

Options for Gunnersbury Park

There are currently a wide range of potential costs involved for the regeneration of Gunnersbury Park depending on the different options available. While all options are still being considered, no decision has yet been made.

The Conservation Management Plan (*this document can be viewed on the website*) completed last year established the importance of the park and highlighted its continued decline and imminent loss of heritage and visitor facilities if no action is taken.

Jura Consultants were appointed to consider what options are available and to recommend a course of action to resolve this. This report is not yet a public document but has been presented in public with the salient points being:

Jura have looked at many different options for the buildings under the guidance of a conservation accredited architect aiming to ensure that: the heritage of the park is protected; that the park remains open to the public; that the cost of the project is practical and that future maintenance costs of the park are secured.

In brief a shortlist of four options was considered.

1 One option would be to accept the decline of the park as an inevitable result of cuts in funding of public parks and manage a controlled loss of heritage, facilities and quality of environment at Gunnersbury. This would not meet the vision established by the CMP but has to be understood as it will become the option by default if no other option is agreed.

2 A proposal was also put forward to completely restore the major heritage assets and invest significantly in the landscape infrastructure. It would retain the museum and allow a mixture of conferences, weddings and community events. There would also be a new build sports hub to improve sporting and community facilities. This project would be eligible for both heritage and sports funding opportunities but even with a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and other anticipated partnership funding it is likely there would still be at least a £12 million shortfall and consideration would need to be given as to how this was funded.

3 Consideration was given to leasing the mansions as offices or other uses. This would reduce the cost of the project and secure the heritage asset to provide an income to the estate but might be difficult to achieve in today's economic climate and might severely limit public access to a private facility, impacting on the relationship between house and landscape.

4 A further aspirational Option was also explored to significantly improve the museum and increase community facilities to provide a destination visitor attraction. While this would have major public benefits there would also be greater capital and revenue costs than other options.

There are unavoidable costs if the buildings are to be restored into an appropriate use. HLF and English Heritage have indicated that they are not interested in a piecemeal approach and the costs for a holistic restoration (Options 2, 3, and 4) are significant. If the continued loss of Heritage and visitor facilities at Gunnersbury is to be avoided significant funding needs to be identified.

Jura consultants concluded the most realistic scenario was enabling development, within English Heritage guidelines although building on public parkland is obviously an emotive issue.

Members of the Gunnersbury Park Regeneration board agreed that a substantial consultation exercise should take place over the summer before any decision is made.

A questionnaire is being developed to make the benefits and consequences of each option available to the public.

A number of presentations are also proposed including to the Brentford Community Council.

Richard Gill,
Gunnersbury Park Museum
London W3 8LQ

Tel 020 8992 1612
richard.gill@hounslow.gov.uk

Visit the website at www.hounslow.gov.uk/gunnersbury