to urge a new form of governance as proposed on the Friends web site.

Forum Comment that: it be better to be run by one council or if this could not be agreed a Trust.

Addendum: The future management of the Park was still to be decided and will be decided at Executive and Cabinet level not by this options appraisal consultation.

Forum Comment that: ineffective governance might be tempted to sell off more of the park in the future.

RG: Legal agreements would be entered into with partners such as EH and HLF that land cannot be sold off in future. Enabling development guidelines would have to be followed which require that the proceeds have to be used for the project and the development is only large enough for agreed proposals.

Forum Comment that: That the earlier denial about considering building in the Park had been shown to be false, so how could the politicians be trusted in the future?

Addendum: The Joint Advisory Panel did not deny that housing was discussed at an early stage. But this decision has not been made and will not be without consultation.

Forum Comment that: the Rothschild's' donation to the Councils was a mistake because Councils cannot afford to maintain it properly.

Forum Comment that: the Park was bought from the Rothschild's and funded by selling the edges of the park (Lionel Road and Popes Lane houses)

Richard Gill Development and Regeneration Manager for Gunnersbury Park

0208 992 1612