

Chair's Report for 2020-2021

The Council has continued to be less than forthcoming as regards the future of Broomfield House. This report is a diary of attempts to establish a cooperative relationship with the council.

As requested at last year's AGM, I wrote to Ian Davis Chief Executive of Enfield Council about the Council's strategy as regards the future of Broomfield House, since this unclear to us. There was no substantive response

Councillor Barry raised her own questions about BH which were answered in February by Councillor Chibah (who had replaced Councillor Stewart in the role of Chair of the Broomfield Park Partnership Board, though this last met in 2018).

Question 10 from Councillor Dinah Barry to Councillor Katherine Chibah Associate Cabinet Member for Enfield West.

In March 2019, a statement about Broomfield House said that "further feasibility work (would) be undertaken into the viability of delivering a shell reconstruction of Broomfield House. This would be cost neutral to the Council with funding arising from the disposal of the redundant fire damaged stable block / yard which was formerly used for staff accommodation for repair and development and without reliance upon obtaining grant aid."

How much has Broomfield House cost the Council in the financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21 and what is planned for its future?

Reply from Councillor Chibah *Broomfield House has cost the council £315,466 over the two years requested including staff time. The costs are spent on maintaining the hoarding in a safe manner, as well as feasibility design and heritage work to consider options to facilitate redevelopment options. COVID pressures including property service supporting the NHS, staff capacity, and budget constraints mean that the feasibility options work to facilitate repair and redevelopment were paused in the summer without a fixed proposal. Officers have informed me they have plans to resume options evaluation, including engagement with Historic England and local residents, in the late spring.*

This was in February 2021.

I wrote again to Cllr Chibah in June asking for at least an indication of the Council's strategy. There was no direct answer to this question.

However, I met Cllr Chibah on 22 July for a familiarisation walk around the park.

On 24 July I received a reply from Mark Bradbury, the Council's Director of Property and Economy:

"We have an internal meeting next week on Broomfield House and Park so will be in touch after that about next steps."

Bill Yates then tried another approach to get an answer from the council, by writing to the Enfield Dispatch. His letter was published in the October edition. The editor, James Cracknell, also posted an article on the Dispatch website.

On 1 October the Enfield Dispatch published an article which included Bill's letter.

<https://enfielddispatch.co.uk/fears-broomfield-house-may-never-be-restored/>

James Cracknell subsequently told us:

"The council have responded to me to say they have appointed a "specialist heritage consultant" to liaise with stakeholders such as Historic England and that they are planning to meet with Broomfield House Trust."

Also in Oct, Cllr Daniel Anderson had a similar response from Mark Bradbury, who said:

"The Council has appointed a specialist Heritage consultant to liaise with Historic England, The National Lottery Heritage Fund and other stakeholders and to advise the Council on next steps".

Continuing with the policy of ad hoc meetings, the Trust was invited to a meeting on 15 November with Adrian Smallwood Head of Strategic Property Services and Dr Alix Slater, Alix Slater Consultancy & Training Ltd. (Dr Slater had been heavily involved in finalising the 2012 bid to the Lottery for a full rebuilding of Broomfield House.)

Unfortunately, this meeting was exceedingly disheartening. In summary, Dr Slater said that the current National Lottery Heritage Fund "Expressions of Interest" statement and its priority outcomes which run up to 2024, mean that in her view the Broomfield House project does not score highly; new build and restoration is a lower priority, and the London/SE area is highly competitive, even though the Borough as a whole is a priority for the NHLF.

The conclusion was that the House would be likely to be demolished and "memorialised" in some way, but that there was potential for securing funding for a restored stableyard and the Park. It was suggested that there could be a combination of housing in the Grade II listed stableyard with some undefined public use. What form "memorialisation" would take had not been decided and might be the subject of a public competition.

As a guide to the potential costs of memorialisation, the council's estimated costs of memorialisation noted in last year's Chair's report were:

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).

As noted in last year's report the council also said;

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 ".

Given that the meeting was three months ago, I have recently written to the council and consultant asking for an update on the position. To date there hasn't been a response.

Our fear is that we might end up with the loss of a Grade II* listed building, which should be the centre piece of the listed park, a housing development in the stableyard, little or no public use of the stableyard, and no serious investment in the wider park. This may be pessimistic, but the whole history of Enfield Council's dealing with Broomfield House from the first fire in 1984 has been of a successive stepping down of options.

Other Issues

The Friends of Broomfield Park with the Trustees support have been examining ways of restoring the Grade II listed Gazebo/Summer House set against the eastern wall overlooking the rear lawn. If the council are unable/unwilling to fund this, it could be another project for the Friends.

We have heard nothing about the fate of the remaining salvaged sections of the Lanscroom murals and oak staircase stored in council office space at the Claverings industrial estate which the council had said was likely to be vacated. Historic England had previously raised concerns about the unsuitability of these conditions.

Similarly, we have haven't heard a decision about the final display site for the restored Minerva panel.