

GUNNERSBURY PARK
MUSEUM

Executive Summary

June 2011



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report considers the future development of Gunnersbury Park Museum, and considers its role in the regeneration of the whole of Gunnersbury Park. The study has been informed by a review of existing museum facilities and visitor experience, the collection, consultation with staff and stakeholders, and a market analysis.

Study Brief

The brief for the study outlines a number of aims for the redevelopment project, which can be summarised as:

- To be imaginative, appropriate and distinctive, but also sustainable
- To reposition the museum service
- To raise the profile of the museum as a major cultural service
- To strengthen the relevance of the service for local people
- To be a vehicle for interpreting the Gunnersbury Estate
- To provide a long term plan for the museum service
- To appeal to major funding bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund
- To be an integral part of the park regeneration proposals

These aims have been used to assess the potential development options for the museum.

Current Museum Experience

Gunnersbury Park Museum is the local history museum for the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow. The collection consists of approximately 38,000 items covering archaeology, clothing, transport, toys, photographs, prints, paintings, domestic equipment and wartime material. The museum is located within the Large Mansion building at Gunnersbury Park, with permanent museum collection and temporary exhibitions on display in various rooms on the ground floor, including the original State Rooms of the house.

The Large Mansion has a surviving Victorian Kitchen, an attraction in its own right, and used regularly by the museum education service. The education service also makes use of other facilities on the Estate, including the Temple building and the Small Mansion. The museum education service is well established and is highly regarded by the Primary Schools which use the service. The service provides a wide range of primary school programmes linked specifically with the curriculum. A selection of 23 school's workshop activities are available for school visits, most of which are linked to Key Stages 1 and 2.

Current Visitor Numbers

Recent visitor numbers to the museum are shown in the table below. Visitor numbers to the museum are classed as 'general visitors' while school visitors are recorded separately.

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
General Visitors	20,503	23,139	28,167	26,397	21,399
Schools					
Ealing	2,750	3,091	3,205	3,161	2,896
Hounslow	2,213	1,976	1,564	1,219	969
Other	5,837	5,582	5,914	5,250	5,559
Schools Total	10,800	10,649	10,683	9,630	9,424
Total Visitors	31,303	33,788	38,850	36,027	30,823

The number of general museum visitors in recent years has been between approximately 20,000 and 28,000. Over the last 3 years, visitor numbers have declined from just over 28,000 to approximately 21,400. This decline is also reflected in recent school visits, which have decreased from over 10,600 to approximately 9,500 in the last 3 years. In spite of this decline, the schools market is clearly a significant part of the current audience for the museum.

Current Financial Position

The current museum operating budget is approximately £300,000 per annum. As a free admission museum, with a small retail facility and no catering facility, the level of earned income from museum visitors is low. The main source of earned income for the museum is the schools programme, which is budgeted to generate gross income of approximately £58,000 in 2011. Gross income from the museum shop is approximately £7-8,000 per annum.

Current Collections

A survey of the current collections, including current storage conditions, was carried out by Museophile Ltd with input from Equal Studio Ltd. The survey has highlighted the significance of the collections and highlights the breadth of topics that they relate to. The key collection areas highlighted in the survey include: costumes and textiles; local industries; Ealing Studios; carriage collection; domestic items, personal items toys and childhood collections; ceramics; transport; architecture and building materials; archaeology; Rothschild family; and the Martin Ware Ceramic Collection currently displayed elsewhere. With 38,000 items, the collections are larger than many equivalent local history museums. The collections survey provides recommendations relating to the rationalisation of the collection, including working more closely with local study centres.

The collections survey highlights that current stores are almost all full to capacity and that a number of improvements to storage conditions are required. The observations made in relation to the storage conditions include: water damage and damp; threat of wordworm and moths; threat of mould growth; asbestos; and the cellars are vulnerable to high humidity and flooding. A series of specific recommendations relating to storage conditions are provided to address the risk to the collections

Audience Consultation

Consultation to inform the feasibility study was carried out with museum staff, stakeholders, current visitors and non-visitors from within the local boroughs. Feedback from the various consultees confirms that the current provision, particularly the education service, is good. There is also considerable potential for improvement and enhancement to attract new audiences, more frequent visitation and high levels of visitor satisfaction. Some of the key issues raised in consultation included:

- For some, the museum seems unknown, not visible and without a strong presence
- The museum is currently in poor condition and the visitor experience is in need of improvement
- The collection displays could be stronger – they do not showcase the strengths of the collection
- Visitors want to see more of the building
- Non-visitors have a lack of awareness of the museum or of where it is

In the absence of some intervention and enhancement the relevance of the museum for visitors will decline resulting in a museum service attracting fewer and fewer visitors.

Market Analysis

An analysis of the current and potential market for the museum has been carried out, resulting in the following conclusions:

- The museum is located within an area with a large local population of over 500,000 people. With improved facilities and a higher quality visitor experience, there would be greater opportunity for more repeat visits from the local market.
- With improvements to the current visitor experience, the potential to attract the tourist and day visitor market would be stronger.
- The museum currently has a strong relationship with the schools market, particularly those within Ealing, and has the reputation and quality of service to justify an increase in the education audience. In order to do so, however, improvements to the current facilities would be required.
- As the only local history museum within the two boroughs, it performs a unique role and could therefore strengthen its current share of the visitor market.

In addition to building on its current market, the museum has potential to broaden its audience through the provision of enhanced facilities, a more varied visitor experience and a targeted programme of activities. Through future activity planning, the potential to target under-represented groups and address barriers for non-visitors can be explored.

Visitor Market Projection

The following presents a penetration rate analysis to calculate the total number of potential visits to the museum. Penetration rate analysis works by identifying the total population of an audience, i.e. market size in the table below, and then applies a penetration rate which identifies the percentage of the market who will visit. To demonstrate a range of impact, a low, medium and high scenario has been presented for each penetration rate.

Market	Market Size	Market Penetration Rate			Visits		
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Local Residents	1,533,629	1.50%	2.00%	2.50%	23,004	30,673	38,341
London Residents	5,638,462	0.05%	0.10%	0.15%	2,819	5,638	8,458
Domestic Tourists to London	10,800,000	0.01%	0.02%	0.03%	1,080	2,160	3,240
Overseas Tourists to London	14,100,000	0.01%	0.02%	0.03%	1,410	2,820	4,230
Sub Total					28,314	41,291	54,268
Schools Market	249,770	4%	4.3%	5%	9990.8	10,615	11,240
Total					38,304	51,906	65,508

The visitor numbers outlined above are indicative of the potential that could be achieved through enhancements to the museum facilities and the visitor experience.

- The 'low' scenario is viewed as possible through essential improvements to facilities and investment in audience development activity to reverse the recent decline in visitor numbers
- The 'medium' scenario is viewed as possible by improving and enhancing the current facilities, investing in higher quality visitor experience, as well further audience development activity
- The 'high' scenario is viewed as possible through improving and enhancing the current facilities, investing in higher quality visitor experience and widening the scope of the museum to include more outreach activity and events on site.

Options Long List

A long list of potential options has been developed as a result of discussions with the Museum Steering Group, the Project Team, and feedback from consultation. The options have been tested against the aims of the study brief

- Reposition the museum service:
The options that score higher under this objective are those that provide the museum service with the opportunity to operate in a more effective and more efficient way, building on its current strengths to deliver a wider range of services and activities. The lower scoring options will be those that either change nothing, or prevent the museum from taking advantage of opportunities to deliver a higher quality service.

- Raise the profile of the museum as a major cultural service:
Options that score higher will be those that allow the museum to strengthen its identity, broaden its audience and deliver a higher standard of museum service to a greater number of people. Provision of appropriate facilities to support this objective is therefore considered under each option. Lower scoring options will be those that either change nothing, or have a minimum impact on the museum’s profile.
- Strengthen the relevance of the service for local people:
Higher scoring options are those that provide more opportunities for the museum to engage directly with local residents, either through its displays, its activities, or its profile. Lower scoring options are those that either change nothing or make the museum less visible and less relevant to the local community.
- Be a vehicle for interpreting the Gunnersbury estate
To meet this objective, the museum should have the opportunity to link with the with Gunnersbury Park estate and tell the story of the estate to its visitors. Lower scoring options are those that remove or reduce the connection between the museum and the estate.
- Provide a long term plan for the museum service
Higher scoring options are those that create an opportunity for the museum to build its activities and its audience in the future, beyond the lifetime of the redevelopment project. Lower scoring options limit the potential for the museum to make positive developments in the long term.
- Appeal to major funding bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund
Higher scoring options are those that offer the greatest appeal to HLF in terms of conservation of heritage and widening opportunities for learning and participation relating to heritage.

A scoring exercise has therefore been carried out based on a score out of 10 to assess the extent to which the long list meets these objectives, as shown below.

TABLE E.3 LONG LIST ASSESSMENT							
	Reposition museum service	Raise profile	Strengthen local relevance	Interpret the Estate	Long-term plan for Museum Service	Appeal to HLF	
Do nothing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Do minimum	0	0	0	0	1	1	3%
Relocate to Stable Block	2	2	0	2	2	2	17%
Relocate to Small Mansion	7	6	6	6	5	7	62%
Relocate off-site	6	5	5	0	5	4	42%
Enhance Large Mansion	7	7	6	6	6	8	67%
Utilise Small and Large Mansions	6	7	6	6	5	5	58%
New build store	5	4	2	3	5	4	38%
New build museum	7	8	3	5	5	2	50%

The **Do Nothing** option meets none of the objectives. In addition, do nothing is likely to result in further damage to the collections currently stored in inappropriate storage, a decline in visitor numbers as visitor satisfaction falls, and further deterioration of the building rendering it less attractive to visitors and less suitable for the operational requirements of the museum service.

While the **Do Minimum** has not been specified this would involve some prioritisation between the building, the collections storage, the collections display and the visitor experience. The failure to address all of the current weaknesses is likely to only postpone the decline in the museum but in the absence of a significant upgrade to all aspects of the museum this would be viewed and act as a 'sticking plaster' rather than a long-term solution.

The **Stable Block** offers the potential to considerably enhance the museum. On the assumption that the entire stable block would be available to the museum and would be rebuilt to retain the façade, the museum accommodation needs could be met fully with appropriate modern construction to provide displays and collections storage. The issues with the Stable Block relate to the location within the Park and the anticipated costs. The Stables are in an area of the Park that is remote from the vehicular access points and the existing car parks. Relocating the car parks would result in access roads intruding on some of the most sensitive aspects of the designed landscape. The issue of cost is in relation to the alternatives and the ability to secure the future of one of the Mansion houses at a cost similar to or less than the Stable.

The option to **relocate the museum off-site** has some appeal and could involve an existing building or new build. However, the consultation exercise has indicated that as a location from which to serve both boroughs, while not perfect, has a number of advantages in terms of access and perception that the current location favours neither Hounslow nor Ealing.

The ability to expand the museum into **both Mansion houses** while retaining residential accommodation has some merits. However, there is a concern that this would restrict the development opportunities for the wider Gunnersbury Park Masterplan and as such we have been advised that there is no appetite in either Borough for this option to be developed or considered further.

The **New Build Storage** facility would address the urgent issue concerning the conditions in which some of the collections are stored. However, this would not address the need to enhance the displays and increase the appeal of the museum. The New Build storage facility would be an alternative to converting the residential accommodation in the Large Mansion to create new museum storage but would need to be accompanied by enhancements in the museum displays and conservation of the Large Mansion.

A **New Build Museum** would be an extremely exciting option and the location and design could relaunch the museum service serving Hounslow and Ealing. However, such a proposal would leave unanswered the issues of what to do with the Large, or even the Small Mansion. Such a project is unlikely to be a priority for the HLF and therefore highly unlikely to secure funding.

Based on this scoring exercise, the highest scoring options are:

- Enhance and improve Large Mansion
- Relocate museum to Small Mansion

Option 1: Enhance the Large Mansion

This option would involve the museum remaining within the Large Mansion, but with enhancements and improvements made to the facilities and the visitor experience. The improvements required would respond to the issues identified by the museum staff, the collections assessment and the user consultation.

Option 2: Relocate to the Small Mansion

Option 2 would be based on the same principles as Option 1, but would relocate the museum into the Small Mansion and provide the opportunity for the museum to continue its presence within Gunnersbury Park, This change could allow improvements to the current collection storage, displays, education facilities and staff space.

Comparison of Short-Listed Options

The Large and Small Mansions differ considerably in scale. The difference in scale does not automatically rule out the Small Mansion but there are some clear implications for the continued operation of the museum. The following table compares the current use of the Large Mansion with the proposed future uses of the Large or Small Mansions.

LARGE MANSION		LARGE MANSION		SMALL MANSION	
CURRENT USE	m2	PROPOSED USE	m2	PROPOSED USE	m2
Museum Display	460	Museum Display	1091	Museum Display	263
Museum Storage	1048	Museum Storage	1346	Museum Storage	600
Museum Administration	408	Museum Administration	143	Museum Administration	150
Museum Education	34	Museum Education	85	Museum Education	160
Museum Kitchen display	156	Museum Kitchen display	232	Museum Kitchen display	n/a
Informal Use	72	Informal Use	0	Informal Use	0
Residential	719	Residential	0	Residential	0
TOTAL	2897	TOTAL	2897	TOTAL	1173
NOTES:					
The museum storage in the Large Mansion includes the basement (650m2), but this is assumed to have limited use in the proposed use.					
The current museum kitchen display is predominantly used by the museum education service. In the proposed use parts of the kitchens would form part of the general visitor experience.					
In addition to the current use of the Large Mansion the education service uses the Temple as a Victorian Classroom and the Small Mansion as activity space and schools lunch rooms.					

The current floor area allocated to museum displays is 460m2. The proposed enhancements within the

Large Mansion would increase this to 1,091m², together with an increase in storage and in the kitchen displays.

The Small Mansion would result in a reduction in both museum display and museum storage and the loss of the Victorian kitchens that supports much of the schools education programme. The Small Mansion could be developed into a more hybrid option with the retention of a number of elements in the Large Mansion. The Victorian Kitchens would be a priority for schools access, and although only suitable for the most robust material from the collections, the retention of the basement cellars as collections storage. Additional storage would be the next priority. However, any version of the hybrid option would mean the museum operating on two sites with a probable increase in the administrative overhead

The Large Mansion allows the museum service to make a considerable step change in provision, making it more attractive to visitors and increasing its potential. The Small Mansion would require the storage of museum collections to be split between the Small Mansion and another building. The museums displays would be reduced and the schools programme would have to be reconsidered and operate at a reduced capacity

Financial Viability

The financial impact of both options is based on a typical financial year using the 'medium' scenario from Table E2 to reflect the change visitor numbers.

NB the medium scenario (increase in visitor numbers) will be more difficult to achieve in the small mansion than the large due to its reduced Museum display areas and storage facilities

Option 1: Enhance and Improve the Large Mansion

TABLE E.5 INCOME ESTIMATE- OPTION 1		
Income	£	Note
Workshops	72,000	Increased based on higher number of participants
Retail	25,000	Increased based on higher spend per head and higher visitor numbers
Lettings/Hire Charges	15,000	Use of flexible spaces in Large Mansion for external hire
Donations	3,000	Based on increase from current level
LA Funding	160,000	Based on previous years
Other Funding	2,500	Based on previous years
Total	277,500	

The impact of option 1 is a higher level of income than at present. This option increases earned income from visitors by approximately 30% due to a greater number of visitors and higher standard of visitor experience. It should be noted, however, that income from tenants in the Large Mansion would no longer be available under this option.

Expenditure	£	Note
Staff Costs	225,000	Increased with addition of Deputy Curator
Utilities	50,000	Slight reduction – increased use but more heat efficient building
Telephones	2,000	Slight increase
Software Maintenance	50	Based on previous years
Computer Consumables	250	Based on previous years
IT Maintenance	8,000	Reduced based on introduction of more efficient systems
Building Maintenance	5,000	Based on previous years
Display Materials	5,000	Increased to reflect more displays
Conservation and Office Material	4,000	Based on previous years
Shop Purchases	10,000	Based on 40% cost of sales
Conservators	550	Slight increase
Licenses - Other	300	Based on previous years
Marketing	5,000	Increased to reflect higher use
Postage	750	Slight increase
Total	315,900	

Expenditure is increased under this option, reflecting the essential increase in staffing and operating costs to provide a higher quality visitor experience. We have not increased the maintenance costs at this stage as these will be dependent on the scale of the capital works and the potential of long-term efficiencies. The deficit incurred under this option is approximately £38,000, which represents a saving in comparison with the current level.

Option 2: Relocated to Small Mansion

The financial impact of option 2 is shown below, based on a typical financial year. Income estimates have been made based on comparison with recent years, adapted to reflect the change in operation as a result of option 2.

Income	£	Note
Workshops	68,000	Increased based on higher number of participants (but lower than option 1)
Retail	22,500	Increased based on higher spend per head and higher visitor number (but lower than option 1)
Lettings/Hire Charges	10,000	Use of flexible spaces in Small Mansion for hire
Donations	2,000	Based on increase from current level
LA Funding	160,000	Based on previous years
Other Funding	2,500	Based on previous years
Total	265,000	

The ability to enhance the visitor experience by moving to the Small Mansion has an increase in visitor numbers and therefore earned income. This is not to the same extent as option 1, however, as the level of space available in the Small Mansion may restrict the ability to build audiences as much as with the Large Mansion. As such, the level of earned income is estimated to be smaller than under option 1.

Expenditure	£	Note
Staff Costs	225,000	Increased with addition of Deputy Curator
Utilities	45,000	Reduction – smaller space; more heat efficient; no tenants utilities costs
Telephones	2,000	Slight increase
Software Maintenance	50	Based on previous years
Computer Consumables	250	Based on previous years
IT Maintenance	8,000	Reduced based on introduction of more efficient systems
Building Maintenance	5,000	Based on previous years
Display Materials	5,000	Increased to reflect more displays
Conservation and Office Material	4,000	Based on previous years
Shop Purchases	9,000	Based on 40% cost of sales
Conservators	550	Slight increase
Licenses - Other	300	Based on previous years
Marketing	5,000	Increased to reflect higher use
Postage	750	Slight increase
Total	309,900	

As with option 1, expenditure under this option is higher than at present, reflecting the increase in staffing and operating costs. This scenario results in a deficit of approximately £45,000, a larger level than option 1.

Conclusion

Both the shortlisted options considered demonstrate a number of benefits for the museum. Issues with the current facilities have been demonstrated and both options provide an active response, directly addressing the poor physical conditions that exist at present. In addressing these issues, both options present the opportunity for a higher quality visitor experience and an enhanced museum service. These improvements therefore present the opportunity to raise the profile of the museum, broaden its audience and increase its volume of users.

Both options will require additional resources to ensure a sufficient standard of museum service, and this is reflected in the forecast expenditure outlined above. As well as considering the financial impact in terms of income and expenditure, a value for money judgment must also be made. This will require consideration of the extent to which the project can offer a greater standard of museum service and offer a variety of benefits for its audiences, considered against the investment required to do so

The feasibility study has not confirmed a preferred option at this stage as this can only be done in conjunction with decisions about the wider Park and its development. However, the feasibility study does demonstrate the museum's ability to play a major role in an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund by enhancing the museum displays, the collections storage, the visitor experience, visitor numbers, all in an historic setting. This can only be achieved in the Large Mansion.

The alternative in the Small Mansion would not match the current museum in terms of display space and would require an additional storage building to improve the collections storage. In addition the Small Mansion alone would not provide the unique possibilities of the Victorian kitchens, the link with the Rothschild's or such an accessible relationship with the wider parkland that the Large Mansion offers.

The feasibility study will be concluded in tandem with consideration of the wider development of Gunnersbury Park.



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