

Committee(s)	Dated:
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee - For Information	9 March 2015
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee - For Decision	23 March 2015
Subject: Landscape improvement works at the North End Road Entrance into Golders Hill Park	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information

Summary

This report informs Members on the proposed hard and soft landscape improvement works at the North End Way entrance to Golders Hill Park. The intended works will be undertaken by the multi-skilled in-house teams from across the North London Open Spaces as part of the 2015/16 Annual Work Programme. The scheme will simplify and soften the entrance, to create a more coherently designed landscape.

Recommendation(s)

- That the Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee note the proposals to improve the hard and soft landscaping works at the North End Way Road entrance into Golders Hill Park.
- That the views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee are conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 23 March 2015.
- That the Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee support the proposals to improve the hard and soft landscaping works at the North End Way Road entrance into Golders Hill Park.

Main Report

Background

1. In 1898 Golders Hill Park was bought for public access with funds subscribed by the general public and both the London and Middlesex County Councils. The Park is a Humphrey Repton-influenced 'designed park' and is adjacent to West Heath. The Park was once the property of Queen Victoria's surgeon, who lived in Golders Hill House.

2. Within its 36 acres, the Park contains a formal walled garden, small zoo collection, sports facilities (including grass and hard tennis courts, croquet lawn, table tennis tables and putting lawn), children's play area, a band stand, a stumpery, formal mown grassland and informal woodland walkways. Unlike the rest of Hampstead Heath, Golders Hill Park is closed by staff nightly. In 2014 Golders Hill Park was awarded a London in Bloom gold medal and was a category winner (Best large park in London, over 25 acres).
3. Over the past three years, staff have improved the entrances at Gordon House Road and the Ball Path at Highgate Road on the southern part of Hampstead Heath. It was agreed by both the Consultative and Management Committees that these entrances should be softened with the removal of municipal furniture and ad-hoc ornamental shrub planting, and a move was made towards a more rural gateway entrance.

Current Position

4. The hard and soft landscape features at the North End Way main entrance include a disabled car park, footpaths, signage, and planting that has evolved piecemeal over time. Two established shrub borders contain a mixture of mature plants and five conifers that are out of scale with the surrounding landscape.
5. There is a disused steep pathway leading to a locked gate onto Sandy Road. The decision was taken to close this gate approximately twelve years ago, due to there being an adjacent gate close by.

Proposals

6. It is proposed to simplify the landscape, signage and planting to create a more coherent arrival at the North End Way entrance (see proposed plan – Appendix 1). The Hampstead Heath Management Plan Part One "Towards a Plan for the Heath 2007-2017", states:

There are two areas that stand out as discrete and historically important designed landscapes: Golders Hill Park and the Hill Garden and Pergola. They are unique and require a different management approach from the rest of the Heath.

7. Advice was sought from a Landscape Architect, and the Golders Hill Gardening Team Supervisor and Team Leader on how best to improve the landscape, while at the same time recognising the above statement that the Park is not part of the Heath's rural natural landscape. Appendix 2 depicts Golders Hill Park in 1896, clearly showing that it is a designed landscape, with the old Victorian mansion on the footprint of the current car park.
8. The following hard and soft landscape improvement works are proposed, which will form part of the 2015/16 Annual Work Programme. Photographs of the area, taken in January 2015, are appended at the end of the report (Appendix 3):

- Fell five overgrown and out-of-scale conifers (Figure 1), and replace with ornamental cherry trees (*Prunus Shizuka*) and replant shrub border with Camellias, Azaleas and Maholias.
 - Plant a new native hedgerow to soften the edges of the car park and provide a green vegetative screen for seated visitors (Figure 2).
 - Remove the disused path leading onto Sandy Road (Figure 3), extend the existing wall, and gap up with existing plants.
 - Replant the *Rhododendron ponticum* shrub border (Figure 4) with Camellias, Azaleas and Maholias, retaining the two Acer trees (*Acer Pseudoplatanus brilliantissimum*) (Figure 4), and plant a beech hedge along the fence line.
 - Review the signage at the entrance gate (Figures 5 & 6) to remove repetition, de-clutter and standardise with the new Open Spaces identity.
9. It is intended that the works will be carried out by the Hampstead Heath in-house multi-skilled staff, including the Arboriculture, Gardening and Technical Maintenance Teams. Thirty percent of the plants can be re-planted by thinning other shrub borders, while bricks from the edge of the pathway can be recycled to build the wall.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. The works supports the City of London Corporate Plan 2013-17 – KPP5 *“increasing the impact of the City cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation”*.
11. 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”*.

Implications

12. It is estimated that the costs of the planting will be £1,400, which will be met from the Superintendent’s Local Risk Budget. Discussions will also be had with a local benefactor who has donated plants in the past, in order to drive down costs. The soil will be ameliorated with approximately 60 cubic meters of locally produced leaf mould which will be available in September 2015. This will have the effect of improving the soil structure and incorporating earthly organic matter back into the soil. New plants will be dipped in Mycorrhizal fungi at a cost of £50.00 to aid root establishment.
13. There is a risk that the felling of five large conifer trees may be controversial on Hampstead Heath. Clear reasons for the change will be explained on interpretation boards, together with the new planting designs and plans.

14. Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee were introduced to the concept of a design change during their walk on 1st November 2014. Initially Scots Pine and Heather were discussed as planting options, but as the Hampstead Heath Management Plan recognises Golders Hill Park as a designed landscape, a more coherent approach is recommended.

15. There are no legal or property implications.

Conclusions

16. The works will improve the entrance to this important gateway into Golders Hill Park, and will simplify and create a more coherent designed landscape, as defined by the Hampstead Heath Management Plan.

17. Gardening staff from Golders Hill Park and an external Landscape Architect have contributed to the design, and multi-skilled teams from across Hampstead Heath will be involved in completing the works.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Proposed Planting Plan.
- Appendix 2 - 1896 Map of Hampstead Heath.
- Appendix 3 - Photographs of the area as it exists today (January 2015).

Bob Warnock

Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, Open Spaces Department

T: 020 7332 3322

E: Bob.warnock@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Declan Gallagher

Operational Services Manager, Open Spaces Department

T: 020 7332 3771

E: Declan.gallagher@cityoflondon.gov.uk