

Committee	Dated:
Queen's Park Consultative Group	14 June 2017
Subject: Queen's Park Farm Revitalisation Project	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Report author: Richard G Gentry, Open Spaces & Heritage Department	

Summary

The Queen's Park Draft Farm Vision has been developed to promote greater public engagement.

The Draft Vision entails a larger, more visually pleasing, entertaining and user friendly Farm, with integrated and focused educational information throughout. There will be additional space allocated to animal housing, in addition to the improvements to the facilities. The improvements will benefit local school groups and members of the local community who visit the Farm.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that:

- Members note the report.
- Members discuss the Draft Vision and Outcomes (Appendix 1) and give their views.
- Members discuss the Queen's Park Farm Visualisation Drawings (Appendix 2) and give their views.
- That the views of the Queen's Park Consultative Group are conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee at their meeting in July 2017.

Main Report

Background

1. The Farm facility at Queen's Park was introduced in 1990 and currently receives an estimated 80,000 visits a year. It serves as an excellent opportunity for young children to engage with animals and is a much loved local resource.

Current Position

2. The Farm facility is now showing its age and restorative work is required to bring it back up to standard. Animal stock levels are historically low, and this represents an opportunity to improve the Farm. It is proposed that this could be achieved by redeveloping the Farm around the guiding concept of “*A small-holding with a sense of fun*”.
3. An over-arching Draft Vision has been developed, together with four key themes: Welfare, Welcoming, Engagement and Collection (see Appendix 1). This includes an Outcomes Framework with key indicators and performance measures.
4. The City would like to develop the site to represent an idealised small holding which would encourage visitor engagement. Visitors to the Farm will be able to develop their understanding and knowledge of the animals, a Farm environment and food production.

Project Outcome Areas

5. **People:** An improved public experience (site aesthetic, animal stock, interpretation signage, space) leading to increased visitor numbers/repeat visitors. Updates on signage and website, advertising farm based events such as “Meet the Farm Attendant” should also increase visitor numbers.
6. **Finance:** By improving the appearance of the Farm and the overall experience of the visiting public, we would expect some degree of increase in public donations received at the site. An increase in visitor numbers and particularly in repeat visitors should translate to a growth in visitor donations whilst the diversification in animal stock should garner improved funds from animal adoptions and structured educational school visits that can be charged for.
7. **Environment:** Promote the Farms biodiversity with wild flower areas and organically grown fruit and vegetables. Incorporating sustainable planting and using reclaimed wood for structures such as fencing and animal housing. Ensure any breeding programmes are sustainable. Promote biodiversity through educational visits to encourage pupils to care for their own environment.
8. **Education:** The more specifically themed animal collection will lend itself to structured educational visits. This in turn will enable us to gather a more quantifiable view of the community educational benefits of the site. The addition of a vegetable patch will add educational focus for subjects as diverse as food production and security, climate change and health & nutrition. The redevelopment will also provide the opportunity to introduce age appropriate interpretation over the entire site covering a broad range of subjects (agriculture, animal care, species information, rare breeds, healthy eating).
9. **Animals:** The development will focus on improving housing, care facilities and overall enclosure quality for all species. Specific parts of the project will also provide us with important biosecurity options and improved physical security in animal night quarters.

10. As part of the wider Zoo and Farm Project, the donation post in the farm will be reviewed. It is hoped that new donation boxes, that are more visually attractive, will encourage visitors to make regular donations to help support the costs of providing the Farm. Other opportunities for members of the public to donate will also be considered, e.g. contactless donations. In the financial year 2016/17, donations received amounted to £2,207.27. This money supports the cost of providing the Farm.

Options

11. In order to properly accommodate animal stock, improve facilities and enhance the public value with this project it will be necessary to slightly expand the footprint of the site. There is limited opportunity for expansion due to the surrounding staff yard on three sides and the park itself on the western boundary.
12. The north side of the site is bordered by a waste compactor and green waste collection bay both of which it is not feasible to relocate.
13. The flower bed currently adjoining the existing entrance at the north west corner of the site will be included in the extended footprint of the Farm, and will allow for the construction of a new entrance to the Farm. This will allow easier access for larger buggies and will provide extra space for interpretation signage.
14. To the east side of the existing Farm boundary, there is the option to consider the reduction of one car parking space in the staff parking area, in the staff yard, opposite the staff buildings. This could provide enough area to either extend the current pond paddock or run a public pathway leading to the area behind the barn.
15. Extension of the boundary on the southern side will take in two small structures important for animal housing, biosecurity provision (especially re: Avian Influenza) and storage for bedding, dry fodder and equipment. The area south of these structures will become either a new staff yard area or a publicly accessed area with small animal enclosures dependant on the final proposal.
16. The west side is bordered by a beech hedge and shrubbery. Extension into this area would increase the site by a 3 to 3.5m strip along the entire length. This would enable the expansion and remodelling of the central enclosures and the creation of border enclosures. It is proposed that this land is gained by planting a new hedge. This will significantly reduce the impact of the changes to the Farm in terms of the public view from the park, and will alleviate concerns about wildlife habitat loss due to the removal of hedges.
17. Detailed plans for two site expansion options along with artist impressions are included at Appendix 2. It is proposed to close the site entirely in September 2017 with works to be completed in time for a re-opening event in Spring/Summer of 2018.

Proposals

18. With only minor adjustments the animal exhibits will be focused exclusively on domestic livestock whilst the inclusion of an allotment and a wildlife garden will highlight vegetable crops and basic ecological ideas. The improved public and animal facilities will be themed to reflect the aesthetic of an idealised small holding and educational interpretation will be redesigned and expanded to reflect ideas around food sources and production, biodiversity and animal care.
19. By improving facilities the Farm will deliver a better experience for visitors. As the facility will be larger, more visually pleasing, entertaining and usable, with integrated and focused educational messages.
20. The proposed changes to the Farm facility will allow for additional space for animal housing.
21. When considering changes to the facility, notably bringing the fodder storage barn into the farm. Members should note that the barn will be split north / south into two bird housing areas, each with full height barn-style doors on the northern wall facing the public view from the pathways. This new "Bird Barn" will double as open fronted day-time shelters and secure night-time quarters for chickens, ducks and geese. The 'Bird Barn' will also allow for fowl to be quarantined for bio-security when required, as has been required during the most recent outbreak of avian influenza. The metal storage shed used by staff for equipment storage would be relocated within the staff yard complex. The visualisation attached at Appendix 2 provides information on this.
22. The design aims are:
 - a. Maximising space and options by expanding site footprint.
 - b. Creation of a new entrance way with a more pleasing appearance and better accessibility for larger buggies.
 - c. New public pathway layout aimed at maximising space for animal enclosures whilst maintaining good public traffic flow and improving the overall public experience.
 - d. Repurposing the fodder store into a 'Bird Barn'. Opening up the north side with full height doors, splitting the internal space, addition of wood cladding covering all publicly visible surfaces both inside and out.
 - e. Ensuring sufficient enclosure space for newly expanded stock list (Pygmy Goats, domestic chickens/duck/goose, quail, giant rabbits, Ouessant (miniature) sheep, turkey).
 - f. Creation of a covered combination interpretation and sheltered seating area in north east corner of the site.
 - g. Redeveloping pond to enlarge, reshape and provide planting. Remove current filtration system and replace with less obtrusive setup.
 - h. Particular attention to be given to the issue of the beech hedging during expansion. Any change/removal options must mitigate concerns raised about habitat loss.

- i. Incorporate an 'Allotment' area at northern end of site. A series of beds containing commonly grown vegetables alongside a dedicated Wildlife Garden area.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. The proposed restorative works at the Queen's Park Farm will help fulfil the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2015-19; to provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation. The report also meets the Department's Strategic Goals and Objectives; To protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites, Embed financial sustainability across our activities by delivering identified programmes and projects, Enrich the lives of Londoners by providing high quality and engaging educational and volunteering opportunities, Improve the health and wellbeing of community through access to green space and recreation. The report also contributes to the Departmental values of quality, inclusion, environment, promotion and people.

Implications

24. Funding for this project would need to be given careful consideration. The City of London would consider appropriate funding mechanisms, including donations and fundraising opportunities for this project with the support of the local community. Any funding from the Superintendent's Local Risk may have further implications of operational delivery in the Park.

Conclusion

25. The implementation of the Vision for the Farm and the redevelopment of the facility will enable the City of London to transform the Farm in to a well structured, high quality resource accessible to the public, promoting engagement and learning opportunities.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Queen's Park Farm, Vision and Outcomes Document
- Appendix 2 – Queen's Park Farm Visualisation Drawings

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