

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (For Discussion) Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	7 April 2014
Subject: Ponds Project Public Consultation	Public
Joint Report of: Director of Open Spaces and Director of the Built Environment	For Information

Summary

A non-statutory public consultation and information giving exercise was undertaken from 26 November 2013 – 17 February 2014 as part of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project. The consultation presented two options for both the Hampstead Chain and the Highgate Chain of ponds.

The information giving element of the activity reached out to large numbers of people using a variety of methods of engagement. The results of the consultation did not indicate a strong preference for either option on either chain of ponds. The consultation demonstrated that amongst the respondents there was concern not only in respect of the specific options proposed but with the legality and the necessity of the project.

Many of the comments received fell into the following categories:

- Interpretation of the law & necessity of the project
- The visual impact
- Ecological impact
- Impact on amenity & recreation.

The detailed report on the outcome of the consultation is attached (Appendix 1). This report has been shared with the Project Board, Design Team and Constructor so that the comments, particularly around visual, ecological and amenity impact, can be fed into the design process.

Recommendation

It is recommended:

- That the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee consider this report and the appended results of the consultation exercise;
- That the views and comments of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee be conveyed to and received by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee.

Main Report

Background

1. The Ponds Project was initiated following hydrological studies that revealed that in the event of a severe storm, there was a risk that the reservoirs on Hampstead Heath could overtop, potentially leading to erosion and dam failure. Following the approval of the Court of Common Council in July 2011, the City has been developing options for both the Highgate and Hampstead chains of ponds.
2. A Stakeholder Group made up of local interest groups and residents associations was formed in July 2012. This group fed into the development of the design principals. The application of the design principals and further hydrological modelling lead to the development of constrained options, which were further developed to a short list of options. This work was then distilled to the two sets of preferred options for both chains of ponds. These preferred options were subject to the information giving and public consultation exercise.

Current Position

3. The City employed an independent company called Resources for Change, who specialise in engagement and consultation to undertake information provision and non-statutory consultation on the Preferred Options for the Ponds Project. The information giving and consultation took place for 12 weeks, from 26 November 2013 – 17 February 2014.
4. A statutory public consultation will follow the submission of a planning application.

Information Giving

5. The primary purpose of the activities undertaken by Resources for Change was to inform the public about the Ponds Project, and why it is being undertaken. Information on the project was provided on the City's website www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/pondsproject and staffed consultation displays were located at Parliament Hill Staff Yard and the East Heath fairground site.
6. To raise awareness of the project and the information giving and consultation process:
 - a. A postcard was sent to 79,000 local residents and businesses
 - b. Adverts were placed in the local press
 - c. Press releases were issued and media coverage secured
 - d. Site specific information boards were placed at each pond

- e. Information stalls were hosted at the Parliament Hill Farmers market, Kentish Town Tube Station, by the Hampstead Heath High Street post office, Golders Green station and next to Gospel Oak station
 - f. An information video was placed on YouTube
 - g. Two guided walks led by the City's Panel Engineer and the Superintendent were provided.
7. This resulted in approximately 4,000 visits to the consultation displays and the receipt of 1,000 questionnaire responses.

The Consultation

8. The non-statutory consultation presented people with the two Preferred Options for each chain of ponds. They were asked to rate their satisfaction with the options and offered the opportunity to make any additional comments about each option and about the project more generally.
9. The options presented emerged following a substantive engagement with the Ponds Project Stakeholder Group and the Design Team. This engagement led to the following design criteria which all options meet:
- a. Compliance with current and expected reservoir legislation and associated industry standards
 - b. Preserve as far as possible the natural aspect of the Heath
 - c. Introduce a passive system (i.e. no reliance on mechanical or human intervention)
 - d. Maintain or increase the standard of protection downstream in non-dam breach flooding scenario
 - e. Not increase the flow rate from the last dam in the chain in any flood scenario
 - f. Flood storage to be increased in the middle of the chains
 - g. Works to be concentrated at the least ecologically sensitive locations
10. Due to the narrowing down of the design criteria in this way, both options for each chain were similar, with the differences reflecting the various trade-offs between dam heights in different locations, and between dam height and potential tree loss.
11. The options consulted on, as approved by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee and Project Sub Committee, were:

Highgate Chain

Option 4	Option 6
Crest Restoration works at Stock Pond and Kenwood Ladies Bathing Pond	
2m raising of the dam at Model Boating Pond	2.5m raising of the dam at Model Boating Pond
1.5m raising of the dam at Men's Bathing Pond	1m raising of the dam at Men's Bathing Pond

1.25m raising of the dam at Highgate No.1 Pond
Spillway works at all ponds

Hampstead Chain

Option M	Option P
Crest Restoration works and spillway works at Heath of Heath and Viaduct Ponds	
Build a new 5.6m high flood storage dam (with a 300mm pipe) at the Catchpit area	
1m dam raising at Mixed Boating Pond	2m dam raising at Mixed Boating Pond
Install letterbox culvert spillways and Hampstead No.2 Pond and Hampstead No.1 Pond	0.5m dam raising at Hampstead No.2 Pond with a 2m wall Install letterbox culvert spillways and Hampstead No.2 Pond and Hampstead No.1 Pond

Consultation Responses

12. Following a high level of public engagement through postcards, media work, the guided walks and the staffed consultation stands which were visited by 4,000 people; 1,000 questionnaire responses were received. Resources for Change suggest in their report that this is not uncommon, and further that questionnaires tended to be responded to by those with a significant interest and who have a strong negative view.
13. The consultation responses did not reveal any strong preference between either options 4 and 6, or options M and P. Unsurprisingly, there was a quite a high degree of dissatisfaction with the proposed options – with only 8-12% stating that they were most satisfied with any of the options and 60-66% stating they were dissatisfied with the options, with a number of respondents questioning the basis of the project.
14. A full analysis is provided in the report attached as Appendix 1.
15. Related comments can be summarised in a number of themes, the most prominent being: interpretation of the law and necessity of the project; the visual impact; ecological impact and impact on amenity and recreation. These comments will be extremely useful as the project moves forward. The comments highlighted particular areas of concern, many of which mirror the City's own determination to minimise the impact on the Heath as we progress the project.

Next steps

16. Although the consultation did not indicate a clear preference on either chain, the messages from consultation will be considered and utilised by the Project Board, Design Team and Constructor to influence our approach to the project.
17. Ground investigations are currently underway, having started on 24 March 2014. The results from these tests will feed into buildability considerations as we move towards a final design proposal.
18. A report recommending a Preferred Options and seeking authority to submit a planning application will be presented to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee on 2 June 2014, Hampstead Heath, Queen's Park & Highgate Wood Committee on 9 June 2014 and Project Sub Committee on 17 June 2014. It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in July 2014.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. The Ponds Project supports Key Policy Priority 5: Increasing the impact of the City's cultural and heritage offer on the life on London and the nation by supporting the provision of "safe, secure and accessible Open Spaces". The project will ensure compliance with the current and anticipated requirements of the Reservoirs Act 1975 and deliver the concluding mitigation of Strategic Risk 11.

Implications

20. The consultation did not demonstrate any clear public preference for either option on each chain of ponds. It however did successfully reach out to large numbers of people and succeeded in raising awareness of the project.
21. The comments from the consultation on the specific options and in terms of the approach the City should take to the project have been shared with the Project Board, Design Team and Constructor and will inform our approach going forward.

Conclusion

22. In conclusion, the information giving and public consultation exercise met the requirement to raise awareness of the Ponds Project. The consultation succeeded in eliciting views about the options proposed and messages in respect of ecology, landscaping and amenity concerns have emerged. The consultation did not however demonstrate any clear or meaningful preference for either option on either chain of ponds.
23. The results of the consultation will feed into the City and our Design Team's approach and the messages emerging about issues of particular concern to the public will be considered as we move towards a final design solution.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Information Giving and Consultation Report produced by Resources for Change

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