

MEETING NOTES

Gurnell Sounding Board – Meeting no.4

Wednesday 28 September, 6pm – 8pm

Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall

Attendees:

Name	Organisation / Role
Adam Towle	London Borough of Ealing Housing & Design
Adam Whalley	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Capital Investment Programme
Alex Jackson	London Borough of Ealing Development Planning Manager
	Ealing Skatepark
Chris Bunting	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director, Leisure Services
	Save Gurnell
	Pitshanger Community Association (PCA)
Jennifer Ross	Tibbalds
Cllr John Martin	Pitshanger Village Traders Association
Justine Sullivan	Drayton Community Association
	Mikhail Riches Group
	Ealing Matters
	Ealing Matters
	Save Gurnell
Mark Gowdridge	GT3 Architects
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association

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	Brent River & Canal Society
Paul Reed	GT3 Architects
	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.3, held on Thursday 12th July 2022*
- *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. 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. It was requested that where possible presentational material for the evening should also be circulated in that timeframe.

POST MEETING NOTE: *As advised at Sounding Board no.3, it is not always possible to circulate slides in advance as the team is often working on these up until the last minute. The slides have been issued prior to the meeting at the two most recent Sounding Board meetings to enable attendees to view on their own devices.*
 - ii. The new Gurnell Leisure Centre scheme will be presented to Cabinet only at such time as the Council is comfortable with the proposals. It is unlikely that the Cabinet will be before December 2022.

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- iii. A letter had been received from Save Gurnell, received on 18th August 2022 and expressing concerns generally around the proposals for redevelopment of the Gurnell leisure Centre.
- 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. Ealing Swim Club;
 - ii. Empowering Action;
 - iii. Sport England;
 - iv. Cllr Ilayda Nijhar; and
 - v. Cllr Ben Wesson.
- d. Agenda and presentation
 - i. The presentation was put on screen and referred to during the Sounding Board meeting. A further copy is appended to these meeting notes:

220928_Gurnell Sounding Board 04.pdf

2. NOTES OF SOUNDING BOARD MEETING No.3, HELD ON THURSDAY 12th JULY 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. RECAP ON CONCLUSIONS FROM SOUNDING BOARD No.3 / AGENDA FOR SOUNDING BOARD No.4

- a. JR confirmed that a study on carbon and cost had been undertaken which determined that refurbishing the existing leisure centre was not sustainable and therefore the proposals explore various locations and funding options for building a new facility on the site.
- b. The intention of the presentation was to respond to the matters raised in the letter from Save Gurnell, dated 18th August 2022, addressing the following concerns:
 - i. Development on MOL.
 - ii. Lack of meaningful options, leisure centre and cost.
 - iii. Lack of transparency and detail regarding funding.
- c. All those present were encouraged to digest the contents of the presentation and revert with any remaining questions in due course prior to the next Sounding Board meeting.

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4. METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND POLICY

- a. JR advised that under National Policy Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), construction on greenbelt land is deemed to be inappropriate, save for a number of specific exceptions as set out under paragraph 149. It can be demonstrated that there is a precedent for limited development on the Metropolitan Open Land of the site under the following exceptions:
 - *(b) the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, providing these facilities are connected to the existing use of land and preserve the openness, whilst also not conflicting with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt/MOL;*
 - *(d) the replacement of a building, providing the new building is the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; and*
 - *(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*
- b. Details of the 'exceptions test' and steps necessary to demonstrate this are set out in pages 5-9 of the attached presentation.

5. OPTIMISING THE LEISURE BRIEF

- a. PR advised that since the previous meeting the team had been working closely with the Council's Sports & Leisure operators in order to rationalise the requirements of the leisure centre brief whilst maintaining a sustainable, revenue generating facility. As a consequence of this, the overall area has been significantly reduced from 11,505sqm to 8,499sqm.
- b. A detailed analysis of the approach and rationale leading to this stage is set out in pages 10-20 of the attached presentation.

6. UPDATE ON FEASIBILITY STUDY, INCLUDING ENABLING DEVELOPMENT

- a. How do we pay for it?
 - i. MG explained the various and limited income streams available for funding the new leisure centre, a mixture of one-off capital payments and ongoing revenue streams as summarised below:
 - *Council borrowing*
 - *Leisure income*
 - *Grant funding*
 - *Section 106 (S106) contributions*

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- Enabling developments

- b. Having considered each of the above routes, it was the team's clear conclusion that an enabling housing development would be required, at that point estimated not to exceed 500 units, including 50% affordable housing. Various avenues of procurement are being explored to determine the most appropriate method and these were summarised as follows:
 - *Developer land sale*
 - *Council borrowing (self-delivery)*
 - *Income strip bond*
 - *Developer joint venture*
- c. A detailed explanation of how an enabling development could justify the special circumstances for building on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is set out in pages 21-27 of the attached presentation.
- d. AW explained that there is a sum of £12m allocated in the Council's forward plan, clarifying that this figure itself is a form of borrowing.

7. NEXT STEPS

- a. MG & JR confirmed that the next steps to finalising the feasibility study were:
 - i. Agree brief and firm up cost of new leisure centre
 - ii. Agree location of new leisure centre and associated development
 - iii. Agree financing arrangements
 - iv. Decision to be put to Cabinet to ratify
- b. Programme estimated to be as follows:
 - i. Planning Application in December 2023; and
 - ii. Start work on site in autumn 2024
- c. A summary of the above, along with confirmation of works undertaken thus far to help inform the baseline option is set out in pages 28-32 of the attached presentation.

8. 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. These are set out below:

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Question 1: The existing facility was considered to be satisfactory. Why are we seeking to provide more than that (we just want a swimming pool)?

Answer 1: The building is at the end of its shelf life and to simply rebuild is ineffective.

Question 2: What does the proposed footprint, size and mass of the new leisure centre look like compared to the existing building?

Answer 2: Comparable to the height of the existing but slightly larger. There is more work to do as the shape, size and location of the areas are firmed up.

Question 3: Is it proposed to have a gymnasium in the new building?

Answer 3: No, but there is one in the Borough.

Question 4: Can the area comparisons between each option be shown in a table form?

Answer 4: Yes, it is straightforward to present in this way.

Question 5: What are the revenue generators in the new building?

Answer 5: Mainly these are flexible teaching water, galas, community use of pools and studio space.

Question 6: Can we all look at sources of grant funding?

Answer 6: This is being looked at as part of the process we were in but expectations should be realistically set that any grant funding would likely only provide a small proportion of the funds needed.

Question 7: We don't want you to build on MOL. Why can't you just borrow and building on the existing footprint?

Answer 7: Borrowing will become increasingly more expensive, given the current economic climate and should be kept to a minimum, preferring options which carry a lesser debt burden to the Borough.

Question 8: What is the actual demand for affordable homes?

Answer 8: The Council has committed to building 4,000 new affordable homes in the next four years.

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Question 9: Why is the presentation still stating ‘up to 500 homes’ on an enabling development when the area of the new proposal is smaller than that tabled previously?

Answer 9: We are delaing with many moving parts and will minimise the extent of any enabling works but cannot commit to a figure yet.

Question 10: If this is a Boroughwide facility, why is Gurnell footing the bill?

Answer 10: There is currently an automated review being carried out of all leisure demands in the Borough

9. CLOSING REMARKS

- a. SCC stated that he found the slides to be clear in explaining the process of the feasibility study, thanking the presenters for taking the time to explain.
- b. SCC requested that a follow up Sounding Board meeting is convened at the earliest opportunity. LBE to arrange.
- c. SCC thanked the attendees for their time and contributions, noting that as a group we are a Sounding Board and not decision makers. Decisions will be made by Cabinet.

10. NEXT SOUNDING BOARD MEETING

- i. Date to be agreed, target early November.

11. MEETING CLOSE – CHAIR – 7.55pm

Distribution list:

Name	Organisation / Role
Adam Towle	London Borough of Ealing Housing & Design
Adam Whalley	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Capital Investment Programme
Alex Jackson	London Borough of Ealing Development Planning Manager
	Pitshanger Community Association (PCA)

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Chris Bunting	London Borough of Ealing Assistant Director Leisure
	Save Gurnell
	Ealing Swimming Club
David Mikhail	Mikhail Riches Group
	PCA
	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
	Anti_Tribalism Movement
Gary Starkey	GLL (Operator)
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
Cllr John Martin	Pitshanger Village Traders Association
Julia Robertson	London Borough of Ealing Sports Development Manager
	Featherstone School Sport Partnership
	Drayton Community Association / Stop The Towers

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Katrina Duncan	Mikhail Riches Group
	Ealing Matters
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 Gowdridge	GT3 Architects
Mark Leahy	Everyone Active (Operator)
Mark Lever-Green	Integrated Transport Planning Ltd
Mark Tate	Gurnell Grove Residents Association
Matthew Keown	GLL Leisure Operator
	Empowering Action (EASE)
	Brent River & Canal Society
Paul Reed	GT3 Architects
Pauline Lawrence	London Borough of Ealing Leisure Operations Manager
	Brent River & Canal Society
Richard Lamburn	Swim England (Facilities Development)

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Appendices:

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