



Ponds Project Stakeholder Group
Saturday 10 May 2014, 9.30am
Parliament Hill meeting room

Present:

Karen Beare	KB	Fitzroy Park RA (Acting Chair)
Jeremy Simons	JLS	City of London elected member (Deputy Chair)
Nick Bradfield	NB	Dartmouth Park CAAC
Tom Brent	TB	South End Green RA
Simon Briscoe	SB	Highgate Society
Lynda Cook	LC	Heath & Hampstead Society
Tony Gilchick	TG	Heath & Hampstead Society
Janis Hardiman	JH	Vale of Health
Prem Holdaway	PH	Angling Society
Richard Harvey	RH	Highgate Men's Pond Association
Charles Leonard	CL	Oak Village RA
Ed Reynolds	ER	Oak Village RA
Jean Rohart	JR	Highgate Men's Pond Association
Bob Warnock	BW	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Armorer Wason	AW	West Hill Court RA
Peter Wilder	PW	Strategic Landscape Architect
Jennifer Wood	JW	Communication Officer, City of London (notes)

Officers observing:

Tom Creed	TC	Engineer and project liason, City of London
Philip Everett	PE	Project Board Director, City of London
Declan Gallagher	DG	Operations Service Manager, Hampstead Heath
Ian Grant	IG	Site Manger, BAM Nuttall
Paul Monaghan	PM	Assistant Director of Engineering, City of London
Peter Snowdon	PS	Project Consultant, City of London
Esther Sumner	ES	Ponds Project and Management Support Officer

Presenters:

Liz Brown	LB	Landscape Lead, Atkins
Tom Dell	TD	Arboriculturist, Atkins
Ben Jones	BJ	Engineer, Atkins
Ian Morrissey	IM	Aquatic Ecologist, Atkins

Apologies

Rachel Douglas, Jane Shallice, Michael Hammerson, Susan Rose, Harriet King, Ellin Stein, Mary Port, Rob Mitchell

Approval of note of previous meeting

- NB raised point again of area behind Bird Sanctuary being too muddy and impassible.
- LC – ambiguity in tree figures which have gone up since the last seminar. i.e. Stock now has 26 trees lost while at earlier seminar figure was 22 trees.
- KB -tree loss would be discussed during the seminar.

Introduction by PW

- PW introduced the day and went through the agenda.
- BW updated on Ground Investigation and that Panel Engineer had completed annual inspection.

Model Boating Pond

- LC – wants clarification on which trees are to be removed.
- KB – can they be marked on the plans?
- ACTION: It was agreed that plans would be issued with trees at risk of removal clearly marked.
- TG – how will people sail model boats now there are more reeds and less access to water?
- BJ – there is still access to water at points all round the pond and no planting on east side.
- SB – Highgate Society is strongly opposed to planting around the pond so people do not have access to water. MBP is currently only pond where people can get close to water and feel it should remain this way
- IM – reed planting is just proposal at moment, not set in stone.
- SB – loss of causeway to island also means more of pond – another 20% -will be inaccessible. Other ponds on Heath have ecological features, not necessary on MBP.
- PW – over the past couple of years discussions have taken place and there was agreement amongst the PPSG that MBP could have its margins softened as it is the most municipal pond.
- NB – looks like a lot of extra paths. How will they be surfaced?
- LB – all will be surfaced but some may look more informal. This will be discussed in the next section of the seminar.
- LC – when western slope is dug out to create the island, will the new slope not be too steep and dangerous?
- BJ – slope is currently 1 in 10, under current proposals it will be 1 in 5 or 1 in 7. This is not too steep.
- LC – will people be able to sit on it?
- LB – yes it will be like the slope on the opposite side of the pond.
- SB – Sketch-up drawing is misleading. There is a lack of clarity over what the proposal will look like.
- PH – what will happen when a child loses its model boat in the reeds?
- IM – planting shelf will be able to be walked on for someone to retrieve a boat. They will be designed with safety in mind.
- KB – cross sections of the planting shelves would be useful.
- PH – what about the excavated hillside getting waterlogged and causing a landslide?
- BJ – we will do slope stability analysis. Changing it from a 1 in 10 to a 1 in 5 should mean it is still a stable slope.
- CL – how big is the gap between the island and the shore? Worried it will be a temptation for children to jump the gap.
- IM – the gap will be around 5m and 1.5m deep.
- CL – why was the idea of a causeway dropped?
- BW – there was a preference to making it an island so it could be a nature reserve for nesting birds.
- RH – does not agree the slope on the west side will be similar to that on east side. Feels west side will be dangerously steep.
- BJ – slope will have steeper parts but will be very similar to east side.
- AW – will sheet cladding on east side of pond be hidden to be consistent the whole way round the pond? This would be welcomed.
- IM – they could be clad in timber.
- CL – what is the gap between the paths?
- BJ – between 5 and 6m

- PS – is there a consensus on whether a causeway to the island is a good idea?
- TG – thinks it should be accessible for model boating.
- BW – it could have a wet causeway so people could wade out and collect model boats.
- SB – cross sections are misleading as they are two different scales.
- LB – apologies – it was not intended to mislead.
- KB – not fair to say Atkins are deliberately misleading however finds it frustrating that various information is not available or is presented poorly despite constant requests. The information provided must be reliable.

Men's Bathing Pond

- JR – how high will wall be?
- BJ – maximum of 1m – a little lower than the current fence. New spillway will be 0.25cm above current water level.
- JR – will spillway be a drain or a sluice?
- BJ – it will be an open gap in the wall and the spillway will look like a grassy slope.
- BJ – because of information discovered during GI (that top of the dam is made from rubble) sheet-piling may have to be used to strengthen dam but it should not change the outward appearance of the dam too much.
- CL – what level is base of spillway?
- BJ – the spillway is about the same level as the current pond level.
- NB – this will open up the corner so people can see in over pond. Will there be opportunities to open up the western bank for views?
- LB – we have received mixed feedback on this – it is more of a City management issue.
- BW – new spillway will need to have a fence so people cannot access water from this area
- LC – where is leak and how long has it been there?
- PM – leak is quite high in dam which is why it is not always an issue. It has been there a few years and is being monitored. The fact the top of the dam is not made of clay could explain why there is a leak.
- RH – the trees removed in this area are still important even if category C. It would be counterproductive to cut trees back which over-hang ponds as they provide good nesting locations for birds.
- IM – these comments will be taken into account. Cutting trees back does help water quality as it reduced the amount of leaf litter that falls into pond, but de-silting further up the chain will also help.
- KB – it would be good to look on site. It is important we are not too formulaic.
- JH – can we see the trees which are proposed for removal when we go on site?
- BJ – yes.
- KB – it would be helpful if the trees could somehow be identified on site. People need to know.
- AW – also need to see the tree survey.
- LB – it is still incomplete.
- SB – most people will not understand the tree grading. People need to know what it will look like.
- LC – I led a walk and when I explained which trees would be going people were appalled. The fact the numbers are changing is very worrying.
- PE – we will provide clearer information on trees for the next meeting on Monday 19 May.
- AW – a wall with timber cladding has been discussed but the preference from West Hill Court and Millfield Cottage is a brick wall.

Highgate No. 1

- AW – what trees are to be removed?
- TD – two limes and an alder but still working with the engineers to hopefully reduce this.

- AW – there is an area on dam where there are trees which are of particular interest to West Hill Court. When will we know whether they will be affected? We accept there may be some tree loss and are not against this.
- BJ – should have that information in next few weeks.
- PH – where does water go when it comes off the spillway?
- BJ – currently there is a low spot in the garden of Brookfield Mansions but the building sits higher up. We will have more detailed information when we have the survey results.
- KB – we should wait for the survey results before we discuss this further. It will not be a meaningful discussion without these results.
- CL – are Atkins aware of the proposal for a second overflow pipe?
- PE – we have done survey work to find out what happens to the water now, the situation will not be made worse after the project takes place.
- LC – if this pond is good ecologically why is there so much work taking place?
- IM – there are no proposals to do lots of work here, only extending marginal reedbeds.
- AW – tawny owls live here and are missed off the bird survey. They are important as they help control the rat population.
- IM – we will pass this on to the terrestrial ecologist.

Hampstead Chain

Mixed Pond

- PH – this is the only pond on this chain with wheelchair access for anglers. If there is to be no angling here, is there to be provision elsewhere?
- LB – yes possibly on Hampstead No. 2.
- BW – disabled angling will also be retained on Model Boating Pond.
- TB – causeway solution (with 0.5m raising and 0.5m bund) proposed by Atkins is good and will improve the area as it is now.

Hampstead No. 2

- TB – could the culvert be burrowed under the Plane tree so it could possibly be saved?
- BJ – there is an engineering issue with burrowing into a dam as it can cause internal erosion.
- TB – the curve in the avenue of plane trees is one of the best features. It would be a great shame to lose trees on this curve.
- BJ – will discuss with Panel Engineer about possibility of moving culvert further over to avoid tree roots.
- JR – is proposal to build dam at Catchpit still happening?
- BJ – yes this is still the proposal. We can show engineering drawings.
- KB – it is important to recognize that there is significant negotiation with Panel Engineer taking place.
- BJ – we are constantly in discussions with him.
- PE – this is correct. The pipe at Hampstead no. 2 has become curved (to avoid trees) after negotiations and we can go back to Panel Engineer with the idea of curving it even more.

Hampstead No. 1

- CL – is it correct that box culvert will start passing water at 1 in 1,000? Is this the same as Highgate?
- BJ – yes they are both the same standards of protection.
- TB – can the new outflow be screened with reeds?
- IM – yes we can look at planting to screen.
- TB – could the pond be de-silted?
- IM – it is not on the list to be full de-silted but there will be some localized de-silting. The silt can be used to build a planting platform.

- TB – whole dam is very visible after some tree clearance. Could replanting/screening be considered?
- TD – the stumps of the trees which have been taken down still remain, so good chance they will regrow.
- PH – why not increase the size of the existing outflow pipe?
- BJ – the existing pipe cannot be increased enough to mean we won't need a second culvert, so as we are putting in a new culvert it makes sense to do all of the work here rather than in two places. This minimizes the intervention.
- TB – could the rectangular culverts be turned the other way round?
- BJ – yes but they would need to be put in deeper into the bank.
- JH – can trees for removal be identified by paint?
- KB – perhaps not paint but a temporary mark would be useful.

Design Approach and Landscape Treatment

- KB – is there a Design Approach document for the lower ponds? If so, can this be circulated.
- LC – important PPSG get to look at engineering drawings as they have not had any influence on this aspect.
- PW – the PPSG has had significant impact over the engineering over the past two years.
- TB – materials palette is complicated but helpful document. Over the years the Heath has gradually shifted towards a civic landscape and I think it should be shifted back. If paths get muddy, then so be it. Asphalt should be avoided.
- TG – can this document (materials palette) be emailed on Monday?
- SB – this needs more explanations. I want an explanation of why MBP is going to be nearly all surrounded by reeds.
- PW – since the beginning of discussion with PPSG there has been support in softening the edges of MBP which is currently the most municipal.
- AW – there is a balance that needs to be found so people with buggies etc. can access paths.
- TB – prefer walls to be overgrown.
- AW- my preference is for the walls to have a brick finish – not trying to hide what they are.

What happens next

- PW – we all share the Heath and we need to get the right balance.
- On 19 May we will have another chance to discuss the plans. We will also hear from BAM Nuttall about construction.
- Looking for feedback on the materials palette by 19 May.
- Thursday 26 June – we will look at the final scheme before a planning application is submitted on July 4. We will look at how the scheme has progressed.

Walk on Site

The following points were made during the site walk to the lower ponds:

Mixed Bathing Pond

- Fishing to be removed.
- Fence should be the absolute minimum required for safety and also to prevent swimming from causeway.
- Surface is tar and chip – needs to be strong enough to take large vehicles.
- Edge of pond will be reinstated to bring environmental benefits. Any vegetation which is cut back will be done in consultation with City ecologists.
- Pond will be de-silted.

Hampstead No. 2

- Currently losing two Plane trees.
- Fishing to be retained and disabled access for fishing could be possible on decking over culvert.
- PH – not sure this is the best spot in pond for fishing and it limits the disabled person.
- Path over causeway is tar and chip.
- Existing fencing to be retained.

Hampstead No. 1

- Culvert has been located to avoid plane trees on cathedral avenue.
- Current picket fence is to be moved to other side of trees as part of Heath Management plan.

Model Boating Pond

- Tar and chip surface on larger path – it is a busy access route.
- Hoggin path currently next to pond – does this create an issue with water quality – run-off going into pond?
- IM – not as worried about this when it is not on a hill.
- KB – should the surfaces be porous?
- BW – not always durable and need edging.
- AW – timber cladding should be kept consistent around the whole pond.
- Fishing could be moved out on platforms to avoid clash with those using paths.

Men's Bathing Pond

- Removal of a group of small trees at spillway location will open up the pond for some views.
- BW – we will need some sort of fencing to prevent people accessing water.
- The wall could look different on both sides.

Highgate No. 1

- TG – could low shrubs be grown to disguise the wall?
- LB – we will check this with Panel Engineer.

Next Meetings

- Monday, 19 May
- Thursday, 26 June