

Report by: Head of Active Communities

To: South Area Committee, 13th May 2010

Wards: Cherry Hinton, Queen Edith's and Trumpington

Cherry Hinton Hall Improvements

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Officers from Active Communities have engaged with a series of key stakeholders to consider the future use of this area previously occupied by the former propagation centre in the centre of the park. In addition, stakeholders were asked to consider the whole park for improvements and creation of a Masterplan see Appendix A.
- 1.2 A series of workshops were carried out with local residents and a report commissioned to understand usage, needs, and improvements at Cherry Hinton Hall. Both of these approaches have shaped the proposed Master Plan

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The South Area Committee is recommended to:-
 - a) Agree the proposals and timescales as laid out within this report, and
 - b) Instruct officers to proceed with wider public consultation on the Masterplan.

3 Background

- 3.1 The former propagation centre compound in the centre of the Hall grounds has remains fallow and there have been discussions about its future use. In January 2010 Active Communities undertook a stakeholder session involving officers, the local friends group and the principle of the Cambridge International school who are currently tenants of the Hall building.

- 3.2 In addition to this, the Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall group was established during 2009 and has since met regularly and worked with the Council to develop a clear list of priorities for improvements.
- 3.3 A consultancy report entitled “Understanding usage, needs, and improvements at Cherry Hinton Hall” was commissioned in January 2009 and had the following key objectives:-
- a. To examine how people utilise the park, and to see which groups of people are well served, and which are less well served, by the park as it currently stands;
 - b. To examine which facilities in the park require improvement to meet the needs and expectations of those who use the park for different purposes; and
 - c. To explore possible future uses of the former propagation centre, and to gauge public and stakeholder interest in a range of alternative possibilities.
- 3.4 Taking the information derived from the above report, a sketch landscape masterplan was formulated based on the following key objectives and the outcomes:-
- a. To retain the existing character and uses of the park, whilst improving its fabric, facilities and biodiversity;
 - b. To restore the historic setting of the Hall building and recreate the sense of a residence within a parkland. To improve the visibility of the Hall by removing the dense planting on its South side, and restore something of the original carriage sweep and formal planting, possibly a rose garden;
 - c. To develop former propagation area as a public space at the heart of the park, incorporating a flexible events space, and areas of orchard, wildflower areas and community gardening spaces relating to the former walled gardens of the Hall. Within the development some of the area will be retained to facilitate council function relating to operational management of parks and open spaces;
 - d. To improve the quality of the spaces around the weir and improve conditions for paddling, pond-dipping etc;
 - e. To improve seating and access to the water in this important ‘hub’ area;
 - f. To connect disparate parts of the park with paths and planting, including a circuit route around the park;
 - g. To improve the legibility of paths and routes, cater for ‘desire lines’ and simplify the path network;
 - h. To spread the provision of WCs and possibly catering concessions across the site, responding to the patterns of use;

- i. To improve the structure, quality and diversity of the existing woodlands, hedges and tree belts, thinning out where necessary and adding understorey planting and coppice;
- j. To improve the ecological and visual condition of the ponds area. To dredge the water bodies of silt and remove overhanging vegetation. To thin and replant the woodland areas as necessary to retain biodiversity and structure, and remove ivy from trees. Create glades by opening up the canopy in places. To add aquatic planting to the ponds to improve water quality and soften the engineered pond edges and
- k. To rationalise seating provision and improve the quality of benches. To improve signage and interpretation and install new litter bins, a dedicated barbecue area etc. Line of existing fence/hedge yard access to recycling centre.

4 Creating the Masterplan

4.1 Designed by Robert Myers Associates the plan has been discussed with the key stakeholders and revised to its current format. The key design areas include:-

- a. The removal of existing planting to the front of the Hall to open up views of the building. A historical arrangement will be restored with a gravel forecourt and parterre rose garden;
- b. Restoration of lake area to promote the biodiversity of both the water and surrounding fauna;
- c. Incorporation of pond dipping platform, seating, barbecue area and kingfisher reflection area which has pre-approved funding via the Children's and Youth Participation Service;
- d. Re-alignment of existing pathways and incorporation of new paths to the perimeter to create a circular route;
- e. To open out the central area incorporating into public space including a café facility, performance space and soft landscape;
- f. To consider the current building in the center compound and create a new community facility with the construction more in keeping with the Hall building itself; and
- g. The relocation of the current toilet provision to a more appropriate and accessible position.

5 Next Steps

5.1 The next stage for the plan is to extend the consultation to a wider audience during the summer period (2010). This will include on site as well as web based consultation, both via the Cambridge City Council and friends group web pages. The consultation will then be considered and the Masterplan refined if required to reflect any changes.

- 5.2 It is anticipated that the project will go to Community Services Scrutiny in September 2010 and, subject to approval, officers will consider submission of projects for funding to Improve Your Neighbourhood Scheme in autumn 2010.
- 5.3 These projects will be in addition to prior approved section 106 projects for Cherry Hinton that fit the Masterplan comfortably.
- 5.5 The Children's and Youth Participation Team already have a Big Lottery funding allocation to deliver certain elements of the Master Plan around the lake area. Project delivery for this funding will need to be before the end of March 2011.
- 5.6 A full project appraisal will be considered by Community Services Committee during the first quarter of 2011.

6 Background Papers

- a. Phil Back Consultancy "Understanding usage, needs, and improvements at Cherry Hinton Hall" January 2009.
- b. Notes from Stakeholder Meeting 11/01/2010

7 Appendices

Appendix A – Masterplan for Cherry Hinton Hall Grounds

8 Inspection of Papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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