

The Broomfield House Trust

Chair's Report for 2019-2020

The Broomfield House Partnership Board, which was set up by the Council in 2014, has in effect become moribund. It last met in November 2018. The Council has instead called ad hoc meetings such as the Workshop held in March 2019 noted in the report for 2018-19.

As a result of that meeting, a proposal was produced by The Regeneration Practice. This is for an external reconstruction based on the House as it was when purchased by the Southgate Urban District Council. Initially it would only be occupied by a café. The funding of this first stage would largely come from a housing development in the stableyard. Our view is that once such a structure is in place, it should be possible, on that evidence, to raise funds for a gradual restoration of the interior beginning with the hall, oak stairs, and eventually large areas of the Lanscroom Murals.

The unofficial signs we received was that this concept appeared to be the basis of a way ahead.

When we next met the Council on the 29th October we were shocked to be told that in the Council's view their own costings (although based on TRP's plans and costings would not support the rebuilding proposal. Instead, they favoured demolition of most of the remaining structure; some form of memorialisation of the House, and possibly some combined housing development and (undefined) community use of the stableyard might be possible.

Having failed to have proper sight of the basis of this view, we submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act to see all the relevant papers. This produced a mass of material.

The simplest presentation of the costings is in the March 2020 Viability Report produced for the council by Perfect Circle from which the following extract is taken:

Range (Low)	Range (High)	
FULL RESTORATION		
£6,066,135	£7,740,000	Broomfield House
£300,000	£1,000,000	Park Landscape (scope not determined - Historic England requirement)
	£2,410,000	Priced Risk Register
£6,366,135	£11,150,000	TOTAL
SHELL RESTORATION		
£3,153,517	£4,050,000	Broomfield House (Shell only)
£300,000	£1,000,000	Park Landscape (scope not determined - Historic England requirement)
	£2,410,000	Priced Risk Register
£3,453,517	£7,460,000	TOTAL

MEMORIALISATION

£610,000	£784,000	
	Broomfield House Partial demolition, and memorialisation	
£300	£1,000,000 Park Landscape (scope not determined - Historic England requirement)	
£300,000	£200,000 Public Enquiry Risk [though the Risk Register puts this as at least £400,000]	
£910,300	£1,984,000	TOTAL

The alternative options reviewed in this report include:

- Demolition, Restoration of soft landscaping with Interpretation Boards (c. £660,000), plus risk of Public Enquiry (c. £200,000) **[though the risk Register puts this at least £400,000]** plus annual maintenance costs (c. £10,000 pa).
- Do Nothing – ongoing annual maintenance and security costs (c. £100,000 pa).

The report continues:

“It is important to recognise that Historic England would object to demolition of Broomfield House for memorialisation of the site unless they had been satisfied that all other sources of funding, such as a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, had been fully and recently explored with restoration of the Baroque landscape and investment in the park as a whole. The Secretary of State would scrutinise any proposals and have the power to direct the refusal of listed building consent, hence the potential risk of a public inquiry, which would bring both substantial costs and an unknown outcome.

The recommendation to mitigate this risk is to prepare a holistic proposal for Broomfield Park incorporating memorialisation of the Broomfield House ruins and seek funding from a Heritage Lottery Fund.

*The Stable Block would then no longer be seen as an enabling development for the House and proposals could be developed to restore the Stable Block and yard by rebuilding the four existing houses with properties more in keeping with the historic park and use the capital receipt to restore the Stable Block and create a Community facility.” **[NB this is not defined]***

NB The return on housing in the stableyard at the time was put at between £1.55m and £2.99m though this was uncertain and would have to be market tested.

Comments.

There were many questions and uncertainties about these figures even at the time, but they give an idea of the issues involved. For example, the landscaping costs do not seem to us to be inevitably part of the reconstruction of the House. Historic England say that the landscape improvements could be phased and be part of a separate project. These costs might only reach such a high figure if there were conditions imposed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This would only be an issue if they were providing funding, and there is no provision noted in the estimates for the possibility of such an offsetting sum. Further, the Priced Risk Register figure of £2.4m is not the same as an inevitable cost to the project; the ten individual elements might not be triggered together, though obviously each one needs to be managed and mitigated by the Council.

We do not know how the Council intend to proceed.

Our position is that we should continue to press for a limited reconstruction of the House and accept that housing in the stableyard as offsetting the reconstruction is the only way that this can be done. Money spent on demolition and/or memorialisation, including the costs of a possible public enquiry would be simply wasted, and at best leave the Council with the unresolved problem and costs of the decaying Grade II stableyard.

Other Matters.

The Trustees have continued to visit historic properties to learn how they are managed and funded. In November 2019 we visited Beckenham Place Park, which has a Georgian stableyard which houses a very impressive café. The Mansion run by another independent group accommodates a variety of social and arts-based activities and has a small snack bar.

Also in November 2019, a local resident put us in touch with the eminent architect Maxwell Hutchinson, former President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, who visited the park. Although he said he would think about options for the future, sadly we heard nothing more, though he expressed doubt that the council could obtain Listed Building consent to demolish the house.

Broomfield Park Purchase Memorial

We took advantage of the Trust's charitable status to negotiate grants to restore the shell memorial (by the white gates) which had deteriorated to the extent that the engraved dedications had all but disappeared. Grants from the Heritage of London Trust (£6,000), the Enfield Society (£800) and the Friends of Broomfield Park (£800) enabled this work to take place and we held an "unveiling" event on 5 March with the enthusiastic support of pupils from Broomfield and Hazelwood Schools.