At a meeting of the Gunnersbury Park Regeneration Board held on Thursday, 2 April 2009 at 7:00 pm at The Terrace Room, The Small Mansion, Gunnersbury Park.

**Present:**
Councillor Taylor (Chair)
Councillors Barwood, Brookes, Samantha Davies and Harmer.
Richard Gill, Bridget Gregory, Mike Jordan, Hamish Pringle and Lee Dawson

**Apologies for Absence**
Councillor Dabrowska.

35. **Apologies for absence, declarations of interest or any other communications from Members**

Councillor Hardy and Councillor Dakers were in attendance.

Councillor Lee asked whether Peter Lipman from LB Ealing had moved on. Councillor Taylor clarified that Mr Lipman’s post had come to an end at the end of the financial year. Councillor Lee wished to minute thanks for all Peter Lipman's help in respect of Gunnersbury.

36. **Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2009**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2009 were confirmed. There were no matters arising.

37. **Report on Tenancies - Verbal update by Barbara Perry, Housing Services**

Richard Gill, Development and Regeneration Manager, gave apologies from Barbara Perry of Housing Strategy, who was unable to attend. He explained that a meeting had been arranged for 21 April 2009 between staff in Housing Allocations and Hounslow Homes to commission Hounslow Homes to progress work on offers of transfers. There would be more information available after this meeting, to be reported back to the Board on 28 May 2009.

Councillor Davies advised that it might be necessary for the Board to receive this information in a Part 2, confidential part of the meeting as it might be difficult to ask questions fully in a public meeting.

Councillor Barwood asked whether the present number of tenants were known. It was understood that there were 5 in the Large Mansion and 1 in the Small Mansion, but Councillor Barwood stressed the need for detailed, correct information to be available for the next meeting.

38. **Report on the final stage of the Options Appraisal - Jura Consultants**

Jura Consultants gave a half an hour presentation to be followed by questions and
answers.

The text of the presentation was circulated to members around the table.

The presentation gave an update on the process, information on the preferred option and emerging next steps.

Members and officer feedback on the initial sections of the report had commented on the clarity of the options and some concern that the ‘do nothing’ option had been dismissed too quickly, as it would help to carry this through to demonstrate the baseline.

English Heritage had expressed concern that the concentration was on the main built heritage assets and were keen that all should be considered including the landscape. This had been addressed so that the option considered the landscape and all structures. English Heritage were keen to understand what intervention there would be in the landscape, that is whether areas would be reinstated or detrimental features removed. Jura had stepped back to reconsider these issues.

The process of the Options Appraisal had always envisaged two stages, moving from a long list to a short list. Feedback had suggested that the short list produced did not give clarity to the options. Jura accepted this point and realised that buildings and landscape needed to be considered together as a package. So in effect they had established a three stage process, developing scenarios for moving in a particular direction from the long list and then narrowing down to four specific options at the third stage. This was a robust process, with options assessed against specific criteria set in the original brief or developed in consultation with members, officers and key stake holders such as English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Each option specified what could be done with the major core assets, so that costs of intervention could be developed, anticipating inflation and contingency.

The four options were:

- **Minimal intervention** – no additional Capital investment except for the Stables. This would not meet the requirements of the Conservation Management Plan and would result in the loss of the Stables in 5 years, significant deterioration of the Small Mansion and real costs to the heritage of the park.

- **A destination park** – this would require investment of £50m and was consistent with the Conservation Management Plan but the real difficulty would be in securing that level of funding. So this was not deliverable.

- **Mixed use** – would address concerns about the buildings but for commercial, private rather than public use. English Heritage and the Planning authority might not be comfortable with this option. An income from private funders might negate a relationship with potential public funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

- **Upgrading** – would involve investing in the Large Mansion as a function venue to generate income to invest in the maintenance of the park. The Small Mansion would be used for the Museum and the Stables would be an accessible store. Public access would remain so that the option would be acceptable to external funders. Under this option, English Heritage was prepared to consider enabling
Jura were confident that this final option would be able to be funded. They had had discussions with external funders and believed that the project would appeal to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and attract £3 ½ million for a significant project. The presentation included estimates of the minimum contribution HLF would expect the two Councils to make, based on Jura’s experience of HLF. They had considered potential funders and means of bringing in partnership funding but would need enabling development to support the project.

The proposal for a Sports Hub near the Potomac had been considered. There were a number of agencies able to fund but this would also need an element of enabling development. Jura believed that with enabling development, it would be possible to attract funders without looking at other options.

The preferred site for a housing development was Lionel Road North. This was considered the most realistic, following significant analysis of other alternatives, and able to deliver a significant sum. Support would be needed from other external funders and permissions.

With the generation of income from leasing the Large Mansion and existing budgets, Jura did not consider that there would be a need for the Councils' revenue investment to change markedly.

The next steps for the Options Appraisal would be to write up the full report. There was the need for a feasibility study with plans to be worked up and a scheme design. In tandem with this, there was the need to look at an appropriate vehicle to deliver the project and an operational vehicle for the management of the park. The main consideration should be what was most appropriate to bring in funding and most tax efficient. It was also important if there were additional income to consider how this might be secured for the future to ensure a ring fenced income for future maintenance.

There was the need to look at how quickly the works could be implemented and an indicative development programme.

A critical element was the creation of a prospectus to test the market for private interest in the Large Mansion. Jura were confident this would attract interest and confident of the valuer’s baseline figures. There was a need for a Business Case for the whole park before submitting bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. Experience of previous projects suggested that it would take a year to prepare and two years to a decision from the HLF. Values for the enabling development were also at risk from changes in the market.

The Board moved to questions.

In response to a question from the Chair as to when the final document would be available to study in detail, Jura advised that the aim was to complete it by the end of April.

Councillor Brookes spoke of the importance of putting as much information in the public domain as possible, but was aware that some information might be commercially sensitive. She advised that when a brief overview of proposals were put to the South
Acton Ward Forum, residents involved in running a hotel were sceptical about the viability of running a restaurant in the Large Mansion. Jura advised that their analysis suggested that there would be interest in a restaurant and function business and a level of income from this.

Councillor Harmer gave credit to Jura for the report. He noted that pursuing the next steps would involve costs and he looked to the Lead Members to check whether there was funding to take this forward. He also asked whether there had been any reference to similar bids on other sites in the area. Jura acknowledged that this was a serious issue and when the bid went to external funders there would be a need to say whether this had priority over Boston Manor or another bid. Jura were suggesting that the application should be to Heritage Grants funding rather than Parks for People, which would require a Parks Strategy for the whole borough. English Heritage feedback had been helpful in recognising that in taking the project forward, it was possible to divide up the whole package in order to consider the core assets of the Stables, Mansions and landscape first and then deliver other elements later.

Councillor Harmer explored whether this meant that development at Gunnersbury might lead to other sites not being funded. Councillor Lee advised that the Council was committed to seeing the project through and were looking at a different formula to develop Boston Manor. Councillor Taylor advised that Ealing also had two other projects – Pitshanger and Hanwell Community Centre. The Board were also informed that the estimated cost of the next steps would be around £100k to submit the Stage 1 bid to HLF, based on funding by local partners. This cost would not include enabling development permission.

The Chair suggested that at present the Board was engaged in an information gathering exercise and would use the summer for consultation on the package.

Councillor Barwood drew attention to the experience gained from working with English Heritage at Chiswick House and the usefulness of engaging English Heritage help and support in applications. Jura confirmed that both English Heritage and the HLF saw Gunnersbury as a priority and would not be satisfied until something had been done for the estate.

Mike Jordan referred back to the costs of putting forward the application and the risk of incurring costs to find the development could not proceed. There needed to be some confidence in the stages of permission to be achieved and the acceptability of enabling development in planning and political terms. He suggested that the costs were escapable if the ambition were achieved.

Given the potential sacrifice of building on parkland, Councillor Harmer asked how long the options put forward provided a solution. Was this for 10 or 100 years? He felt that this was an important consideration, given that there was a finite amount of park to build on. Jura suggested that the options proposed gave a 25-50 year life to the buildings. However, they would need to ask an architect for an enhanced maintenance regime as well to prevent a spiral of decline.

Lee Dawson spoke of the importance of not underestimating maintenance costs. Officers needed to establish with Jura assurance that there would be ongoing provision for
maintenance and the avoidance of the need for future capital investment. This had not yet been done.

Councillor Dakers, speaking from the public gallery, advised that previous meetings had spoken of a guesstimate of £10m but figures were now significantly more. He asked whether consideration had been given to an alternative for the Museum not involving the Small Mansion or the Stables, for example a warehouse for the assets and the exhibits moving around the borough to make them more accessible.

Councillor Dakers also noted that Jura had focused on one option for enabling development. He asked whether they had considered private dwellings closer to the existing buildings at the centre rather than around the outer edge.

In response, Jura explained that the figures had been changed in detail. Previous figures excluded inflation and contingency. In respect of the enabling development, there had been significant analysis and the figures had been refined, although it always needed to be clear that this was work in progress.

Alternatives for the Museum had been considered but there were advantages to maintaining the Museum on site, particularly in attracting HLF and English Heritage funding. The Stables would be an access store, which the public could visit by arrangement.

In respect of enabling development, Jura had examined a range of sites but discussions with English Heritage and Planning identified that anything within the heritage core would not get planning permission. The site identified did not conflict with the Conservation Management Plan.

Councillor Hardy, speaking from the public gallery, noted that the introduction of the Tropical Forest to Gunnersbury Park appeared to have been ruled out on the grounds that their café would compete with the park café. Jura explained that they had looked carefully at the needs of Gunnersbury and whilst the Tropical Forest might need Gunnersbury, the reverse was not the case. The organisation could come to Gunnersbury and would introduce something different but there would be conflict in attracting visitors and providing function facilities in competition with other attractions such as the Museum. This was particularly true of the desire for the Large Mansion where it was more attractive in the prospectus to say that it was the sole catering/function element in the park.

Councillor Lee advised that the authority was looking at alternative homes in a park for the Tropical Forest, as it had to move from Syon, but not necessarily in Gunnersbury.

A resident asked whether there would be anything concrete to present to the Stakeholders meeting at the end of April, in order to avoid scaremongering in the press. Residents explored whether the public would be given a choice in consultation and what would happen if there were massive objections.

Richard Gill explained that the original plan was for consultation over the coming four weeks with a report then being put to the Hounslow Executive and the Ealing Cabinet. However, the timetable had slipped so there was the opportunity for extended consultation over the summer. The Board needed to determine the details of the consultation. The Chair clarified that the Board was undertaking an information gathering
exercise. They were part way through this and the last stage would be public consultation.

Councillor Davies asked the legal ramifications of doing nothing. Mike Jordan explained that there were statutory responsibilities for the property. If remiss in these duties the Council could face pressure from English Heritage with notices served requiring the protection of the building.

The Chair advised that the enabling development line was unattractive to Ealing and the Administration but they also needed to look at the decline in capital and the implications for the Council, to bear all these points in mind.

James Wisdom of the Friends of Gunnersbury Park asked about the perishability of figures, which could be destroyed because too long was taken for implementation. He stressed the need to move quickly and asked how long the present figures would be valid.

Jura considered that the figures were probably robust for two to three years. The modelling for enabling development anticipated short term recovery in the market.

Mr Wisdom thanked the consultants for a good piece of work, the best he had seen in a long time and one which had ruled out a mass of ridiculous ideas. The Chair echoed thanks to Jura and moved on to the next item.

39. Report by the Development and Regeneration Manager

See the report of the Development and Regeneration Manager – Agenda Item 5.

Stakeholder Partnerships
Good discussion continued with English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It had been proposed to develop a relationship with the London Development Agency (LDA) as well.

Community Engagement
The Board discussed a consultation strategy for the project. The questionnaire to consult on the Options Appraisal was to be developed. Richard Gill. It was proposed to bring this to the Board to agree the scope and distribution. The report proposed what might be included in the questionnaire. It would outline the scale of the task and the problems, summarise the findings of the Options Appraisal and the four options, inviting people to agree or disagree with the options, be open with the implications for funding and that enabling development would mean housing in the park, which was an emotive issue.

The format was proposed to be a fold out document covering 4 sides of A4. The questionnaire would seek information on ethnicity, age and usage so if necessary people could be targeted by post code or other group.

The Chair asked about the size of the questionnaire. He pointed out that LB Ealing would like to see a substantial exercise with a paper copy to the 10,000 residents living near to the park and an on line consultation to reach a wider audience.
Councillor Brookes suggested a pull put in both of the borough magazines as this would reach all residents. She proposed that the content should not just refer to housing but specify where, with a diagram, and the type of housing so that it was clear the aim was two storey terrace housing similar to the existing properties. She believed that for people to give proper consideration, the fuller the information the better. She also felt that it was important to have post code/address so it was clear where the responses were coming from.

Councillor Davies asked whether it was too early to specify the type of housing and whether it would reflect what was there. Jura Consultants advised that the valuation was based on different patterns of development, for example flats on the short section near the Potomac and the rest terrace, based on the proposed density and style.

Councillor Barwood suggested it should also be made clear that the ‘do nothing’ option had financial implications.

Mike Jordan noted that members’ preference was for an extensive consultation. He noted that there was an unspent budget for consultation and the message he was hearing was that there should not be stinting on the consultation. He endorsed this point about the scale, whilst also noting that some communications such as the borough magazines would be low cost or free.

The Chair agreed that this should be an ambitious consultation with the opportunity for people to understand the issues and express their views. He proposed meeting with Councillor Lee to design the consultation and identify the costs. He advised that if the present budget for consultation was insufficient, the two Lead Members should seek to find extra funds.

Officers agreed to produce a costed programme with timescales. Hamish Pringle suggested that, as the leaflet would need to refer to the main Options Appraisal report, officers should bring an outline design to the next meeting, which would incorporate reference to the final report.

Members agreed that the wording of the document would be important. Councillor Brookes noted that James Wisdom had made the point that there was probably only one realistic option and she felt that if there were no choice this should be made clear. However, it was noted that there were four options on the table for residents to consider.

The Chair stressed that the Board would need a developed consultation plan for its May meeting. This would require interim meetings of the Lead Members and the opportunity to circulate drafts to members so that they could consider something virtually complete by 28 May. Members agreed that it would be helpful to have the questionnaire emailed to them before 28 May to enable them to comment.

Councillor Hardy advised that the Isleworth and Brentford Area Committee had taken a lot of interest in the proposals for Gunnersbury and asked that the questionnaire might be circulated to Area Committee members in the interim. Richard Gill advised of his intention to attend Isleworth and Brentford Area Committee, Chiswick Area Committee and the local Ealing Ward Forums to present the proposals.

Resolved:
1. That the Board would consider the proposed questionnaire and consultation arrangements at its next meeting on 28 May 2009.

2. That the two Lead Members should meet to discuss the consultation strategy.

3. That the draft questionnaire should be circulated to members for comment by email prior to the next meeting.

40. Dates of future meetings

The next meeting was scheduled for 28 May 2009.

41. Urgent Business

The Board noted that the constitutional issue had been confirmed by Hounslow Borough Council the previous week and the arrangements would be finalised via the two Borough Solicitors in Ealing and Hounslow. The change would be effective from the AGM of each Council.

The meeting finished at 8:25 pm.