

Committee	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	11 September 2017
Subject: SEF 21/17 Wanstead Park: - Briefing note for Members	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For decision

Summary

The City of London is the primary landowner for the Wanstead Park Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. In 2009 Historic England placed it on the Heritage at Risk Register. Working with the three co-owners of the registered Park and Garden a parkland plan is being developed by consultants to help with securing the removal of the park from the 'at risk' register.

This report provides an update on the Parkland Plan development progress at Wanstead Park since last reporting to your committee on the 15 September 2015 and also outlines the proposed process to continue to progress the Parkland Plan. It is recommended that an outline (Gateway 1/2) project proposal be submitted to the Project Sub Committee for autumn 2017

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree that Gateway 1 and 2 reports be submitted to the Corporate Projects Board and Project Sub-Committee with outline project proposals seeking to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the Heritage at Risk Register.

Main Report

Background

1. Wanstead Park was a grand house, gardens and estate dating from the 1500s which enjoyed the patronage of both royalty and the aristocracy for over 500 years. The Park is 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 of London. 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 City Corporation acquisitions between 1876 and 1880. Other parts of the Park were later purchased by London Borough of Redbridge and the Wanstead Sports Ground Limited.

2. The Park is listed as a Grade II* – ‘a garden of special interest’ - Registered Park and Garden by English Heritage (now Historic England).
3. The Park was declared at risk 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. Historic England has indicated that to achieve the removal of the parkland from the Heritage at Risk Register the following needs to be in place:
 - a. A Parkland Plan encompassing the entire extent of the Registered Park and Garden;
 - b. An indication of a clear change in the trajectory for management including proposals for addressing the management of the cascade and identified heritage assets;
 - c. Some evidence of implementation to demonstrate commitment, with the recent vegetation works around the Grotto cited as a good example.
4. A Wanstead Park Steering Group (WPSG) was established in 2013 to explore the potential for removing the RPG from the ‘at risk’ register. Under the auspices of the WPSG the consultancy LDA Design was engaged 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. LDA were tasked with establishing a consensus within the partnership’s key stakeholders over the scope of works that should be included in future landscape conservation and regeneration plans at the park. The core focus of the plan would be to identify regeneration works suitable to ensure that Wanstead park is removed from the ‘at risk’ register whilst satisfying the criteria of the HLF and Big Lottery Fund Parks for People programme.

Current Position

Parkland Plan

5. Draft proposals for the future management of the Park were put out for public consultation on 23 February 2015. 272 responses were received to the questionnaire; 194 via an online response form and 78 using paper questionnaires and four organisational responses from; English Heritage, the Friends of Epping Forest, Vision RCL and the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group. Broadly speaking there was public support for proposals to improve public access and to address water management issues while ensuring that the park retains its existing natural character. Concerns were expressed about the potential for over ‘over restoration’ of the Park as a formal designed landscape.
6. Following public consultation LDA produced a draft Wanstead Park Conceptual Options plan in April 2015 which identified activity proposals into three categories as follows:
 - a. *Priority Projects*: Activity which should be addressed in the next 5-7 years;

- b. *Longer Term Priorities*: Where resource and planning needs or the project precedence require a longer time frame of 7 to 15 years
 - c. *Possible Future Aspirations*: Desirable as future aspirations of 16+ years
7. Once the proposed 5-7 year Priority Projects were compiled it was evident that the scale of resources required meant there was a need to further prioritise this activity to a scale in line with potential funding opportunities. The Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Fund's joint 'Parks for People' programme is essentially the only significant source of external funding available and consequently the £5million limit on individual projects in this program was used as a basis for framing work packages.
8. The current plan proposes three different themed work packages. Two of the packages are framed to meet the objective of getting Wanstead Park off the 'at risk' register. These projects would require substantial capital funding and have been framed to sit within the Lottery Parks for People programme. A third package has been framed which seeks to achieve key improvements but does so largely working within existing resource levels.
9. The three themed work packages are still in the early development stage and further work to refine and cost these is pending. The three packages are outlined below with package 'a', Wanstead for All, likely to be proposed as the best fit with current needs and opportunities:

Possible lottery funded projects

- a. *Wanstead for All*: This package focuses on substantial access improvements across the park alongside progressing research on hydrological issues as required under the abstraction licence and some largely vegetation management works on protecting and interpreting heritage earthworks. The major investment project would look at improvements to the Temple so that it could be better used as a visitor 'hub' with a much improved catering offer which it is hoped will bring future income generation benefits.
- b. *Creating a sustainable and resilient waterscape*: This would seek to take forward improvements to the significant water management issues at the park with the possible major investment project focused on the relining of the Heronry. Some works to improve paths and earthworks, especially those associated with lake system, would be included.

Existing resources funded project

- c. *Improving Access, Management and Amenity*: This package would seek to focus existing resources onto the key improvement priorities. Vegetation management to open paths and views is a key need and something that could be integrated within future work activity for work teams and contractors. Similarly, phased investment in upgrading signage could be integrated within wider EF work to improve Forest wide signage and

interpretation. This work package in isolation would not be sufficient to remove the parkland from the 'at risk' register.

Parkland Plan Revision

10. The May 2016 Draft Parkland plan is currently being revised to update for additional considerations that have been identified through discussions and activity over the last year. Key additional considerations are:
 - a. *Lake system*: Shift of emphasis towards a 'sustainable' lake system and not simply a like for like replacement. To include: An assessment on the potential role for wetland habitats such as reed beds to reduce the need for water; increased emphasis on the enhancement of the lake system for biodiversity and improving the resilience of the lake system to cope with problems such Blue Green Algae and invasive weeds.
 - b. *Parking*: The increasing establishment of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) has meant that we need to consider more parking requirements for day to day visitors and also for event parking.

Next steps

11. With the Parkland Plan nearing completion approval to progress the development of any project proposals at Wanstead Park needs to be sought via the City Corporation's gateway approval process.
12. It is proposed that Gateway 1 (Corporate Projects Board) and Gateway 2 (Projects Sub-Committee) reports proposing a project to remove Wanstead Park from the 'at risk' register be submitted in autumn 2017. This will enable the subsequent development of detailed project proposals suitable for taking to the Lottery's Parks for People programme. Further progress will be determined by subsequent gateway approval processes.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. 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.
14. Corporate Plan 2013-17: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research meets the objective of the Corporate Plan to provide valued services to London and the nation.
15. Statement of Community Involvement: The City of London has consulted on the preparation of the original Conservation Statement for Wanstead Park (2011) and in 2015 consulted on the LDA Project Plan.

Implications

16. **Financial Implications;** Subject to Gateway approval any final Project Plan will need to be developed to a RIBA Stage 2 Concept cost estimate prepared for all the Priority, Longer Term, and Future Aspirations projects.
17. The HLF's Parks for People programme requires matched funding from the City of London. The matched funding proportion varies across projects, however benchmarking with similar projects suggests that Lottery funding would be c70% and that there would be a requirement of 30% match funding contribution from the City of London, local fundraising and project partners.
18. Definitive overall project costs have still to be compiled however as a guide if the project costs are at the maximum possible of £5 million it is likely that the City of London's matched funding requirement will be in the order of £1.5 million.
19. A financing plan is still to be developed and will form part of the Gateway application process however it is anticipated that a bid would comprise a mix of the following elements:
 - a. *City of London, Epping Forest Local Risk* -Efficiencies delivered through the Service Based Review and earlier savings rounds have reduced the potential for a Local Risk contribution.
 - b. *City of London, Epping Forest:* - Request to Epping Forest Fund, currently standing at £0.5 Million with additional capital receipts anticipated, though the Department of Built Environment is anticipating a call on the Fund for capital to repair Baldwin's and Birch Hall Park Ponds.
 - c. *City of London Combined Work Programme:* Utilising resources identified for Wanstead Park activity by City Surveyors and other Departments as part of the matched funding package.
 - d. *City of London:* A request for additional finance to the Resource Allocation Sub (policy & resources) Committee will need to be made as part of the Gateway process
 - e. *Volunteer Time:* Valuation of volunteer time contributed by the Friends of Wanstead Parklands and others.
 - f. *Thames Water* – Potential Corporate Social Responsibility award.
 - g. *Local Authority Funding* – Local authority contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy with some proposed activity likely to address identified local needs such as a play area.
 - h. *Local Fundraising:* Based on the model developed for Gunnersbury Park Museum Committee could consider a local fund raising campaign. This would reflect the recent success of local fundraising that has supported the Orion Harriers community room. Some aspects of the proposed activity

lend themselves to both community and commercial sponsorship opportunities.

20. **Legal Implications:** The Epping Forest Act 1880 includes an additional power at section 5 to reflect the City's purchase of Wanstead Park in 1880.
21. 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.
22. **Large Raised Reservoirs (LRR):** Four of the Park's remaining five lakes are designated Large Raised Reservoirs (LRRs) under the Reservoirs Act 1975, with three of these in COL ownership. Under the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 EA undertook in 2014 a risk-based review of LRRs and have provisionally given the largest LRR – Ornamental Water – an unexpected 'High Risk' category compared to the lower risk Category B assessment made under previous legislation. The City of London will continue to work closely with the Environment Agency to ensure that the waterbodies are correctly assessed and that proportionate remedial works are undertaken.

Conclusion

23. 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.
24. The Parkland Plan draws together this extensive body of research and has undertaken stakeholder feedback to prepare a Parkland Plan to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the 'at risk' register and to identify how best we can access external funding programmes.
25. It is recommended that Gateway 1 and 2 reports be submitted in autumn 2017 with an outline project proposal based around the Lottery's Parks for People programme seeking to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the 'at risk' register.

Appendices

- None

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