



The Jubilee Gardens Design Consultation

A Summary of Community Feedback January – February 2005



Introduction

The Jubilee Gardens Steering Group asked for feedback from the local community on its emerging proposals for the Gardens. The proposals were set out in a number of documents issued in late January. The public were asked for their views on three key strands: the design brief; the use of the Gardens as a venue for events and cultural activities; and the proposed governance structure for the Gardens.

Consultation took the form of a Public Information Evening held at the South Bank Forum (at which there were some 80 attendees); two public workshops (with a total of some 25 attendees); a touring exhibition; a web-based survey; and an invitation to submit written comments.

This paper summarises feedback from the Consultation Workshops with Appendix One setting out those responses in detail.

The Design Brief

There were three components on which the Steering Group sought feedback: the overall vision; the summary of aspirations underlying the brief; and the proposed design objectives.

The Overall Vision

- Broadly agreed by delegates at both workshops
- Some discussion about term “as is sustainable” which was criticised as being too vague, and difficult to pin down and define.
- View that design should be for a ‘Garden’ rather than a ‘Park’.

Aspirations

Those who attended wanted the aspirations to reflect the desire that the Gardens:

- Were gardens not a park
- Would be a place of rest and peaceful enjoyment
- Made best use of the river frontage
- Did not become a destination in its own right
- Did not try to compete with, or replicate, other nearby facilities (be they artistic, cultural or convenience, e.g. toilets and cafes)
- Remained suitable for small children (and that a play area was preserved)

Other suggestions offered by delegates included:

- Either building additional toilet facilities nearby as part of the broader regeneration
- Better signage to existing toilet and café facilities
- Using gradients and natural boundaries to discourage mere through-traffic across the Gardens

The Design Objectives

Those who attended did not want the Gardens to be used for events and cultural activities, nor did they want that design trappings that that might require. Rather they wanted the Gardens to be a beautiful, well maintained and designed Garden for everyone to access and enjoy, that complemented the local architecture and area, but offered an alternative to the perception of busyness on the South Bank.

Specifically, people:

- Welcomed the principle of openness and accessibility, but not if it merely allowed people to get from A-to-B more quickly

- Generally agreed that the designs should “take account of neighbouring buildings and their design”
- Expressed uncertainty over the precept that the design should have a ‘contemporary’ feel, as opposed to any other ‘feel’
- Were adamant that reference to space for events should be removed

Other suggestions offered by delegates included:

- Closing Belvedere Road to reduce traffic and increase available space for the Gardens
- “Everything should be done to enhance the view of the river”

Events and Cultural Activities

It was this theme that provoked perhaps most concern from all those who attended the workshops. Delegates at both workshops articulated a wide range of common fears about the impact that such events might have. These fears included the noise that would result, evening and night-time events and the disturbance that they would cause, the damage caused to the gardens as a result, and the presence of catering and public convenience facilities that people associated with events. People’s concerns are set out in the detailed notes in Appendix One..

One workshop dismissed the idea of events and activities comprehensively, while the other suggested the caveat that such activities should be limited to 100-200, rather than the current suggested total of 5,000 – 10,000. The second workshop took a slightly more positive approach to the possibility of events, and discussed briefly such ideas as sculpture and public arts events, small musical events, lunchtime programmes etc.

Views ranged from the suggestion that the Gardens’ unique feature could be that they were the one place on the South Bank where there were no events, to the injunction that should there be events, they should enhance the space and its reputation.

Other suggestions offered by delegates included:

- Might it be possible to use the Hungerford Car Park for the sorts of events that delegates feared were being slated for the Gardens.

Governance

There was unanimous support for the Trust, which was seen as providing the means of protecting the interests of the Gardens from all its various vested interests. Generally, people wanted to see broad representation on the Board, and a robust constitution that enshrined core values for posterity. A number of people volunteered themselves as potential Trustees. Interestingly, both Workshops suggested that one or more local councillors should sit on the Board to ensure accountability to the broader community. They also both believed that a Chair drawn from the Board was important, rather than having a celebrity or grandee parachuted in.

Appendix One – Detailed Notes from Workshops

The Design Brief

Vision	Workshop One	Workshop Two
	<p>Agreed with proposed vision</p> <p>Keeping grass 'green' would be difficult if there were events, as visitors would churn grassed areas up</p> <p>People asked: Where did gravel or other surface materials fit into the scheme? Did 'green' imply grass or shrubs, or both?</p>	<p>Some concern about vision. The phrase 'as green as is sustainable' came across as "weasely". The suggestion was made that the Vision should read "as green as possible"</p> <p>People queried how the phrase "sustainable" was actually being defined?</p> <p>Overriding view that the design intent should be for Gardens, not for a Park.</p>

Aspiration	Workshop One	Workshop Two
World Class Park	<p>Phrase denotes size and scale that most considered inappropriate and contrary to the ideal of somewhere quiet and restful</p> <p>Would prefer garden NOT to be a tourist destination. There are other parks and gardens (St James' was cited) more suited to that aspiration.</p>	<p>Would prefer something like Embankment Gardens, than something that appeared to aspire to be 'world class'.</p> <p>Wanted Garden, not a Park. And one that is accessible and a resource for the local community.</p>
Green Space	<p>Fully endorsed. There was little, if any other space quite like it – particularly given its location.</p>	<p>Unanimity within work shop that this was the overwhelming preference.</p>
The River	<p>No mention made of the river. Jubilee Gardens offers a quiet alternative to the North Bank. A clear desire was articulated that the vistas across the river should be central.</p>	

Aspiration	Workshop One	Workshop Two
Rest or Transit?	This contradiction was discussed at length. The clear preference was for a place of calm enjoyment. The design should not prohibit through-traffic, but it could discourage it through the use of natural boundaries, and perhaps levels or gradients	People wanted a place of rest – somewhere that offered a contrast to (perhaps respite from?) the busy-ness of the rest of the South Bank. Also wanted a balance between a place of rest, and a place that people would walk through to get somewhere else. Would be keen to see easy access to the London Eye deterred. A refuge, rather than a destination. A place of calm.
Café	Would engender a very different atmosphere. Would lead to waste and litter. It would take up space that could otherwise be used for the gardens. There are already other cafés nearby, and if the need was that great, would it not make sense to use some of River Walk, or the area under Hungerford Bridge, rather than chop up the gardens.	No comments made.
Toilets	Shell Centre and other venues have toilets. They present similar problems and concerns as the café does. They also incur expense to manage and maintain. Could additional facilities, if needed, be built elsewhere, rather than on the Garden. An alternative (or additional suggestion) might be to invest in a range of better signage.	Needed. But not as a part of the Gardens. People felt that there were both safety and security issues, as well as issues of cost and maintenance.
Activities and Events	No comments made.	Did not want the Gardens to be used for events.
The Playground	No comments made.	Very keen to see this aspiration remain.

Objectives	Workshop One	Workshop Two
Openness	This is vital both for the Garden itself, and as a means of preventing crime.	No comments made.

Objectives	Workshop One	Workshop Two
Access	Would like to see design deter easy and/ or direct access to the London Eye. Careful planning and design can steer people through the Gardens.	Wanted to avoid 'transit routes' through the Gardens.
Holism	Desire to see the design brief take cognisance of other design and development projects nearby.	People were keen that the design should 'take account of neighbouring buildings and their design' rather than 'knitting'. People did not want to feel that the design of the Garden had in any way been compromised by local buildings.
Contemporary Feel	Uncertainty about what this means, or why it appears as a design objective. There was interest in balancing garden design concepts, perhaps between a modern European design and a more traditional English one. There was no interest in 'contemporary' if it was a euphemism for poor quality, unsympathetic structures and/ or art, but there was interest in seeing the space used for public art.	<p>What does this mean? People did not want to see buildings or structures in the Gardens.</p> <p>People wondered whether this should this remain as an explicit requirement?</p> <p>Were concerned about the 'balance' being proposed between green space and paved areas. Clear preference for paved areas or paths to serve the green space, rather than the two being equivalent.</p>
Space for Events	No comments made.	This should be removed. There should be a recognition in the design brief of multiple needs, but only "as befits a garden"
Other Suggestions	Would it be possible to close Belvedere Road completely, and use the land for the Gardens. It would increase the size of the Gardens and reduce traffic.	<p>The presence of the river should be central to the design brief. People agreed the following wording:</p> <p>"Everything should be done to enhance the view of the river"</p> <p>There was a suggestion that there should be access to the beach/ shore.</p>

The Events and Cultural Activities Segment

Fears	Workshop One	Workshop Two
	Concerns over events at night	Concerns over events at night
	Concern over the loss of quietness	Concern over the loss of quietness
	Concern over physical damage to the Gardens	Concern over physical damage to the Gardens
	Controlling access to events might sometimes be a problem	The Garden shouldn't be closed, and events may require this at times
	Concern that events would compromise the identity of the Garden – people wanted to avoid it being associated in people's minds as an 'events venue'	Concern that events would compromise the identity of the Garden
	Concern over the presence of illegal traders (esp. Hotdog vendors). Concern too over litter.	Concern over the consequence of having catering facilities
	Concern that local people would lose control over the Cultural Policy and that there would be a 'creeping-in' of the sorts of events that residents did not want. Concerns too over frequency	Concern that events would make the Gardens even more of a destination
	<p>Concerns over crime</p> <p>Concerns over the behaviour of people who had no investment in keeping the Gardens attractive</p> <p>Having to accommodate events might have an unwelcome impact on the overall design. Events, for example, would inevitably require additional facilities (both for performers and</p>	<p>Concern that if there are events or activities, they shouldn't incur costs that the Gardens would have to bear</p> <p>Concerns over the influx of large numbers of people and additional busy-ness</p>

Fears	Workshop One	Workshop Two
	<p>the public) which in turn would detract from the available space</p> <p>Concern that large scale events might require platforms, stages, speakers etc. Particular dislike of the idea of a Cinema screen</p>	

Hopes	Workshop One	Workshop Two
	<p>Alternatives: Riverside Walk and Festival Square could provide space for Events. Could this be incorporated within a larger and more holistic design for the area?</p>	<p>Alternatives: There are so many other venues and spaces available for activities and events, could they not be used instead? The Gardens could be the only place where there are not events and activities.</p>
	<p>Public art would be welcome – as long as it was sympathetic</p>	<p>Some interest in sculpture, and also in a water feature</p>
	<p>If there was to be some performance area, that it be limited to audiences of 100-200.</p> <p>Whatever performances might be put on, should enhance the space and its reputation</p> <p>Events should be accessible and relevant (meaning reflecting community diversity) to local people. They should also be free.</p> <p>Events might be most appropriate at lunch times, but not all day long, or all week-ends</p> <p>There should be provision made for children and families</p>	<p>People don't want the sense that everything has been crammed into the Gardens</p>

Other Points Raised

- Would it be possible to use the Hungerford Car Park for the sorts of events that might be being mooted in the design brief?

The Governance & Management Segment

	Workshop One	Workshop Two
The Concept of a Trust	Approved as an appropriate model for the Gardens' governance	Approved as an appropriate model for the Gardens' governance
Representation and Accountability	The Trust's Board should be representative of business partners and local residents There should perhaps be some elected representation (e.g. local councillors)	No one group should be in control. There should be some balance. There should be representatives from local employers and local workers. The Trust must be accountable to its local constituents. Having local counsellors could be a good idea.
Objects	Must work together, and dispassionately, in the interests of the Gardens. The Trust's Constitution is critically important.	Long term interests of the Gardens should be protected. The Constitution will be essential. Essential to establish complete security of tenure on the site.
Modus Operandii	Should be as consensual as possible	No comments made.
Size of Board	Not too large. Perhaps a maximum of 12?	No comments made.
Chair	Should be drawn from the pool of Trustees, rather than brought in from outside.	No comments made.

