



SAVE TREES IN GUNNERSBURY

The story so far:

Already a year has passed since a few Ealing residents gathered in Gunnersbury Park and affixed 'Help Me!' flyers on several trees to raise awareness of the threat of bulldozing hanging over more than 400 trees along Lionel Road.

Jura Consultants had recommended to Hounslow and Ealing Councils that over 5 acres of the Park's green spaces would have to be sold for development in order to spend £39 million to restore Gunnersbury Park's listed buildings and regenerate the Park. A flawed and patchy community survey on Jura's proposed option followed which led to an outcry from residents and other Park users. Hounslow and Ealing Councils seemed uncommitted to seek funding agencies apart from English Heritage and the Lottery Fund to avoid the need for selling part of the Park.

Save Trees in Gunnersbury (STIG) was born from the residents' anger at these proposals and a distrust of both Councils. The aim was to safeguard our beloved green spaces and to pressure the Councils to seek alternative funding options for the restoration of the Gunnersbury Park's buildings. Although STIG recognizes the importance of these buildings, it is committed to contest any proposal that implies the loss of green spaces in the Park. Gunnersbury Park is not only a historical site with its Museum and Mansions, but also a listed Park, an oasis of peace where people enjoy beautiful tree-lined pathways and woodland. STIG wants to preserve this beauty.

We don't know whether it was pressure from STIG, together with the impending local elections that was responsible for Ealing Council's unexpected change of heart. A motion was passed in full Council against selling land for development in Gunnersbury Park. Ealing also pledged £5 million towards the restoration costs.

Unfortunately, Hounslow Council matched neither the motion nor the £5 million. Instead they pledged £50K for a 'feasibility study'. In February a piecemeal solution for the Park's regeneration was rejected leaving the question of how to source funds for the restoration still unresolved.

It is also a fact that English Heritage has the power to serve a full Repairs Notice on both Councils, which would force them to undertake restoration no matter what the opposition against selling part of the Park.

What next?

The local elections in May changed the political landscape. It is vital for STIG to remain vigilant. Both Councils are now Labour-controlled. The new Councils may not regard past promises and motions as binding. STIG intends to engage with the new Councillors in a spirit of openness and cooperation so that a viable solution for the regeneration of the Park and its buildings can be found that does not endanger its green spaces. The next STIG meeting will be an opportunity to meet our new Councillors and find out their views on how the Park can go forward.

Come and join us on Monday 27th September at 19:00 at the Polygon, St Mary's Church, St Mary's Road Ealing W5 for the next STIG meeting! Become a member, put forward any suggestions for the future of the Park and let us have your ideas on how we can expand our pressure group. We look forward to seeing you there!

For further information write at: stig2009contact@googlemail.com

Join Google groups: STIG – Save Trees In Gunnersbury Or leave a message to: 07719 387 106