

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS

Cabinet Members	Councillor Keith Burrows / Councillor Sandra Jenkins
Cabinet Portfolio	Planning and Transportation / Environment
Officer Contact	Charmian Baker/Sarah Harper, Planning and Community Services
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Map

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	Cabinet approval is sought for officers to tender for a Conservation Management Plan, in support of a Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) bid for the refurbishment, conversion and interpretation of the listed buildings and park at Eastcote House Gardens, for community use.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	<i>Contributes to the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Council Plan Corporate objectives including:</i> Maintain local heritage; Ensure heritage and natural environment are protected and enhanced Expand cultural and sports activities Extend opportunities for older people to participate in leisure, recreational and cultural activities Work in partnership to maximise the effective use of resources Reduce anti-social behaviour
Financial Cost	The estimated matched funding impact for the Authority is £12,500. If the Council are successful in a HLF bid, there are potential future implications in terms of staffing/maintenance of the site, which would have to be addressed through the MTFF.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents' and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	Eastcote & East Ruislip

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet authorises officers to tender for a Conservation Management Plan, to form the basis of a bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for the refurbishment, conversion and interpretation of the listed buildings and park at Eastcote House Gardens for community use.

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

The listed buildings at Eastcote House Gardens comprise the former Coach House, Dovecot and Walled Garden. They are all included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, and within the Eastcote Village Conservation Area. The buildings have been in Council ownership for many years and are in need of significant repair work. The tenants of the Coach House, the Eastcote Billiards Club, are no longer able to fulfil their obligations relating to the repairing lease, and its intermittent use is encouraging vandalism. The Coach House has been included on the Heritage at Risk Register, published by English Heritage.

It is considered that the situation is now critical with regard to the repair and re-use of the buildings, that the site represents a much under-used community facility, and that an application for external funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund, supported by a Conservation Management Plan, may be the only realistic solution. Officers are supported in this view by the Ward Councillors, the M.P., English Heritage and the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens.

Authorisation is being sought to proceed with these proposals, in a bid to secure the long term future of the site and its buildings for educational and community use.

Alternative options considered / risk management

Cabinet could decide not to agree the recommendation, in which case the buildings will fall into such disrepair that they may be unusable and at risk of collapse, or loss through vandalism.

Comments of Policy Overview Committee

None at this stage

Supporting Information

1. Eastcote House Gardens comprises approx 3.5 hectares (8.7 acres) and is located in Eastcote to the east of Eastcote High Road and the north of Field End Road, with access from both. It once formed the grounds of Eastcote House (demolished in the 1960's), and comprises the timber-framed Coach House, the 18th century Dovecot, the Walled Garden and an area of public parkland. The Coach House, Dovecot and Walls of the Walled Garden are listed Grade II and the park is included on the draft Parks and Gardens Local List, while the site falls within an Archaeological Priority Area, is designated as Metropolitan Open Land

and has been included within the Eastcote Village Conservation Area. (A map is appended to this report – Appendix 1).

2. The site has been in Local Authority ownership for around seventy years. The buildings have been maintained over the years, most recently in 2008. However significant repairs to all three buildings are now urgently needed. The Dovecot is showing signs of subsidence in one corner, the garden walls are leaning and the condition of the Coach House is very poor, and full modernisation of the electrical, plumbing, sanitary and kitchen installations are needed, before it can be brought into full use. The Coach House has been included in the Heritage at Risk Register, published by English Heritage.

3. The Coach House has been occupied for many decades by the Eastcote Billiards Club, whose declining and aging membership has led to an inability to meet obligations under the repairing lease. The very small number of club members means that the building is used less frequently, and this, together with its isolated location, renders it vulnerable to attack. The Coach House has been damaged by vandals on a number of occasions, and, on one occasion, members were threatened by a gang of youths brandishing beer bottles.

4. There is much interest in the park and its buildings. In September 2008, The Friends of Eastcote House Gardens Management Advisory Group (known as MAG) was set up by the Eastcote Residents Association, with the purpose of “advising the Council on the development and management of Eastcote House Gardens and the preservation and development of its ecological, historical and social quality . . .” The Friends have co-ordinated a monthly group of local volunteers who work on the gardens. They have also been successful in obtaining £22,000 ‘Community Spaces’ funding for the restoration of the planting in the walled garden.

5. The Council’s Green Spaces Team have been working towards obtaining a Green Flag Award for the park, and, during 2008/9 have carried out improvements to entrances and pathways, and have provided handrails to the bridge over the River Pinn, provided new planters and installed a new sundial in the Walled Garden.

6. On 7th November 2008, a meeting took place between the Ward Councillors, the MP, English Heritage, the Eastcote Residents Association, the Eastcote Village Conservation Area Advisory Panel and officers from the Conservation Team and Green Spaces. It was noted that numerous previous proposals to achieve the repair and re-use of these buildings had failed, due to the scale of the repairs needed (probably in excess of £500,000), the difficulties of finding suitable alternative premises for the billiards club and the need to find sustainable new uses for the buildings. It was agreed that the best option for securing and repairing the historic buildings for the community would be to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding, and that their requirement for projects to encompass conservation, education and partnership with local residents could be met in this project.

7. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is not able to consider any bid for funding without the submission of a Conservation Management Plan. This would provide a full analysis of the site, identifying repair requirements, investigating all the options for community use, the relocation of the billiards club, and external funding

sources, and estimating the likely costings and staffing implications. Consultation would take place throughout with council officers and the local community.

8. A draft brief for a Conservation Management Plan has been drawn up, and five firms of consultants having the expertise to carry out such work were approached to give a guideline figure as to the likely cost of producing such a Plan. Items which could be carried out by the Friends of Eastcote House or by council officers have been identified, and omitted. The likely cost was established as being in the region of £25,000.

9. In April, an application was made to English Heritage for partnership funding for the Management Plan. Although work in kind was offered as the Council's contribution towards match funding, only direct financial support was found to be eligible.

10. In June/July, English Heritage made a grant offer of £12,500, that is 50% of the cost of the plan. Of the remainder, £6,000 has been earmarked from the current ECP Green Spaces budget for the Ruislip/Northwood area in support of the project. A further £6,500 is still required to be made available.

11. In order to meet the requirements of English Heritage with regard to partnership funding, the Conservation Plan should be commissioned in the current financial year.

Financial Implications

Currently the estimated matched funding figure for the Authority is estimated to be £12,500. Almost half of this (£6,000) has been initially earmarked from an ECP Green Spaces budget. The balance would be covered from current PCS budgets, although there is no explicit provision for it.

If the bid to HLF is successful, the HLF can grant money for projects in full or in part, and funding for a Project Manager is usually included. It could be expected that the Council would be required to make a contribution through the future maintenance of buildings and grounds, and the provision of staffing and resources to manage the facilities.

However this is a small site in comparison with Manor Farm, Ruislip, and such costs would be likely to be of a limited nature. Any such provision would have to be addressed through the Councils Medium Term Finance Forecast (MTFF) and annual budget setting process.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The effect of the recommendation would be to commission a Conservation Management Plan to lever in funds for the site, potentially from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

External funding could then secure the repair and upgrading of the buildings in Eastcote House Gardens, and their conversion to educational /community use would provide an attractive facility for local residents, community groups and

visitors of all ages. It would enable the repair and re-use of an attractive group of historic buildings, which, without urgent attention, could otherwise be lost to the Borough. The interiors of the Coach House and Dovecot are particularly fine and cannot at present be enjoyed by the general public.

The repair and re-use of the buildings would also deter the vandalism and safety issues which have beleaguered the site in recent years.

Such a project could significantly enhance the site, providing, through external funding partners, significant Value for Money for the Council.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The following have been consulted throughout the project to date: Ward Councillors, Nick Hurd M.P, English Heritage, Friends of Eastcote House Gardens, Eastcote Residents Association, Eastcote Conservation Area Advisory Panel, Green Spaces Team and Property Services, Friends of Eastcote House Gardens.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

The estimated match funding for the Authority is £12,500 of which £6,000 has been earmarked from ECP Green Spaces budget. The balance will be covered from existing budgets within P&CS although there is no specific provision for this. If the HLF is successful then this will secure the long term future of the site bringing benefits to the Authority and contributing to the Sustainable Communities Strategy. This would incur additional costs to the Council in terms of staffing/maintenance and as such these provisions would have to be addressed through the Council's Medium Term Finance Forecast (MTFF) and annual budget setting process.

Legal

The National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) was established in 1980, with a substantial endowment. It receives annual grant-in-aid from DCMS for the Heritage Memorial Fund (HMF). In 1994, the NHMF also took on responsibility for managing grant-giving of money raised through the National Lottery for heritage projects. This is what is known as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The HLF has a number of different grants programmes. Each programme has its own application form, associated guidelines and assessment criteria.

The National Lottery was established by the Government under the National Lottery etc Act 1993 to create extra funds for five good causes: heritage, arts, sports, charities and projects to mark the beginning of the new millennium (a sixth good cause, the New Opportunities Fund was created in 1998). The Act also appointed NHMF as the distributor of funds to the heritage sector, and NHMF established the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out this task.

HLF's mission is:

'To improve the quality of life by safeguarding and enhancing the heritage of buildings, objects and the environment, whether manmade or natural, which have been important in the formation of the character and identity of the UK in a way which will encourage more sections of society to appreciate and enjoy their heritage, and enable them to hand it on in good heart to future generations'

HLF is funded by the proceeds of the National Lottery and receives 16.66% of the good causes share of the income.

There are four main Acts that define NHMF's legal framework. These are:

- National Heritage Act 1980
- National Lottery etc Act 1993
- National Heritage Act 1997
- National Lottery Act 1998

In addition, the Secretary of State has the power to issue directions on how it wishes NHMF to distribute lottery funds, and on how NHMF must manage and control its funds. These are known respectively as Policy and Financial Directions.

Corporate Property

The Billiards Club occupies the Coach House by virtue of a lease which commenced on 4 September 1990. The lease term has expired but the Club are holding over and as the lease was within the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 security of tenure provisions, the Club has a statutory tenancy until such time as terminated. The Club's lease can only be terminated under certain limited grounds specified under the Act or with the agreement of the Club.

Relevant Service Groups

This report has been prepared in liaison with the Council's Green Spaces Team

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Draft Brief for Conservation Management Plan
English Heritage Report for Partnership Funding
Heritage Lottery Fund Guidance Note