

## MEETING NOTES

### Gurnell Sounding Board – Meeting no.3

Thursday 21 July, 6pm – 7.45pm

Victoria Hall, Ealing Town Hall

#### Attendees:

Name	Organisation / Role
Adam Whalley	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Capital Investment Programme
Alex Jackson – via MS Teams	London Borough of Ealing Development Planning Manager
Cllr Ben Wesson – via MS Teams	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
	Save Gurnell
David Mikhail	Mikhail Riches Group
	Pitshanger Community Association (PCA)
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
	GLL (Operator)
Cllr Ilayda Nijhar	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
	Pitshanger Village Traders Association
	Drayton Community Association
Katrina Duncan	Mikhail Riches Group
	Ealing Matters
	Save Gurnell
Mark Gowdrige	GT3 Architects
	Everyone Active (Operator)

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Mark Lever-Green	Integrated Transport Planning Ltd
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
	Empowering Action (EASE)
Pauline Lawrence	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Operations Manager
	Brent River & Canal Society
Richard Sims	London Borough of Ealing Lead Project Manager - Projects Delivery Unit
Cllr Rima Baaklini	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
Sandra Fryer	London Borough of Ealing Interim Director of Growth and Sustainability
Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles	Chair of Sounding Board
	Ealing Matters

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

- *Agenda*
- *Notes of the Sounding Board Meeting no.2, held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022*
- *Gurnell Leisure Centre; Sounding Board Terms of Reference*
- *Presentation slides*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION FROM CHAIR

- a. The meeting was introduced by the Chair of the Gurnell Sounding Board, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles who, in opening the meeting, said:
  - i. Consideration would be given for nominating a Deputy Chair, should he be unavailable to attend a future event in his capacity of Chair.
  - ii. Agendas for the Sounding Board meetings were and would continue to be issued in good time, aiming to be circulated five days before each meeting, in accordance with the Terms of Reference.
  - iii. Slide decks / presentational material would be circulated as soon as possible following each Sounding Board meeting, however it would not always be possible to circulate slides in advance on the basis that these are often being prepared up to the meeting themselves.

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**POST MEETING NOTE:** *The slides for the evening had on this occasion been circulated just before the meeting so that attendees could follow on their personal devices should that be easier than viewing on the presentation screen.*

- iv. It remained the intention that all Sounding Board papers are to be published and available for all to access, although it was acknowledged that this has not yet been completed.
- v. The new Gurnell Leisure Centre scheme was an extremely important project for the Council, and in good faith it was requested that everyone works together to get the right result. Governing involves compromises and working together as a team.
- b. There then followed a table round session where all attendees introduced themselves and outlined their role and interest in the Gurnell scheme.
- c. Apologies were received from the following:
  - i. Dave Heathcock, *Ealing Swim Club*; and
  - ii. Nic Ferriday – *Brent River & Canal Society* (Phil Belman attended as substitute).
- d. Agenda and presentation
  - i. The presentation, by Mikhail Riches, was put on the screen and referred to during the Sounding Board meeting. A further copy is appended to these meeting notes:

***220721\_Gurnell Sounding Board 03.pdf***

### **2. NOTES OF SOUNDING BOARD MEETING No.2, HELD ON THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022**

- a. The notes were acknowledged as received by those present and agreed as a true and accurate record, as read.
- b. There were no new matters raised.

### **3. SUMMING UP THE CONCLUSIONS OF SOUNDING BOARD No.2 (GT3)**

- a. MG provided confirmation of the following:
  - i. The aspirational leisure centre brief had been established, following consultation with a broad selection of stakeholder groups including through the vision workshop. There remains an intention to continue to consult on this and, in particular to seek the views of harder to reach groups who may not have been able to access the leisure centre previously.
  - ii. UK sports standards and guidance have been followed in preparing the brief.
  - iii. Sustainability remained high on the agenda and was fundamentally informing the development of the scheme.

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- iv. The team is developing a site masterplan, connecting the proposed leisure centre to wider elements on the site as a whole.
  - v. Indicative layout was shown to the group, along with examples of what the end-product might look like.
  - vi. The aspirational brief is generating a leisure centre with a gross internal area of circa 11,500sqm, with big spaces which would be costly to provide but high in quality and flexible in use.
- b. A detailed summary of this progress can be found on **slides no.5 – 19** of the attached presentation.

#### 4. FINANCE AND VIABILITY UPDATE (GT3)

- a. MG explained that:
- i. The additional area over and above the old leisure centre was largely attributable to incorporating a sports hall, health spa and library, along with bringing the overall spaces in line with current Sport England guidance.
  - ii. Inflation in world markets suggested a gross build cost of about £5,160/sqm. On this basis the total cost of the new leisure centre at the current brief would likely be between £58m - £65m.
  - iii. Given the interest rates on Council borrowing are at circa 6% and accounting for the anticipated revenue generated by the new facility, a substantial revenue deficit has been identified leading to a need to consider additional funding streams, including grant funding, Section 106 (from other developments in the Borough) and ultimately enabling development.
  - iv. The team is exploring values of residential development using a baseline assumption of circa 500 units. Efforts would be focused on minimising the impact and massing of any such development. One way of doing so would be to relocate the leisure centre to the NW of the site, meaning that the residences along Ruislip Road could be lower level.
- b. A detailed summary of the financial considerations, including the proposed approach to an enabling development can be found on **slides no.21 – 33** of the attached presentation, with **slide no.33** indicating types of housing that might be considered.

#### 5. SUSTAINABILITY INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT (Mikhail Riches)

- a. ML-G set out how the sustainable travel network would be improved under the proposed development, including:
- i. Improved walking and cycling connections to South Greenford and Perivale Underground Stations.
  - ii. Covered Cycle Parking for Leisure Centre to meet demand.

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- iii. Improved walking and cycling access to A40 - step free.
  - iv. Segregated cycle/pedestrian provision along Ruislip Rd using River Brent path.
  - v. Multi-modal transport improvements to Argyle Road Junction.
  - vi. Real time bus information at stops nearest the Leisure Centre.
  - vii. Off-site parking for peak times.
  - viii. Overlap parking with other uses.
- b. Further details can be found on **slides no.35 – 37** of the attached presentation.

#### 6. NEXT STEPS (LBE)

- a. AW explained that, with the feasibility study approaching completion, it is the Council's intention to go to the Cabinet for approval to move to the next stage and that this is provisionally being targeted for October 2022. Following Cabinet approval, the next targeted milestones would be:
- i. Planning Application in December 2023; and
  - ii. Start work on site in autumn 2024
- b. These milestones are set out on **slide no.29** of the attached presentation.

#### 7. GENERAL QUESTIONS

- a. The Chair invited questions from the group which prompted discussion, during which a number of questions were raised. These are outlined below, along with responses and comment where these were provided in the room. It is intended that these questions (and any others raised) will serve as record for further consideration and response:
- *Q: Challenged sustainability of building on MOL and emphasis on 'building sustainability' vs environmental sustainability. Noting the car park is for all visitors to the park and has ecological value in its established hedges and planting.*
    - A: SF explained that in discussions with the Council's planning department and the GLA a planning case could be made for the approach being explored. Clearly the ecological impact will require further assessment.
  - *Q: Has the price gone up because we are trying to make this a regional centre? What is the cost to simply rebuild like for like with the existing leisure centre?*
    - A: Explained that the brief was informed by consultation with this group and wider stakeholder groups but it is a baseline / aspirational brief for now – i.e. the areas can be reduced if necessary, however it was emphasised that a case can be made for all spaces in the brief in that it is not excessive when considered against identified demand and need.

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- Q: *Why such a large scheme? This impacting on the MOL. Can we see a smaller version of the leisure centre?*
  - As per above.
- Q: *What would happen if we just replaced the existing leisure centre like-for-like?*
  - As per above.
- Q: *Why so much housing? Where is the demand for housing coming from?*
  - A: SF explained that the numbers were set out in Ealing's new Local Plan which was trickling down from the London Plan. SF added that there was a massive need for housing, although the actual mix was to be determined and would be further considered at the next stage.
- Q: *It is generally understood that the income from the leisure centre is generated by the swimming pool and it is being stated that this will be funded by housing. However, the requirement in the Borough is for social housing which will not generate additional value. Please explain how this works.*
  - As per above.
- Q: *Are we now only looking at the one option – i.e. building the leisure centre on the NW of the park? It is considered to be a 'terrible location'.*
  - There are any number of permutations / variations within the options including on leisure specification and on enabling housing quantum / tenure etc.
- Q: *The residents of Gurnell Grove have not been aware of the Sounding Board and discussions by way of direct communications or newsletters. Why is this?*
  - It was clarified that the consultation to date had been targeted to specific stakeholder groups, including the Sounding Board, as well as the online public consultation. There has not yet been wide consultation of the type suggested in the question.
- Q: *The entire site is within the area of the Brent River Park and should not have housing built on the MOL. The Council's Climate Emergency is a drive to sustainability and to build on the MOL would destroy biodiversity. The site of the proposed leisure centre is known as Longfield North and is under consideration to become a nature reserve.*
  - A: DM stated that if approached correctly and sensitively, it would be feasible to develop an overall masterplan which offers a net gain on biodiversity.
  - A: SF Referred the group to recent Cabinet papers which confirmed a reduction and rationalisation in golf courses within the Borough. This would add to the biodiversity of the Gurnell area specifically.

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- Q: *Why can't the Council just retain the existing leisure centre?*
  - A: The existing leisure centre is beyond economic repair and is not sustainable from a cost and environmental perspective. This has been researched and addressed in detail at the previous Sounding Board, and was again summarised in the presentation that evening.
- Q: *Will the Council be submitting the planning application and how will S106 work in these circumstances?*
  - A: Reminded that this is a feasibility study, and that level of details is yet to be worked through.
- Q: *It would be good practice for the Council to prepare a site brief. Has this been done?*
  - A: SF reiterated that this was a feasibility study and a site brief will be prepared in due course.
- Q: *Has an assessment of facilities / amenities been carried out to determine impact on local infrastructure – e.g. school places, GP surgeries etc?*
  - A: SF explained that this will be addressed through the planning process and Section 106 obligations which will be assessed. A statement of consultation will accompany the Cabinet Report which is hoped to be submitted in October.
- Q: *Is the leisure centre scheme too ambitious?*
  - A: DM explained that the outline plans had been developed based upon the brief, prepared following stakeholder engagement, noting that there was a sliding scale which could be worked on to adjust the size of leisure centre if necessary.

#### 8. MEMBERSHIP OF SOUNDING BOARD

- a. SCC asked those present if they felt the make-up of the Sounding Board was appropriate. If it was felt the group would benefit from the introduction of other members, such requests should be addressed to him as Chair and not through Council officers.
- b. It was noted that James Murray MP had been invited to contribute to the Sounding Board and had confirmed his intention to do so.

#### 9. CLOSING REMARKS

- a. SCC stated that the Sounding Board should reconvene in good time before the October Cabinet in order to respond to the questions which had been raised. It was agreed to target early September and allocate a full two-hour slot to allow ample time for Q&A. Proposed date(s) will be circulated shortly.

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- b. SCC reiterated that all Sounding Board papers were public and would be uploaded shortly onto a micro-site, with details to be confirmed.
- c. It had been suggested that the group might wish to visit some new leisure facilities and in discussion agreed that the design team would provide a list of suitable venues so that Sounding Board members could visit at their leisure.

#### 10. NEXT SOUNDING BOARD MEETING

- i. Details to be agreed.

#### 11. MEETING CLOSE – CHAIR – 7.45pm

#### Distribution list:

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
	Save Gurnell
	Ealing Swimming Club
David Mikhail	Mikhail Riches Group
	PCA
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association



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Cllr Ilayda Nijhar	Council Member (Pitshanger Ward)
James Murray MP	Member of Parliament for Ealing North
James Parker	Expedition
Jennifer Ross	Tibbalds
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 / Stop The Towers
Katrina Duncan	Mikhail Riches Group
Laura McCarthy	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Contracts Officer
	Ealing Matters
	Save Gurnell
Luke Willett	GT3 Architects
Maria Gull	London Borough of Ealing Research and Performance Officer
Mark Furnish	Sport England (Sports Planning)
Mark Gowdrige	GT3 Architects
	Everyone Active (Operator)

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	Brent River & Canal Society
Pauline Lawrence	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Operations Manager
	Brent River & Canal Society
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
	Ealing Matters

#### Appendices:

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