

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	26 June 2019
Executive Member/Reporting Officer:	Councillor Allison Gwynne – Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment Emma Varnam – Assistant Director, Operations & Neighbourhoods
Subject:	STAMFORD PARK CONSERVATORY
Report Summary:	<p>Stamford Park is Tameside’s premier park and as such attracts thousands’ of visitors every year. The park has been refurbished to a high standard in recent years following a successful £3.9million HLF lottery bid.</p> <p>The Conservatory has been closed to the public since April 2015 after safety concerns were raised following a structural survey.</p> <p>The conservatory is in a poor condition and this report sets out the various options available; repairing the conservatory; building a new conservatory; demolition of the conservatory. It sets out the financial and maintenance implications of each option and sets out a proposed way forward.</p>
Recommendations:	Option 3 is the preferred option: To demolish the conservatory and create a new formal garden in its place. This option is the most appropriate in terms of value for money, use of public money and long term sustainability.
Links to Community Strategy:	This project links to the Corporate Plan under several strands. The new garden will be an important asset within the park and will contribute towards a sustainable environment – there will be relatively low maintenance costs and it will not rely on oil heating as the current conservatory does. The new garden will also go towards the aim of Nurturing Communities as there will be an increased level of satisfaction with the park and there will be opportunities for volunteers to get involved with the maintenance of the garden.
Policy Implications:	This project does not have wider policy implications for the Council.
Financial Implications: (authorised by Section 151 Officer)	The costs of the proposed option can be funded by the earmarked reserve which currently has a balance of £120,586.91. The ongoing maintenance will be managed within the existing staffing and revenue budgets within Operations and Greenspace.
Legal Implications: (authorised by Borough Solicitor)	The recommendations should make clear that Option 3 is the option recommended, and the report should make clear what is the best option from the public purse and value for money perspectives. All options are within the Council’s power provided they can be so justified. Any option pursued of significant amount will need to ensure procurement options are properly evaluated.
Risk Management :	The current Conservatory poses a risk to the safety of anyone entering the building and therefore it has been closed to both staff

and the public. Option 1 detailed in the report is high risk as once repair work starts it is likely additional costs will be incurred and the work will be complex and costly. Option 2 has slightly less risks in that it will involve a new building being erected but there is a greater reputational risk to the Council of investing in a new building at a time when the Council is having to make significant savings elsewhere. The third option is likely to lead to some initial reputational risk to the Council but longer term there will be far fewer risks to manage as the garden will be easy to maintain and low risk in terms of any hazards.

Access to Information :

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Nick Sayers, Head of Operations & Greenspace



Telephone:0161 342 2704



e-mail: nick.sayers@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Stamford Park is one of Tameside's premier park and as such attracts thousands' of visitors every year. The park is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens as Grade II listed and by Historic England for its special historic interest. It has been refurbished to a high standard in recent years with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Council's capital funding.
- 1.2. Stamford Park has a wide range of facilities which are enjoyed by both local residents and visitors from much further afield. These facilities include play areas for both younger and older children, water fountains, an aviary, café and toilets within the pavilion, bowling greens, multi-use games area and formal flower displays. Feedback from residents and visitors is overwhelmingly positive and sources such as Trip Advisor feature a large number of positive reviews.
- 1.3. The Conservatory has been closed to the public since April 2015 after the findings of a structural survey demonstrated safety concerns.

2. CONSERVATORY DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The Conservatory is a Victorian Style timber and iron framed glass house. It was first constructed in October 1907 and was the gift of John Neild but was subsequently completely rebuilt in 1982-84. It was later refurbished in May 2003. Due to the significant rebuilding of the Conservatory including use of soft wood and polycarbonate rather than glass the Conservatory was not a priority for funding from the HLF as much of its historic integrity has been lost. Registration of Stamford Park as a Historic Park identifies the park's importance and historic significance but the status does not trigger any special statutory protection system. The significant changes to the Conservatory also mean that it is not a listed building in its own right and is not separately protected.
- 2.2. The building is made up of three parts with two outer wings, the North and South Houses, which are approximately 4m high to eaves, the roofs to which are each supported off four internal columns in a rectangular layout.
- 2.3. The North and South houses are connected at the rear by a lower level Centre House section which is approximately 2.5m high to eaves. The outer sections of the building are supported from glazed timber support frameworks built off low level brickwork, ranging from 600mm to 2m in height depending on external ground levels.
- 2.4. The Central House roof is duo pitched with a raised central ridge and timber / metallic trusses. The trusses support the purlins with 3 sections of glazing panels between trusses, in turn supported off timber glazing bars supported by the steel angle sections at mid span.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS

- 3.1. In 2015 Officers requested the inspection of the conservatory by Engineers due to concerns for the condition of the timber superstructure, which was seen to be suffering from rot in many areas. The survey was conducted using a high level platform when the heavy metallic roof finial details were removed, due to concerns about their fixity in the rotten timber ridges.
- 3.2. Further deterioration was noted in the rafters and hips extending to the ridge. Bolt fixings have become exposed in rotten timbers above the roof line where they provide fixity to the metallic brackets through the steel reinforced main rafter sections, and that support the higher roof sections. Further additional checks on the remainder of the buildings, were then

requested, following the recommendation that costly repairs would be necessary to the timber structure. Officers also recommended that the building be closed to the public for safety reasons due to the condition of the rotten timbers.

- 3.3. Although much of the substructure is in a good condition, due to water penetration, defects were noted to the South House floor over the basement, which is leading to corrosion of the supporting steelwork within the basement and to deterioration of the more recently replaced concrete floor slab itself.

4. OPTIONS FOR FUTURE USAGE

Option 1: Repair of existing structure

- 4.1 The existing timber structure could be locally repaired replacing existing rotten timbers on a like for like basis. Preliminary estimates for the replacement of those sections of timber already observed to be decayed are of the order of £35,000. This could escalate further if evidence of deterioration becomes apparent during the works. It should be noted that such repairs could not be guaranteed for much more than another 5 years and thus are not a long term solution. Other repairs would be required to the original steel beam members and some additional water proofing. Additional repairs are required to the windows and doors. The overall costs for these repairs are circa £84,000 and as stipulated above could also include more additional repairs and replacement. It must be noted that these repairs do not offer a long term solution. The heating and electrical systems have not been tested but there may be a significant cost in repairing these systems should the building be refurbished.

Option 2: Replacement of existing structure with alternative new structure

- 4.2 This option considers 3 independent quotations for a full replacement of the existing superstructure above the present brick walls. These estimates range from £250 -500k.
- 4.3 The first option would cost approximately £250,000 to £300,000 and is based on the layout of the existing conservatory footprint and using the company's Cedar range of glass houses. The supplier has indicated that they would expect the life expectancy of the greenhouse to exceed 30 years and there is a 10 year structural guarantee.
- 4.4 The second option would cost approximately £450,000 - £500,000. This would be a bespoke glass house made in the same style to fit the existing brick base. This option would be the most aesthetically pleasing however is also the most costly.
- 4.5 The third option would be a metal framed option. This would cost in the region of £350,000. They indicated that the existing steel mechanisms for the window opening devices could be incorporated into a new steel structure and aluminium glazing system.

Option 3 – Demolition of the conservatory

- 4.6 The estimated costs for demolition of the Conservatory and removal of the materials from site are in the region of £11,250. If a decision is taken to demolish the conservatory there will be a need to create a high quality space and which brings the space back into the park.

Creation of a formal garden

- 4.7 If the conservatory was demolished the site could be developed into a high quality garden space featuring ornamental planting, some interpretation of the site, formal benches, paths and pergolas created from the original ironwork within the Conservatory. A design proposal is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.8 The costs of the new garden are approximately £39,654. This capital cost will be funded from a reserve which is available solely for Stamford Park and was created to ensure future

maintenance of the lottery funded park. A table for the overall costs of this option is attached below:

	Stamford Park Conservatory: Demolition and Creation of Formal Garden Costs
Demolition/Site set up cost:	£11,250
Site Preparation	£4,208
Hard Landscaping	£15,667
Soft Landscaping	£4,000
Plants/Trees/Shrubs	11,151
Contingencies	£4,628
Total:	£50,904

4.9 The timeline for the work involved is as set out below:

Timeline	Date and Duration
Prior Notification of Demolition	1 July, for 4 weeks.
Demolition of Conservatory	2 September, for 2 weeks.
Grading, Levelling of Site and Hard Landscaping	16 September, for 3-4 weeks.
Planting of Trees and Shrubs	Mid October-Early November (3-4 weeks).

4.10 Whilst the garden would be formal and look attractive it has been designed to be fairly low maintenance. Some of the maintenance of it could be carried out with volunteers from the community on the monthly Conservation Days. The day to day maintenance will be carried out by staff already based within the park as part of their daily duties.

5. MAINTENANCE OF THE CONSERVATORY

- 5.1. The Conservatory has always been a high maintenance element of the Park, not only in terms of labour but also the cost of fuel to keep it heated throughout the year. Previously the Grounds Maintenance staff maintained the plants, unlocked and locked the building each day, cleaned and vented the building and treated pests and diseases.
- 5.2. In addition to the staff time approximately £10,000 was spent each year on oil to fuel the boilers which kept the Conservatory at a constant temperature.
- 5.3. In the past the conservatory had been prone to vandalism and on the last occasion approx. £2,000 of repairs were required, mainly to the glazing.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1. The Conservatory is part of the heritage of Stamford Park and as such views have been sought from Tameside Council Planning, the Samuel Oldham Trust and Ward Members.
- 6.2. The Heritage Lottery Fund has already been consulted as they have funded the restoration of the rest of the park. Whilst they are disappointed that the Conservatory may be lost they are realistic about the pressures on local authority budgets and have accepted the proposals.

- 6.3. The Samuel Oldham Trust has provided funding for the previous refurbishment and has recently funded a new garden within the Park. Officers have been in dialogue with the Trust about the Conservatory and they are aware of the proposals.
- 6.4. Tameside Council Planning Department will be consulted via an application to determine if the proposed demolition is Permitted Development subject to Prior Approval as to the method of demolition and any proposed restoration of the site (if required). A site notice will be displayed on the Conservatory for 28 days, and before an application for a Prior Approval determination is formally submitted, as required by legislation and to inform the public of the proposals. The plan of the proposed garden will be displayed alongside the Demolition notice. Whilst the public can complain they cannot formally object.
- 6.5. When the Conservatory initially closed there were very few complaints from the public; however a post on Facebook Tameside Tourism highlighted the closure and led to more complaints about the closure of the Conservatory. Officers met with a representative from Tameside Tourism in November 2017; the representative was keen to work with the community to see the conservatory restored. However since the meeting we have not had any more contact and we have not been provided with a plan of how the community would restore and maintain the conservatory.
- 6.6. Staff working in the park are sometimes asked about the Conservatory by members of the public but there have been relatively few formal complaints about it in email or in writing.
- 6.7. Relevant Ward Members have been consulted about the proposals for demolition and the new Garden design. Whilst they are disappointed to see the loss of the Conservatory they recognise the financial restrictions placed on the Council and are supportive of the new formal garden.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Stamford Park is Tameside's destination park attracting thousands of visitors each year from Tameside and beyond. The Conservatory cannot be left to rot any further and a decision needs to be taken to ensure that this high profile part of the park is in keeping with the high standards maintained elsewhere. Within the current financial climate of severe budget cuts across the Council tough decisions have to be made and there has been a commitment from Councillors to protect services over buildings.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 As set out at the front of the report.