

## **Briefing note on Waterlow Park Project**

**To:** Waterlow Park local stakeholders

**Cc:** Ward Councillors

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**From:** Jessica Gibbons, Head of Parks and Open Spaces, London Borough of Camden ([Jessica.gibbons@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.gibbons@camden.gov.uk))

**For further information contact:** Andrew Wright, [Andrew.wright@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.wright@camden.gov.uk)

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 On 2<sup>nd</sup> September we held a meeting with local stakeholders at the Waterlow Park Centre to update on the Waterlow Park Project, to discuss progress so far and identify key next steps. Attendees asked that a written brief could be provided to circulate to members of their groups and the wider community. This briefing note aims to meet that request.

### **2 Background**

2.1 Nurturing and improving our parks and open spaces is important to Camden. We are proud of the natural spaces in Camden, in particular Waterlow Park, but the financial challenges we face are driving us to reconsider and transform how we deliver services in order to maintain the quality and opportunity within our green spaces.

2.2 Waterlow Park is a unique site in Camden in many ways including because it is held in Trust under an Act of Parliament with the London Borough of Camden as the sole Trustee. Within this Trust are four buildings Lauderdale House, the Waterlow Park Centre, Swains Lane Lodge and Dartmouth Park Lodge.

2.3 Through the Waterlow Park project we are seeking to find a Sustainable Future for Waterlow Park, to protect it from funding cuts. The project is trying to take a new approach to how we make decisions in Camden we are seeking to work with the community, to openly and transparently share information and to come to decisions together, we are seeking to achieve a true partnership with the Community. While this approach brings many challenges the positivity of all those involved to date has enabled real progress to be achieved.

2.4 The project aims to:

- Maintain the park's quality and community benefit
- Develop a financially sustainable future for all park buildings
- Explore the potential to increase income to the park to enable a move towards a self-sustaining model

- Ensure Lauderdale House Society (LHS) has a strong and sustainable business model
  - Engage the wider community and continuously test that this is being achieved
  - To support LHS to continue to secure match funding and deliver Lauderdale Transformed
- 2.5 To date the project has held three stakeholder meetings with key local stakeholder groups and from this set up two working groups, one looking at the Waterlow Park Centre and the second looking at a new model for the management of the Park.

### **3 Project progress**

- 3.1 The Lauderdale House Society in partnership with Camden has been successful in their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Lauderdale Transformed. A project that will see the house restored and new resources put in place to enable the Society to deliver key activities for the local community.
- 3.2 Following detailed discussions with local stakeholders and the sharing of detailed information about both the legal position and financial position of both buildings, the decision to lease Swains Lane and Dartmouth Park Lodges on short term high specification residential leases has been made. We are currently awaiting planning confirmation for this use and hope to start refurbishment in October/November.
- 3.3 The Friends of Waterlow have continued to play a key role in modelling the way we hope to work together in the future: the Orchard project and Kitchen Garden have truly demonstrated how well the community can not only improve but sustain improvement to our green spaces.

### **4 Project working group updates**

#### **4.1 Waterlow Park Centre working group**

- 4.2 The average annual running costs for the Centre are £55,000 (£45,000 without public toilets). The planning use is D1 Community and Education, with a specific clause stating the building use must link to the environment of the park.
- 4.3 This working group is formed of representatives from the Friends of Waterlow Park, Lauderdale House Society, Highgate Society and LB Camden. The working group through a number of meetings, research and discussions have three models that are being considered for the use of the building: continued management by Camden Events team, leased business units and community space, lease or license to a complementary organisation.

- 4.4 **Camden Events Team:** The events team currently manage events in the Centre, but have proposed a model whereby they refurbish the building to give a greater opportunity for events bookings and revise the fees and charges for events in the building to enable cost effective delivery. They anticipate an income, after costs, of approximately £30k.
- 4.5 **Leased business unit and community space:** The Friends of Waterlow Park have developed this model which refurbishes the building to have small office units and a central community space. Rental income could be achieved through leases to small local businesses, while the community continues to have access to the building for meetings and activities. Self-contained office units can rent for as much as £15k per annum. Camden Planning Officers have expressed concerns that this model could be in breach of the planning use of the building; further consideration is needed on this issue.
- 4.6 **Lease or license to a complementary organization:** Given the planning conditions on this building this would need to be an organization that provided a service to the local park users and local community. In order to prevent direct competition with Lauderdale House refreshment facilities would not be considered, but other opportunities do exist and soft market testing is needed to determine interest and rental value.
- 4.7 **Lauderdale Transformed**
- 4.8 The aim of Lauderdale Transformed is to improve the facilities of Lauderdale House so that the Society can generate more income and become self-sufficient financially and able to maintain the house whilst running its arts and education programme. This will include the introduction of full disability access, a new 'state of the art' Learning Centre, reconfiguration of the building to allow LHS to do more for more of the time, transformation of facilities, uncovering and displaying the heritage and a new 3 year heritage learning programme
- 4.9 Total project cost is £1.8million of which £1.3million has been raised. A further £200k is required by January 2014 and the balance by May 2014. HLF have contributed £800k following a joint Camden Council/HLF bid. Permission to progress the design to the pre-tender stage has been granted by HLF. If LHS raises the funds, building work will start late 2014 and be complete Summer 2015.
- 4.10 LHS is formalising a lease of the building with Camden Council as Trustee of the Waterlow Park Trust based on a 'profit' related rent. It is also agreeing a licence relating to use of space beyond the four walls of the building.

#### 4.11 **Community Management Committee**

4.12 This working group includes representatives from Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum, Friends of Waterlow Park, Highgate Neighbourhood Forum, Lauderdale House and LB Camden. This working group has been exploring the following four options to identify the most suitable approach to increased community engagement and potential management of the Park:

4.12.1 Maintain current management structure

4.12.2 Increase the number of trustees on the Waterlow Trust Board

4.12.3 Develop an unincorporated community management committee

4.12.4 Develop a Community Interest Company

4.13 **Maintain current management structure**; the working group consider this option puts the Park at risk of funding cuts as LB Camden continue to be under pressure from Central Government funding reductions. It also implies minimal influence for the FoWP and other interested parties.

4.14 **Increase the number of trustees on the Waterlow Board of Trustees**; currently LB Camden are the sole trustee. The Waterlow Trust is enshrined within an Act of Parliament and therefore to make any change to the structure of the Trust would require a change in this Act. This is a considerably lengthy and expensive process. The group do not feel the cost benefit of this approach is worthwhile.

4.15 **Develop an unincorporated community management committee**; this option is supported and could under an appropriate agreement give greater community input into the management of the park. A draft heads of terms has been developed by the group and includes the following draft remit:

4.15.1 To lead the strategic planning for the maintenance, enhancement and public enjoyment of Waterlow Park and its buildings. Working closely with and engaging the Lauderdale House Society, Friends of Waterlow Park and local groups, organisations and individuals to do this. Parks priorities. Development of 5 year plan. Reduce the cost of running the park for Camden. Income generation and fundraising. Need to define line between operational management, this remains with Camden and strategic management (CMC). CMC to develop over a number of years.

4.15.2 To shape and consult on the formulation of the park maintenance brief, prioritising works and considering the best delivery model for Waterlow

4.15.3 To prepare and oversee planning documents on issues such as horticulture, arboriculture, nature, landscape and views, memorials, recreation, etc. and to agree how these fit with Camden and wider policies and good practice

4.15.4 To consider the resources available and help to shape and agree the annual budget for the Park

- 4.15.5 To direct resources and people employed on behalf of the management committee to support the committee to carry out its work, to support and lead fundraising, income generation and project activities.
- 4.16 Being unincorporated would put committee members at risk if they were to take on any financial responsibilities, further research needs to be undertaken as to whether this could be mitigated by approach insurance.
- 4.17 ***Develop a Community Interest Company***; further research is needed into this option but it is understood this approach would give members of the committee protection against liability risks.

## 5 Next steps

- 5.1 The project is seeking to ensure engagement from across the whole community and welcomes new group representatives and individuals to join the project working groups
- 5.2 The next working group meetings are on:

**Waterlow Park Management Committee:** 19 September 2013, Waterlow Park Centre 11.30pm-1.00pm (confirmed)

**Waterlow Park Centre:** 10 October 2013, Waterlow Park Centre 11.30 to 12.30pm (to be confirmed)

If you would like to send a representative of your group or attend either of these meetings as an individual please contact [Andrew.wright@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.wright@camden.gov.uk)

To keep up to date with project progress please visit

The [Waterlow Park Project webpage](#) on the LB Camden website

or

The [Friends of Waterlow Park](#) website