

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	27 January 2014
Subject: Progress Report on the Improvements to East Heath Car Park and South End Green Approach	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report informs members on the completed landscaping works and minor enlargement of East Heath Car Park that was approved by Management Committee in July 2011. The improved layout and increased capacity is expected to yield additional income to support the budgetary reductions previously identified.</p> <p>The report updates members on the proposed future works planned for Spring 2014.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>That the Management Committee notes the successful implementation of the landscape enhancement scheme and agrees the proposed future works for 2014.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. East Heath Car Park is a popular facility for visitors to the Heath. Charging for the car park began in July 2005 with a modest fee being charged for stays of less than four hours. The increased cost after four hours was implemented to discourage long stay parking. The car park was often busy and full by mid-morning resulting in drivers having to find somewhere else to park and a lost opportunity for genuine Heath users to park.
2. The original car park measured 2,538m² and could accommodate around 100 vehicles organised in 3 rows. The new design saw the car park re-aligned to make it more rectangular in shape (see Figure 1), meaning that 4 rows of vehicles can park. This extra capacity has a potential to raise an additional £60,000 through additional income. The additional income was identified as one of the methods to off-set efficiency savings that had to be made by the Division in July 2011. The plans were presented and supported by your Committee and approved by the Management Committee in February 2011.

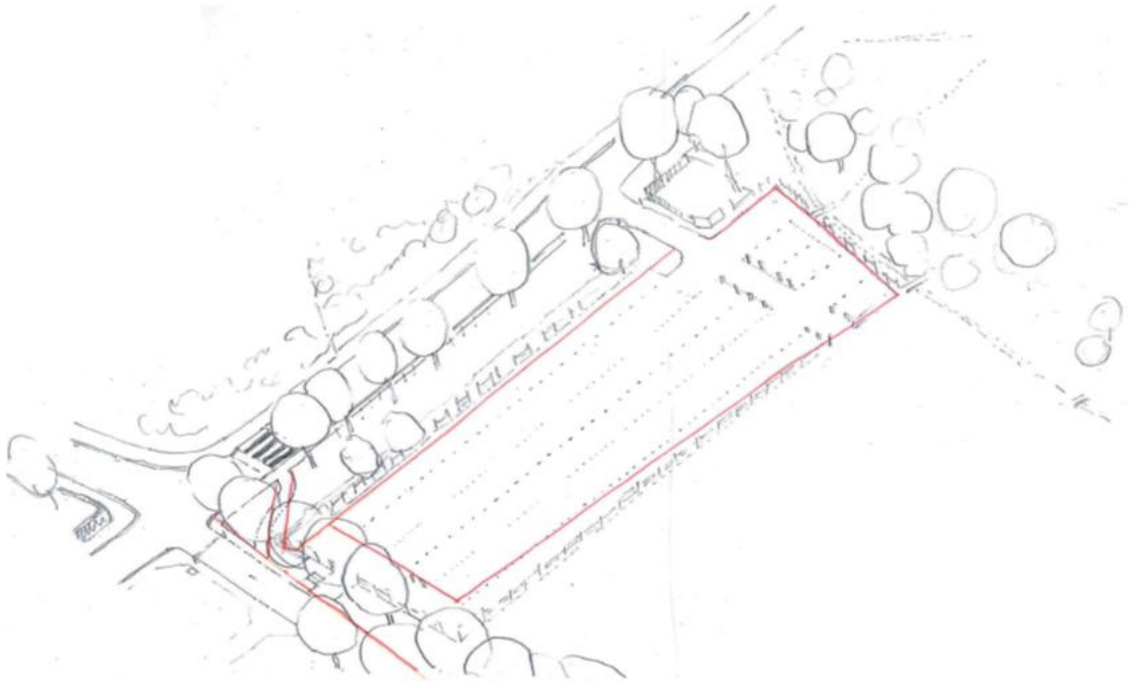


Figure 1: Sketch of the proposed design showing the existing car park boundary in red (Produced by Dominic Cole Landscape Architects)

3. East Heath car park and the adjacent hard standing area host three fairs annually. During the fairs the car park would remain closed for 8 days, resulting in a revenue loss of £4,000 per week. The removal of the fence line to accommodate fairground rides, took up a considerable staff time and increase vehicle movements across the body of the Heath to/from Kenwood Yard. The initial proposal sought to remove the Showman's Guild and their attractions from the car park and hoped that they could be accommodated on the adjacent land.
4. As part of the review of this area of the Heath it also became clear that the approaches to the Heath via South End Green and East Heath Road had developed a semi-urban appearance and an opportunity existed to make the area more rural.

Current Position

Showman's Guild

5. Consultation with the Showman's Guild took place between January and November 2012. During these discussions it became apparent that it would not be possible to move the fairground from the car park, as the rides and stall holders could not be accommodated in the remaining space.
6. A series of permanent fence sections with opening 'pole gates' was proposed. This resulted in the fence not having to be removed, reducing the amount of time that the car park is closed from 14 days to 7 days. During the fairs the pole gate are opened and they allowed visitors to move between the car park area and fairground site (see Appendix 1).
7. Plans showing the existing and proposed location of the fairground rides in relation to the new fence line were produced (see Appendix 2). Approval to

relocate eighteen rides to accommodate the new fence line was received from the Showman's Guild.

East Heath Car Park

8. Planning permission for the car park extension was granted by London Borough of Camden in May 2012. The design was refined following consultation with staff and the Showman's Guild. The project saw 2400 M² Coxwell Gravel brought on site along with 710 M² macadam to create the new surface. The Coxwell gravel gives a 'countryside feel' to the car park, while the macadam areas provide a more robust surface in the areas of highest use, i.e. the turning areas at the top and bottom of the car park.
9. Thirty additional parking bays were added along with five disabled parking bays. French drains have been installed to improve drainage across the sloping site. The upper entrance has been widened to aid the movement of traffic during events and reduce disruption to car park users. Heath Hands have planted native whips around the existing fencing at the upper entrance of the car park.
10. Works began on the 25th February and were completed in 28 days. The Easter Fair then opened on Friday 29th March (See Figures 2 and 3), with the car park reopened to the public on the 3rd April 2013.
11. It has not been possible to mark parking bays as stated in the original design as the insertion of concrete markers in to the Coxwell Gravel would disturb the surface and create issues with long term maintenance. Currently the bays are left unmarked, but users are parking sensibly and maximizing the available space. On exceptionally busy days Heath Rangers have assisted visitors with parking and when the Affordable Art Fair was on site in June, the car park was full from 11am in the morning until the car park closed at 8pm in the evening.



Figure 2: Photograph of the completed car park, looking north from the main entrance on East Heath Road (March 2013)



Figure 3: Photograph of the completed car park, looking east across the car park towards Hampstead No1 pond.

12. The project has created a flexible space which can be utilised for parking and continue to provide a base for Hampstead's traditional fair. Robust entrances to the Heath have been created that can bear the weight of heavy cranes and event equipment that are brought onto site. The cost of all the works including landscaping came to just over £100,000 and was met in part from additional income generated through the Affordable Art Fair and also from the National Grid works who had been working on site at Parliament Hill Fields.
13. Additional enhancement works were carried out at the lower entrance, improving drainage, resurfacing paths and shortening the entrance gate to allow better access for disabled users. A new style of water fountain was agreed during Hampstead Heath Consultative walk in July 2013 has been installed. The Heath's staff created the base which includes a 'dog drinking bowl' (see Figure 4 below).



Figure 4: *New water fountain at East Heath*

14. The hard standing area adjacent to the car park is made up of poor soil with a high content hard core and rubble. This ground can become churned up during events and there has been little success in cultivating grass in the area due to the poor soil makeup. The area often becomes dry and dusty in the summer, detracting from the green and lush areas around it (see Appendix 3 for photographs).
15. Zippo's circus is the last event of the summer based on the hard standing. Following its departure at the end of September, 'Hydro-seeding' of the area was trialed. Hydro-seeding is a process that sprays a mixture of grass seed, water, mulch and fertiliser on to the ground in a single operation. The water retaining mulch keeps the seeds moist, preventing erosion from wind and rain, while the fertiliser provides essential nutrients for healthy grass establishment.
16. The organic cellulose compound comprising of seed and nutrient was sprayed onto the 7000m² of ground that makes up the hard standing area on the 27th

September (See Appendix 4). Since this time the access to the area has been restricted in order to allow the grass to grow. As shown in the photographs an encouraging sward of grass has developed. Positive comments have been received from members of the public regarding the improvements, see comments below:

Dear Mr Maskell, I am told you are the person who is responsible for giving us back the much loved green vista at the entrance to the Heath from near the overland train. I am so delighted that someone took responsibility for rescuing the sad brown area it had become. Many congratulations on making this happen, it is very much appreciated by many people who may not actually write to thank you. I walk on the Heath regularly and will enjoy it even more now.	Maresfield Gardens, NW3	20/11/2013
Well done, many thanks to everyone! Fingers crossed it will continue to look good.	Local Ward Councillor	19/11/2013
I have been enjoying the green vista every day this week. So a big thank you to you and your colleagues for turning back the horticultural clock and allowing this greenery to develop. I am not surprised - I have always felt that time and less use could make it green again - but I am delighted.	Local Resident	19/11/2013

17. In order to further soften the edges of the car park it was proposed that a native hedge would be added to the road side perimeter of the car park. This has the effect of screening the parked cars from people passing by and increases the rural feel of the area. A total of 100m of mixed native hedging was planted, during October by Heath Hands volunteers and Heath Rangers planted 50m of this with the remaining due to be planted in January.

South End Green

18. The South End Green entrance to Hampstead Heath has become increasingly busy particular with the improvement of the London Overland Line. The area has a municipal urban feel containing long stretches of fencing and scrub which blocks out light and restricts views. During 2013 Heath Rangers have trimmed back vegetation and scrub adjacent to Hampstead No 1 pond to open up the Cathedral view and the Arboricultural Team have been working on the avenue of Plane trees, removing dead and diseased wood.

Future Works

South End Green

19. Heath Rangers will complete the following activities as part of their winter work plan.
- Removal of the fence to the east of the path adjacent to South End Road. A new stock fence (the same as those used around the wildflower areas) will be installed at the rear of Hampstead Number 1 dam. This will be less visually intrusive and will maintain a safe distance for the public to be kept away from the pond.

- Two short lengths of knee rail will be installed to discourage desire lines and protect the root plates of the London Plane trees (see Appendix 4 for location).
20. The removal of this imposing fence will reveal the splendor of the Cathedral entrance and open up areas of the Heath that have hitherto remained inaccessible to the public.

East Heath Car Park

21. Bicycle stands will be installed at the lower entrance in order to encourage environmental friendly transport to the Heath, but allow the bikes to be secured at the entrance and allow visitors to continue on foot. The stands will be situated outside the car park to avoid conflict between bicycles and vehicles.
22. The remaining 50m of native hedging will be installed by Heath Hands and Heath rangers in January.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. The landscape enhancement works supports several of the City Together Strategy - The heart of World Class City 2008-2014 themes, including: *... supports our communities ... protects, promotes and enhances our environment ... is vibrant and culturally rich.*
24. The landscape design also shares the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2012-2015 aims & objectives: *“Deliver sustainable working practice to promote the variety of life and protect the Open Spaces for future generations .. Manage, develop and empower a capable and motivated work force to achieve high standards of safety and performance”.*
25. The native plants used in the design supports the Overriding Policy D1 in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan Part 1 – Towards a Plan for the Heath 2007-2017, *“Conserve and enhance the historic and planned elements of the Heath’s designed landscapes, while improving their appearance and public facilities”.*

Financial and Risk Implications

26. The expansion of the car park will provide the opportunity to increase car park income by estimated £60,000 per year on an on-going basis. This however forms part of our on-going savings as identified in our budget savings report, presented to this Committee in July 2011.
27. The costs associated with the future landscaping proposals as set out in Appendix 3 will be undertaken by in-house teams, the works forming part of the Annual Work Plan for 2013/14 and beyond.
28. Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows the City to provide parking spaces and to charge for parking. These provisions are applied to the Heath by the London Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order 1989.

Conclusion

29. The realignment of East Heath car park has created an additional 30 car parking spaces along with better disabled access and 5 disabled only parking bays. This has been welcomed by visitors and has seen the car park full to capacity during events and the summer. It is anticipated that the larger car park will provide an additional income of £60,000 per year on an on-going basis.
30. The proposed landscaping works at East Heath and South End Green will increase the rural feel of these entrances. Heath hands volunteers and Heath Rangers will complete these activities as part of their work plans and they will not attract a significant cost.

Background Papers / Walks:

Progress Report on Improvements to East Heath Car Park and South End Green Approach July 2011

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Proposed fence line and gates
- Appendix 2 - Fairground stalls new layout
- Appendix 3 – Artists impression of the proposed works South End Green
- Appendix 4 - Hydroseeding

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