

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group - For Discussion	20 09 2019
Epping Forest Consultative – For information	23 10 2019
Epping Forest and Commons – For decision	18 11 2019
Subject: Wanstead Park: Conceptual Options Plan (SEF 38/19b)	Public
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
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Summary

The City of London Corporation purchased Wanstead Park, London's oldest Public Park, in 1880 as one of a series of land acquisitions to settle the boundary of Epping Forest. Wanstead Park was recognised as a Grade II, then II* Registered Park and Garden in 1987 and 2001 respectively. The City Corporation holds in trust 70% of the Park and Garden, alongside three other landowners.

Wanstead Park faces a series of challenges having been placed on the national Heritage at Risk Register by Historic England in 2009, due to concerns over the deteriorating heritage condition of the Park. The Environment Agency have extended the lake water abstraction licence until 2021, however, the Agency has served notice that aquifer water used to augment the lakes may be reduced in the future. Paradoxically, the Environment Agency, through the Roding Catchment Management Plan (2016) indicated that riparian landowners, including the City Corporation at Wanstead, would need to fund an upstream flood storage scheme and take responsibility for riverside embankments to prevent localised flooding in Wanstead and Woodford. Furthermore, in late 2017, the Environment Agency designated three of the Parks lakes as 'High Risk' Large Raised Reservoirs.

Working with the Friends of Wanstead Parklands, Historic England and the three co-owners of the registered Park and Garden, a Parkland Plan has been developed by consultants with the ambition of reviving the Park, identifying the works necessary to address the condition of the water bodies and secure the removal of the park from the 'Heritage At Risk' register. The engineering studies necessary to address statutory High-Risk obligations have already been approved separately by your Committee and the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee. This report outlines the final draft Conceptual Options Plan which is also given in Appendix 1. It is recommended that, following any agreed revision, the plan be adopted as a resource to guide the management and investment decisions of the Wanstead Park Project Board.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Consider comments made by the Consultative Committee on the final draft Wanstead Park Conceptual Options Plan
- Approve the Plan for adoption to guide the future management of the Wanstead Park, Registered Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest

Main Report

Background

1. Wanstead Park is East London's oldest public park and considered to be London's greatest surviving designed waterscape. At its most extensive (circa 1800) there were nine artificial lakes within the Park. Five lakes remain today and form a cascade with the lower four lakes administered by the City Corporation. Following a spectacular decline in the 1820s, followed by 60 years of neglect, a substantial proportion of the Park and Out Park were added to Epping Forest by the City Corporation between 1876 and 1880. Other parts of the original Park were later purchased by the London Borough of Redbridge and the Wanstead Sports Ground Limited.
2. Three of the four City Corporation managed lakes, each of which impound over 25,000 cubic metres of water, are classed as Category B Large Raised Reservoirs (LRRs) under the Reservoirs Act 1975 as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. As LRR's the City Corporation is obliged to retain their registration as LRRs, safely manage the dams and ensure that the dams are regularly inspected by suitably qualified engineers. In late 2017, the Environment Agency designated three of the Parks lakes as 'High Risk' Large Raised Reservoirs. The engineering studies necessary to address statutory High-Risk obligations have been approved separately by your Committee and the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee.
3. The Park was listed as a Grade II* – 'a garden of special interest' - Registered Park and Garden (RPG) by English Heritage (now Historic England) in 2001, following an earlier Grade II designation in 1987. In 1954, the Temple and Boathouse Grotto were designated as Grade II Listed Buildings, while in 1970, the Wanstead Park area including parts of Overton Dive was designated as a Conservation Area.
4. The Park was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR) by English Heritage in 2009 due to concerns that the designed landscape was in poor condition, divided under separate ownership and management, and was at risk of further decline. As a result, the Wanstead Park Conservation Area was also added to the HARR in 2010, while the Boathouse Grotto was separately added to the HARR in 2017.
5. In 2015, the Environment Agency extended the abstraction licence until 2021, however, the Agency has served notice that aquifer water used to augment the

lakes may be reduced in the future. Paradoxically, the Environment Agency, through the Roding Catchment Management Plan (2016) indicated that riparian landowners, including the City Corporation at Wanstead Park would need to make a £0.5 Million contribution to fund an upstream flood storage and take responsibility for riverside embankments to prevent localised flooding in Wanstead and Woodford.

6. LDA Design were commissioned in November 2014 to undertake a review of the knowledge and evidence base on Wanstead Park and to provide direction for future planning in the Park. This report outlines the Conceptual Options Plan prepared by LDA for the Steering Group and presents recommendations on the next steps to be taken.

Current Position

Consultation

7. To explore the potential for removing the RPG from the 'at risk register' the City Corporation worked with the Friends of Wanstead Parklands (FoWP) to establish the Wanstead Park Steering Group (WPSG) in 2013. This was made up of representatives from FoWP, the four landowners, Historic England and a Verderer representative from the south of the Forest.
8. A separate community stakeholder group, the Liaison Group, was also established in 2013 to improve local communication and to help facilitate the progress of smaller improvement projects. This group has representatives from FoWP, Vision Redbridge, the Wren Group as well as local councillors from the LB of Redbridge.
9. With financial support from the FoWP, along with City Corporation funding, the WPSG commissioned LDA Design to prepare draft proposals for the future management of Wanstead Park. These were put out for public consultation on the 23rd February 2015 and a draft Wanstead Park Conceptual Options plan began preparation in April 2015.
10. As confirmation of the risk status of the LRRs was subject to a national risk assessment process, the statutory nature of the assessment process and possible significant financial implications, led to an understandable delay in the development of proposals for the Park. Following work by the local MP John Cryer who hosted a meeting at the Houses of Parliament in November 2017, the Environment Agency confirmed the risk status of the Lakes in late December 2017 allowing the Parkland Plan development work to further progress.

Parkland Plan

11. The final draft Parkland Plan is given in Appendix 1. In summary the brief given for the development of the plan (Page 19) was to:
 - a. Develop an agreed landscape management aesthetic;

- b. Identify a landscape conservation and regeneration programme that will lead to the removal of the park from the HARR;
 - c. Identify a landscape conservation and regeneration programme that will increase the park's profile and public awareness;
 - d. Identify those elements of the plan that may satisfy the criteria for a possible National Lottery Heritage Fund programme bid;
 - e. Compile a high-level capital cost plan; and,
 - f. Compile annual revenue costs plan.
12. Implicit, but not directly in the remit of the plan, was the need to ensure the needs of the Reservoirs Act 1975 as amended in 2010 are met.
13. This report forms part of the consultation process for the Parkland Plan. Following approval by the interested committees the report will become a working document for the Wanstead Park Project Board to inform project development and investment. The report's findings will also be fed back to the local community.

Proposals

Parkland Plan Vision

14. At the start of the Parkland process, the following vision for Wanstead Park was established through a series of workshops with key stakeholders:

“Wanstead Park is London’s greatest surviving designed historic waterscape and one of the country’s most spectacular and ambitiously-designed 17th and early 18th century landscape.

It has the potential to become one of London’s destination parks—a unique and stunning landscape combining a sense of wilderness, tranquillity and experience of nature with spaces for fun, entertainment and getting active outdoors.

A revitalised park could reveal and celebrate the many unique aspects of its special landscape, welcoming all local people and visitors from further afield.”

Key Objectives and Themes

15. To achieve this vision, the plan identifies 13 Key Objectives (Page 29) that progress actions identified under the following seven ‘Themes’:
- a. *A Unified Plan (Page 32)*: Over time the historic landscape has become fragmented when compared with its original singly managed design. The plan sets out a vision for a unified landscape approach across all the four ownerships subject to the Registered Parks and Gardens registration;
 - b. *Waterscape (Page 34)*: The surviving ornamental water bodies form the most significant element of the historic landscape, as well as providing an important wildlife habitat, and being subject to obligation under the

Reservoirs Act 1975 (as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010). In the context of works to bring the Large Raised Reservoirs to a required standard, the plan identifies opportunities to improve other wider hydrological aspects in an efficient and holistic manner;

- c. *Earthworks (Page 38)*: Substantial evidence of previous stages of the Park's historic development are evident through the many earthworks and related features found, some of which are substantial and significant earthworks associated with the formal garden and house. Works to reveal these features to better illustrate the scale and significance of the designed landscape are outlined;
- d. *Views (Page 39)*: Views formed a significant ornamental element of the historic landscape, with vegetation and fencing currently interrupting many of these. Actions to restore important lost views and reinforce surviving views to better illustrate the scale of the designed landscape are identified;
- e. *Tree and woodland (Page 40)*: Many mature parkland trees were lost as part of the changing history of the Park. Some veteran and mature trees still exist and have significant heritage value. However, overall the woodland is relatively poor quality and dominated by elm and sycamore, both of which suffer considerably from disease. The objective for the woodland is identified as being to manage it as a backdrop to the historic park;
- f. *Grassland (Page 41)*: The Park includes substantial areas of grassland which are largely managed for their natural aspect and nature conservation value, with other areas accommodating heavier use for recreation and amenity. Grassland management to manage fire risk and create more of a parkland character is promoted, such as considering extending the use of the rough on the golf course for conservation. The need for increased amenity grassland within the park is identified;
- g. *Structures and Facilities (Page 42)*: Wanstead House was demolished in 1823 however other significant structures remain that are associated with the Park. The plan proposes that the partners should conserve historic structures, improving their sustained use with an emphasis on the better use of the Temple and Grotto.
- h. *Access and Movement (Page 43)*: The Park's entrances are typically low key and poor quality while parking provision is restricted to residential streets and increasingly impacted by the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones. Paths criss-cross the park with frequent sections in a poor condition. The Plan proposes improving the condition and accessibility of all major entrances and routes into and around the Park, including wayfinding from locations such as St Mary's Church and considering improved connections to the Ilford side of the River Roding.

Themed Work Packages

16. The amount of work necessary to remove Wanstead Park from the HARR is considerable. While the costs are yet to be determined, the response to the Environment Agency's classification of the Lakes as 'High Risk' LRRs is likely to represent a significant statutory cost to the City Corporation. In addition to statutory obligations, are potential works to improve wider access and visitor facilities. The plan attempts to group the range of proposed works into three separate, achievable and complimentary work programmes which have particular outcomes in mind and with indicative costs based on current understanding (Page 49):

- a. *Wanstead For All*: The main goal will be to considerably improve the access, and vastly improve the visitor offer alongside limited works on hydrological issues. The development of a 'visitor hub' at the Temple would comprise a key major investment project for this package which has an estimated cost of £4,172,940.
- b. *Creating a Sustainable and Resilient Waterscape*: This includes all the items that focus on creating a sustainable future for the Waterscape at Wanstead Park, adding to and complimenting the needs of the Large Raised Reservoirs and demands of the Reservoirs Act 1975 as amended. Until the LRR works are known the cost of this package is difficult to establish, however an overall cost estimate is £10,350,000 has been developed, a large proportion of which will be statutory works under the Reservoirs Act 1975 as amended.
- c. *Improving Access, Management and Amenity*: This focuses on the day-to-day work programme required for the City Corporation to maintain and deliver improvement to access, heritage and nature conservation and improved management and maintenance. This package is based on the prioritisation of existing resources invested at Wanstead Park rather than new resources being identified.

Longer Term Priorities

17. Outside the current plan's delivery framework are a number of Longer Term Priorities and Possible Future Aspirations (Page 65). These future works will require further consents from the partners and are not assumed at the point of the current plan being adopted.

Taking the Plan Forward

18. The Director of Open Spaces established a Wanstead Park Project Board in summer 2019 to coordinate the City Corporation's response to the developments arising from the LRR High Risk and HARR status. It is proposed that the Parkland Plan be used as a resource by the Wanstead Park Project Board to guide heritage, access and conservation investment priorities as part of its activity.

19. A number of additional actions are required to progress the plan:

- a. Agreement and adoption: The plan will need to be endorsed by the Steering Group and agreed by the Wanstead Park landowners;
- b. Income benchmarking: An exercise should be undertaken to identify the level of income, including volunteer input that can be realistically achieved at Wanstead Park;
- c. Phasing of Potential Capital Works: The possible capital works budget for non-statutory works needs to be considered by the City Corporation's Wanstead Park Project Board and its consequent impacts on the priority projects that can be delivered decided upon by the key stakeholders;
- d. Consideration of grant funding: A detailed funding package will need to be developed, including the consideration of an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

20. This final draft plan is to be considered by the Wanstead Park Steering Group, the Epping Forest Management Plan Steering Group and the Epping Forest Consultative Committee. Following which it is proposed that it be revised as required and an adoption proposal prepared and submitted to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. Similar requests for consideration and formal approval will be made to the three other Landowners.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. Open Spaces Department Business Plan: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research follow from three of the Open Spaces Department's Strategic aims of: providing high quality accessible open spaces, involving communities in site management and adopting sustainable working practices.

22. Corporate Plan 2018-23: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research meets the objective of the Corporate Plan to provide thriving and biodiverse green spaces and urban habitats.

23. Statement of Community Involvement: City Corporation has consulted on the preparation of the original Conservation Statement for Wanstead Park (2011) and in 2015 consulted on the LDA Project Plan proposals.

24. The plan proposes significant environmental improvements including diversification of aquatic habitats and securing sustainable water supplies. Large Raised Reservoir improvement works, especially, may have potentially disruptive and typically time-limited environmental impacts that will require further consideration through separate Environmental Impact Assessments.

Implications

25. **Financial:** Improvement works on the dams following the engineering assessment will be a statutory requirement for the City Corporation to complete and will not be able to be funded from external grants.

26. Heritage works under the Parkland Plan have been developed to fit in with the HLF grant scheme for projects of up to £5 million and will need to be developed to a RIBA Stage 2 standard.
27. Grant support mechanisms to help fund the delivery of the Parkland Plan are likely to have a matched funding requirement. The matched funding proportion varies across projects, however bench marking with similar projects suggests that for Lottery funding, there would be a requirement of 30% match funding contribution from the City Corporation, local fundraising and project partners.
28. A financing plan is still to be developed and will form part of the Gateway application process; however, it is anticipated that, subject to approval, a bid would comprise a mix of internal City Corporation and external funding elements:
- a) *City of London Corporation funding options:* Epping Forest Local Risk budget, Epping Forest Fund, Combined Work Programme funding and Capital funding bid;
 - b) *External funding options:* Lottery Fund Schemes, Thames Water – Potential Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) award, Local Authority Funding E.g. Community Infrastructure Levy, Local Fundraising and Volunteer Time.
29. **Legal:** Subject to the provisions of the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880 the Conservators are under a duty at all times to keep Epping Forest uninclosed and unbuilt on as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. They are also under a duty at all times as far as possible to preserve the natural aspect of the Forest.
30. The Epping Forest Act 1880 includes an additional power at section 5 to maintain “*ornamental inclosed lands*” which most probably reflects the City Corporation’s purchase of Wanstead Park in 1880 and enables the Conservators to make proper provision in a parkland context for securing the enjoyment thereof by the public for exercise and recreation at all reasonable times during the day.
31. Apart from general Occupiers Liability Acts responsibilities, there is no specific heritage duty on owners of registered parks and gardens to take steps to have them removed from the ‘At Risk’ register. However, taking steps to address the issues which have led to entry on the register is consistent with the Conservators’ statutory functions and objects of the charity.
32. Under the Reservoirs Act 1875 as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) three of the five Park LRRS have been designated ‘High Risk’ and the City Corporation will be under a statutory duty to comply with any recommendation made by an inspecting engineer as to their maintenance.
33. **Consultative Committee:** The Consultative Committee was broadly supportive of the Plan, but raised concerns with regard to the longer timescales now involved, and questioned whether the partners would be able to meet the significant costs involved. The Director of Open Spaces indicated that while the

City's Capital programme had been suspended, funding for the statutory reservoir works was still being progressed. The need to provide improved path surfaces for public access and novel forms of funding were also considered.

34. **Charity:** Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.
35. **Equalities & diversity:** An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision has been undertaken by the City Corporation. At this stage, it is considered that there are no negative impacts on the protected equality groups.
36. Initial scoping suggests that there are no negative equality impacts identified for this proposal, with the prospect of improved accessibility for people with some disabilities and additionally for parents with young children.
37. **Exiting the European Union (EEU):** The main influence of EU law on development close to the Epping Forest SAC relates to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations') and the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna & Flora, which is incorporated into UK law as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). The future influence of existing EU Directives and the Regulations may be affected by the EU and will also be consequent on the terms reached with the EU as part of Brexit negotiations and the future governments views on 'Retained EU law' contained within the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Conclusion

38. A revised risk category for the LRRs at Wanstead Park to 'High risk' means that a significant reservoir improvement project is likely to be required. Responses are also required to address potential future abstraction shortfalls and the risk of damaging flooding from the River Roding.
39. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken to research and understand the landscape conservation and regeneration needs at Wanstead Park since it was added to the Heritage at Risk Register in 2009.
40. The Wanstead Park: Conceptual Options Plan draws together this extensive body of research and has undertaken stakeholder feedback to prepare a Parkland Plan, to seek the removal of Wanstead Park from the Heritage at Risk register and to identify how best the partners can access external funding programmes.
41. It is proposed that, following any revisions, the plan be adopted as a resource to guide the investment decisions of the Wanstead Park Project Board.

Background Papers

- Wanstead Park: Landscape conservation and regeneration progress update. Epping Forest and Commons Committee, 11th May 2015

- Wanstead Park: - Briefing note for Members, Epping Forest and Commons Committee, 11th September 2017
- Wanstead Park: - Briefing note for Members (SEF 38/18), Epping Forest Consultative Committee, 10th October 2018

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Wanstead Park: Conceptual Options Plan and Cost Planning Study – Rev

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