

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

NO 102
DEC 2015



Looking north from the Children's Playground (AFLS+P Architects)

SPORTS PLANNING APPLICATION: Meeting on site, 19 December 2015

The proposed buildings and the pitch layout will have a substantial impact upon the appearance and use of the Park. The last date for sending in comments is 23 December so we propose to meet by the main Children's Playground on 19 December to walk through the plans with Friends between 10 and 11am. We know that is a big day for Christmas shopping but this is almost our only opportunity.

Applications to Hounslow Council for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent were submitted in mid October; we were notified by email on 2 December, gaining access to the details on 4 December. We put up a news items on gunnersburyfriends.org on that date with a short description and links to over 50 files. As they all had meaningless code numbers, making it impossible to identify what was what, we have renamed and listed them. Please note that a number of documents have had to be duplicated to meet the requirements of the two applications. The *Design & Access Statement* provides the best summary. To submit your own comments via the Hounslow Council Planning web pages you should use System Ref no P/2015/4519 or Planning Ref 00885/A/S32 in the search box for the Planning Application or P/2015/4520 or 00885/A/L15 for the Listed Building Consent Application.

An initial review of the documents suggests that these are some of the issues we have to consider:

The appearance of the sports hall The architects have chosen to use black painted timber cladding for the upper floor. They say "*Black painted cladding was chosen because it is a traditional colour. Historically agricultural outbuildings and barns were black from being coated in protective tar so black has strong associations with buildings in nature. Black as a background colour can emphasise*

and appear to 'lighten' a bright colour adjacent to it. The green foliage of adjacent trees and of trees in the foreground of views of the building will be emphasized in front of a black background."

The black cladding will make the building far too dominant and ugly. The justification for this choice is completely out of keeping with the nature of a public park. The *Design & Access Statement* reports that Historic England were concerned about uneven discolouration through weathering and about its durability. However they have been 'reassured' that the kiln-dried modified timber, factory painted, with a warranty life of only 15 years, won't weather. The grassland falls away below it and this black upper wall will be seen from many parts of the park. In winter there will be no tree cover or emphasise-able foliage in the foreground. The architect's drawings of the elevations in the proposals, which give a preferable impression of lightness and silver, are unfortunately wholly misleading.

Fencing and lighting The open field will have three, possibly four, fenced areas, two with floodlighting. The tennis court fencing will be 3-metre (10ft) high green plastic-covered chain-link with 15 galvanised column lights each 8-metres (26ft) high. The artificial grass pitches will have 4.5 metre (15ft) high fencing with 9 galvanised column lights, all 13 metres (43ft) high. The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA on the plans) will have 3-metre high green chain link fencing, but does not appear to be floodlit. There are also plans for the golf course to move to the top of field, and this site will presumably be fenced as well, but the golf course proposals are not included in this planning application.



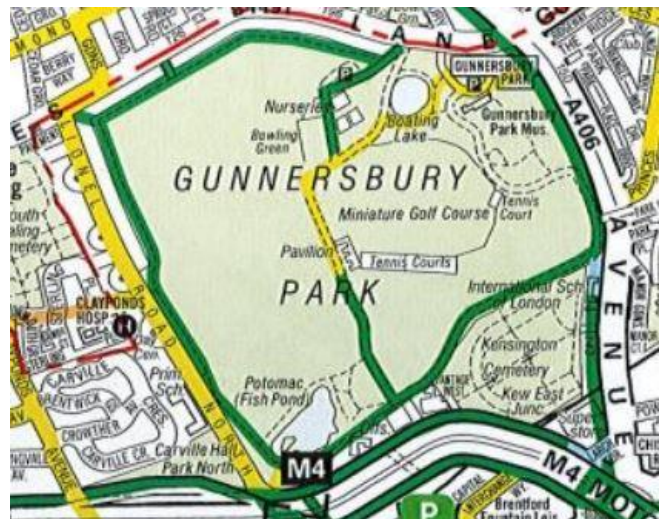
Modern floodlighting on a recent and similar development to show very limited light spillage outside the playing area

The visual impact of the fenced and floodlit artificial grass pitches The fencing and floodlighting will have a major visual impact on the park. One of Hounslow's Planning Officers, Sean Doran, is quoted in support of siting the Sports Hall on the bowling green: the "*location of the new sports hub is determined by two main factors; the benefit of using a part of the site that is previously developed and the fact that locating it here will not impact on the historic protected landscape setting, views within the setting to and from the listed mansions and other listed buildings/structures, and will not further remove any openness from the Metropolitan Open Land.*"

The *Visual Impact Statement* presents several views of the fenced enclosures but none includes the floodlight columns, and the viewpoints chosen diminish the impact of the proposals. One of the most delightful experiences at Gunnersbury is to follow the route past the Round Pond to the Children's Playground and, at the point where you stand by the Rothschilds' polo mounting block, the whole western sky opens up in front of you and lifts the heart. The lowest horizon in west London, and not a tower block in sight. Right in front of you will be 15ft high fencing, which will do nothing for the "openness from the Metropolitan Open Land".

Cycle routes within the Park The *Transport Assessment* (para 4.3.5) states "*As can be seen cycle routes are provided within Gunnersbury Park. Full off-street routes are available close to the perimeter of the Park, whilst there is also a cycle route provided on a north south axis across the centre of the Park.*"

This statement on cycle routes is repeated throughout the supporting documents, so either this is a mistake or the Ealing Project Team has briefed their consultants accordingly. At each public meeting where this contentious subject arose it has been as a consultation, with promises that no decisions have been made. The Park's Bye-laws clearly state that cycling is forbidden; other than issuing this map nothing has been done to change this.



Yellow routes: Quieter roads recommended by other cyclists, may connect with other routes

Green routes: Off road routes through parks

Enlarged Car Park There are currently 130 spaces in the main car park, in two areas, one tarmac and the other a “grasscrete”-type cellular surface). Another 153 spaces will be added by taking over the PHS/Greenscene site behind the walls. The existing entrance/exit at Popes Lane is deemed to be wide enough for two cars to pass and it is not possible to change it because of the boundaries.



Landscape Masterplan from *The Design & Access Statement* showing the siting of the artificial grass pitches (red, in the centre) and the tennis courts (top)

This project provides a fine opportunity for upgrading the sports facilities and recognising how needs have changed since the Park opened. Such a chance is unlikely to arise again for another century so getting both appearance and disposition right now really matters, to ensure we don't lose in the process the significant features we value today.

CURRENT WORKS IN THE PARK

With the arrival of the contractors and works getting underway, scaffolding now covers the Large Mansion, substantial hoardings surround the works to ensure safety and the big iron gates on Popes Lane are closed. The nearby pedestrian gate facing the North Circular is the best alternative way in. It is disappointing that the hoped-for notices, to keep Park users informed, have not materialised.



Metal mesh barriers in place around the former Horseshoe Pond

CHRISTMAS CONCERT 20 December

The lively West London Folk Band will present a seasonal concert in the Small Mansion Terrace Room. The event is free but advance booking is essential via visitgunnersbury.org/music-in-the-small-mansion or phone 07803 454 813. The show runs from 12 noon (doors open 11.50am) to 1.30pm, seats allocated first come, first served. Tea/coffee and mince pies will be served in the interval.



SMALL MANSION

The Small Mansion had to close suddenly during the autumn. We understand that this was due to the discovery of a problem with the elderly electrical system. While work was undertaken to make this safe, we understand that staff worked from home and some school sessions were cancelled over a period of about 6 weeks.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS NEAR THE PARK

Two companies held consultation meetings recently to announce proposals for very substantial developments south of the Park. We made comments on each occasion about the potential impact of high rise buildings on views from the Park. A sketch of a 32-storey tower for the north side of Chiswick Roundabout (but no details) can be seen at chiswickroundaboutplans.co.uk and ideas for Capital Interchange Way by Will Alsop are at ciwconsultation.com.

MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions fall due each year on 1 April; reminders will be sent out with the next Newsletter in March. Do encourage others to join at this exciting time at Gunnersbury or perhaps buy membership as a gift. Greater numbers give us a stronger voice.

In addition to our own fund-raising, which includes your very welcome donations accompanying subscriptions, one member left us a generous legacy a few years ago. Our investment income enables us to make modest donations to support the Park and Museum. You could strengthen our financial position by leaving a bequest in your will. Do please let us know if you would like to discuss this.

The annual subscription is £10 per person and an application form can be found on our website. Send the completed form, with a cheque to *Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum*, to The Membership Secretary, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8ND.

NEWSLETTER 103

This will be prepared in February 2016. Your contributions – short articles, Gunnersbury stories, photos and memories, or just useful information – are always very welcome.

Please post items to The Editor, 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL or attach to an email to info@gunnersburyfriends.org.

ACTON HISTORY GROUP

A number of local history societies cover our area. That for Acton meets at 7.30 pm on the second Wednesday of each month from September to March in St Mary's Church Hall in Acton opposite Morrisons.

Their 2016 programme will include talks about the history of Gunnersbury on 10 February, when David Bush, the Friends' membership secretary, will speak about the Small Mansion and Vanda Foster, the former Curator, will look at the Large Mansion and more recent developments. Non-members are welcome at all meetings, admission £2.

CONTACTS & INFO

For general information about the Park, the Museum and the restoration project, the official web-site is visitgunnersbury.org

For details of Events or of the Learning Programme contact the team on 07803 454813 or gunnersburylearning@ealing.gov.uk

On gunnersburyfriends.org, our own web site, you can find information about Friends' activities as well as news updates about Gunnersbury

Contact Capel Manor College's Centre at Gunnersbury by email, enquiries@capel.ac.uk, by phone 08456 122122, or see capel.ac.uk/gunnersbury-park-centre.html

**The Friends
of Gunnersbury Park
& Museum is a
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