

# EASTCOTE HOUSE BUILDINGS AND GARDENS

## HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND STAGE 2 BID: REPORT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor Keith Burrows Cllr Jonathan Bianco
<b>Cabinet Portfolio(s)</b>	Planning, Transportation and Recycling Finance, Property & Business Services
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Charmian Baker – Residents Services
Papers with report	Appendix 1: Proposals Map Appendix 2: Summary of written responses to the public consultation Appendix 3: Summary of written responses to questionnaires

### 1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Summary</b>	The Heritage Lottery Fund project at Eastcote House Gardens is currently in the development stage, with a view to submitting the Stage 2 Bid in February 2013. This report informs Cabinet of the outcome of the recent public consultation on the draft proposals for Eastcote House Gardens and sets out how the proposals may be revised to take account of the concerns raised. It seeks approval to consult the public on the revised proposals and to subsequently proceed with the submission of the Stage 2 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
<b>Contribution to our plans and strategies</b>	Contributes to the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Council Plan Corporate objectives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining local heritage;</li> <li>• Ensuring heritage and natural environment are protected and enhanced</li> <li>• Expanding cultural and sports activities</li> <li>• Extending opportunities for older people to participate in leisure, recreational and cultural activities</li> <li>• Working in partnership to maximise the effective use of resources</li> <li>• Reducing anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Cost</b>	The cost of the further consultation is expected to be less than £150 and will be met from the 2012/2013 printing and stationery budget for Resident Services.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Residents' and Environment Policy Overview Committee
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	Eastcote and East Ruislip Ward

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

**That Cabinet:**

- 1. Notes the results of the public consultation on the draft proposals for Eastcote House Gardens**
- 2. Agrees the ways in which residents' concerns will be addressed.**
- 3. Authorises officers to go back to residents and local groups, with the amended drawings and proposals for a second, smaller consultation.**
- 4. Grants delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services to agree, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation and Recycling, to make any further minor amendments to the revised proposals for Eastcote House Gardens as a result of the further consultation.**
- 5. Authorises officers to proceed with the submission of the Stage 2 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.**

### **Reasons for recommendation**

A six week public consultation period for the proposals at Eastcote House Gardens ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October. The consultation was published on the Council's Eastcote House Gardens and 'Have your Say' web pages; an e-mail consultation with interested groups, individuals and forums was carried out; and a two day public consultation event was held. In addition to 124 completed questionnaires, notes of comments were made at the event and there was some e-mail and telephone engagement with individuals. In addition, extensive consultation has taken place with local residents, groups, forums and people visiting the gardens from further afield, over the last few months, amounting to a further 588 completed questionnaires.

The comments and suggestions are largely positive with high levels of support for all elements of the proposals. There have been concerns raised, particularly by those living on the perimeter of the gardens and in nearby roads, which need to be addressed. The success of the project will depend not only on the support of local residents, but of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund themselves, who are looking for a body of evidence to show that the proposals have good support from local communities and a wider audience.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

The concerns of the local residents who have shown some or complete opposition to the proposals, need to be addressed and responded to, otherwise there will be a risk that this community project will fail. If concerns are not heeded there is a real risk that the Heritage Lottery Fund will not support the project when submitted at Stage 2.

### **Policy Overview Committee comments**

None at this stage.

### **3. INFORMATION**

#### **Background**

1. Following the success of the Bid at Stage 1, Cabinet resolved on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012 to take the project through the development stage to submission of a detailed Stage 2 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. A consultancy team was commissioned to work with the Steering Group of Ward Councillors, local residents and officers to draw up proposals for the facilities necessary to support the activities planned for the site.
2. The formal consultation period was from 27<sup>th</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012. During this time residents could access the proposals via an on-line questionnaire, by telephoning or e-mailing the Customer Engagement Team or by attending the two day public consultation event. The two day event was held on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September and Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.), in Eastcote Catholic Church Hall in Field End Road. It was publicised by flyers, 2000 of which were delivered to the surrounding roads by a team of volunteers, together with articles in Hillingdon People, information on the Council's events web page and posters in all of Hillingdon's libraries. Information was also sent to interested groups and organisations so that they could display the information and/or share it with their members.
3. Exhibitions and activities in the Church Hall included:
  - displays of A1 size artwork and plans of the proposals for the new buildings and car park;
  - photographs of similar activities, such as the outdoor classroom and pond dipping, which take place in other parks;
  - a display of historic photographs of Eastcote House and its former owners, put together by the Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote Local History Society;
  - a display by the Friends Group on their work at the Gardens;
  - a sale of produce by the Rural Activities Centre; and
  - refreshments were served throughout the day by the Friends Group.
4. On the Saturday, the archaeologist who led the 'dig' on the site of Eastcote House in the summer, and whose company had undertaken a survey of the Stables building and geophysical surveys of the Gardens, gave a talk about his findings. This was very popular and attracted an estimated audience of over 100 people.
5. Central to the consultation were the four presentations and question and answer sessions, delivered twice on each day. In these, officers were able to explain not only what the proposals were, but how they came about and why, what processes they had been through, and how the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund would be met. Vital to this though was the need to gauge the support in the community and address the suggestions raised and concerns expressed. In total, it is estimated that around 230 people registered over the two days.

#### **The Proposals**

6. At the Consultation Event, officers explained how the proposals had been shaped. The success of the Bid at Stage 1 had been due to the potential perceived by the Heritage Lottery Fund in realising the objectives of their Parks for People programme. This was because heritage buildings would be conserved; volunteer effort would be augmented and formalised with training schemes; and visitors, young and old, would be attracted by the educational opportunities provided with regard to the ecological, horticultural and architectural heritage of

the Gardens. On-going management and maintenance were a vital component of this, and to this end the buildings and gardens had to be well managed and generate some income.

7. The proposals set out at the public consultation are illustrated in Appendix 1. Key components were:

- the repair and extension of the stables for community use, with some limited hire for private functions, including weddings;
- the linking of the stables to a new building at right angles, on the site of the former coach house, which would accommodate a small café with kitchen, sitting area, and toilets;
- the relocation of the car park in the woodland area to the west of the front gate, to improve the setting of the listed buildings and to enhance public safety;
- the straightening and raising of the south wall of the walled garden, behind which the Gardeners' Facility would be located, in a covered, secure area
- the provision of an outdoor classroom in Long Meadow (a circle of logs and tree stumps),
- the repair of the dovecote and its use as an interpretation centre for the whole site
- improvements to the River Pinn to enable school children to do pond dipping and to encourage more abundant plant and aquatic life
- a natural 'playground' of logs and tree stumps
- an archaeological dig on the site of the old House, and potentially on other sites within the Gardens, to be carried out during three weeks of each of four consecutive years.
- The site of Eastcote House to be marked out in the ground and the subject of an interpretation board.

8. The Community Engagement Team and the Friends Group have been gathering information on local groups interested in hiring the Stables, and groups wishing to exhibit paintings, or relocate there for their meetings or classes. The new building would enable further meeting space, whether formal or informal, and a refreshment facility and toilets would support activities in the Stables building, including visits from schools and uniformed groups and other activities taking place in the Gardens. The Gardeners' Facility is long overdue to provide the many local volunteers with safe storage, a rest area, and an area to propagate and pot plants and to train others in doing so.

9. The concept of a new building is to support the activities on the site, and within the Stables. As the Stables is small, and its subdivision is not considered appropriate to its historic character, it is not possible to include a kitchen, sufficient toilets, storage or a Site Manager's office within the building. Moreover, it is considered that the viability of the community use of the Stables and the Gardens will generally depend on suitable facilities, albeit of a modest size. It is proposed to erect this new building on the site of the former coach house (demolished in 1964), and give it the appearance of a brick outbuilding with timber doors, similar to its predecessor. Its design is intended to complement, and remain subservient in height and appearance to, the Stables.

10. As part of the development stage of the project, archaeological survey work was carried out to inform the proposals in the Gardens. This comprised a topographical survey, geophysical surveys and a standing buildings survey of the Stables. An archaeological dig on the site of Eastcote House also took place on three days at the end of June. This was professionally managed and supervised, with volunteers from the community and local school children taking part. The 'dig' was exceptionally popular, and volunteers of all ages thoroughly enjoyed the experience and relished learning about the features and finds from the archaeologists.

11. In September, body heat sensors were installed at all the entrances to the park to collect the data essential to the Heritage Lottery Fund Bid. The first readings show that some 550 people and vehicles visited the park every day in September. Included in these readings will be people who use the park as a short cut, such as school children who cross through the Gardens on their way to and from school. Nevertheless, the figures do demonstrate that the numbers of people using the park are high, something not generally known to those living nearby, who perceive it as being quiet.

12. Also not generally known, is that the Friends already welcome regular visits from at least four local schools and some of the local beaver scout, brownie and cub groups. They provide the children with historical information about the site, a visit to the dovecote and information about the gardens and the flowers in it. Some of the schools have been involved in planting bulbs in the gardens under the supervision of the Friends. Activities with the children have included:

- Archaeological dig – four classes came to take part in June 2012
- Gardening sessions
- History tours/nature studies
- Bulb planting sessions with classes from four local schools, from 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012

13. This year, the Friends also held the following events:

- January - Wassail
- June - Jubilee Picnic, with stalls, events and vintage car display
- June - Bat Walks
- August - History Walks
- June to October - Monthly Vintage Tea Garden with village fete attractions
- September - Open House weekend
- September - Ruislip National Women's Register
- November - University of the Third Age visit
- November - Church wives group visit

### **Consultation Responses and Feedback**

14. All those attending the public consultation event were encouraged to fill in a form, setting out their comments on the proposals and inviting suggestions for activities. 124 people filled out a form at the event, completed an on-line form or sent a form in afterwards. The majority of residents were in agreement with the proposals. Others agreed with the proposals in principle but had suggestions for improvements or amendments, about 19 of whom (15%) expressed strong opinions about particular aspects. Only 6 people (5%) said that they were entirely unhappy with the proposals, stating that they lived very near the Gardens and were concerned about any change to them. A table of the key themes coming from the responses is set out in Appendix 2. As some respondents gave detailed comments covering a number of different themes, a total of 147 points have been noted.

15. In addition to this period of public consultation, the Council's Customer Engagement Team have been analysing the 588 questionnaires, completed by people visiting the park on event and non event days over the summer. These have been collected from people visiting the park on normal, non event days (63), visitors to the Jubilee Picnic (45), people attending the monthly Vintage Tea events (424) and school children taking part in the archaeological dig (38) and on

an educational trip to the Gardens to learn about its history (16). Respondents were asked what they would like to see at the Gardens; what activities they would like to take part in; and what they thought of the proposals generally, including the potential new facilities (café and toilet facilities).

16. The feedback from visitors on non event days largely follows the findings from the formal consultation, with most people being positive about the proposals and offering suggestions to include or consider. Some local residents living on or near the perimeter of the park raised a number of concerns about changes, with a smaller group objecting to any change whatsoever. Those attending the various events often attended as a family and they were very much in favour of increasing the facilities to accommodate the needs of families and young children. Of the 424 attending the Vintage Tea events, 93% said they would be interested in taking part in selected activities in the Gardens, and the children interviewed were very enthusiastic indeed about their time at the Gardens. The questionnaire results are set out in Appendix 3.

### **Addressing the concerns raised during the consultation**

17. The outcome of the consultation demonstrates strong community support from residents living in the Borough and from community groups and organisations who want to be involved in the project going forward. Residents have spoken with familiarity and fond memories of Eastcote House and its outbuildings (demolished in 1964) and how these buildings were regarded as the centre of the community. It was also recalled by residents how unsafe the gardens had felt to them in the years after the demolitions, when gardens and surviving buildings began to deteriorate. At this point the gardens became neglected and anti-social behaviour in the park was causing issues and concern for local residents. Many residents were grateful for the contribution the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens had made to improving the gardens and bringing some community life back into the park.

18. The questionnaires were designed to quantify the desire for a café and toilets at the park. As the responses show, these facilities are desired and people felt they would attend the park more often with family and friends if these facilities were available. Most people gave examples of events and activities that they would be interested in taking part in, if they were available. Other residents wanted greater interpretation of the site and its history. Local groups and organisations have spoken to the Customer Engagement Team about the shortage of suitable venues for local groups and classes.

19. The chief concerns listed were:

- the scale of the proposals
- the size and design of the new-build
- the 'commercialism' of the park and the potential for impact upon the tranquil nature of the walled garden and other areas,
- the impact of events on parking in the surrounding roads on the Eastcote Park Estate
- a fear that the proposals would increase vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

20. These concerns and the responses to them are set out below:

POINTS RAISED	OFFICER RESPONSE
Concern at the scale of the proposed new build, and that it might overpower and detract from the existing buildings.	<p>The scheme will be reduced in size:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The extensions at the back of the Stables will be removed from the scheme entirely, so that the Stables would be refurbished, as is, with a kitchenette and disabled toilet installed in the existing lean-to.</li> <li>2. The footprint of the new build will be reduced in size by 23 square metres. This to be achieved by reducing the size of the kitchen, eliminating the internal staircase and making other internal alterations. The length of the front façade will be reduced by 5 metres. This would constitute a reduction in size of some 22%.</li> </ol>
Concerns relating to the use of the Stables, including use as a wedding venue.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The removal of the rear additions to the Stables, which included a meeting room, would mean that it could no longer be used for wedding ceremonies.</li> <li>2. The lease for the Stables would be designed in line with the views of residents, ensuring that it would primarily be used for community use, with social lettings restricted by early closing times and limited numbers of visitors.</li> </ol>
Concern at the appearance of the new build, in particular the doors	The overall design is being reconsidered, including the doors. The aim is for it to look similar to the brick coach house, which used to stand on exactly this site. English Heritage will have the final say on the design, and will want to be convinced that it will not harm the special architectural character and appearance of the Stables.
Access/Parking for school coaches	It is possible that school children or other groups could be brought to the park by coach (albeit infrequently). If this were the case, coaches would drop off in a safe place and there would be no parking for coaches on or near the park. Local schools and groups will continue to walk to the park. Other groups and individuals will be encouraged to use local transport networks.
Would there be more archaeology at the park? The new building would go on the site of the old coach house, would there need to be a dig here too?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes, if the project is successful at Stage 2, there will be four seasons of community archaeology (4 x 3 weeks) undertaken.</li> <li>2. A trench was dug on the site of the old coach house, after the community dig in the summer. However English Heritage may ask for a watching brief to be carried out when, or if, work starts on the site of the new building.</li> </ol>
The protection of bats	A survey was undertaken in May 2012 by the Bat Group, in advance of urgent works on the Stables. An additional survey is being commissioned to cover the woodland areas and advise on whether the project might affect the bat population, and, if so, how this could be prevented or mitigated.
Issues relating to the Natural Play Area	The play area would be carefully sited in line with recommendations from residents. The natural play area will be very small, comprising only natural materials, sourced locally. A suggestion that this 'play ground' should be divided up and located in two or three parts of the gardens will be investigated. All comments and recommendations will be considered in the design and location of the natural play area.
Suggested rules for the walled garden	<p>Appropriate signage will be put up to advise residents on the use of the walled gardens to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent the use of scooters, bikes or ball games</li> <li>• Ensure dogs are kept on leads.</li> </ul>
Concern that the new proposals would attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is considered that the repair, maintenance and regular use of the buildings, together with the presence of a Site Manager, is likely to deter vandalism not attract it.</li> <li>2. Better lighting, burglar alarms and CCTV cameras will be installed.</li> </ol>

POINTS RAISED	OFFICER RESPONSE
	<p>3. The body heat sensors installed will show if there are people entering the park at night. This can be monitored and followed up.</p> <p>4. The park has six entrances and it is impossible to prevent people visiting at night. If there is a noise nuisance there, residents are advised to contact the police and get a crime number. An accurate picture of the problem can then be built up.</p>
The Site Manager	<p>1. It is envisaged that the EHG Site Manager would work the equivalent of 4 days per week. This could vary across the seasons, with more hours in summer than winter, and vary across the days of the week. The exact details of the role will be developed as more information is gathered on what best suits the park and residents.</p> <p>2. The installation of a flat for a Site Manager in the new build was investigated, but the Heritage Lottery Fund confirmed they would not fund it.</p>
Parking and transport issues in relation to increased numbers attending the park	<p>1. Parking provision is a balance between what can be accommodated on site without damage to the tree roots of the best trees, and the need to provide enough parking to prevent nuisance on nearby roads.</p> <p>2. Public transport will be actively encouraged on event publicity material by the provision of information about local bus and train links.</p> <p>3. Any large events may result in extra parking on neighbouring roads. However this can be managed by parking enforcement officers on the day.</p>
The use of renewable energy	A Ground Source Heat Pump is being considered in the new build, but the listed Stables would be heated in a more traditional way.
Number of attendees at functions	The maximum number which the Stables could accommodate is 80 standing or 40 seated. The numbers would be monitored in line with the lease.
Perceived increase in noise	<p>1. 550 visitors a day have been reported during the month of September and the gardens also host many community events and activities during the year. Thus there are already significant numbers visiting the Gardens.</p> <p>2. The intention is to have an annual programme of events and activities that will not overlap and will be tightly managed in line with the needs of the local community. The resources only allow for one activity at a time and there have been no complaints to date by visitors to the gardens when school classes have visited. Thus activities should not detract from the tranquil nature of the site.</p>
Opposition to a commercial café. It is not needed to support the Stables	<p>1. A café is a proposal that has great support. The HLF would only fund proposals if there were a convincing business case to support their viability.</p> <p>2. The café would only be small, with four inside tables and four outside. It would be similar in scale to that at Manor Farm or Kings College Pavilion, Ruislip.</p> <p>3. The Stables is really quite small. There is not enough space for toilets, kitchen, storage and an office for a Site Manager. In order to make the building usable for local groups, and increase the volunteer and educational visits, it is essential to have appropriate facilities.</p>
Issues relating to the number of toilets	The scheme has now been reduced and two of the toilets have been cut from the proposals. Disabled toilets will be available.
The need to raise the garden walls	<p>1. It is proposed to raise the south wall to the vertical and then raise in height, to enable the location of the Gardeners' Facility behind it.</p> <p>2. The raising of the east wall is technically more difficult due to its poor condition and the practicalities are being investigated by an Engineer. The degree of difficulty will also be</p>

POINTS RAISED	OFFICER RESPONSE
	reflected in the cost
Notice boards should be more easily readable	This is agreed. Easily readable signage and interpretation will be an important element of the project. Signage will be developed with local groups and individuals to ensure it meets the needs of local residents
Access to park	The road network around the park does make it difficult for pedestrians. The possibility of a new zebra crossing is being investigated, with a view to improving access.
Need for raised beds for disabled visitors.	The need for raised flower beds for disabled gardeners is part of the activity plan for this project. All residents should have the opportunity to contribute towards the gardens and take part in activities.

## The Next Stage

21. The next stage is to re-consult those groups and individuals who responded to the consultation, to make available the revised drawings and receive their comments. The information will also be published on the Council's website.

22. Subject to any further minor revisions to the proposals being agreed by the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation and Recycling, the final drawings be costed and submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to ensure that they pass the Stage Reviews. The combined submission of the Stage 2 Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February 2013 will comprise:

- An Activity Plan: including baseline data on visitors and volunteers, with associated targets; a detailed description of the proposed activities; and how these proposals have been trialled and with what success
- A report of the Consultations carried out, the results and subsequent amendments
- A Business Plan for the Activities and the Buildings
- Proposals maps, demonstrating how the archaeological, ecological, arboriculture and architectural surveys carried out have been taken into account
- Drawings up to planning submission standard, with a statement from English Heritage regarding the suitability of their design and location for the site
- An updated Conservation Management Plan
- A Management and Maintenance Plan
- A detailed budget analysis

## Financial Implications

24. The development stage for the Stage 2 bid for improvements to Eastcote House and Gardens has an approved budget of £95k, 78% of which (£74k) is reimbursed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The balance of funding for the budget comes from £15k approved by Cabinet in February 2012 for surveys and investigative works, with the balance from volunteer time and a contribution from the existing Residents Services revenue budget for consultation costs. The further consultation stages recommended in the report have low financial implications, particularly given the distribution of the flyers by volunteers. These costs will therefore be met from the agreed budget for the development phase of the Bid.

## **4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendation?**

The project has been supported throughout by representatives from the local community who sit on the Steering Group, a group which has had a major input into the proposals. Overall the responses to the consultation have been very positive and it is clear that the community are keen to see the site as a community hub once again. There are residents living very close to the Gardens who are sceptical of the need or desirability of this project. However, the Heritage Lottery Fund project offers the best opportunity for repairing and maintaining the buildings and gardens, for the sake of the community, in perpetuity.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

As documented in this report

## **5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance concurs with the financial implications set out above; noting that costs associated with the recommendations set out in this report will be contained within existing budgets. As noted within this report, a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund would provide resources to support investment at Eastcote House Gardens although a contribution from Council Resources will likely be required. As this bid progresses, potential impacts on future revenue budgets and capital programme will be managed through the MTFF process and further reports to Cabinet.

### **Legal**

There are no specific legal implications for this report, which recommends that Cabinet notes the latest consultation responses, authorises officers to carry out further consultation, and authorises officers to further pursue lottery funding for the Eastcote House Gardens project.

In considering any consultation responses, decision makers must ensure there is a full consideration of all representations arising including those which do not accord with the officer recommendation. The decision maker must be satisfied that responses from the public are conscientiously taken into account.

### **Corporate Property and Construction**

Corporate Property and Construction are happy to support the recommendations in the report.

### **Relevant Service Groups: Green Spaces**

Green Spaces support this report.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL