

Summary of analysis

to returning the northern top end of the Fields to a sports field or introducing a garden into the orchard area. Highbury Corner is identified as a strategic gateway within the Borough of Islington, and the spatial strategy of this space will be integrated at the southern end of Highbury Fields. Likewise enhancing the northern end of the Fields and the pedestrian environment around the listed Clock Tower within the curtilage of the listed Christ Church is seen as an opportunity.

TREES

Due to the foresight of previous generations, for much of the 20th century the capital has benefited from the large scale planting of trees, notably the London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*). The long-term replenishment of London's maturing tree stock is highly desirable. However this has many technical challenges including new planting within an existing treescape, ground conditions and relationships with buildings.

The understanding and evaluation of the arboricultural asset is not fully possible without appropriate expert technical advice. For this reason an arboricultural survey by CBA Trees was commissioned to identify value and tree protection zones in accordance with BS5837:2005 with the aim of identifying appropriate protection of the significant tree groups.

An independent survey by arboricultural consultant Mr. Booth challenged the accuracy of a small element of the CBA Trees survey. A subsequent revision to the survey gained consensus with regard to baseline data. This process has engaged the project in a detailed arboricultural discussion, wholly appropriate considering the significant group, amenity, heritage and cultural value of the trees.

Through the consultations the Vision has explored the opportunity to set a phased plan of replanting to help create a better age balance on the Fields. These discussions included replanting the outer avenue of limes on Highbury Place. It acknowledges that there is no certainty of the life expectancy of the plane trees that account for 42% of the tree cover on the Fields. Historical research reveals that these trees are approximately 120 years old, and are likely to live for several hundreds of years more.

A detailed tree management and tree planting strategy for the Fields is considered an essential additional piece of work.

APPENDIX D & E (1 & 2)

ECOLOGY

Highbury Fields is not only a vital recreational and aesthetic resource. Its ecological value is important. Highbury Fields is a site of Local Nature Conservation Importance and has potential to expand the communities engagement and understanding of urban nature conservation. Any proposed changes need to consider the ecological impact and develop mitigation measures.

SOIL

An appreciation of the potential for improvement of the sports facilities, horticultural improvements, drainage and the management plan depends on a thorough soil survey. Soil & Land Consultancy provided the baseline study of landscape and sports pitch facilities, which might inform a future management plan and the potential for sward improvements. Unsurprisingly the soils were found to be heavy in texture, containing high proportions of clay and silt, demonstrating slow drainage rates and soils prone to degradation due to intensive use.

APPENDIX F

CLIMATE CHANGE

Detailed proposals would be subject to analysis of the likely impacts of climatic conditions.

CONSULTATIONS STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME

This element is critical to the success of the project, with the aim of engendering a positive response to the project process and support for the Vision.

J & L Gibbons with Urbancanda undertook the consultations. This included a desktop review and analysis of all relevant recorded public opinion to help inform the initial stages of the information production for consultation, the design of supporting publicity, and running two open community dialogue events. The first ran as a formal consultation evening in June 2006, the second as a two day

exhibition on the Fields followed by a formal consultation evening in September 2006. Leaflets, posters and banners were designed and distributed by J & L Gibbons. The events were advertised in the local newspapers and letters were also written to those who had participated in the first consultation.

In addition, J & L Gibbons undertook a whole raft of technical and community consultation dialogues, some face to face, some by letter and email, and others in small groups.

Document 2 of the suite of Vision documents summarises the findings. Together the events generated over 600 completed questionnaires and over 500 post-it-pad suggestions along with numerous email correspondence and letters from local schools, residents, users and youth groups.

APPENDIX B

The draft Vision was uploaded onto LBI's website for comment at the beginning of December 2006, and a full copy was available for review at the Central Library (2 Fieldway Crescent, N5 1PF). The period for comment closed in the second week of January 2007 enabling J & L Gibbons to analyse, and incorporate or respond to the comments.

During the period of the website consultation J&L Gibbons received 12 emails which have been analysed. Altogether there were 158 hits on Islington Council's website while the Vision document was uploaded. (DOCUMENT 5)

PHASED REALISATIONS AND FUNDING

The Vision will facilitate the commissioning of a number of studies so that a phasing and funding strategy can be produced in conjunction with more detailed design proposals and management strategies. The document will also be used to support funding applications.



Plane trees to Queens Walk



Looking towards Queens Walk from the Mother Field



Shrub and tree planting to southern playground

It is recognised and acknowledged that the interlocking network of avenues and groups in its entirety forms a significant heritage asset and the character of the Fields depends on them.

The arboricultural survey confirms this. It gives a substantial amount of technical information on condition and value, and is accompanied by an assessment according to BS5837:2005 of related tree protection zones tree by tree.

The tree protection zones have already been useful in early discussions with London Underground defining constraints related to the possible location of shafts for enhanced station safety. The Victoria line platforms run diagonally under the mound area, which contains a number of substantial 'A' category trees. Further consultation is required.

The consultations sought to open discussions on addressing the issues of age balance. Many of the trees on the Fields planted just over 100 years ago are of a similar age and there is a concern that they are likely to decline at the same time. The tree stock is dominated by a few species; this is not an issue in terms of current pests but diseases do spread and mutate.

As the trees continue to mature, and may continue to do so over several hundreds of years, the challenge is in finding the positions and projecting forward the consequences of future planting. Felling is controversial, particularly in a Conservation Area, but the benefits in the long term may be significant, and the historical research has revealed similar strategies of planting and selective felling in the past.

It was broadly agreed that a tree management and planting strategy should be commissioned to define a coordinated approach to pruning, planting and felling. This strategy should also be coordinated with the Council's tree policy and other detailed surveys and design.

The long term strategy should seek to manage the existing London plane trees that make up the Avenues such as to ensure their long term survival. A maintenance strategy of selective felling and replanting of healthy existing London plane trees should not be adopted.

The long term strategy should consider the feasibility and practicalities of:

- Replanting the outer avenue on Highbury Place, replacing the limes and planting into an enhanced below ground planting trench an avenue of evenly spaced (20m) non drip limes.
- Define areas for infill planting of plane trees on Highbury Crescent and Highbury Terrace.

Strategies: Trees

- A replanting strategy
- Selective felling of trees in the Orchard to allow the possibility of creating a garden and to allow remaining trees to fulfil their full potential.
- Crown lifting of trees adjacent to the war memorial to allow a clearer view under the canopies when walking south on the broad walk.
- Keep under review the ongoing issue of plane trees and proximity to the back of Baalbec Road properties.
- Infill with plane trees if the ranger's office is demolished.
- Plant a new line of plane trees on the north edge of the mound, alongside Highbury Pool.
- Review the policy of memorial trees, which was raised through consultations and generally thought not to be appropriate for the Fields.
- Contact the Nature Conservation Team for advice on shrub removal and tree pruning.
- The impact of a limited range of species on Highbury Fields.
- that plane trees, especially in avenues, form a fundamental part of the character of Highbury Fields and therefore should be protected.

NEXT STEPS:

- Commission a long term management plan which conforms to the Council's Tree policy.
- Further negotiation with LUL on impact of works on trees required.
- Undertake an ecology survey to establish extent of wildlife found on Highbury Fields.