

MEETING NOTES

Gurnell Sounding Board – Inaugural Meeting

Tuesday 11 May, 6pm – 7pm – MS Teams

Attendees:

Name	Organisation / Role
Adam Towle	London Borough of Ealing Housing Team
Adam Whalley	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Capital Investment Programme
Alex Jackson	London Borough of Ealing Development Planning Manager
	Pitshanger Community Association (PCA)
Cllr Ben Wesson	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
Chris Bunting	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Leisure
	Ealing Swimming Club
David Mikhail	Mikhail Riches Group
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
Cllr Ilayda Nijhar	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
Jessica Tamayao	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director of Strategic Property & Investment
	Pitshanger Village Traders Association
Julia Robertson	London Borough of Ealing Sports Development Manager
	Featherstone School Sport Partnership
	Drayton Community Association
Katrina Duncan	Mikhail Riches Group

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Laura McCarthy	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Contracts Officer
	Save Gurnell
Luke Willett	GT3 Architects
Mark Furnish	Sport England (Sports Planning)
Mark Gowdrige	GT3 Architects
	Everyone Active (Operator)
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
	Empowering Action (EASE)
	Brent River & Canal Society
Pauline Lawrence	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Operations Manager
Richard Lamburn	Swim England (Facilities Development)
Richard Sims	London Borough of Ealing Lead Project Manager - Projects Delivery Unit
Cllr Rima Baaklini	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
	Ealing Skatepark
Sandra Fryer	London Borough of Ealing Interim Director of Growth and Sustainability
Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles	Chair of Sounding Board

The following documents had been issued to all attendees before the meeting:

- Cover email invitation from Sandra Fryer
- Meeting agenda
- List of invitees and their roles / organisations
- Sounding Board Terms of Reference

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1. INTRODUCTION FROM CHAIR

- a. SCC introduced himself as the independent Chair of the Gurnell Sounding Board and explained the objectives of the group, being to work together and agree a way forward for this important project. It was acknowledged that there would be difficult choices to be made along the way and that these would be made together in a collaborative way.
- b. There then followed a table round session where all attendees introduced themselves and outlined their role and interest in the Gurnell scheme.
- c. SCC stated that the intention was to engage with all interested parties and asked that anyone who was aware of any other stakeholder group who it was felt should be represented to let him know, and these will be engaged with as far as was reasonably possible.

2. INTRODUCTION FROM SANDRA FRYER, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR EALING COUNCIL

- a. SF thanked everyone for taking the time to meet, acknowledging that those invited were doing so on the basis of being interested parties.
- b. SF explained that the Sounding Board had been conceived as a key part of the process to define the future of Gurnell Leisure Centre, a highly important project for the Borough and was being taken very seriously. It was important that expectations were set realistically.
- c. SF added that she and colleagues came to the table without presumptions, although it had to be recognised that the development would involve significant expenditure by the Borough and therefore – whatever the outcome – it needed to be understood that there was likely to be some form of enabling development which could come in the form of residential and/or other community facilities.
- d. SF advised that the Borough had commissioned a feasibility study and was pleased to welcome Mikhail Riches and GT3 on board as part of this. Together, both practices had a successful record in delivering leisure centres, sustainable zero carbon developments such as Passivhaus

3. INTRODUCTION FROM DAVID MIKHAIL OF MIKHAIL RICHES AND MARK GOWDRIDGE OF GT3 ARCHITECTS

- a. DM explained he was delighted to work on this key project, having assembled a first-class team. The aim was for an exemplar leisure centre, taking account of ecological sensitivities and sustainability. DM noted that at the end of the feasibility study there may not be an agreed design but he hoped to have an agreed way forward for the future of the Gurnell Leisure Centre.
- b. MG explained the purpose of the Vision Workshop, for which placeholder invitations had been sent to those present and others, for a face-to-face event being held in Queen's Hall, Ealing Town Hall on Tuesday 17th May from 5.30pm to 8.30pm. The intention of the Vision Workshop was to go in with a

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‘clean sheet’ and identify the expectations of the stakeholders present so that these could be reflected in future plans.

4. INVITATION FOR GROUP FEEDBACK FROM CHAIR

- a. SCC opened a further table round session from the group, where everyone present was invited to summarise any thoughts, concerns, or specific interests they have in the project. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - Concerns about any effects of development on the outlook from the estate.
 - Residents were missing leisure facilities and would wish for these to be reinstated sooner rather than later.
 - Stated interest in good design and would wish to challenge some of the previous assumptions, and work with team to establish a robust design review process.
 - Wanted to be kept up to date and find out what was going on and would speak to residents of PCA to arrange feedback.
 - Stated priority was to reopen the Gurnell Leisure Centre facility at the earliest opportunity but concerned that this should not lead to an overload of new residential properties in the area.
 - Grateful for being invited to contribute and recommended that the team took a look at the survey which had been undertaken.
 - Stated that there was a strategic leisure need for facilities in the area, and that Gurnell needs to be the ‘jewel in the crown’ for the Borough.
 - Looking for a clean way forward.
 - People were missing the leisure facilities and want to provide input into discussions – for example, the potential for a hydro-pool.
 - Reiterated the importance of listening to local residents first and foremost.
 - People were upset that they were unable to take their children swimming at present and that the area is not able to facilitate swimming for school students.
 - Hoped that the feasibility study and ongoing process were successful.
 - Wanted to see a facility which was future proofed and flexible.
 - Gurnell is an important community resource and that needed to remain at its heart.
 - Priority is to get the pool opened as children are lacking this facility.
 - Aesthetics were important. The area has to look good, being the first thing seen when exiting the A40.
 - Greenspace needed to be retained and ecology preserved.

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- Concern that ‘affordable housing’ can be a very loose term and is not convinced that provision of affordable housing is justification for blocks of residential properties.
- Asked that Ealing Matters were invited to join.
- Feels strongly that housing should not be built on the site.
- Made the offer for anyone wanting to have an offline discussion with the Save Gurnell.
- Keen to have a facility which met local needs.
- Excited to be involved and would help in any way that he could.
- Feels that it is important to challenge the notion that housing is a necessity and would like first to exhaust the other options for raising capital.
- In terms of Gurnell Grove, there was a fear amongst residents for the impact of increased infrastructure – e.g., cars, schools, doctors etc.
- Would like to have the real sense that Gurnell Grove was being included and involved in this discussion.
- Would like to echo comments about fully exploring affordability and funding streams, along with concerns on increasing infrastructure.
- Noted that there were 600 new flats on Copley / High Lane already, placing an increased burden on GP surgeries and school places.
- While fully understanding that leisure is an appropriate use of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), was concerned that the Council was wanting to rebuild rather than refurbish the existing facility and felt this would cost more in long run.
- was totally opposed to building housing on MOL.
- Wanted to ensure a sustainable and fit for purpose facility.
- Noted that the skatepark was a well-used part of the facility and should not be included in plans as an afterthought, as this could be a real opportunity to build on the current success for future users.

5. NEXT STEPS BY SANDRA FRYER

- a. SF thanked everyone for taking the time to attend and contribute, stating that her job is to make sure the Council listened to contributions. The immediate next steps were confirmed as follows:
 - i. Vision Workshop to take place on Tuesday 17th May, as advised. All present were invited to attend.
 - ii. Sounding Board meeting no.2 to be arranged in June.
 - iii. A further follow up session to discuss the findings of the feasibility study to be arranged in the autumn.
- b. SF noted that the output of the feasibility study must be a planning-compliant scheme in order for it to move forward.

6. MEETING CLOSE – CHAIR – 7.10pm