

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	9 May 2016
Subject: Wanstead Park – Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Our Heritage’ Application by the Friends of Wanstead Parklands (SEF 24/16)	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Decision
Report author: Geoff Sinclair – Epping Forest	

Summary

The Friends of Wanstead Parklands are a well-established voluntary group with a commitment to promoting the use, recreational opportunities, public awareness and benefits of improvement to Wanstead Park as part of Epping Forest.

The Group are independently applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage Programme - for an award towards £100,000 with the intention of interpreting the physical and natural environment of Wanstead Park. The bid requires the approval of your Committee on behalf of the City of London as the Conservators of Epping Forest. There are no direct financial implications for the City of London in supporting the project other than Officer time associated with approving the interpretive content of the project.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Support the application by The Friends of Wanstead Parklands for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage Programme – to interpret the heritage of the Wanstead Park Grade II* Listed Registered Park and Garden.

Main Report

Background

1. ‘Wanstead Park’ was a grand Essex house, gardens and estate originally dating from the 1500s which enjoyed the patronage of both Royalty and the aristocracy for over 400 years. At the height of its fame the estate had a house which was favourably compared to Blenheim Palace and gardens that rivalled Versailles. Following the Park’s dramatic decline in 1822, the main site was added to Epping Forest by City of London acquisition in 1880 as part of Epping Forest. The parkland was partially restored and managed as a municipal park until the 1940s, and then less intensively as a full part of Epping Forest.

2. To protect its heritage interest, the remaining estate, stretching across four landownerships, were declared a Grade II 'of special interest' Registered Park and Garden (RPG) in 1987, becoming Grade II* 'particularly important gardens of more than special interest' by virtue of City of London funded research in 2001.
3. The RPG was declared on the 'Heritage At Risk Register (HARR)' in 2009 by English Heritage, now Historic England, (HE), with key concerns being the proximity of development; divided ownership; the condition of the cascade; the loss of the traditional garden design of radiating planted avenues and the poor condition of remaining park features.
4. The Wanstead Park Conservation Area which is largely similar to the Registered Park and Garden boundary was added to HARR in 2011 for much of the reason stated above, and the changing appearance of the streetscape houses along Overton Drive.

Current Position

5. Since 2013 the four landowners – City of London; Wanstead sports Grounds Limited; Wanstead Parish and the London Borough of Redbridge, together with Historic England and the Friends of Wanstead Parklands (FoWP) have been working together to seek the removal of the Park from the HARR.
6. The FoWP are a well-established voluntary group whose objectives in their constitution include:
 - a. to promote the use of Wanstead Parklands for the benefit of the inhabitants of L.B. Redbridge, L.B. Newham, L.B. Waltham Forest, the surrounding area, the wider national and the international community
 - b. to promote the opportunity for recreation or other leisure time of individuals of all ages in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said community;
 - c. to raise the general public's awareness and understanding of the character and history of Wanstead Parklands.
 - d. to promote for the benefit of the general public the conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Wanstead Parklands, especially its features of historic, architectural and wildlife interest
 - e. to raise the general public's awareness and understanding of the character and history of Wanstead Parklands.
 - f. to promote for the benefit of the general public the conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Wanstead Parklands, especially its features of historic, architectural and wildlife interest.
7. The FoWP are currently seeking charitable status and have produced publications; DVDs, research and surveys regarding the history of Wanstead Park and maintain a website that forms an unrivalled source of historical information regarding Wanstead Park.

8. In line with the FoWP's objectives, the group now wishes to make a selection of key information about Wanstead Park available digitally through new technology. Initially, the project proposal had focused on the use of Quick Response (QR) codes mounted on 26 posts, or other existing structures, throughout Wanstead Park. QR codes are matrix barcodes which when scanned with a software application on a mobile device provide links via an URL (Unique Resource Locator) or 'web address' to Internet-based resources featuring written information, images, recorded sound and video.
9. The FoWP are now considering the use of GeoTagging which connects geographical identification metadata to existing media such as an image or video clip. Mobile device users will be able to access GeoTagged data compiled on Wanstead Park through the use of Global Positioning Software (GPS). This approach will provide the opportunity for visitors to view text, images and maps which feature the park's natural and built history and could potentially include an annotated overflight video of the Wanstead Park cascade.
10. The FoWP are independently applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage Programme- for an award towards £100,000 with the intention of interpreting the physical and natural environment of Wanstead Park. This project has the potential to 'unlock' much of the hidden story of Wanstead Park which remains within the Parkland landscape and should be of significant interest to the Park's 200,000 visits made each year.
11. The FoWP have at times been critical of the City of London's stewardship of Wanstead Park. However, all the Steering Group partners view the current project purely as an opportunity to interpret the long history of the Parkland using the considerable research undertaken by members and associates of the FoWP

Options

12. There are two options available to your Committee:
 - a. Refuse permission for the project. This option would continue to limit the information that could be made available on Wanstead Park and will frustrate the work of an extremely committed group of local volunteers. This option is **not recommended**.
 - b. Support the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund made by the FoWP. Approval of this option would enable a major investment in Wanstead Park in terms of both volunteer time and Lottery funding, providing the potential to reveal information about the Park without the need to build expensive and intrusive conventional interpretational infrastructure. This option is **recommended**.

Proposals

13. It is proposed that the City of London provides a letter of support for the Friends of Wanstead Parklands application and a licence arrangement to cover the installation if required of QR code 150mm square plaques or GeoTagged information across Wanstead Park and the approval of text content.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. **City of London Corporate Plan:** the proposal meets the Corporate Plan's vision of providing modern, efficient and high quality local services and maximising the opportunities and benefits afforded by our role in supporting London's communities.
15. **Open Spaces Department Business Plan:** the proposal meets the Open Spaces Department's Business Plan Vision by preserving and protecting our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities.

Implications

16. **Financial** – There is no financial exposure for the City of London. Licence terms would be offered that would include all construction and future maintenance costs being borne by the FoWP. Officer time would be required to approve digital content provided by the Friends.
17. **Legal** – The City of London has powers under section 9(2) *'For the purpose of providing or improving opportunities for the enjoyment of open space by the public and in the interest of persons resorting to the open space, the Corporation may provide such facilities, services and works as may appear to them to be necessary or expedient, including meals and refreshments, parking places for vehicles, shelters and lavatory accommodation'*.

Conclusion

18. A QR Code or GeoTagged interpretive project led by the Friends of Wanstead Parklands has the potential to share the considerable knowledge of the Friends Group; to increase public understanding regarding the significance of both Wanstead Park and Epping Forest without the need to construct conventional and intrusive infrastructure across the Park.

Appendices

- None

Geoff Sinclair
Head of Operations

T: 020 8532 1010

E: geoff.sinclair@cityoflondon.gov.uk