



Regenerating Gunnersbury Park, local history museum and mansions: A way forward

*Joe Bourke and Cllr Andrew Dakers
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Introduction

The Secretary of State and English Heritage have the power to put a Repairs Notice on both Councils directing them to immediately repair the stables and other buildings at risk in the park. The work of the Ealing and Hounslow Councils over the past year should help avoid the need for such intervention and is therefore broadly welcomed.

After decades of inaction a vision for the park, local history museum and mansions has been brought together by nationally recognised consultants, backed up by the local appointed Development Manager. The passion and commitment of both the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum and the Save Trees in Gunnersbury Park groups and the wider community for these locally and nationally significant amenities has shone through as a vigorous debate has taken place regarding the value of these local resources.

The Liberal Democrats recognise the need to invest substantially in both the park and museum, which attracts almost 40,000 visitors, including school children, each year. For many children this museum is their first taste of real history. Tragically, at the moment, the local history collection is being damaged by rain from leaking roofs.

However we do not accept that the loss of one corner of the park to housing can be the only way to raise the necessary capital receipt for investment back into the house and park. This is why Hounslow and Ealing Liberal Democrats are supporting residents' fight against plans to sell off a corner of Gunnersbury Park.

The total estimate of costs for the consultants recommended option was £39 million, or £24 million project if the Sports Hub project is set aside as a separate phase to the programme. Consultants Jura assumed Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and London Development Agency funding of £7.5 million requiring £2.4 million jointly from the two Councils in match

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funding. This would still leave a £14 million shortfall. *See Appendix 4 for a full breakdown.*

The Liberal Democrats note the recent pledge of Ealing Council to contribute £5m to the regeneration of Gunnersbury Park and Museum and welcomes their support. However if Hounslow match Ealing's £5m commitment it will still leave a total shortfall of £6.4 million. Each Council needs to commit £8.2m.

This paper proposes a new funding approach based on prudential borrowing to restore the parks and their buildings – as well as setting out some broader recommendations. Our Alternative Budget for Hounslow Council 2010/11 reaffirms our commitment to this major programme of investment. We look forward to continued discussions about these ideas with a range of stakeholders and other political parties in the weeks ahead to ensure their successful implementation.

The Conservation Management Plan

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) that was commissioned by the councils describes the parks features, why they are important and starts to consider how they can be retained, restored and interpreted.

The parks significant historic buildings, landscape and its importance as; valuable open space for sports and informal recreation, a site for regional events and a haven for nature conservation is identified.

The plan determines the following priority actions as being required:

- Establish a clear management regime and structure to take Gunnersbury Park forward, including the appointment of a Political Champion;
- Adopt the Conservation Management Plan as formal guidance;
- Carry out works to buildings at risk, to stabilise their condition and commission feasibility studies for all buildings to determine a sustainable use;
- Commission a feasibility study for the location of Gunnersbury Park Museum;
- Complete the Sports Hub feasibility study;
- Finalise and adopt the Masterplan; and
- Investigate alternative sources of public and private funding to implement the Conservation

The Options Appraisal

The Options Appraisal explores the intervention required to prevent the continued decline of the estate. The recommended option, which aims to tackle all the parks problems and maximise the potential for community use, would:

- Develop the large mansion house into a functions and meeting venue with a restaurant.
- Develop the small mansion as a new home for the museum
- Use the stables as an accessible store to display more of the museum collections
- Improve the park's landscape

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- Build new changing rooms and an indoor hall to support a range of sporting activities

Public consultation

We believe there is little to be gained by pursuing the weaknesses in the consultation process much longer. Whilst it had flaws, what matters now are deliverable ideas that will improve on the proposals. These frustrations must not become an excuse for inaction as there has been too much prevarication over Gunnersbury Park by both Councils for too many years. Most people to whom we speak welcome the proposals, but feel strongly that the Council's must find alternative ways of providing the capital investment.

In October 2009 Ealing Council responded to this an unanimously passed a motion against building on Gunnersbury Park stating: *"This Council is committed to improving Gunnersbury Park but rules out selling parts of the park to developers to help pay for it."*

The change in Ealing Council's position was welcomed by Ealing and Hounslow Liberal Democrats. Ealing Council's Leader and Executive member for parks subsequently, both confirmed that the administration has agreed to carry out the much-needed works to the historic buildings in Gunnersbury Park, but without following the scheme Ealing and Hounslow councils consulted on building houses and flats on part of the Park to raise the money. However Ealing Council has yet to specify exactly where their funds are coming from ...and when.

Hounslow Liberal Democrats subsequently secured support for a motion at Isleworth & Brentford Area Committee reading: *Isleworth and Brentford Area Committee welcomes the recent work of the both Councils and the Development Manager to progress the urgent restoration of Gunnersbury Park, the local history museum and mansions. We support local residents' calls for a more extensive search for alternative sources of funding (e.g. alternative land sale for capital receipts, prudential borrowing or new revenue streams within park) for the building restoration and new museum/ collection store at Gunnersbury Park as an alternative to building on parts of the park.*

We call on Ealing and Hounslow councils to fully explore these alternative funding sources before a final decision is made. This must be undertaken with urgency so as not to delay progress in developing a business plan and submitting funding applications to national bodies which has, thus far, been too slow.

In January 2010 the Liberal Democrats launched a petition calling on Ealing and Hounslow to invest in Gunnersbury: <http://tinyurl.com/gunnersburypetition>
In a matter of little more than a week 250+ people signed.

Liberal Democrat recommendations

1) Put in place new Governance arrangements

There is an urgent need to develop much more robust and independent governance arrangements for the park, mansions and museum. We do not

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want another 30 years to go by with continued chronic under-investment in the park, local history museum and mansions.

Hounslow and Ealing Councils should immediately press ahead with establishing a managing trust for the park accelerating the review of governance arrangements due to be undertaken in 2010. The trust would take on the work of developing the parks revenue generating capabilities with a view to defraying in part the costs of maintaining the park and progressing proposals for development of sporting facilities.

The trust could be supported by an Advisory Panel. This group of people would contribute expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Visual arts
- Architecture
- Historic buildings and landscape
- Social history and heritage
- Community gardens and projects
- Fundraising
- Legal, finance or business
- Voluntary sector and volunteering
- Environment and landscape
- Education
- Public relations

Two other governance options to consider are: 1) resolving the challenge of joint ownership with the sale of Ealing's share in the park to Hounslow as the planning authority whose boundaries the park falls within; and 2) whether the London Development Agency (LDA) would be an appropriate agency to take over managing the regeneration of the park, mansions and museum.

We believe that in an age of austerity and 'shared services', continuing to collaborate on the local history museum/ collections of the two boroughs makes sense.

2) Utilise prudential borrowing and a new fundraising capability to invest

Hounslow Council must now address the funding crisis with urgency so as not to delay progress in developing a business plan and submitting funding applications to national bodies.

A commitment needs to be made to investing £8.2 million capital – starting with the 2010/11 budget. This annual capital provision should be made up of: sponsorship, donations, legacy giving and small grants as part of a fundraising strategy, as well as the Council's own contributions through a 25 year prudential borrowing programme.

Partnership arrangements for the large mansion restaurant and conferencing business that reduce pressure on the public purse should also be explored.

Clarity is needed around:

- What guaranteed level of subsidy the Councils will need to maintain;

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- How reserves will be built up to cover future capital depreciation of assets;
- How will these reserves be protected/ ring-fenced.

We set out our detailed funding proposals in appendices 1, 2 and 3. These are indicative of the broad strategy that we believe should be followed and can form the basis of further work and discussions in the weeks ahead.

3) Improve the current preferred option

The museum

The museum at Gunnersbury contains a treasure trove of local history. The potential enjoyment by the local community and visitors is vast – as are the benefits from local people learning about our collective history. However, sadly today the sprawling collection is inappropriately housed and at constant risk of decay from leaking roofs.

Concerns we have with respect to this aspect of the proposals are:

- Is the proposed store at the Stables large enough or do we need an extra 100-200 sq/m of capacity costed into the proposals?
- Should the museum be renamed 'The Local history museum for LBs of Ealing and Hounslow'? At the moment a lot of people simply do not realise the museum houses the local history collection.
- What plans are there for exhibitions outreach? Could we have exhibitions utilising clusters of electronic displays in locations across the boroughs, so at the press of a button new local history exhibitions could be rotated around community halls/ libraries. Gunnersbury is a long way for someone to travel from Feltham or Southall for an introduction to the history collections.

Pitch and put

We have concerns about the loss of this facility. Is there an alternative location in the park it could be sited that does not reduce the 'permeability' of the landscape in the same way? By permeability the consultants mean access into and through this very central space is reduced by its current location.

Sports hub

More information is needed on how developed, and indeed flexible, the plans are for the Sports hub. Residents are concerned about the scale and location of the proposed building, as well as access and parking requirements.

Other uses of park and mansions

It has been also been suggested that a few areas need to be further explored within the visioning and business planning process:

- Visual arts
- Community gardens and projects

For further information on these proposals please contact:

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Appendix 1: Proposed project timetable

The project timetable set out assumes funding is sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Securing funding happens in two stages and would take at least two years – a timetable that we would pursue aggressively. Some of this time would also be used for:

- Tendering for consultants
- Designing the detail of the scheme
- Gaining planning and listed building consent

Following the completion of design the Councils will have to tender for Contractors. The Liberal Democrats propose that planning permission is sought to demolish the rear of the stables, restore and protect the façade of the stables at a faster rate than the other three phases of the project implementation set out below.

Phase 1 - The stables, the small mansion and some of the landscape works would all be run as concurrent contracts since they are separate sites with different points of access.

Phase 2 - The refurbishment of the Large mansion would take place after the museum (and Housing tenants) have vacated the building.

Phase 3 - The landscape works will have elements which are seasonal and LB Hounslow / Ealing would not wish to shut the whole park at once. It might be that this is split into several phases which run concurrent with Phase 1 or 2.

Year	Project Year	Activity	Details	Approximate Capital requirement for LB Hounslow
2010/11	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for Round 1 application to HLF • Round 1 application considered by HLF • Stable block façade 	£0.5m (includes allowance for immediate work of Stable block façade)
2011/12	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation round 2 application prepared • Round 2 application considered by HLF • Tendering procedures 	£0.25m
2012/13	3		Phase 1 Works to Refurbish Stables and Small Mansion	£3m
2013/14	4		Museum Decant	£1m
2014/15	5		Phase 2 Works to Refurbish Large Mansion	£3m
2015/16	6		Phase 3 Works to Refurbish Landscape and garden buildings	£0.45m

Total capital contribution: £8.2m

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We note officer advice that this may be too aggressive a timetable and that the capital spending profile may be a bit less bumpy (see below).

It has been suggested three years may be a more realistic timeframe for the development of plans and securing funding. The second stage of the funding application process alone usually takes 18 months for a project of this size, with a 3 month approval process by HLF. It would require proposals being drawn up to 'RIBA Work Stage E'¹.

Tendering for contractors (up to 'RIBA Work Stage J') could run, 'at risk' concurrent with HLF approval, but this may reduce the effectiveness of consultation.

The first stage proposals to 'RIBA Work Stage C' would need less capital (say £0.3m LBH contribution) than second stage proposals to 'RIBA Work Stage E' (say £0.5m LBH contribution).

This assumes:

- £23.6 M project with fees at 25% of construction costs.
- LBH contribution equates to 34.3% of total budget.
- Does not include any additional staff costs

This would give an approximate LBH capital requirement as follows:

Development of Proposals

Year 1	£0.15m
Year 2	£0.15m
Year 3	£0.50m

Phase 1 construction (small mansion and stables) plus 50% of phase 3 (landscape and small buildings)

Year 4	£1.98m
Year 5	£1.97m

Phase 2 construction (large mansion) plus 50% of phase 3 (landscape and small buildings)

Year 6	£1.68m
Year 7	£1.67m

¹ For more information on the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Work Stages see: [http://www.architecture.com/Files/RIBAProfessionalServices/Practice/OutlinePlanofWork\(revised\).pdf](http://www.architecture.com/Files/RIBAProfessionalServices/Practice/OutlinePlanofWork(revised).pdf)

Appendix 2: Proposed prudential borrowing programme

Impact on Council Tax: This calculation is looking at the simple cost of borrowing £8.2 million in a period of 6 years, to then be repaid over 25 years. An additional revenue cost of £50,000 p.a. (for years 1 - 6) has been included as part of the increase in the Council Tax charge.

Financial Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Capital Sum to borrow (£000's) £8m in total	500	250	3,000	1,000	3,000	450	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Cost of borrowing (interest and repayment over 25 years) (£000's)	0	34	51	263	336	560	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595
Revenue cost: Fundraising manager at £50k pa for 6 years (£000s)	50	50	50	50	50	50	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
Total revenue cost incurred (£000s)	50	84	101	313	386	610	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595
Annual increase in council tax required (note 1)	£0.58	£0.97	£1.17	£3.63	£4.48	£7.07	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90

2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	TOTAL
nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	8,200
595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	13,134
nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	300
595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	595	13,434
£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£6.90	£155.81 (note 5)

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Notes

Note 1: Impact on Council Tax is defined as an increase for a Band D Council Tax payer.

Note 2: A Council Tax base of 86,221 (which is the figure for 2010/11) has been assumed for the whole period of this project.

Note 3: This calculation does not account for the impact of inflation and does not include any other contingency.

Note 4: An interest rate of 4.51% has been assumed as the cost of borrowing for a 25 year annuity.

Note 5: Total Council tax contribution for Band D Council Taxpayer over 25 years.

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Appendix 3: Proposed funding mix

Financial Year	Capital Sum to borrow (£000's)	Funding from other sources	TOTAL L.B. HOUNSLOW FUNDING	Area of Spend	Additional Information
2010/11	460,000	40,000	500,000	Professional fees / stable block façade	Other sources: sponsorship (25%), donations (25%), legacy giving (0%), special events (25%) and small grants (25%).
2011/12	200,000	50,000	250,000	Professional fees	Other sources: sponsorship (20%), donations (20%), legacy giving (0%), special events (20%) and small grants (40%).
2012/13	2,934,000	66,000	3,000,000	Phase 1: Works to Refurbish Stables and Small Mansion	Other sources: sponsorship (20%), donations (20%), legacy giving (10%), special events (20%) and small grants (30%).
2013/14	934,000	66,000	1,000,000	Museum decant	Other sources: sponsorship (20%), donations (20%), legacy giving (10%), special events (20%) and small grants (30%).
2014/15	2,890,000	110,000	3,000,000	Phase 2: Works to Refurbish Large Mansion	Other sources: sponsorship (20%), donations (10%), legacy giving (20%), special vents (20%) and small grants (30%).
2015/16	340,000	110,000	450,000	Phase 3: Works to Refurbish Landscape and garden buildings	Other sources: sponsorship (20%), donations (10%), legacy giving (20%), special vents (20%) and small grants (30%).
	7,758,000	442,000	8,200,000	Total sum to raise (£8.2m capital and £300k revenue for LB Hounslow fundraising manager post over 6 years)	

Funding mix: Prudential borrowing, sponsorship, donations, legacy giving, events and small grants as part of a fundraising strategy.
Provision of £50k per annum for fundraising manager (£35k salary + on costs)

Appendix 4: Capital requirements of Jura preferred option

**TABLE 8.1
PREFERRED
OPTION**

**Restoration and Upgrading Estimated
Costs**

CORE ASSETS (Note 1)

Heritage Assets

Large Mansion House	Building restoration and reuse as restaurant and function venue.	£7,912,500
Small Mansion House	Building restoration and reuse as museum.	£5,250,000
Stable blocks	Building restoration and reuse as accessible museum store.	£4,150,000
Landscape Features	Remove detrimental elements (e.g. pitch and putt and tennis courts), reinstate lost features to reconnect the mansions and other buildings with the landscape setting, enhance the structure planting, and introduce signage, lighting and interpretation and o	£2,000,000
Heritage Assets Total		£19,312,500

Sporting Assets

Sports Facilities	Introduction of the Sports Hub.	£12,884,020 (Note 2)
TOTAL CORE ASSETS		£32,196,520

SUPPORTING ASSETS

The Orangery	Operate as function and education venue in tandem with the Large Mansion House.	£300,000
The Temple	Operate as function and education venue in tandem with the Large Mansion House.	£200,000
Potomac Tower / Gothic Boathouse	Built heritage feature with public access, e.g. Doors Open Day, guided tours, museum group visits.	£50,000
Princess Amelia's Bathhouse	Premises to be let as small office to local amenity / community group.	£50,000
Gothic Ruins	Restoration of landscape feature to original form and condition with supporting interpretation.	£250,000
Boundary Wall	Restoration of landscape feature to original form and condition with supporting interpretation.	£200,000
East Lodge Ruins	Site to be used for future park related supporting development, e.g. accessible museum store.	£0
Walled Garden	Continue with site for Chapel Manor College allowing expansion of the college and contraction of the Greenscene operations.	£0

TOTAL SUPPORTING ASSETS £1,050,000

Inflation and Contingency Allowance (16%) £5,350,000

OVERALL TOTAL **£38,600,000**

(Note 3)

Source: http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/gunnersbury_park_options_appraisal_jun_09.pdf (pg 101)

Report editors' notes for clarification

1) 'Assets' in this context is used as an alternative to 'built structures'.

2) This figure of £12.8m + 16% contingency gives the projected cost of the Sports Hub.

3) This figure of £38.6m is where the £39m in the final paragraph of page 1 is drawn.