



**LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW**

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**THE GUNNERSBURY PARK ESTATE  
CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

**March 2008**

***CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES***

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*Environment    Landscape    Planning*

**LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW**

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**Approved By:** Mark Holland

**Signed:**

**Position:** Director

**Date:** 18 March 2008

***CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES***

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*Environment    Landscape    Planning*

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## **FOREWORD**

To be completed after consultation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To be completed after consultation.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Gunnersbury Park is situated within the London Borough of Hounslow, but is unique in being jointly owned by both the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing.

It is a Grade II\* English Heritage Registered Park containing 21 Grade II\* and Grade II English Heritage listed buildings, making it one of the top 30% of Registered Parks and Gardens within the country and containing some of the top 10% of historic buildings within England. This being said, some of the buildings within the Park are also designated as ‘at risk’, and English Heritage has named Gunnersbury Park as one of the top 12 ‘at risk’ properties in England, due to the large amount of investment needed urgently to stabilise and ultimately repair the buildings.

The Park’s historic values, however, are by no means its only asset. It is a valuable open space, and as such is: a designated as Metropolitan Open Land; a haven for nature conservation containing protected species; and an irreplaceable area for the local community, as a space for both formal and informal recreation.

Despite its value, Gunnersbury Park is a park in major decline, not only in terms of its buildings, but also the landscape in general, visitor facilities, use and management. To maintain the management status quo of the Park is not an option. However, in order to reverse this decline, a vast amount of backing, both in human resources and financial terms, is required. The Conservation Management Plan is the first step in this process of reversal and needs to form the springboard for future actions.

### **Vision**

This document sets out an agreed Vision for Gunnersbury Park, which will underpin every aspect of its future care and management and provide a common goal for all parties involved. The significance of the Park is not provided by only the listed buildings or due to its amenity value, but by the unique mix of assets and uses. The vision for the future of the Park is based therefore on the fundamental need to conserve and enhance the significance of every aspect of the Park. The vision is to become:

A sustainable high quality park with varied uses, which serve the local community and the region whilst respecting, enhancing and interpreting its historic framework and fabric.

## **The Purpose of the Conservation Management Plan**

The Conservation Management Plan sets the framework for co-ordinated management and the development of partnerships, complements the existing statutory plans and will serve to inform existing and future management documents relating to the Park.

In particular the Plan aims to:

‘produce a better understanding of the significance, value and needs of the diverse features making up the Gunnersbury Park Estate, thereby enabling more effective strategic planning and management to ensure its preservation and sustainability into the future’.

The principle objective of the Plan is to cultivate a tradition of care and encourage all the users of the site, the managers and the local community to value and respect Gunnersbury Park in a real and tangible way.

## **The Contents of the Plan**

The Plan comprises a statement of the objectives necessary for the long term preservation of the Park, aiming to balance the interests of conservation, public access, and the interests of those who live and work in the area. The objectives are based on the identification of the significance of the Park and an assessment of which parts of the Park are sensitive and vulnerable to current and pressures.

## **Summary of Issues and Actions**

Through the Conservation Management Plan process, the major issues facing the Park today have been identified. The key issues are:

- Lack of clear management and maintenance structure;
- Limited and decreasing funding;
- Deterioration of built fabric and landscape, most prominently the buildings identified as being at risk;
- Poor visitor facilities; and
- Declining use.

## Priority Actions

The priority actions are:

- Establish a clear management regime and structure to take Gunnersbury Park forward, including the appointment of a Political Champion;
- Adopt the Conservation Management Plan as formal guidance;
- Carry out works to buildings at risk, to stabilise their condition and commission feasibility studies for all buildings to determine a sustainable use;
- Commission a feasibility study for the location of Gunnersbury Park Museum;
- Complete the Sports Hub feasibility study;
- Finalise and adopt the Masterplan; and
- Investigate alternative sources of public and private funding to implement the Conservation Management Plan and Masterplan.

## Policies

The agreed policies are:

**POLICY A: Decisions relating to the management, conservation and enhancement of the Park should respect and develop its significance whilst being committed to the principles of sustainability.**

**POLICY B: Conserve and enhance the Park's distinctive landscape character and structure**

**POLICY C: Conserve and enhance the Park's built heritage assets.**

**POLICY D: The archaeological remains and potential of the site should be conserved.**

**POLICY E: The historic associations of the Site should be recognised.**

**POLICY F: Ensure the long-term conservation and development of the collections.**

**POLICY G: Continue to offer a variety of safe, secure and inclusive opportunities for visitors in a high quality environment.**

**POLICY H: To provide a clear, high quality and consistent message and interpretative vision that links the whole Park and its different components.**

**POLICY I: Conserve and enhance the Park's nature conservation.**

### **Implementing the Plan**

It is important to follow through on the objectives of the Plan to ensure the necessary improvements are made. This is especially true as the 'do nothing' option would result in the significant loss of the historic buildings on the site, would be detrimental to the landscape and would be impossible to reverse. Without timely, effective action now, there is a risk that Gunnersbury Park, as it exists today will not survive.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General Background**

1.1.1 This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Gunnersbury Park (the Park) was commissioned by the London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) in December 2006. Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was appointed to prepare the CMP and complementary Restoration Masterplan for the Park. These will be used to inform the future of the Park and support funding and grant applications.

1.1.2 The Conservation Management Plan builds on the Conservation Statement for Gunnersbury Park which was produced in 2005 (CBA).

### **1.2 Aim of the Conservation Management Plan**

1.2.1 LBH and LBE have identified Gunnersbury Park as a park which could be a much more valuable heritage and visitor asset. As a result of this, Gunnersbury Park has been specifically targeted for improvement. The aim of the Conservation Management Plan is to produce a better understanding of the significance, value and needs of the diverse features making up the Gunnersbury Park Estate, thereby enabling more effective strategic planning and management to ensure its preservation and sustainability in the future. The Conservation Management Plan should act as a tool kit for decision makers and managers, providing information and policies to guide decision making, with a logic and priority to direct future areas of work.

### **1.3 Vision**

1.3.1 It is important to have an agreed Vision for Gunnersbury Park as it will underpin every aspect of its future care and management and provide a common goal for all parties involved to work towards. The significance of the Park is not provided by only the listed buildings or due to its amenity value but by the unique mix of assets and uses. The vision for the future of the Park is based therefore on the fundamental need to conserve and enhance the significance of every aspect of the Park. The Vision for Gunnersbury Park is outlined below:

A sustainable high quality park with varied uses which serve the local community and the region whilst respecting, enhancing and interpreting its historic framework and fabric.

## 1.4 Scope of the Conservation Management Plan

1.4.1 The brief for the CMP was produced by CIP Group Limited, leisure & cultural services managers for the LBH, in August 2005. It is contained in full in **Appendix A**.

## 1.5 Preparation of the Plan

1.5.1 The methodology used in the preparation of the CMP is based on the requirement of the brief, HLF guidance and information provided by other expert sources, such as Kerr (2002)<sup>1</sup>.

1.5.2 The Plan has been prepared in five stages:

- **Stage 1: Understanding the Site** – This stage was essentially about building a robust understanding of the Park. It involved a number of different disciplines including, amongst others, historic research, landscape assessment, townscape assessment, archaeological analysis, ecological analysis and public consultation. The results can be found in **Section 2.0**.
- **Stage 2: Defining Significance** – Based on the understanding of the Site gained through Stage 1, a Statement of Significance was prepared which identified what was important about the Park and why. This can be found in **Section 3.0**.
- **Stage 3: Identifying Issues** – As part of Stage 1 and through consultation, the key issues facing the Park were identified; these issues are explored in **Section 4.0**.
- **Stage 4: Developing Policies and Objectives** – Following the assessment of the issues, a series of Policies and objectives were developed to help address the issues and guide the future conservation and management of the Park.
- **Stage 5: Outline Maintenance Plan**

**Restoration Proposals:** Based on the five preceding stages, a Masterplan and restoration proposals have been developed and agreed after further consultation with key stakeholders and the public.

## 1.6 Consultation

1.6.1 It is LBH and the HLF's policy, as well as good practice, to encourage the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in the development of proposals that will impact

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<sup>1</sup> Kerr, James Semple, 2002. The Conservation Plan. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. UNESCO Australia

on public parks. This policy has been adhered to throughout the preparation of this CMP and a programme of informal and formal consultation has been followed.

1.6.2 CBA undertook the following consultation activities in the preparation of this CMP:

- Stakeholder Workshop 1, June 2007 – Understanding the Park;
- Stakeholder Workshop 2, July 2007 – Issues, Concerns and Future Options for the Park.

1.6.3 These workshops were for an invited stakeholder group, which included representatives of all business within the Park, residents within the Park and members of museum staff.

1.6.4 The issues, ideas and proposals from these have been developed in line with Section 4 of this report and the Outline Masterplan.

## 2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

### 2.1 Summary

2.1.1 In order to conserve, enhance and operate the Park to its full potential it is vital to understand all aspects of the park, the inter-relationships and how an impact on one part might have a subsidiary effect on another. In general the components of the Park include:

- a 72 hectare grade II\* English Heritage Registered historic public park;
- 21 Grade II\* and II English Heritage Listed Buildings;
- a valuable open space for formal and informal recreation for residents in the immediate vicinity and wider area; and
- a centre for the London Borough of Hounslow and Ealing Museum and archive service.

2.1.2 This section outlines the current understanding of the Park so that its significance and relationships can then be interpreted. The section is divided into the following:

- Summary
- Description of the Site
  - *Location and Brief Description*
  - *Character Zones*
  - *Geology, Topography and Soils*
  - *Site Audits and Surveys*
  - *Built Heritage Analysis*
  - *Nature Conservation*
- History and Context
  - *Introduction*
  - *Archaeological Background*
  - *Historical Development*
- Management Information
  - *Ownership and Management*
  - *Population Statistics*
  - *Stakeholders*
  - *Landuse*
  - *Policies, Strategies and Designations*

## 2.2 Description of the Site

### *Location and Brief Description*

- 2.2.1 Gunnersbury Park is a public park of 72 hectares (186 acres), situated in West London within the London Borough of Hounslow (LBH), and delineated by the M4 and Kensington Cemetery to the south, the North Circular (A406) to the east, and housing to the north and west (**Figure 2.1**). The National Grid Reference (NGR) of the centre of the Park is 518770, 179002. Although entirely within the London Borough of Hounslow, the northern and western edges of the Park are on the border with the London Borough of Ealing, and consequently the catchment area of the Park is formed from populations from both Hounslow and Ealing.
- 2.2.2 The area immediately surrounding the Park is characterised by inter- and post-war housing and industry. Kensington Cemetery is located immediately to the south of the site. There is a culturally and economically diverse local community.
- 2.2.3 Prior to becoming a public park in 1926, Gunnersbury Park had been a continually evolving and expanding private estate, occupied at different periods in its history by a succession of owners that included a Member of Parliament, a Royal Princess and an eminent banking family. Each owner made their impact on the Park, expanding the estate and developing the landscape and built features within its changing boundaries. Although much has changed at Gunnersbury Park over the centuries, many of the hallmarks of its various past lives remain, providing historic layers within the Park, landscape and buildings.
- 2.2.4 A cultural, historic and visual focus within the Park is provided by Gunnersbury Park House (the Large Mansion) and Gunnersbury House (the Small Mansion) located in its north-east corner. (**Figure 2.2** shows the key features of the Park.) The Park's main entrance and driveway lie to the north of Gunnersbury Park House. To the south of the houses there is what was once the nucleus of Gunnersbury's gardens, an area with a significant number of built features including the Orangery, 'Princess Amelia's' Bath House, the Gothic Ruins and the Stables. To the west of Gunnersbury Park House is a round pond, the former boating lake, with its mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Temple and Italian garden beyond. Continuing west from this are the former walled Kitchen Garden and bowling greens, and west of these the Park's car park and a considerable area of open playing fields given over to football, cricket and rugby pitches. To the south of this area and near the southern boundary are the West Lodge and the Potomac Lake with its woodland walks and Gothic-style boathouse. At the centre of the

Park is a children's play area, miniature golf course, tennis courts and sports changing facilities located on its west side near the former model farm. There are a number of exceptional mature trees across the site, particularly in the original garden, pitch and putt, Potomac Lake, Japanese Garden and fringe areas.

### *Character Zones*

2.2.5 The site can be divided into seven zones, each with a distinctive landscape character. (These are not identical to the Character Areas identified in the 1995 Development Plan due to changes in methodology in the intervening years). These are shown on **Figures 2.3** and **2.4** and are described as follows:

- Area 1    Gunnersbury Park House, Gunnersbury House and Gardens
- Area 2    Ornamental Parkland
- Area 3    Wooded Lake
- Area 4    Walled Garden
- Area 5    Amenity Area
- Area 6    Open Playing Fields
- Area 7    Lionel Road Municipal Park Entrance

#### *Area 1      Gunnersbury Park House, Gunnersbury House and Gardens*

2.2.6 This area is part of the historic core of the site, comprising the immediate setting for the most important listed structures. The focus is Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House set in their 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century designed gardens and grounds. The Temple and round pond are important features to the west. The Houses dominate this part of the site, forming a focal point; looking out southwards over the raised terrace across sweeping lawns punctuated by mature ornamental trees. A series of walks and smaller garden areas of different character surround these lawns. There are important views available both from and to both houses and the Temple. The landscape is punctuated by various structures of historic interest, each of these designed to form a 'set piece' in their own right. The structure of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century layer of design can be clearly seen together with many magnificent tree specimens. However generally speaking the poor condition of the buildings (particularly the East Lodge, houses and stables) and poor quality of the hard landscape and some soft elements are detractors. Later interventions such as the café are popular elements but visually unattractive and poor provision for access, servicing and circulation further degrade the area's special landscape quality.

*Area 2 Ornamental Parkland*

- 2.2.7 The ornamental parkland lies to the south of the Houses and comprises areas of grass parkland interspersed with individual and clumps of specimen trees. The area is defined to the south and east by belts of mature trees and peripheral walls. The central part of the parkland has been overlain with the 20<sup>th</sup> century pitch and putt course, which detracts from but does not destroy the parkland effect. The smaller enclosed intimate field used for cricket has mature trees bounding its west, south and eastern edge. This has a pleasant ‘village green’ character. The poor quality and disused open nature of the tennis courts and the Pavilion to the north are detractors.

*Area 3 Wooded Lake*

- 2.2.8 The Potomac Lake lies in the south-west corner of the Park and is surrounded by dense overgrown trees and shrubs. A high fence surrounds most of this area and there is currently no public access. The overgrown nature of the planting and lack of physical and visual access mean that the lake holds interest for nature conservation. There is an opportunity to open this area up and increase public access whilst retaining its value for wildlife. The almost derelict Gothic Tower adds to the special character but also is a detractor due to its condition. The area is perceived as being unsafe and visitor numbers are noticeably less in this area than elsewhere (for example Area 1 & 2) in the Park.

*Area 4 Walled Garden*

- 2.2.9 The Walled Garden is of historic interest and currently is occupied by Capel Manor the horticultural college, who are carrying out some restoration on the old fruit tree tunnel, and Greenscene, a horticultural business. It is only accessible to staff and students of Capel Manor and Greenscene and not to the general public, although there are occasional open days. The brick walls and gates around the Garden are badly affected by overgrown ivy and this should be addressed as soon as possible. The boundaries of this particular area are extremely poor and include a close boarded fence topped with barbed and razor wire adjacent to one of the main entrances into the Park. There is a conflict here between pedestrians and vehicles.

*Area 5 Amenity Area*

- 2.2.10 The amenity area comprises a strip of land which has been adapted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide modern amenities for the public park. These include a car park area, two bowling greens (one derelict) a children’s play area and a large number of hard tennis courts (seven useable, seven derelict) together with a cricket pavilion, various changing rooms and a complex of historic buildings that were formally the Model farm. These are used partly as a

depot for the current maintenance team and partly as changing rooms (now burnt out). The area is of mixed quality with derelict, disused and vandalised areas contrasting with the surrounding framework of fine trees and established hedgerows. Although the landscape is of relatively poor quality and the Model Farm needs renovating, this area has many visitors and is on a major path through the Park.

*Area 6 Open Playing Fields*

- 2.2.11 This is a large open flat expanse of grassland used for sport (football and rugby). The open space is bounded by trees to the south-west and by the back gardens of 1930s semi-detached and terraced housing to the north-west and north. The area affords broad open views of the sky and a wide panorama which is a complete contrast to the surrounding densely developed area. It can however, appear bleak and windswept, particularly in winter.

*Area 7 Lionel Road Municipal Park Entrance*

- 2.2.12 This small area was laid out in 1926 when the Gunnersbury Park was laid out to form a public park. It has the formal appearance of a municipal public park that is at odds with the character of the rest of the Park, as no other area has retained this influence in such a way.

***Site Audits and Surveys***

*Soft Landscape*

- 2.2.13 The soft landscape audit was carried out on site in winter/spring 2007. The site contains a number of fine native and ornamental trees, some of which are unusual species, and some of great age. London Borough of Hounslow has carried out a tree survey of the Park, in 1993. This is included in **Appendix B**. It is likely that both of these tree surveys are now out of date and it is recommended that a new tree condition survey is undertaken to inform detailed management prescription, masterplanning and design proposals.
- 2.2.14 The tree surveys showed that there are about 2030 trees in the park with a varied age range. The predominant species are Sycamore, Yew, Horse Chestnut, London Plane and Norway Maple. There are also many Ash, Oak, Common Beech and Pine, Holly, Hawthorn and Silver Birch. There is a wide variety of more unusual deciduous and evergreen ornamental trees. Generally these are either in single or small numbers. Some trees are of particular note because of their rarity or extreme age. These include a cut leaf beech (*Fagus sylvatica Heterophylla*), Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba Fastigiata*), a Weeping Willow (*Salix Chrysocoma*), a Japanese Pagoda Tree (*Sopora japonica*) and a Rowan (*Sorbus Thebetica* 'John Mitchell').

- 2.2.15 There are no digital plans that exist showing accurate tree locations. **Figure 2.5** shows the main trees in the park interpolated from an aerial photograph. Individual trees have been identified from Gunnersbury Park Museum 'Tree Trail' leaflet and verified on site. The ornamental species are chiefly located in the environs of Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House and their surrounding gardens, pleasure grounds and in the ornamental parkland to the south and south-west. There are belts of trees and areas of woodland on the east and south boundary and surrounding the Potomac Lake. The west boundary has some large Plane trees and a length of younger smaller trees adjacent to the housing which adjoins the Park. The early peripheral walk, which followed the former boundary of the site and which now lies between the Playing Fields and the Model farm, is lined by an almost continuous avenue of mature Plane trees.
- 2.2.16 Planting in the Park is shown on **Figure 2.6** and comprises areas of woodland understorey, woodland edge and screen planting, areas of ornamental shrub and herbaceous planting. The former are located to the south of the Park on the boundaries and around the Potomac Lake. They include a range of mature and ornamental shrubs, including a high proportion of evergreen species. Some of these areas are overgrown and require a pruning regime and more maintenance to remove invasive weeds such as brambles. In particular the shrub growth around the Potomac Lake prevents views of the water from outside and access within the fenced perimeter.
- 2.2.17 Ornamental shrub beds are concentrated in the historic core area around the houses and their gardens, the Round Pond, Walled Garden and ornamental Parkland. There is a range of ornamental shrub planting some of which (particularly by the round pond, against the kitchen garden wall) is attractive in appearance. Other areas lack diversity and some beds are overgrown. There are also a limited number of garden areas all of which suffer from a lack of maintenance. These include the Rose Garden, the Rose Basket Garden, the garden on the east boundary adjacent to the Bath House, the rockery by the Orangery and the Japanese Garden. The latter is in a particularly poor state with most of the planting removed, and features infilled. Some pernicious weeds such as Japanese Knot weed were noted and should be removed. Considering the size of the Park and its history of horticultural excellence, there is a lack of horticultural diversity and poor standards of maintenance. Some of the listed structures such as Princess Amelia's Bathhouse and the Potomac Tower are obscured by inappropriate planting.

- 2.2.18 Grass areas in the Park include large areas of amenity grass land used for sports including football and cricket, a meadow area south of the house gardens, a well maintained bowling green and a disused bowling green.
- 2.2.19 There are also areas of mown grass beside the houses, the boating lake and on the pitch and putt course. There are some areas of rough grass with bulbs under trees and on tree margins.

#### *Hard Landscape and Site Furniture*

- 2.2.20 The hard landscape and site furniture audit was carried out on site in winter/spring 2007. This audit can be seen in **Figures 2.7 - 2.15**. These show: paving, walls, fences, edges and finally site furniture and lighting.
- 2.2.21 **Figures 2.7 and 2.10** show that most path surfaces are tarmac without any apparent edging treatment. There are some areas of pre-cast concrete slab paving, which are in relatively poor condition. Half of the car park area is surfaced with concrete and grass-crete that is in a very poor condition: it clearly needs replacing. Seven tennis courts are in fair condition, the other half of the court area (potentially an additional seven courts) is derelict and overgrown with weeds. Examples of paving are on **Figure 2.9**.
- 2.2.22 The Park has a number of different walls and edgings (**Figures 2.8, 2.11 and 2.12**), which do not always relate to each other and have been constructed at different times and in different contexts. There is also a wide range of fences, some of which are inappropriate aesthetically and detract from the Park's appearance. Some boundary walls are made with unsympathetic materials (for example concrete walls with wire fencing). Some internal fencing may now be redundant and could be removed.
- 2.2.23 The historic walls have been vandalised and in a few cases are in poor condition. The historic entrance gates are important as a first indicator of the identity of the Park. They are in need of restoration. Other more modern entrances are of very poor condition and require improvement.
- 2.2.24 **Figures 2.9, 2.13 – 2.15** show the locations and types of site furniture. Most benches and bins can be found within the historic area of the Park. The paths leading to the entrance of Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House are well lit with lamp columns of historic interest some of which are listed, the rest of the Park has no lighting. The historic areas are well supplied with benches. However, the remaining parkland has relatively few seats. More than half of the urns on the south terrace have been removed, destroyed or damaged

and need replacing. Dog bins are numerous and well distributed around the Park. The playground has been well supplied with furniture including three different types of benches and picnic tables. Cycle racks are scarce; in total there are only 11 cycle racks covering the Park. There are some signs in the Park including finger posts and some interpretation panels which were put up in collaboration with the Friends of Gunnersbury Park. There is a lack of signage at entrances and elsewhere in the Park.

### ***Built Heritage Analysis***

- 2.2.25 Twenty-one buildings were inspected and are listed in **Appendix C** and **Figures 2.15 - 2.17**, and included several minor and now demolished structures in addition to the principal buildings such as the Houses, Temple, Orangery, Bath House etc. This is an initial inspection only, mostly made without the benefit of accurate floor plans and elevations.
- 2.2.26 The inspection covered the visible internal and external fabric of the buildings. The roofs were inspected where access was available. No opening up of floor or roof structures was carried out. Electrical installations, water and drainage systems were not surveyed except where there was an evident fault.

### *Summary Findings and Recommendations*

- 2.2.27 As a consequence of the turbulent history of the estate between the mid-18th and early-20th centuries, involving the break up and reunification of the estate under different ownerships, there is a complex history of building construction and demolition and an equally complex patchwork of historic building fabric remaining.
- 2.2.28 Despite the variety in ages and types of buildings, the fabric and materials of which those remaining are constructed are, nonetheless, fairly uniformly being of mass brickwork or masonry with painted thick stucco, with slate or lead-covered timber roofs and timber windows and doors. This building fabric is generally in very poor condition, due principally to a history of poor maintenance and inappropriate repair or 'improvement'.
- 2.2.29 The demolition of some of the buildings such as the East Lodge (1990 and ongoing), the Ornamental Dairy (1960s), parts of the Gothic Ruins (1960s) wine cellars to the north of Gunnersbury House (1980s) and other smaller buildings is a serious loss to the historic character and quality of the Park. Some of these buildings were demolished as they no longer had an economic use and it was thought at the time that this was the most appropriate course of action. Others, i.e. the gothic ruins, were demolished on health and safety grounds. At

the same time a number of other buildings such as the Temple (which as in a ruinous state) and the Conservatory were saved from demolition (by either Greater London Council or as part of Section 106 agreements).

- 2.2.30 The impending collapse of other buildings due to dereliction and deterioration, in particular the Grade II\* listed stable complex and the gothic walls to the Bath House, for example, would equally be a significant loss.
- 2.2.31 The management structure, funding and the culture around the care of municipal parks in past decades has been a major factor in the deterioration and loss in the Park. Lack of preventive maintenance, particularly to renders, roof coverings and rainwater systems, has further resulted in the gradual deterioration of the underlying building fabric and damage to the decorative finishes and interiors. The ill-considered use of materials such as waterproofing renders and plasticised paints in the past 40 years has resulted in the dramatic deterioration of the paint surfaces, renders and almost certainly in the underlying masonry. This damage is common to almost all buildings and structures on the estate.
- 2.2.32 Poor repair techniques such as the use of cement mixes for repointing, gypsum plasters and plasterboards internally, plasticised paints and historically incorrect colours etc, have altered the character of the buildings and their visual impact.
- 2.2.33 Smaller changes, when not properly considered, such as the crude insertion of a gateway adjacent to the north gate or the extensions at the rear of the north lodge, equally contribute to a deterioration of the historic environment.
- 2.2.34 Smaller garden features such as the fountain that can be identified should be replaced. Minor features that make a contribution to the character of the park, such as the mounting block by the polo fields, should be identified and conserved.
- 2.2.35 The use of inappropriate landscaping materials, in particular tarmac, as a setting for the buildings detracts from their quality.
- 2.2.36 A set of guidelines for the proper care of the historic building fabric should be prepared. In future, any contractors working on the repair or alteration of any of the structures, however small, should be required to demonstrate their knowledge and experience of appropriate materials and techniques.

- 2.2.37 The remaining fabric, buildings and landscape features need to be protected to ensure their continued existence for education and academic research purposes. Where possible, every opportunity should be taken to undo recent intrusive changes and to reinstate features and qualities that are important to the historic character of the houses and landscapes.

### *Geology, Topography and Soils*

- 2.2.38 The Park is situated on the post-diversionary River Thames Terrace Deposits of Taplow Gravel. These deposits are gravel, sandy and clayey in part<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.2.39 The Park is situated at approximately 20m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) although there is a gentle slope southwards, with the extreme south of the Park being recorded at 10m AOD.
- 2.2.40 Due to the urban surroundings of the Park, the soils were not recorded as part of the Soil Survey of England. The nearest recorded soils, however, are of Hucklesbrook, which are coarse loamy and sandy river terrace soils<sup>3</sup>.

### *Nature Conservation*

- 2.2.41 Gunnersbury Park is designated as a nature conservation Site of Borough Importance, Grade II and therefore has an ecological value. There is certainly ecological potential at Gunnersbury, with habitats provided by the buildings, wooded areas and water bodies. Given the once elaborate and exotic planting at Gunnersbury, there is also likely to be a variety of interesting, and perhaps unusual, plant species in the gardens. The fallow land area between the east walls may also harbour interesting species. A Phase 1 Habitat survey has been conducted as part of a wider conservation management planning exercise to explore this aspect of the Park further. It recorded areas of mixed interest, with fine mature trees and a large variety of bird life.

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<sup>2</sup> British Geological Survey 1998. 1:50,000 series England & Wales Sheet 270, South London, Solid & Drift Geology

<sup>3</sup> Soil Survey of England & Wales 1983. Soils of England & Wales, Sheet 6, South East England 1:250,000

## 2.3 History and Context

### *Introduction*

- 2.3.1 This section provides an overview of the current understanding of Gunnersbury Park in terms of its historic development, archaeology, ecology and its social and cultural importance. In preparing this section of the Plan, a number of field surveys were undertaken in addition to extensive research using primary and secondary information at local, regional and national records centres.
- 2.3.2 A great deal of documentary, pictorial and cartographic material relating to Gunnersbury Park is readily available, much identified in previous studies, and a full review and analysis of this, furnished with further research and surveys undertaken in the preparation of this Plan, has led to a robust understanding of the site. **Appendix D** lists the documents identified.

### *Archaeological Background*

- 2.3.3 There is only fragmentary evidence for the early history of Gunnersbury Park. There has been little archaeological exploration of Gunnersbury Park and its various features and a desk-based assessment of the Park suggests that there is only limited recorded finds within the Park (see **Figure 2.16** and **Appendix E** for a gazetteer of all archaeological finds within 1km of Gunnersbury Park).
- 2.3.4 A number of Palaeolithic handaxes and flint flakes, some identified as Levalloisian, have been found within Gunnersbury Park, but their exact location is unrecorded. Archaeological finds of this nature are to be expected in an undeveloped site in this location, close to the Thames and situated on gravel terraces.
- 2.3.5 The Roman period is represented within the Park with the discovery of a Dupondius of Hadrian from the Alexandria Mint, which was found on the front lawn north-west of the Cedars (its exact location is unknown). Once again this is not an uncommon find and could have been deposited by a number of different means, and therefore does not necessarily equate to Roman occupation of the area.
- 2.3.6 This lack of archaeological evidence can be attributed more to the limited excavation which has been undertaken within the Park rather than to a lack of archaeological remains.

Excavations that have been undertaken have concentrated on garden features, i.e. the Japanese Garden or ‘Princess Amelia’s Bath House’, rather than earlier features. Landscaping within the Park may have removed archaeological deposits in certain situations and contributed to them in others, i.e. the arrangement of the early formal gardens.

### *Historical Development*

- 2.3.7 There are seven clear phases of development at Gunnersbury Park that are evidenced in primary documentation and as layers in the landscape. A full chronology of Gunnersbury Park can be found in **Appendix F**.

#### *Phase 1: Medieval and Post-Medieval History*

- 2.3.8 A medieval hamlet of Gunnersbury is known from documentary evidence, and it is also known that in the middle ages, Gunnersbury Manor was held by the Bishop of London who remained the landlord of the property within and around the Park until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Frowyke and Spelman families occupied Gunnersbury in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>4</sup>. A house (now demolished) to the north-east of the Park, on the north side of Pope’s Lane, was apparently known as Ealingbury Manor House in 1422. An 18<sup>th</sup> century map shows it as ‘Gunnersbury Farm’ and it was later known as Gunnersbury Manor (**Figure 2.17**)<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.3.9 The lane, known as Love Lane in later documents, that passes through the centre of the Park, running from north to south appears consistently in historic maps and is likely to represent a medieval or Post-medieval field boundary<sup>6</sup>. By 1656, the capital messuage of Gunnersbury had been acquired by a judge Sir John Maynard.

#### *Phase 2: Webb’s Palladian Villa and Formal Gardens 1656 - 1739*

- 2.3.10 This period of the Park’s history saw the construction of John Webb’s exceptional Palladian house (built between 1658 and 1663 and now demolished) Sir John Maynard (**Figures 2.18 and 2.19**)<sup>7</sup>. During this period the house would have stood in the middle of the terrace, which we can still see today, overlooking, the formal gardens laid out to the south. Other landscape features of Webb’s design can still be seen in Gunnersbury Park today and these are marked on **Figure 2.20**.

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<sup>4</sup> VCH p125-126

<sup>5</sup> Notes in GPM Box 1; SMR 005859; VCH p.123

<sup>6</sup> DP119, Deposition of Benjamin Price 22 Oct 1786

<sup>7</sup> White, ‘Gunnersbury’, p.1480; J Bold, ‘John Webb’, Unpubl. Ph.D. Thesis Univ. Reading (1979). Pp159-169

- 2.3.11 It is thought that the house was built within the estate of an earlier manor house, with the Victoria County History suggesting that an ‘ancient house’, is known to have been in existence in 1593<sup>8</sup>. The first known illustration of the new house dates from c.1715.<sup>9</sup> An engraving of c.1761 shows it surrounded by scalloped walls, but these may not be contemporary with the original setting. The elevated Terrace, upon which Webb’s house was centrally placed, undoubtedly influenced the design of the landscape in later years and is still a major element of today’s landscape. The footprint of Webb’s house has been recorded in archaeological excavations, and was sited between the current houses.
- 2.3.12 Rocque’s 1747 map of ‘London and the Country Near Ten Miles Round’ (**Figure 2.18**) shows the footprint of the house with a formal walled garden on a central axis with parterres, rectilinear canals and an avenue extending south towards Brentford Road.<sup>10</sup> It is likely that this depiction represents the garden as laid out in Maynard’s time. The road from Ealing Common is aligned with this avenue and with Gunnersbury Lane before it swings eastwards to pass around the garden. It seems possible that the original Gunnersbury Lane followed a more or less straight alignment heading north-westwards to Ealing Common and that it was moved eastwards to accommodate the gardens to the south of the house.
- 2.3.13 Rocque’s map shows a garden design but it is not possible to say whether this is contemporary with Webb’s house, or whether it is an accurate representation of the garden at the time. His mapping of field boundaries, for instance, is known to be inaccurate in some cases.<sup>11</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> century walling, however, does survive in the walls parallel to the eastern boundary of the Park and in the wall of the Orangery.<sup>12</sup> By projecting Rocque’s map onto a modern base, the boundary of the 1741 garden, which extended as far south as The Stables, can be seen.
- 2.3.14 Webb’s house, and the terrace in front of it, overlooked this garden and commanded wide views across the Thames. It has been suggested that this was one of the main reasons for its siting, as described by Defoe in 1742<sup>13</sup>.

*[It] ‘stands on an Eminence, the Ground falling gradually from it to the Brentford Road; so that from the Portico in the Back-front of the House, you have an exceeding*

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<sup>8</sup> VCH p126

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, C. *Vitruvius Britannicus* 1.4 (1715), p117-118

<sup>10</sup> J Rocque, Middlesex 1757, copy at GMP map drawer

<sup>11</sup> L.Dudley Stamp (ed), Land of Britain pt.81 (1941) p356-7

<sup>12</sup> LB Hounslow HLF Bid Report, Garden Buildings and Structures p.11

<sup>13</sup> D Defoe A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain 3 (1742), 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., p291. Extract in GMP Box 1

*fine prospect of the county of Surrey, the River Thames, and all the meadows on the Borders for some Miles, as also a good Prospect of London, in clear Weather ... the Portico on the Back-front of the House, which is supported by Columns, and is a delightful Place to sit in, in the Afternoon, during the Summer Season; for as it faces the South-east so the Sun is gone from it by two o'clock and Shining on the Country, which is open to the View, renders the prospect very delightful'.*

2.3.15 Defoe also gives a description of the gardens while they still retained their formal plan.

*'Upon going out of the House into the Garden, you come upon a noble Terrace, the whole Width of the Garden, from whence you have a fine Prospect of the neighbouring Country, and on which you may walk dry after the greatest Rain, from this Terrace you descend to the Garden by a noble Flight of Stone Steps, the upper part of which is concave, and the lower convex, with a noble Stone Balustrade on each Side, as also upon the coping of the Wall, the length of the House, which makes a fine appearance from the Road; but the Gardens are laid out too plain, having the Walls in View on every Side; and at present the Offices are too mean for the House, which I hear the present possessor intends to alter, in a most elegant Taste, which will render it the finest Seat near London'.*

2.3.16 The very large elms described in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts seem more likely to be associated with the earlier formal landscape.

2.3.17 Maynard died in 1690, leaving his Gunnersbury Estate in such a complex trust that it took two acts of Parliament to resolve its terms, the second in 1737 when John, Lord Hobart obtained consent to sell the property.<sup>14</sup> On Maynard's death, the estate passed to his wife who was remarried to the Earl of Suffolk. Her son, Hobart, inherited it after her death in 1721.<sup>15</sup> No works to the grounds or house are known from this period and Hobart gave the cost of repairs as the principal reason for seeking the Act of Parliament in 1737. The landscape shown by Rocque is thus quite likely to have been that present in the 1680s and before.

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<sup>14</sup> GPM Act for the Sale of the Capital message of Gunnersbury, Late Estate of Sir John Maynard Knight, serjeant at laws for Purchasing Another Estate 1737. Copy in GPM Box 1

<sup>15</sup> GPM Working papers of Roger White, Box 1

*Phase 3: Expansion and development of 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape style*

Henry Furnese 1739 -1756

- 2.3.18 In 1739, Henry Furnese MP acquired Gunnersbury Park comprising 116.5 hectares (288 acres), which included 5.7 hectares (14 acres) of the house and grounds including ‘*all gardens walled in and otherwise*’, for £12,700<sup>16</sup>. The formal gardens of the Old Gunnersbury House survived certainly up to 1741. Furnese implemented a number of changes in the landscape, perhaps with the help of William Kent, as he made payments to Kent in the mid 1740s. Lysons<sup>17</sup>, 1795, and Keane<sup>18</sup>, 1850, state that ‘*the gardens were enlarged and altered by Kent for Mr. Furnese*’. Other landscape features that are postulated to be of Kent’s design can still be seen in Gunnersbury Park today and these are marked on **Figure 2.20**.
- 2.3.19 Furness commissioned various alterations to the gardens and Park, including designing the Round Pond and the Horseshoe Pond (now drained). Their construction was representative of the transitional period from formal to informal landscape that is typified in Kent’s work. The construction of the ponds necessitated the expansion of the gardens to the west and the removal of the formal gardens to the south of the house. Again, it is possible that Kent built an early form of the Temple at or about this time and that he may have been responsible for the alcove at the eastern end of the terrace in 1792<sup>19</sup>. He is also credited in some sources with the Cedar Grove, which lay to the south of the western arm of the Horseshoe Pond. Nineteenth century descriptions of cedars around the Round Pond with large branches dipping into the water may mean that he was also responsible for the trees there<sup>20</sup>.
- 2.3.20 On balance, it is very difficult to associate any extant feature of the Park firmly with William Kent. It is known that Kent was working for Lord Butlington at Chiswick (less than 2km to the east) and indeed was buried in the Burlington family vault at Chiswick parish church, at the same time as the works at Gunnersbury that are attributed to him were undertaken. Descriptions of the Park during this period are sparse. In 1784 the walled garden and scalloped wing walls to the house were probably still in place. The Round Pond is not mentioned until Princess Amelia’s time: and perhaps Furness’s designer was just responsible for the ‘*large sheet of water*’, which may have been the Horseshoe Pond and the ‘*noble pavilions*’, however these could also have been survivals from the garden shown on Rocque’s map.

<sup>16</sup> White, ‘Gunnersbury’, p.1480

<sup>17</sup> D Lyson, *Environs of London (1792-1796)* quoted in White ‘Gunnersbury’ p.1480;

<sup>18</sup> W Keane, *Beauties of Middlesex (1850)* p89-91.

<sup>19</sup> *Garden Buildings* pp.1-4 gives a comprehensive account of The Temple.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Keane ‘Middlesex’ pp88-91

### Princess Amelia 1761-1787

- 2.3.21 Furnese died intestate in 1756 and his estate and debts were acquired by his sister, Elizabeth Pierce. She died two years later and following disputes between her legatees, the Court of Chancery ordered the sale of the estate to redeem the debts.<sup>21</sup> Jackson referred to the fact that *‘the south or principal front contained a ground terrace walk and a large sheet of water and was bounded on each side by noble pavilions’*.<sup>22</sup> The Site included *‘all that Great Court Yard, the Stable Yard, the Kitchen Yard or Orchard, the Orangery, the Terrace, the Lawn and Gardens of the same containing 15 acres plus a further 42 acres’*.<sup>23</sup> In March 1763 the Earl of Bessborough and John, Lord Berkeley bought Gunnersbury in trust for Princess Amelia (b.1711), daughter of George II. She acquired 6.1 hectares (15 acres) of formal grounds, which corresponds roughly with the extent of the 1741 house and gardens, a further indication that Kent may not have done work in this area. The 17.4 hectares (43 acres) of other land that she acquired is rather less than the extent of the park shown on the map in 1777, but is roughly equivalent to the freehold land of the later park. Further land was purchased in 1770 and 1785 by Princess Amelia.
- 2.3.22 In brief Princess Amelia’s house and gardens consisted of a central house situated on the terrace with long distance views to the Thames and beyond. The gardens roughly corresponded to the formal area of Gunnersbury Park as seen today (**Figure 2.18**). There are a number of features which were built during Princess Amelia’s residence at Gunnersbury including the kitchen garden. These are marked on **Figure 2.20**.
- 2.3.23 The Gunnersbury Estate was within reach of London and was close to Kew Palace, where Princess Amelia’s father had his summer residence. This was situated just south across Kew Bridge, and other estates such as Chiswick House and Fulham Palace to the east, and Marble Hill and Ham House to the west, were within easy reach using the River Thames.
- 2.3.24 The setting of the house is shown on a plan in 1784, although by this time the southern boundary of the enclosed garden has been moved further north (**Figure 2.21**).
- 2.3.25 According to Lyson, the Princess spent £20,000 or more on the Park during her time in residence there, an extremely large sum of money.<sup>24</sup> Writing in 1787 Angus stated that *‘The gardens were greatly improved by her Royal Highness, to which many Additions were made*

<sup>21</sup> GMP R White working papers, Box 1

<sup>22</sup> E Jackson, *Annals of Ealing* (1893) p 144

<sup>23</sup> DP119 Indenture of lease and Release 1763

<sup>24</sup> White, ‘Gunnersbury’, p.1480

by *Plantations, additional Grounds and elegant Erections*'.<sup>25</sup> Particulars of the estate dating from shortly after her death in 1786, watercolours of some of her '*elegant erections*' and contemporary accounts give a picture of her Park.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Payne's watercolours, prepared six years after her death, and engravings of 1787 are likely to show features of her time. The 1777 map (**Figure 2.17**) shows Princess Amelia's Park, however, it is not completely accurate. For instance the walled garden south of the house is not shown but it is known to have still been intact in 1784 (**Figure 2.21**) and the footprint of the house is incorrect.

- 2.3.26 The removal of the earlier landscape around the house may have begun before the Princess formally acquired the property, since ploughing of the 'Great Court Yard' was paid for out of Furnese's estate in 1762. However, elements of the formal landscape still existed in 1784 (**Figure 2.21**) and the differences between the two engravings dated 1787 seem to show some work having been done immediately after her death.<sup>27</sup> In 1786 there was a '*Mansion House, Offices, Courts, Lawn, Orange Grove and Chapel Ground formerly inclosed within a wall extending a little below what is called the Horseshoe Pond*'. The chapel was west of the house. Payne's view from the north shows a stable block and other 'offices' which may date from this period. Although an engraving of the early 1760s shows a formal courtyard around the house, a watercolour by Oldfield in the same sequence as the ornamental buildings shows that this had been swept away.<sup>28</sup> Yet the formal arrangement of the north side is described as still present in 1787 and both north and south courtyards are shown. Payne's 1792 view of the south front shows the same view as the 1787 engravings and could possibly reflect the landscape at the end of the Princess's time.
- 2.3.27 Princess Amelia's so-called Bath House (**Figures 2.22 and 2.23**) lies just below the east end of the terrace. There is no certain evidence to associate this complex building with the Princess. The analysis in *Garden Buildings and Structures*, suggest that there may have been a 'pleasure garden' feature such as a cascade or grotto in her time. The report discusses the complex history of The Temple, which was a dairy when she died.<sup>29</sup> A letter by Lady Mary Coke refers to '*drinking tea in the building by the water*', which was probably The Temple.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> W Angus, *The Seats of the Nobility* (1787) p 147

<sup>26</sup> BL Add Ms 33135 ff48-49 transcribed by Bereford in GMP Box 1; Chiswick 728-3 FUN MP 7851 Sales particulars 7/5/1787; Four vies of Gunnersbury, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, copies at GPM. Originals?; Contemporary accounts as referenced.

<sup>27</sup> DP119, Schedule of the debts of Wm. Furnese

<sup>28</sup> GPM 87.160/2 watercolour

<sup>29</sup> *Garden Buildings and Structures*, pp4-7

<sup>30</sup> GPM Letters of Lady Mark Coke transcribed by R White Box 1

There were ‘*pleasure gardens*’ adjacent to the ‘*Circular Water Ornamental Buildings and Dairy*’ which presumably occupied the land which is now the Italian Garden.<sup>31</sup>

- 2.3.28 A greenhouse, pinery and hothouse are mentioned in 1787: the pinery was ‘*generally allowed to be one of the largest and best constructed in the count[y]*’ being 18.3m (60ft) by 12.2m (40ft). In 1786 stove gardens and a hothouse were said to be on the leasehold part of the Park. This would place them either along the southern boundary or more likely on the site of the present Walled Gardens where some of the walling and the entrance ways may date from this period. Lady Mary Coke mentioned three kitchen gardens but offered no clue to their location.
- 2.3.29 There is more certainty about the position of the garden buildings. The alcove seat was at the mid point of the southern boundary of the garden. The ‘church’ is shown in the south-east corner of the 1777 map. The building on the west boundary to the south-west of the Round Pond, could have been the ‘gothic temple’ which was ‘*six or seven yards*’ from the Love Lane boundary in 1786.<sup>32</sup> The ice house recorded in 1787 may have been on the site marked as such in 1865, adjacent to the present Orangery and still marked by a substantial mound.
- 2.3.30 It is not possible to find a location for the rotunda and alcove shown on drawings labelled ‘*in the gardens at Gunnersbury*’ at Chiswick Library. The labels have been added to the drawings in ink at a later date and it is possible that this is a mistaken attribution.<sup>33</sup> White considers that these and other buildings could have been designed by John Oldfield, the Princess’s surveyor, to whom she left £200 in her will.<sup>34</sup>
- 2.3.31 Princess Amelia held lavish gatherings at Gunnersbury. On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1768 Christian VII King of Denmark, Princess Amelia’s nephew-in-law, ‘*went to Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London and the Royal Armoury, the Mint, the Bank of England and St Paul’s Cathedral. In the evening he drove out of town to Gunnersbury where Princess Amelia and a huge party of 300 people awaited him, and the evening passed with supper, fireworks and a ball*’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 1787 Sales Particulars

<sup>32</sup> DP119 Deposition of Benjamin Price 22 Oct 1786

<sup>33</sup> Chiswick ME 942.144/728 G One (the rotunda) was found at Greenwich Library

<sup>34</sup> White, Gunnersbury, p.1048; Anon, Gentlemen Magazine 1786

<sup>35</sup> Tilliard, Stella, ‘A Royal Affair, George III and his Troublesome Siblings’

*Phase 4: Division and dual ownership*

- 2.3.32 The Gunnersbury estate was sold to Gilbert Ironside, two years after Princess Amelia's death in July 1788.<sup>36</sup> No records of activity by Ironside have been found, and less than four years later, in June 1792, he sold at a loss to Walter Sterling who promptly mortgaged it to the pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood. Sterling's property is described in the sale documents very much as it was at the Princess's death. It comprised '*Great Court Yard the stable yard the itched yard the pheasant yard or orchard the Orangery the terrace the lawn and gardens*'. In all, these totalled approximately 6.1 hectares (15 acres). Thirty-five acres of freehold land (less than Amelia's park) was also acquired together with 2.8 hectares (7 acres) of Potters Field, which lay to the north-east of the Park.<sup>37</sup>
- 2.3.33 Sterling commissioned Payne's watercolours, which probably show the landscape created before 1787 rather than any radical change between 1787 and 1792. Sterling was a Lanarkshire man (although his brother, whose name appears in some of the documents, was a London merchant) and it is uncertain what interest he took in the property other than commissioning the paintings. He was either in financial difficulties or a property speculator<sup>38</sup>. In July 1795 he contracted to sell the estate to Henry Crawford but no conveyance was executed. A sale finally took place in October 1800 after Crawford had paid off the mortgage to Wedgwood who appears to have taken possession of the property on Sterling's default.<sup>39</sup> Crawford was resident at Gunnersbury before the sale, presumably as Sterling's tenant.<sup>40</sup>
- 2.3.34 The complex picture is further confused by the fact that in September 1799 Crawford had agreed to sell the estate to John Morley. Sometime between then and January 1801, presumably in the autumn or winter of 1800, Morley divided the estate into 13 lots (**Figure 2.24**) and demolished the house<sup>41</sup> although the terrace and Horseshoe Pond remained. It was apparently his purpose to make the Park a collection of villas. At the eastern side, the boundary was drawn through the line of the former avenue and old road (separating lot 2 from lot 1 and lot 12 from lot 13). The west wall of the 17<sup>th</sup> century garden was still

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<sup>36</sup> DP119 Indenture of lease and release 3&4 July 1788

<sup>37</sup> DP119 Indenture, lease and release 25&26 June 1792; Indenture lease and release 27&28 June 1792

<sup>38</sup> GPM Box1 Working papers of Roger White; DP119 Indenture of lease and release 11&12 July 1800, Indenture of 10 Oct 1800.

<sup>39</sup> GPM Box1 Working papers of Roger White; DP119 Indenture of lease and release 11&12 July 1800, Indenture of 10 Oct 1800.

<sup>40</sup> DP119 Lease from J Wedgwood 11 July 1800

<sup>41</sup> DP119 Indenture of lease and release 13&14 January 1801

standing at this time, since it was referenced to in several documents, as was the icehouse adjacent to it (in the vicinity of ‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House).<sup>42</sup>

- 2.3.35 Morley sold lot 1 (where Gunnersbury House was to be built) to Stephen Cosser in February 1802, and by June that year a brick and timber partition separated it from lot 2 (where Gunnersbury Park house was to be built).<sup>43</sup> Between 1802 and 1806 Alexander Copland acquired all of the remaining lots by purchase or lease.<sup>44</sup> He lost no time in building a house, which by June 1802 was ‘*latterly erected and built*’ although whether this was the house acquired by the Rothschilds is another matter.<sup>45</sup> The footprint of the house and other buildings shown on the Surveyors Notebook Drawing of 1897 is different from that of the 1802 plan, which is different again from that shown in 1835. There is similar confusion for the development of the Horseshoe Pond, which appears to have been enlarged and modified in a minor way during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (compare **Figures 2.25, 2.26 and 2.27**).
- 2.3.36 In this sequence of events, with the demolition of Webb’s house and the division into lots, it seems very unlikely that there would have been significant improvements, so that Copland and Cosser must have acquired impoverished versions of Princess Amelia’s Park. The Park remained divided until 1889 and is best described in separate accounts.

#### Gunnersbury House

- 2.3.37 The exact date of Gunnersbury House is unknown. The two earliest writers, Lyson (1810-11) and Brewer (1816) state that it was built by Cosser, the original purchaser of Morley’s Lot 1 in 1802, but there are other references to it having been built by Major Morrison, who was the owner from Cosser’s death in 1806 until his own in 1828.<sup>46</sup>
- 2.3.38 Copland and Cosser reached an agreement about the water supply of the two halves of the Horseshoe Pond. The plan accompanying this agreement shows another pond just inside the north-east corner of the property.<sup>47</sup> Disputes over the water supply arose after Cosser’s death in 1806 and carried on until 1838. Morrison may have carried out work on ‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House, but there is no evidence of other work by him and our first picture of the property at this time comes from a description following his death in 1828. There were:

<sup>42</sup> e.g. DP119 Indenture Hill/Crawford/Morley/Steers 27 August 1801

<sup>43</sup> White working papers; DP119 Indenture White/Copland/Hunter/June 1802

<sup>44</sup> Several documents in DP119 refer to this, the last being a lease from William Raven, who had bought the northern part of the Park in 1806.

<sup>45</sup> DP119 Indenture White/Copland/Hunter 1 June 1802

<sup>46</sup> There is an anonymous set of notes in GPM Box 1, together with correspondence from Bridget Cherry and Pevsner about the description of the mansion in Buildings of England.

<sup>47</sup> DP119. Agreement of maintenance of drainage re Horseshoe Pond 10/3/1807

pine pits; hot and green houses with vines; ‘*offices of all description suitable to the establishment*’; coach house and stables; ‘*lawn and pleasure ground laid out with exquisite taste, ornamented with luxuriant shrubs, thriving evergreens and stately timber trees*’; walled fruit and vegetable gardens; ‘*ornamental dairy in the gothic style and cold bath*’ (i.e. ‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House); brewhouse and various outbuildings; the eastern part of the Horseshoe Pond; ‘*running streams*’; and ‘*sundry enclosures of meadow land*’<sup>48</sup>.

- 2.3.39 The property was acquired by Thomas Farmer in 1828 who carried out improvements during the 1830s and 1840s. In 1838 he refers to ‘*improvements of my own grounds*’ in connection with the water supply, which may be the pond shown near the southern boundary (**Figure 2.28**) as well as work to the Bath House.<sup>49</sup>
- 2.3.40 The Gothic Ruins were constructed (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) by WW Pocock to screen the Rothschild stables. They were described in 1885 as comprising ‘*pillars, arches, embrasures and mullioned windows*’; which by then were heavily covered with ivy and containing rooms for young gardeners, ‘*fruit rooms, store rooms, a Grape room and other offices*’.<sup>50</sup> The full extent of the ruins appears to have included not only those to the rear of the Rothschild stables, but also sham ruins along the dividing wall between the two estates and the area of the later Wall Garden north of The Paddock, where as late as 1951 there was still a mock church tower standing.<sup>51</sup> This was perhaps a physical manifestation of the tensions that existed between the occupants of the two houses who lived in such close proximity. Pocock may also have been responsible for gothicising the building now known as ‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House. The entrance gate and east lodge were built in 1837 and the stables (to the north-east of Gunnersbury House) were modified in 1844. Land east of Gunnersbury Lane was later used as a kitchen garden and may have been acquired at this time.
- 2.3.41 In 1847 a building south-west of ‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House is probably the ornamental fowl house, built by Pocock’s son William.<sup>52</sup> The 1847 map also shows the old west wall *in situ*, and the south wall of Princess Amelia’s time with buildings against it (probably glasshouses). The paddock was already bounded by walls, but did not have glasshouses.
- 2.3.42 Thomas Farmer died in 1859 and the property was acquired by J H Atkinson. It is not until the first Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 inch series in 1865 that we have a full picture of

<sup>48</sup> The Morning Chronicle, 23 June 1828

<sup>49</sup> DP119 Letter to Mrs de Rothschild dated 24 June 1838

<sup>50</sup> JHCG 9 July 1885. p18

<sup>51</sup> Chiswick 728. GUN. Old guide book.

<sup>52</sup> GPM Box 1 ‘Extract from Ms. Of WW Pocock’s Reminiscences’; AA Report 2.15

the property. In the north-east corner there was a complex of buildings with a small pond at the centre, perhaps the successor to Farmer's Pond. The grounds to the north of the house show a path layout roughly similar to today's, with mature trees. To the east was the Bath House, beyond which there appear to have been terraces abutting the boundary wall. These led down to an oval bed which still survives. To the west was a small fountain on the lawn. Beyond the Horseshoe Pond, glasshouses lay along the old south wall of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century garden.

- 2.3.43 In 1876 James Hudson came to work for Atkinson as head gardener and was to be a strong influence on Gunnersbury until his retirement in 1919.<sup>53</sup> By 1881 the glasshouses were producing palms, ferns and tree ferns which were among the specimens that won Hudson many prizes at Royal Horticultural Society shows. There was a vinery, pinehouse, and extensive fruit and vegetable production. The oval bed near Princess Amelia's Bath House was a rose garden.<sup>54</sup> Four years later the rose garden was described as a major feature with old varieties of roses and plants at least 35 years old. However, it was Hudson's ingenuity in producing large quantities of fruit, vegetable and flowers for decoration that impressed the horticultural writers.<sup>55</sup>

#### Gunnersbury Park House

- 2.3.44 Evidence would suggest that Alexander Copland, a builder, who was a partner in a firm of contractors with Henry Holland and Holland's nephew, Henry Rowles, built the core of the present Gunnersbury Park House (**Figure 2.31**). The exact details are unclear but the cellar plan would suggest that the core of the house was built in two stages (**Figure 2.32**). This is indicated by the load-bearing walls thick enough to be outside walls, not pierced by any doorway in the cellars under the Pink Saloon, the Saloon, and Parlour and the Entrance Hall. A suggested plan for Copland's house might include the centre of the south front, i.e. the Saloon with the Corridor and Library of the Rothschilds, and the Entrance Hall.
- 2.3.45 The sale advertisement of May 1835 suggests that the house had been built within the last few years. It is possible that Copland extended the house in the early 1820's. It would appear that he added the room to the east of the Entrance Hall as a Library. The Pink Saloon and Dining Room were added on the south front to form the balanced façade depicted by Sydney Smirke in a drawing of August 1835. His drawing shows a central, three storied block with five windows on each storey, the two matching wings were two storeys high and

<sup>53</sup> B Elliot, 'Top Marks for James Hudson', *The Garden* March 1992 pp.118-119

<sup>54</sup> GC 16 July 1881

<sup>55</sup> JH CG 9 July 1885 pp18-19

slightly protruding from the central block. Balustrading above all the ground floor windows united the building architecturally. Smirke designed a number of features within the house, of which those mentioned above and the doors (**Figure 2.27**) are the most notable surviving elements.

- 2.3.46 Alexander Copland died on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1834 and by his will appointed three executors including Edward Smirke, Robert and Sydney's brother. This suggests that one of his brothers may well have been Copland's architect at Gunnersbury and that when Nathan Rothschild brought the house, Sydney Smirke was already connected with the estate.
- 2.3.47 The executors first advertised the house for sale on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1835, in the Morning Herald. The house was described as an '*elegant and magnificent mansion, most complete in all its arrangements, seated on a beautiful terrace.*' It clearly had extensive grounds well planted with trees. '*The whole forming*', the advertisement continued, '*a most enviable property, comprising 80 acres, which, from its superior arrangement and proximity to the metropolis, is remarkably well adapted for the residence of a nobleman, minister of state, or family of the first description*'.

*Phase 5: Nathan and Lionel Rothschild*

- 2.3.48 On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1835, Nathan Mayer Rothschild acquired Gunnersbury Park House and 18.8 hectares (46.5 acres) of freehold and 11.9 hectares (29.5 acres) of leasehold from Copland's Trustees for £13,000. The Rothschilds were an eminent and wealthy family engaged in banking and politics. In addition to the Gunnersbury Estate they also owned land and houses in central London, and the Vale of Aylesbury. The Gunnersbury Estate was however, to provide a critical venue for entertaining.
- 2.3.49 Sidney Smirke was commissioned to enlarge the existing house and to build stables (**Figures 2.29** and **2.30**), the Orangery and a portico to the North Lodge. Drawings of Smirke's designs have survived which show in detail how Smirke undertook the task. December 1835 saw plans for a glass conservatory on the east wing, and for alterations to the kitchen and north stable buildings. Plans for a lodge (the North Lodge) were completed on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1836; for the present stabling in November 1836; and for an orangery on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1839. It is the interior of Gunnersbury Park House which shows most clearly Smirke's influence. His designs survive most prominently in the Grand Staircase as well as some doors and show the general scheme of decoration. The Stables are a grand statement of the time, and the carriages which were once housed in them, along with the Polo horses, are now kept within Gunnersbury Park Museum.

- 2.3.50 From a plan of 1835 and town plans of c1836 it is clear that Smirke altered the uses of rooms, presumably at the dictate of his employers. Copland's Library was turned into a parlour and a new Library established in the larger room on the other side of the Entrance Hall. What could have been Copland's kitchen, near the Dining room, was turned into a Billiard Room and the Cold Bath next door incorporated into it.
- 2.3.51 Halfway through the refurbishment of Gunnersbury, on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1836, Nathan died. His wife, Hannah, inherited the Estate, and by the time of her death in September 1850 it had considerably increased in size from the House and 30.8 hectares (76 acres) that she had inherited from Nathan. Indeed she had purchased three additional houses to the north of the Park, all of which have since been demolished.
- 2.3.52 The Estate Map of 1835 (**Figure 2.32**) would also suggest that construction of the model farm began around this time. Only one building is shown on the Estate Map, however the 1874 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map shows a complex of buildings. Generally use of the farm is not recorded however, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it is recorded as being used as a traditional farm for the Estate (Collis *pers. com.* 2003)
- 2.3.53 Under Hannah, the use of the kitchen gardens were considerably expanded: by 1850, pineapples, melons and cucumbers were being cultivated and the importance of the kitchen garden in supplying the Rothschild's London houses was becoming established.<sup>56</sup> In 1847 the area north of Gunnersbury Park House appears to have been much as it was in 1835 with the same range of buildings near the house, but a much clearer pattern of tree belts, lawns and specimens trees. The terrace still had an alcove with a statue of Apollo at the eastern end, perhaps the one present in 1792. Keane describes a walk from the terrace to the Round Pond similar to that described in Gardeners' Magazine 1833 and subsequently by Mrs Stevenson in 1838 '*a straight terrace on the lawn in front of the house, terminating in an alcove at one end, and, at the other passing through a triumphal arch to a winding walk, carried along the brow of the hilly part of the ground so as to display the leading features of the park and the distant sentry, on the one hand; and, on the other, highly kept lawn, with choice shrubs and all the usual furniture of flowers, basins, fountains, sculptures, rockwork, basketwork, seats and trellises.*'<sup>57</sup> To the north-east of the walk there was a '*rockwork fountain with a figure of Eve bathing ... very artistically embowered with ivy, and is so far*

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<sup>56</sup> B Elliot, *The Victorian Garden* (1986.35)

<sup>57</sup> GM 9 (1833.320); E Boykin, *Victoria, Albert and Mrs Stevenson* (1958)

*keep out of sight till it is approached as to convey the idea of being in a shaded and sacred nook ... two tall and fine cypresses stand by the side of the this recess.*<sup>58</sup>

- 2.3.54 To the south of the house, the 17<sup>th</sup> century west wall had probably been demolished. Rose beds were already in place on the west side of a walk that followed roughly its present alignment, sweeping west of the Orangery. At some point near the Orangery, fruit trees were still in cultivation. These appear to have been separate from the orchard that had appeared in the north-west corner of the Inner Park by 1865. The outer park had a peripheral belt of trees along the southern boundary, in which there was an alcove. There was another building in the extreme south-west corner by this date, and the farm buildings on the western edge of the estate had increased in size since 1835.
- 2.3.55 On Hannah's death (1850), the Gunnersbury Estate passed to Nathan and Hannah's four sons but in 1851 the other brothers gave up their shares to the eldest son Lionel. During his ownership of the estate, between 1851 and 1879, the estate was extended to 250.9 hectares (620 acres) by 1873. A major change in the early 1860s was the purchase of land to the south and west of the Park, including Coles Hole, a former clay pit.<sup>59</sup> Much of the land had been Old Brentford Common Field in the post-medieval period and appears to have been agricultural land until it was purchased. The Ordnance Survey map of 1865 shows this area almost entirely free of trees. It also shows the 1850s expansion of conifers and other planting onto the Inner Parkland and an increased density of tree cover throughout. To the north-west of the house, most of the buildings had gone, with the exception of the dairy and Bath House which survived until the 1950s/1960s.<sup>60</sup>
- 2.3.56 Cole Hole was landscaped to become the Potomac Lake. A tile kiln on the edge of the lake was converted to a tower-cum-boathouse with the assistance of J W Pulham who came from a family of builders/architects who had patented an artificial stone known as Pulhamite.<sup>61</sup> This was used in the rockwork around the boathouse and the dressing of the boathouse itself. A description of the landscaping of this area does not occur until 1881, two years after Lionel Rothschild's death, when it was described as '*recently-formed*' ... '*the pond has been extended into a broad expanse of ornamental water whose islets and rocky margins render it highly picturesque. The surroundings of the lake are diversified by knolls and undulations, all effected by artificial means and a circuitous path renders all sides accessible ... at the*

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<sup>58</sup> Weals, London and its Vicinity (1851) p521

<sup>59</sup> CW p23

<sup>60</sup> NMR M HLG 30/10/1958

<sup>61</sup> Garden Buildings and Structures gives an account of the boathouse / folly. See also S Festing, 'Recent discoveries and restoration of Pulham sites', Garden History 25 (1997) p257-237 and referenced cited by her.

*upper side of the lake, near the tower, an artificial stream, former by Mr Pulham of Broxbourne, adds greatly to the charm of the place, the rocky head of the islet being particularly effective. Around the lake at a little distance from the water's edge have been introduced bold clumps of Pampas Grass, Bamboos, Arundos and other moisture loving plants with good effect. Where the public road flanks this part, the boundary is raised and planted in an effective manner with shrubberies and plantations, though it will be some years before the intended effect will be attained. Near the grounds here alluded to the late Baron transplanted some huge trees from other parts of the park'.<sup>62</sup> A group of Pulhamite rocks were also placed at the western edge of the Horseshoe Pond, adjacent to the Orangery 'recently' before 1883 and it may be that they date from the same phase of work as those at Potomac Lake. These have now been rearranged as rockeries and survive today*

*Phase 6: The Rothschilds - Reunification of the Estate*

- 2.3.57 Farmer died in 1889 and the Rothschild family purchased his land, bringing back Gunnersbury Park as a whole into a single private ownership. However, few radical changes took place. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1895 shows the gardens very much as they had been 30 years earlier, with the dividing wall still in place. Two separate teams of gardeners remained, headed by Reynolds at Gunnersbury Park House and Hudson at Gunnersbury House. By 1899 the wall had been substantially removed and the drive to Gunnersbury Park House had been extended eastwards. The trees and shrubs removed were reused elsewhere in the garden. South of the houses, the landscape was opened out to give larger and wider views. '*Fine trees that were hidden from view by an undergrowth of shrubbery are now individualised*'.<sup>63</sup>
- 2.3.58 In 1855, the Gardeners' Chronicle remarked on '*the magnificent cedar trees*' at Gunnersbury for which it was '*justly celebrated*' and the next year the same magazine commented on the effective introduction of rarer and better kinds of conifer. On a further visit in 1880 the feature writer found that '*the presence of finely proportioned evergreens is one of the glories of Gunnersbury; giving an aspect of warmth, protection and repose in winter, and coolness and shade in summer*'.
- 2.3.59 Sections of the gardens were extensively laid out with plant houses for the culture of exotic flowers and fruit of many varieties. In February 1862, for example, Henry Ormton was paid £400 for building hot-houses at Gunnersbury. It is thought that these were to the west of the present Orangery but their exact location is unknown.

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<sup>62</sup> Garden, Feb 26 1881 p 228

<sup>63</sup> GC 27 May 1899.333

- 2.3.60 Articles in the horticultural press in the 1890s provide more detail of the gardens managed by Hudson.<sup>64</sup> Water lilies had become an important feature, cultivated in the eastern part of the Horseshoe Lake and in a pond, which was a probable successor to Farmer's earlier pond, which was later incorporated in the Japanese Garden. The Bamboo Garden, first mentioned in 1899, was nearby and the luxuriant character of this period is shown in contemporary photographs<sup>65</sup>. As well as the features already described, they show a 'Fountain Walk' at an unknown location.
- 2.3.61 In October 1900 Hudson began the best-recorded horticultural feature of the Park, the Japanese garden. This bore no relationship to Japanese gardens as such, but was rather a wild garden after the manner of William Robinson, using Japanese or Chinese plants to attain luxuriant and exotic effects and based loosely on an unnamed garden near Lake Como. It was described several times in the contemporary horticultural press and an article by Hudson himself gives an account of its construction<sup>66</sup> and lists the plants used. It was developed between the Gothic Ruin and the old south wall of Princess Amelia's Park around the pits formerly used for growing waterlilies (and perhaps also for Hudson's semi-aquatic garden mentioned in the 1880s).
- 2.3.62 In the same year, inspired by the gardens of Hampton Court, the Wall Garden was begun, between Princess Amelia's Bath House and the Gothic Ruins. The walls were built from old brick found during the excavation of the Japanese Garden. This was presumably either brick from the 17<sup>th</sup> century walls (or possibly garden buildings) or from the upper part of the Gothic Ruin. Hudson describes the construction of the wall in detail and gives a list of the plants used.<sup>67</sup>
- 2.3.63 Despite Gunnersbury Park being the home of the wealthy elite and its boundary walls and gated entrances protecting its privileged owners from the outside world, the Rothschild family, in common with many wealthy families of the Victorian era, were dedicated philanthropists, and strived to improve the lives of the community that lived beyond the garden walls. Their activities were focussed particularly on schools and education with donations for school buildings, prizes, equipment and clothing being made. In addition a

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<sup>64</sup> GC, 27 Oct 1893.478-479, GC, 17 Oct 1893.467, J Hudson 'Hardy Nymphaeas', GC, 25 Aug 1898-139-141, GC, 27 May 1899.333, JHCG, 27 July 1899.80-82

<sup>65</sup> CL 24 Nov 1900.656-663, NMR Gunnersbury Park Red Box CC56/25-30, 73/2497-8, 88/36-7, 88/867

<sup>66</sup> J Hudson 'A Japanese garden in England, JRHS 32, 1907.1-10

<sup>67</sup> J Hudson, 'Wall gardening at Gunnersbury', *The Garden* 61 (March 1902) pp.140-141

number of churches were built on land donated by the Rothschilds, such as St James's Gunnersbury.

- 2.3.64 Leopold, son of Lionel, inherited the estate on the death of his father (1879) and established a Stud and a Polo Field at Gunnersbury, with a small pavilion located on the edge of the Polo Field. All that remains today is the Polo mounting block situated at the north-west corner of the children's play area, as the Polo field is now used for football pitches.
- 2.3.65 During this time Gunnersbury House was still in use as a subsidiary residence, perhaps accommodating visitors or staff.

*Phase 7: A Public Park*

- 2.3.66 When Leopold died in 1917, his son Nathan inherited Gunnersbury. Family interests were now focussed elsewhere and it was decided to sell the estate. Restrictive covenants put in place at the time of the sale stated that the land and its buildings could only be put to a beneficial public use (**Box 1**). It is thought that the original covenant is no longer binding, however the covenant on some of the land sold on for building purposes which is substantially the same as that given by the Rothschilds, is. It is likely that a change in the covenant would have to be sought, as it has been previously, should it be proposed that one or more buildings be used for primarily non-public purposes, however a legal opinion will have to be sought on this.

**Summary of the De Rothschild Covenant**

The de Rothschild covenants of 1925, to which the Council's Freehold Title is subject, bind the Council's and their 'successors and assigns' to use the Park for no other purposes than as a 'Public Park and sports ground and that the mansions and other buildings on the property shall not at any time hereafter be used except for such public purposes as may be ancillary to the use of the property as aforesaid and that no building or erection other than a building or buildings for use for public purposes shall at any time hereafter be erected on the property'.

- 2.3.67 Acton and Ealing Councils purchased 75.2 hectares (186 acres) of land, both houses and associated buildings with the help of Middlesex County Council (1925). 7.3 hectares (18 acres) of land were sold off on the northern and western edges of the Polo field for residential development that would help raise funds for the Park. A Joint Management Committee was formed to oversee the management of the Park and a form of this continues to function today. Neville Chamberlain opened the Park to the public in May 1926. A commemorative stone plaque in the Arch on the Terrace, records this (**Figure 2.34**).

- 2.3.68 The Rothschilds placed restrictive covenants on the Estate in 1921, 1923 and 1925 which came into force when the local councils purchased the Park. Only public/leisure use is permitted in the Park, although this has been waived on two separate occasions.
- 2.3.69 Although there are few readily accessible records for the period, it appears that, up until the late 1940s, management of the Park continued much as it had been under the Rothschilds, with many staff continuing from before 1925 and several still living in the Park.<sup>68</sup> Even in wartime there was sufficient Park staff to form their own company of the Home Guard.<sup>69</sup>
- 2.3.70 However, there were also major changes. Football and cricket pitches, hard and grass tennis courts, the putting green and pitch and putt course shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1935 (**Figure 2.28**) were all in place by 1926-7 and the bowling greens appear to have been built soon afterwards. Fencing was placed around the ponds and Potomac Lake and 200 park seats were soon in position. Parts of the Gothic Ruin and some of the hot houses were deemed unsafe and demolished in the 1950s/1960s.<sup>70</sup> The buildings at the north-east corner of the Park were lost to road improvements, when the junction of the North Circular Road, Gunnersbury Lane and Gunnersbury Avenue was expanded. It is possible that the wall between the two former estates north of the houses was not removed until after the property was sold by the Rothschilds. The 1935 map also shows the new housing around the edge of the outer park. The Rothschild's ornamental farm no longer functioned as a farm but became storage and changing rooms for the adjacent sports fields.
- 2.3.71 Gunnersbury Park Museum was established in Gunnersbury Park House when the Park was brought into public ownership. The museum exhibits were on the ground floor with offices on the first. Part of the upper floors were converted into flats to accommodate those who worked within the Park. Flats were also established in Gunnersbury House, with 12 in total. The ground floor of Gunnersbury House has had a variety of uses including as an arts centre and as education rooms associated with the Museum.
- 2.3.72 During World War II, between 1940-43 the Park was used as a heavy anti-aircraft artillery site (**Figure 2.35**). Barracks or stores were also located to the east of the Park.

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<sup>68</sup> Notes made from the first minute book of the Gunnersbury Park Committee 1925-9, J Wisdom 1994. Gunnersbury Park Museum Box File 1.

<sup>69</sup> Notes in Gunnersbury Park Museum Box File 1

<sup>70</sup> Notes by J Wisdom, Gunnersbury Park Museum

- 2.3.73 In common with many public parks, municipal ownership has greatly altered the face and fabric of Gunnersbury Park, post-World War II but the framework of the Rothschild landscape is still present<sup>71</sup>. In 1951 the terraces east of Princess Amelia's Bath house were rebuilt and the Rose Garden below them was refurbished as the Rest Garden, a contribution to the Festival of Britain. The café was put up in 1958 and by 1960 all of the eastern glasshouses had gone, the eastern arm of the Horseshoe Pond had been drained, and the western arm had been greatly reduced. In the late 1950s/ early 1960s the early 19<sup>th</sup> century dairy north of Gunnersbury Park House was demolished (**Figure 2.36**).<sup>72</sup>
- 2.3.74 Under-funded for a park of its size and with so many heritage assets, the Park and its buildings have now deteriorated to the point where some structures are at risk of being lost and nine listed buildings are on the Buildings at Risk register. There is a clear 'municipal layer' over the Park with 20<sup>th</sup> century additions such as sporting facilities and amenity buildings (e.g. the café and changing rooms) overlaying the historic landscape. In addition there are two new children's play areas.
- 2.3.75 The Walled Garden has been let on two separate leases to Capel Manor College and Greenscene, a horticultural business. There is little interaction between Greenscene and activities within the Park. However, Capel Manor College does sometimes use the Park for teaching, offers tree walks, plant identification and problem sessions and open days. It also brings a regular flow of visitors as students.
- 2.3.76 Previously neglected, the Japanese Garden was cleared and studied during the 1990s. In September 2001 a special ground-breaking ceremony, Jichinsai, was performed for the restoration by the Reverend Taira Kemmyo Sata of the Three Wheels Temple before a crowd of over 2,500 including local dignitaries and Japanese trade representatives. However, the garden is now again in a state of disrepair.
- 2.3.77 Other areas of the Park which have been restored are the Temple, Bath House, Orangery and Italian Garden. Between 1998 and 2003 work was carried out following a landscape restoration plan and largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Work included the restoration and replication of lampposts in the garden to the north of the houses, the refurbishment of the children's play area adjacent to the bowling greens, repairs and restoration to the Bathhouse, the recreation of an 'Italian garden' north of the temple and refurbishment works to the round pond and surroundings south of the Temple.

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<sup>71</sup> NMR CC731/2499; NMR CPS1085, BB47/1362-1367

<sup>72</sup> NMR 74/5596-5597

## 2.4 Management Information

### *Ownership and Management*

2.4.1 Although located entirely within the LBH, Gunnersbury Park is owned jointly by LBH and the LBE and its management is overseen through the auspices of a joint committee. This is an historical arrangement that has existed since the time of the Park's purchase in 1925. The current agreement dates from 1967. Both boroughs provide funding for the Park, however, management is undertaken by LBH through CIP, a not-for-profit group of companies that was formed from LBH's Leisure Services Section in 1998.

### *Population Statistics*

2.4.2 In the Brentford Area, set within the borough of Hounslow the percentage of total population in broad ethnic groups is as follows:

- White 73.5%;
- Asian or Asian British 14.4%;
- Black or Black British 5.6%;
- Chinese or other Ethnic Group 3%; and
- Mixed 3.5%.

2.4.3 The population can be summarised as a predominately white population but with significant Asian / Asian British and Black / Black British groups with a small percentage of Chinese and other ethnic groups.

2.4.4 In the Borough of Ealing, the percentage of total population in broad ethnic groups is as follows:

- White 58.7%;
- Asian or Asian British 24.5%;
- Black or Black British 8.8%;
- Chinese or Other Ethnic Group 4.3%; and
- Mixed 3.6%.

- 2.4.5 The population can be summarised as a predominately white population but with significant Asian / Asian British and Black / Black British groups with a small percentage of Chinese and other ethnic groups.

### *Stakeholders*

- 2.4.6 There are a great number of stakeholders with an interest in Gunnersbury Park. General stakeholders for the Park include:

- Tenants
  - Anytime Anyplace Café
  - Greenscene – PHS
  - Capel Manor College
  - Croydon Golf Club Ltd
  - New Star Property Unit
  
- Users within the previous 2 years
  - Bowls Club
  - Dog walkers
  - Sybil Elgar School for Autistic Children
  - National Probation Service
  - Acton High School
  - Brentford School for Girls
  - Gillian Hinds art classes
  - Japanese Martial Arts group
  - Tai Chi group
  - Joggers group
  - International School
  - Model Boat group
  - Café Users
  - Cricket groups
  - Rugby groups
  - Football groups
  - Picnic groups
  - Bubble Theatre
  - GSK Pharmaceuticals
  - Caterpillar Club
  - Disabled groups
  - Tennis players
  - Hounslow Cycling Safety group
  
- Interest Groups
  - Friends of Gunnersbury Park
  - The Covenanters Group
  - Volunteers
  - photographic groups
  - Arboriculture study groups

- Neighbours
  - Lionel Road Residents Association
  - Lionel Road School
  - Local companies with direct gated access
  - Popes Lane Residents
  - Gunnersbury Triangle Residents Association
  
- External Stakeholders
  - English Heritage

This community and stakeholder needs and expectations for the Park were ascertained during the consultation exercises (see **Section 1.5**).

### *Landuse*

- 2.4.7 Gunnersbury Park is a public park with free access to its grounds and in some cases its buildings. Over half of the Park is given over to formal sports and sports clubs such as football, cricket, rugby, bowling and tennis. The formal sports are predominant in the western half of the Park, but tennis courts, football pitches and a grass running track are also laid out in the area south of the pitch and putt course. The tennis courts are available for hire although access is not controlled. Changing facilities are provided in the former model farm (focus of an arson attack in 2002) and in a separate pavilion to the south of the farm. There is also a formal children's playground at the centre of the Park with picnic tables and this is one of the few areas in the grounds where dogs are not permitted. The eastern part of the Park, being more scenic, is used mainly for walking and nature/wildlife enjoyment. The Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Gunnersbury Park Museum organise tree identification walks around the Park. Dog walking is a very popular activity at Gunnersbury Park and most of the open areas around the centrally positioned pitch and putt course are used for this purpose. Many visitors park their cars in the car park located by the nursery and walk around the Park with their dogs. The Park offers several opportunities for casual play and exercise, for example, many people from the nearby offices use the Park at lunchtime or after work for jogging. Many people also use the Park as a short cut.
- 2.4.8 The area of the former kitchen garden is now occupied in part as a centre for Capel Manor College, a horticulture education institution, and part by Greenscene, a commercial organisation specialising in planting and landscaping services. The compound area behind

the Model Farm changing rooms is used by grounds maintenance staff and for museum storage.

- 2.4.9 There are several buildings in the Park and the majority are not in use. The following table summarises the current buildings and their use:

**Table 2.1: Building within the Park and their Use**

<b>Building</b>	<b>Use</b>
Gunnersbury Park House	Museum and archive centre, Victorian Kitchens – open daily. Residential flats on upper floor.
Temple	Occasionally used as a function room
Orangery	Occasionally used as a function room
East Stable Block	Derelict, unused
Gunnersbury House	Occasionally used as a meeting centre / function room. Residential flats on upper floor.
North Lodge	Used as information centre for the Park, although often closed
East Lodge	Derelict, only one wall standing, unused
West Stable Block	Derelict, unused
‘Princess Amelia’s’ Bath House	Occasionally open on Open Days
Potomac Tower	Derelict, unused
West Lodge	Partly residential
Model Farm	Derelict due to fire, unused apart from storage

- 2.4.10 Gunnersbury Park House has housed the local museum service since 1928. The main purpose of the Museum is to collect, record and interpret the history of the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow, to interpret the history of the estate and work with local people in educational and other community recording projects. Objects in the collection illustrate many aspects of life, such as farming, trades, crafts and industries, domestic life, childhood, fashion and transport. Changes in the landscape are recorded through maps, photographs, prints and drawings. The collections on display are housed on the ground floor, with the extensive basement and other rooms given over to storage of additional items. The Museum has a regular changing exhibition programme dealing with local, community and popular themes. It also has a strong educational programme that focuses on life in a Victorian household based on the restored Victorian Kitchens – Gunnersbury Park Museum’s theme for schools (which attracts 12,000 visitors per year) and also provides holiday workshops

and adult sessions. The Museum provides an interesting indoor activity, balanced with and enhancing the outdoor facility of the Park and extending the range of activities on offer at Gunnersbury. The implementation of a 'friends' group which takes an active interest in the Park has improved community participation, and has led to an improvement in the fabric of the Park. The upper floors of Gunnersbury Park House have been converted into office space for the management of the Museum and seven tenanted flats (although not all are presently occupied).

- 2.4.11 The ground floor of Gunnersbury House is currently unused and again, its upper floor has been converted for residential use. Originally, the flats in both buildings were intended to accommodate park staff, but these are slowly being left vacant as tenancies expire.
- 2.4.12 The Orangery, Terrace Room (Gunnersbury House) and the Temple are available for public hire and the Orangery in particular is a popular venue. 'Princess Amelia's' Bath House has been recently restored but is infrequently open to the public. The North Lodge at the main entrance functions as a small office space and information centre. West Lodge is part occupied. New Entrance (the house at the corner of Lionel Road and Pope's Lane) is let on a long term lease. Other buildings such as the Stables and the East Lodge have no use and are in an extreme state of dereliction.
- 2.4.13 The Museum also offers its premises to community groups for exhibitions. The Ealing branch of Independent London Photography has been using the venue for the exhibition of its works.
- 2.4.14 The Park and the Museum have been used by the Questors Theatre in Ealing for many different projects. Rehearsals and performances have taken place for promenade performances of Romeo and Juliet.
- 2.4.15 The Park is also regularly used for large-scale events and filming which act as income generators for the Park. The largest of these is the annual 'Mela' which is organised by LBE. However, while events such as the Mela provide an income, the large number of visitors and required logistics put pressure on the fabric of the Park. A number of sporting events are also held at Gunnersbury.

### *Policies, Strategies and Designations*

- 2.4.16 This section of the Plan identifies relevant national, regional and local statutory policies that might relate to the future management of the Park and also highlights a number of non statutory strategies that could influence or support future conservation and management.
- 2.3.17 Future proposals for the conservation and management of the Park would need to be cognisant of the requirements of the following. The Objectives outlined in **Section 6.0** reflect the guidance contained in many of the relevant plans and policies and the opportunities and way forward identified in **Sections 6.0 and 7.0** seek wherever possible to also reflect this guidance.

### *National Statutory Plans, Policies and Guidance*

- 2.4.18 The following are the key statutes relevant to the future conservation, management and development of the Park:
- Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act (AMAA) 1979;
  - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
  - National Heritage Act 1983 (amended 2002);
  - Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
  - Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
  - The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994; and
  - Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.
- 2.4.19 The following are the key national planning policy guidance notes or planning policy statements relevant to the Plan Area:
- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development;
  - Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation;
  - Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (as amended);
  - Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning; and
  - Planning Policy Guidance 21: Tourism.

### Urban White Paper, Our Town and Cities: the Future (2000)

- 2.4.20 The Urban White Paper, Our Town and Cities: the Future (2000), recognised that well managed public open spaces improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help to promote a

healthier lifestyle, and highlighted the need for improvements in their management and maintenance. It identified a requirement to improve the quality of parks, to make them cleaner, safer and better-maintained places. The need for more imaginative thinking about open spaces planning and design is highlighted and three key areas are proposed:

- development of a shared vision for the future of our parks;
- improved information on the quality and quantity of parks and the way in which they are used and maintained; and
- improved planning and design of new parks and the management and maintenance of existing ones.

#### Sustainable Communities Plan

- 2.4.21 The Government has demonstrated its support for public space by recognising it as a component of sustainable communities. The Sustainable Communities Plan (February 2003) underlies its commitment to the ‘liveability’ agenda that includes open spaces and the public realm.

#### Urban Green Spaces Task Force Report

- 2.4.22 The Urban Green Spaces Task Force report concluded that focused initiatives are needed to stop the exclusion experienced by groups such as children, disabled people and black and minority ethnic communities. In general, social barriers can prevent different groups from feeling they can make use of an open space or that it is a place for them. This may be because they find the environment threatening, or not relevant to their needs or due to conflict with, or fear of other user groups.

#### Living Places - Cleaner, Safer, Greener

- 2.4.23 Living Places - Cleaner, Safer, Greener (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002) sets out the policy framework for open spaces at the national level. It also announced the formation of a new policy unit – CAFE Space.

#### CAFE Space and English Heritage Initiatives

- 2.4.24 CAFE Space has developed a number of raft policies, guidance and advocacy documents that are part of a wider initiative to improve public open spaces. A recent campaign, Parkforce, and accompanying publication, Parks need Parkforce, encourages park managers to bring staff back into public parks. CAFE Space offers training programmes to help park staff make the most of their historic parks. CAFE is also calling on the Home Office to

expand the remit of the 25,000 promised new community support officers to include park patrols, and to encourage this through its guidance to Police Authorities.

- 2.4.25 English Heritage has long-promoted the need for protecting and conserving historic parks. A recent publication, the Park Keeper, timed to support CABE's campaign for increased numbers of better-trained staff within public parks, tells of the decline of staff numbers in public parks as a reason for their deterioration.

#### Green Flag Awards & Green Heritage Sites

- 2.4.26 The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. Winning a Green Flag Award brings excellent publicity. Both the media and the public are becoming increasingly aware that a site flying a Green Flag is a high quality green space. Diversity is welcomed and each site is judged on its own merits, the community it serves and suitability to the Award. Green Heritage Site status can be gained by successfully completing the Green Flag application procedure together with a conservation or restoration plan, details of how the site is promoted in terms of its heritage, and a statement of why the site is important in national or local historic terms.

#### *Regional Statutory Plans, Policies and Guidance*

##### South East Plan

- 2.4.27 The South East Plan (2006) is the current statutory planning document for the South East of England. Its policies are based on the notion that sustainable management of the historic environment should be formed upon an understanding of its significance and vulnerability to change. Key policies in the Plan that relate to the Park include:

➤ **BE7: Management of the Historic Environment**

*'In developing and implementing plans and strategies, local authorities and other bodies should adopt policies and proposals which support the conservation and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. Proposals that make sensitive use of historic assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate use, should be encouraged.'*

### London Plan

2.4.28 The London Plan sets out a number of policies in respect of London's Open spaces. These include:

- realise the value of open space;
- create new open spaces in areas where there is inadequate provision and promote improvements in existing provision;
- ensure that everyone has equal access to, and can use, London's open spaces; and
- manage open space and encourage boroughs to prepare open space strategies to identify priorities and opportunities based on local needs.

### Mayor of London's Cultural Strategy

2.4.29 The Culture Strategy promotes the cultural benefits of open space as an important resource for providing a range of opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Open space contributes to London's cultural identity and can provide good locations for events that bring people together in formal and informal activities and can provide quiet space for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

### ***Local Statutory Plans, Policies and Guidance***

2.4.30 There are a number of local statutory plans, policies and guidance which are of relevance to Gunnersbury Park. These are outlined in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.2: Policies and Strategies with Relevance for Gunnersbury Park**

<b>Policy Document</b>	<b>Description</b>
London Borough of Hounslow: <i>Unitary Development Plan (2003)</i>	The UDP contains a number of locally applied policies that reflect national and regional policies for open green spaces and heritage.
London Borough of Hounslow: <i>The Hounslow Community Plan (2004)</i>	The plan deals with all aspects of community life including a 'greener community' and a 'healthier community' but Gunnersbury is not specifically mentioned. It does suggest that community involvement in parks could be improved through Friends Groups and increasing volunteer programmes for targeted parks and open spaces.
London Borough of Hounslow: <i>Local Cultural Strategy (2001)</i>	The strategy takes in arts, tourism, heritage, libraries, parks and sports, focusing on regeneration and lifelong learning.
London Borough of Hounslow: <i>Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (nd)</i>	This sets out a number of objectives for parks, a number of which are relevant to Gunnersbury Park.

<b>Policy Document</b>	<b>Description</b>
London Borough of Ealing: <i>Unitary Development Plan 2004</i>	The UDP contains a number of locally applied policies that reflect national and regional policies for open green spaces and heritage.
The Gunnersbury Park Development Group: <i>The Gunnersbury Park Development Plan</i>	The Group was established in the early 1990s. The resulting plan was adopted by the Joint Committee in 1996. This set out a vision for Gunnersbury and a likely programme of upgrading repairs, refurbishments and introduction/development of new uses.
The Rothschild Covenant	Restrictive covenants of 1921, 1923 and 1925 came into force when the local councils purchased the Park. Only public/leisure use is permitted, though this has been waived on two separate occasions.
Hounslow Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Parkland & Veteran Trees are identified as a Habitat Action Plan area within Hounslow and therefore these policies will apply to Gunnersbury Park.
London Borough of Hounslow – Byelaws relating to Dogs in Parks Volume 1	Byelaw made by the London Borough of Hounslow under Section 164 of the public Health Act 1875, sections 12 and 15 of the Open Spaces Act and Section 15 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 with respect to public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces.

### ***Future Change***

- 2.4.31 The current planning system is in the process of undergoing review and restructuring, as ‘it reflects a system that has built up over time’, and ‘our understanding of effective heritage protection has moved on’. Thus ‘these traditional distinctions are no longer always helpful’ (DCMS 2007.12). This includes the ongoing Heritage Protection Review; the White Paper (DCMS 2007) for which was published in March 2007.
- 2.4.32 Heritage is just one element of the planning system that is being reformed. ‘The Government’s vision is for sustainable communities – places where people want to live and work, now and in the future – delivered through a planning system that ensures greater speed, efficiency and certainty while maintaining wide community participation’ (DCMS 2007.21). Changes in other sectors will have implications for heritage and an assessment of these may be needed once they have been published.

### *Designations*

2.4.33 The following national, regional and local designations apply to Gunnersbury Park (**Figure 2.29** and **2.30**):

- Grade II\* Registered Landscape (English Heritage’s *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*);
- Four Grade II\* and 17 Grade II listed structures (**Appendix C** contains their full inscriptions), of which nine are on English Heritage’s *Buildings at Risk Register* (the Register) (**Table 2.2**). The risk category and condition information is taken from the Register for Greater London (2005);
- Gunnersbury Park Conservation Area (106.7 ha) - designated by London Borough of Hounslow in 1980 (boundary marked on **Figure 2.29**);
- Metropolitan Open Land; and
- Nature Conservation Site of Borough Importance, Grade II.

### *Current Context*

2.4.34 The Gunnersbury Park Governing Board are currently implementing or considering implementing a number of changes which will affect current use of the park and some of the buildings. These changes are at different stages of development and are being phased over time. The following section provides an overview of the current situation. The proposals include the following:

- Phased termination of residential use of Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House as tenants agreements expire;
- Retain current vacant status of Small Mansion apart from intermittent use of Terrace room (for hire and temporary Museum use) to allow new use for Small Mansion to be considered;
- Implement a new management structure for the Park; and
- Working in partnership with Brentford Community Sport Trust (BCST) to develop a Sports Hub.

**Table 2.3: Listed Buildings at Risk at Gunnersbury Park (February 2007)** <sup>73</sup>

Grade	Structure	At Risk and Category	Condition
Grade II*	Gunnersbury Park House (Large Mansion)	Category C	Fair
	Temple	N/A	N/A
	Orangery	N/A	N/A
	East Stable Block	Category A	Very Bad
Grade II	Gunnersbury House (Small Mansion)	Category C	Poor
	North Lodge	N/A	N/A
	East Lodge	Category A	Very Bad
	Arch adjacent to East Lodge	Category A	Very Bad
	West Stable Block	Category A	Very Bad
	'Princess Amelia's' Bath House and Gothic Screen	N/A	N/A
	Gothic Ruins	Category A	Fair
	Cast-iron lamp posts	N/A	N/A
	West Terrace Arch	N/A	N/A
	East Terrace Arch	N/A	N/A
	South Arch	N/A	N/A
	Potomac Tower (Boathouse)	Category A	Very Bad
	Entrance Gates from Pope's Lane	N/A	N/A
	Kitchen Garden walls and gates	N/A	N/A
	Boundary Wall, Gunnersbury Avenue	Category C	Fair
	West Lodge	N/A	N/A
	Stone fountain near Refreshment Room	N/A	N/A

73 **KEY**

Building Grade – A 'listed building' is a building of special architectural or historic interest; buildings may be listed Grade I, II\* or II. Buildings listed Grade I and II\* are of outstanding interest, and together amount to about 8% of the total. All listed buildings are statutorily protected and listed building consent is required for any works which would affect the building's character externally or internally.

#### Condition

- **Very bad** means a building where there has been structural failure of where there are clear signs of structural instability; (where applicable) there has been loss of significant areas of the roof covering, leading to major deterioration of the interior; or where there has been a major fire or other disaster affecting most of the building.
- **Poor** means a building or structure with deteriorating masonry and/or a leaking roof and/or defective rainwater goods, usually accompanied by rot outbreaks within and general deterioration of most elements of the buildings fabric, including external joinery; or where there has been a fire or other disaster which has affected part of the building.
- **Fair** means a building which is structurally sound, but in need of minor repair or showing signs of a lack of general maintenance.
- **Good** means structurally sound, weathertight and with no significant repairs needed.

#### Occupancy

Occupancy noted (to the best of English Heritage's knowledge) as vacant, part-occupied, occupied, or occasionally unknown; for many monuments, this is not applicable.

#### Priority for action is graded as follows:

- **A** Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed
- **B** Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented
- **C** Slow decay; no solution agreed
- **D** Slow decay; solution agreed but not yet implemented
- **E** Under repair or in fair to good repair, but no user identified; or under threat of vacancy with no obvious new user (applicable only to buildings capable of beneficial use)
- **F** Repair scheme in progress and (where applicable) end use or user identified; functionally redundant buildings with new use agreed but not yet implemented.



### 3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### 3.1 Theme A - General

3.1.1 The purpose of the statement of significance is to set out what is important about Gunnersbury Park and why it is valued. The value of the site will influence all decisions that are made about the Park's future as well as shaping the policies and objectives set out in this document and the future management and maintenance of the Park.

3.1.2 An understanding of the significance of the site has been developed through an exploration of its history, land use, character and values associated with these elements. This has led to the identification of seven broad themes relevant to the Site:

- Landscape;
- Built Heritage;
- Archaeology;
- Historic Associations;
- Collections;
- Local Community and Visitors; and
- Nature Conservation.

3.1.3 An overall Statement of Significance for the Site is provided in the following section. It is subsequently supported by more detailed analysis of the themes presented above (**Sections 3.3 - 3.9**)

#### 3.2 Theme B - Overall Statement of Significance

3.2.1 Gunnersbury Park is a historic landscape that has continually evolved and expanded over the past 300 years, influenced and altered by its successive owners. Today it is a landscape from which emanates a unique, multi-faceted and fascinating history and which imparts a sense of peace and tranquillity. Situated in West London, it bears witness to the large country houses, owned by a wealthy elite, that surrounded London in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the hey-day of municipal parks. Its owners have included Henry Furnese (a member of parliament), Princess Amelia (the daughter of King George II) and members of the Rothschild family (an eminent banking family). Between them, they entertained an array of politicians, statesmen, royalty, diplomats and envoys at Gunnersbury.

- 3.2.2 Gunnersbury Park's designations at national, regional and local level indicate clear cultural, historical, social, recreational and ecological significance and value. The Site contains 21 listed buildings and structures (four Grade II\* and 17 Grade II) and is designated as a Grade II\* on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, a Conservation Area, Greenspace and Metropolitan Open Land and also a nature conservation Site of Borough Importance, Grade II.
- 3.2.3 Its history is visible as layers in the landscape and built features, providing a unique record of its evolution. Its designed landscape has many aesthetic and scenic qualities, creating several interesting vistas across, in and out of the Park and many other unique features. The mansion's gardens, ornamental parkland, wooded lake, walled garden, amenity area and open playing fields all contribute to the Park's special character and structure and form the setting for the listed buildings and other surviving elements from the different phases of the Park's history. Gunnersbury Park could claim to have had the hand of W Kent, W Chambers, J C Loudon and J W Pulham in its making, their associations bringing additional value.
- 3.2.4 Gunnersbury Park's built heritage contributes considerably to its overall significance. J Webb, W Chambers, S Smirke, W W Pocock, W F Pocock and Pulham have all been linked to Gunnersbury, executing fine and elegant buildings and features across the site. The Gunnersbury Park House also retains much of its historic interior. Nine of the Park's buildings/structures are currently listed in the English Heritage Buildings at Risk Register, and their continuing deterioration threatens to compromise the Park's significance.
- 3.2.5 The Park provides a welcome break in a densely built-up area of West London. It is significant in its capacity as a green oasis in the area, providing a pleasant, leafy, tranquil backdrop to the housing, industry and major transport routes that characterise the area. It is esteemed for its cultural, educational, recreational and social importance offering a valuable resource and visitor experience to a wide range of user groups from the local and wider community. It is a recommended tourist attraction and holds the potential to increase local tourism. There is a clear amenity and sporting value attributed to the Park with both informal and formal sports and play areas. The museum as well as a range of activities on offer gives the Park considerable educational value for a variety of user groups.
- 3.2.6 Gunnersbury Park is a site of nature conservation value, with a number of significant trees and shrubs.

3.2.7 The Park has a strong military association as it was used as a heavy anti-aircraft artillery site during World War II.

### 3.3 Theme C: Landscape

3.3.1 The Site's landscape is perhaps its most significant asset. The landscape has evolved and changed over many centuries reflecting the needs and aspirations of the various personalities and organisations that have owned or managed the Site. However, this rich history is not the only value encapsulated within the landscape. The Site's landscape is also:

- A substantial resource for the local community and visitors;
- The setting for a number of nationally significant buildings;
- Important for nature conservation.

3.3.2 These values, including its history, are expressed below through a series of related but independent statements.

#### *Associations with Significant Designers/Horticulturalists*

3.3.3 The development of the Site's landscape is associated with a number of historically important landscape designers/horticulturalists and architects including:

<b>Designer</b>	<b>Date</b>
William Kent (1685-1748)	Mid 18 <sup>th</sup> Century
Sir William Chambers (1723-1796)	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> Century
J C Loudon (1783-1843)	Mid - late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century
Pulham	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century / Early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century
J Hudson	

3.3.4 There is circumstantial and stylistic evidence for work by William Kent of the Round Pond, The Temple, the Horseshoe Pond, Cedar Grove and an alcove on the terrace. However, it is possible that none of these are by Kent and they could date from the early years of Princess Amelia's occupation.

3.3.5 Although he should be regarded more as a horticulturalist than a designer, James Hudson was a significant figure. He was holder of the Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH), awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society to leading figures in United Kingdom horticulture, and is the highest accolade in British gardening, and published several articles on horticulture. His work on the Japanese and Wall Gardens and the water lily collection is very well documented and there is sufficient information for accurate restoration of these gardens. He can be seen as a gardener in the William Robinson tradition relying almost entirely on the quality and diversity of his planting for his effects. Hudson's life and achievements are described in an article by Brent Elliott.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Keynote Landscape Features***

3.3.6 Features of most the periods in the Site's design and history and of most of the designers who worked on the Site have survived on the Site. These include:

<b>Feature (Designer)</b>	<b>CBA Gazetteer No.</b>
Round Pond (William Kent)	97
Horseshoe Pond (William Kent)	20
Doric Temple (Sir William Chambers)	81
Japanese Garden (James Hudson)	98
Gothic Boathouse (James Pulham)	107
Italian garden	90
Rose garden	92

### ***Landscape History***

3.3.7 Perhaps the overriding interest of the Park is that successive changes have respected earlier work. The Terrace, south lawn, Orangery and walls south of the house convey the extent of the 17<sup>th</sup> century garden whilst the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century work of the Horseshoe Pond and Round Pond is readily apparent. The Japanese Garden can still be traced from surviving planting and landform, and was laid out between earlier walls to the north and south. The distinction between the grounds and gardens around the house, the Inner Park and the additions after

<sup>74</sup> B Elliot, 'Top marks to James Hudson', The Garden March 1992 pp 118-119.

1860 are easily visible. The boundaries of these areas follow land divisions traceable to at least the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- 3.3.8 Gunnersbury Park's current structure can be traced back to five key phases in its history. These include: The Palladian Villa, 18<sup>th</sup> century developments, the division of Gunnersbury Park, The Rothschilds and the Municipal Park.

*The Palladian Villa*

- 3.3.9 The main feature of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Palladian Villa still evident within Gunnersbury Park today is the Terrace, upon which both Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House are situated.

*18<sup>th</sup> Century Developments*

- 3.3.10 A succession of owners was seen at Gunnersbury throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Features of this period include the Temple, Italian Garden, Round Pond, Horseshoe Pond, 'Princess Amelia's' Bath House, the walled garden and Orangery.

*The Division of Gunnersbury Park*

- 3.3.11 The most dominant feature of Gunnersbury Park and its division in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is the juxtaposition of the two houses, situated side by side on the earlier terrace. Other buildings built to surpass those of the adjoining estate accompany this, for example the Rothschilds Stables built at the South of Gunnersbury House gardens and the subsequent building of the Gothic Ruins to 'hide' them.

*The Rothschilds*

- 3.3.12 The reunification of the Park under the Rothschilds and their horticultural interests can be seen throughout the entirety of the Estate both in built fabric, such as the Stables, as well as natural assets e.g. trees and planting layouts. Other built landscape features of this period include the Gothic Tower and Potomac Pond and the Rose Gardens.

*The Municipal Park*

- 3.3.13 Today Gunnersbury Park has a municipal layer over the historic features. This is most evident in the area of the sports fields and children's playground and where fencing has been erected around certain areas of the Park i.e. the Potomac Pond and the pitch and putt course.

### *Visitor Resource*

- 3.3.14 The landscape is perhaps the most identifiable and recognisable element of the overall identity of the Park. The landscape comprises one of the key visitor draws of the Site. The significance of visitors is discussed further in Section 3.6.
- 3.3.15 The Site acts as green open land for a large local population, providing a welcome break in a densely built-up area of West London. It is significant in its capacity as a green oasis in the area and in offering a valuable resource and a broad range of experiences to numerous user groups from the local and wider community. These include educational, contemplative, wondrous, horticultural and entertainment experiences.

### *Setting for Nationally Significant Buildings*

- 3.3.16 The landscape and built heritage of the site form a recognisable whole (the significance of the built heritage is discussed in **Section 3.4**). The landscape acts as both the immediate setting for keynote historical buildings as the fabric that meshes them and the Site together.

## **3.4 Theme D: Built Heritage**

- 3.4.1 The Park currently houses a number of structures of national significance. In total the Site contains 21 listed buildings/structures. Details of these designated buildings/structures can be found in **Appendix C**.

### *Keynote Historic Buildings*

- 3.4.2 There are a number of buildings/structures on the Site of significant architectural and/or historical merit. These include:

<b>Building</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Gunnersbury Park House (Grade II*)	1801-28 by & for Alexander Copland Interiors by Smirke c1836
Orangery (Grade II*)	c.1836-7 possibly by Smirke Jnr.
East Stable Block (Grade II*)	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century for Rothschilds
Temple (Grade II*)	Pre 1760 probably on Princess Anne's instructions

<b>Building</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
	Amelia's instructions
Gunnersbury House (Grade II)	c.1810 built for Major Morrison
North Lodge (Grade II)	early 19 <sup>th</sup> century
East Lodge (Grade II)	early 19 <sup>th</sup> century by WF Pocock
West Lodge	mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Arch adjacent to East Lodge (Grade II)	early 19 <sup>th</sup> century
West Stable block (Grade II)	early 19 <sup>th</sup> century remodelled 1836 by Sidney Smirke for Nathan Rothschild
'Princess Amelia's' Bath House and Gothic Screen (Grade II)	late 18 <sup>th</sup> / early 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Gothic Ruins (Grade II)	Early / mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century for Rothschilds
Cast-iron Lamp Posts (Grade II)	Various
West Terrace Arch (Grade II)	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century
East terrace Arch (Grade II)	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Potomac Tower (Boathouse) (Grade II)	mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century by Pulham
Entrance Gates from Pope's Lane (Grade II)	
Kitchen Garden Walls and Gates (Grade II)	Reputedly built for Princess Amelia
Boundary Wall, Gunnersbury Avenue (Grade II)	
Stone Fountain near Refreshment Room (in storage) (Grade II)	19 <sup>th</sup> Century

#### *Associations with Significant Architects*

- 3.4.3 The Site has a number of associations with keynote architects from a range of periods. These include:

<b>Architect</b>	<b>Features</b>
John Webb (1611-1672)	Palladian House (no longer in existence) and Terrace
William Kent (1685-1748)	Various landscape features postulated as being of Kent's design
Sir William Chambers (1723-1796)	Doric Temple
W F Pocock	East Lodge and Gate
W W Pocock (1779-1849)	Extended Gunnersbury House, Bath House?
Sidney Smirke (1797-1877)	Orangery, Stables, Portico, Extended Gunnersbury Park House
James Pulham	Gothic Boathouse and rocks

### ***Complexity of the Built Heritage Resource***

- 3.4.4 One of the most significant aspects of the Site's built heritage resource is its complexity. As a consequence of the turbulent history of the estate between the mid 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, involving the break up and reunification of the estate under different ownerships, there is a complex history of building construction and demolition. The buildings on the Site were built for a number of functions and by a range of architects with no singular person driving the development of the architectural resource. This has endowed the Site with a diverse architectural legacy reflecting a number of styles and fashions and an equally complex patchwork of historic building fabric remaining.

### ***Built Heritage Artefact Collections***

- 3.4.5 The built heritage artefact collection of statues, sculpture, and portable garden furniture is quite large and ranges in date throughout the last 300 years. The material is wide-ranging and much has been taken into storage for its protection. A full audit of the built heritage artefact collection is needed.

## **3.5 Theme E: Archaeology**

- 3.5.1 The most significant archaeological remains within the Park are those associated with the development of the Gunnersbury Park Estate and have yet to be explored. Due to the

undeveloped nature of the Park it is likely that remains from all periods will be present, however they are not in imminent danger due to the parkland setting and should, in the most part, be preserved *in-situ*.

### 3.6 Theme F: Historic Associations

3.6.1 The Site's historic development has brought it into contact with a number of major personalities, families, architects and landscaped designers/ horticulturalists.

3.6.2 In addition to those directly involved in the development of the Estate, Gunnersbury Park played host to politicians and statesmen, royalty, and diplomats and envoys throughout the Rothschild occupation of Gunnersbury and during other periods of ownership, particularly that of Princess Amelia.

#### *Major Personalities and Families*

3.6.3 A number of eminent figures have owned Gunnersbury Park. Such figures include:

<b>Eminent Figure</b>	<b>Date</b>
Henry Furnese, a member of parliament	1738-1756
Princess Amelia, daughter of King George II	1711-1786
Members of the Rothschild Family, an eminent banking family:	
Nathan Mayer and Hannah Rothschild	1851-1890
Lionel and Charlotte Rothschild	1808-1879
Leopold Rothschild	1845-1917
Lionel Nathan Rothschild	1882-1942

### 3.7 Theme G: Collections

3.7.1 The main purpose of the Museum is to collect, record and interpret the history of the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow, to interpret the history of the estate and work with local people in educational and other community recording projects. It owns an exceptional collection of objects that tell the area's own unique story. However, some of these objects are of interest and value on a national and even international, level: In addition, the museum holds a number of artefacts that are related to the Park and its past ownership.

- Ealing Film Studios are the oldest studios in the world and particularly famous for the documentaries, war films and comedies made when Michael Balcon was studio head. Gunnersbury holds a good collection of original posters, stills, campaign books and ephemera relating to this period, together with unique personal memories and photographs given by local people who worked at the studios.
- Of great interest to military historians and researchers on the English Civil Wars are the eleven 17<sup>th</sup> century swords with blades made in Hounslow.
- Gunnersbury's Stanhope printing press, dated 1804, is the earliest iron printing press known to survive. In the displays relating to printing history at the Science Museum, there is a picture of it with the recommendation that this type of press can only be seen at Gunnersbury.
- The fine costume collection is also of special interest. The collection is particularly strong in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century women's dress and is often used for research purposes by students from colleges all over London.
- The Rothschilds' carriages are a major feature of the Museum and archaeological finds from across the Park are held in the Museum's collections.
- The Victorian Kitchens are a major feature of the Museum and the focus of education activities within the museum.

3.7.2 Objects in the collection illustrate many aspects of life, such as farming, trades, crafts and industries, domestic life, childhood, fashion and transport. Changes in the landscape are recorded through maps, photographs, prints and drawings. The collections on display are housed on the ground floor, with the extensive basement and other rooms given over to storage of additional items.

3.7.3 The Museum has a significant number of current users and stakeholders with over 32,000 visitors in 2006, of which over 12,000 were for educational reasons. The museum is free and is therefore accessible to the whole community. It has a regular changing exhibition programme dealing with local, community and popular themes. It also has a strong educational programme that focuses on life in a Victorian household – Gunnersbury Park Museum's theme for schools (which attracts 12,000 visitors per year) and also provides holiday workshops and adult sessions. The Museum provides an interesting indoor activity, balanced with and enhancing the outdoor facility of the Park and extending the range of activities on offer at Gunnersbury. The Museum also offers its premises to community groups for exhibitions. The Ealing branch of Independent London Photography has been

using the venue for the exhibition of its works. Additionally, the Questors Theatre in Ealing has used it for many different projects.

- 3.7.4 There is also historic horticultural interest in the collection of trees and plants within Gunnersbury Park. Individual specimens as well as layouts and designs extend our knowledge of historic gardens during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **3.8 Theme H: Local Community and Visitors**

- 3.8.1 During the Rothschild's residency at Gunnersbury, the estate was an indirect focus for the local community. Extending their positive influence over the local community, Gunnersbury became an economic and social hub for the people of the area. It is interesting that today, in a very different sense, Gunnersbury continues as a social and cultural hub for the surrounding communities of Ealing and Hounslow.

- 3.8.2 The Park has a significant number of current users and stakeholders including those outlined in **Section 2.4**. There is a clear amenity and sporting value attributed to the Park with both informal and formal sport and play areas. There are a number of groups/individuals who regularly use the Park for formal sporting activities (e.g. football, rugby, cricket and bowls clubs) and others for informal dog walking, exercising and playing. The Museum also attracts a significant number of visitors.

The Park's long history of public access and visitor arrangements is a major feature of the park's significance.

### **3.9 Theme I: Nature Conservation**

- 3.9.1 Gunnersbury Park is also a site for nature conservation value, with a number of significant trees and shrubs. There are a good mixture of woodland and garden bird species, including woodpeckers and nuthatch. As yet aquatic fauna and flora have yet to be surveyed.

- 3.9.2 Additionally remnant garden features introduced by previous occupants including the Rose Garden and Japanese Garden, are home to specialist species and associated habitats. The 'Chinese' Oak in the vicinity of the stables is registered with the British Museum, as there are only five in the country.

## 4.0 ISSUES, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

### 4.1 General

4.1.1 This section discusses the issues facing the conservation of the Site's significance and proposes policies and objectives to address these issues. The issues have been identified through a combination of desk based studies, survey work and consultation. The section responds to the Statement of Significance detailed in **Section 3.0**.

4.1.2 Several of the issues were identified in *Mansions at Risks in Public Parks*, an assessment of the factors affecting such buildings commissioned by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House were cited as a case study and while the analysis focuses particularly on the buildings, many of the issues identified can be applied to the Park as a whole.

4.1.3 Conservation, in respect to this plan, is taken as meaning not only ensuring the physical survival of the heritage resource of the Park but also enhancing the character of the Park and setting of assets located within the Park. In the case of Gunnersbury, conservation also includes improving interpretation, presentation, utility and understanding of the Park.

4.1.4 As this section is responding directly to the Statement of Significance (**Section 3.0**), it is structured in a similar manner. The discussion of the issues and relevant policies and objectives are explored through the following themes:

- Understanding Significance
- Landscape
- Built Heritage
- Archaeology
- Historic Associations
- Collections
- Local Community and Visitors
- Nature Conservation

## 4.2 Themes A & B : General & Overall Significance

4.2.1 The significance of the Park is multi-faceted and it is vital that the future management of the Site is based on a recognition, by all parties, of the Site's significance.

### *Key Issues*

4.2.2 The key issues regarding understanding significance of the Park are:

- Management;
- Funding, Commercial Activity and Development; and
- Local Community Involvement.

### *Management Structure and Funding*

4.2.3 The historic, joint management arrangements at Gunnersbury Park have undoubtedly contributed to its decline. The decline of public parks in local authority ownership during the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to a lack of funding and prioritisation despite the recognition of their contribution to the environment and quality of life, is an identified trend across the country. However, this has been exacerbated by Gunnersbury Park's joint ownership; sitting between two local authorities it has been seen as peripheral to both. The day-to-day operational management of the Park by CIP has also allowed the Boroughs to take a more arms-length approach.

4.2.4 The Gunnersbury Park Governing Board was formed in 2007 and will now form the basis for decision-making within the Park. In three years (2010) it will be reviewed with the possibility of moving ownership to a Trust. The post of Development Manager for the Park has also recently been created. These are seen as positive steps towards securing the future management of the Park.

4.2.5 Despite the recently created Board, there is no clear political champion for Gunnersbury Park in either Borough. A Champion is vital, particularly in the case of Gunnersbury where the Park is in joint ownership.

### *Funding, Commercial Activity and Development*

4.2.6 The Park has suffered from inadequate core-funding with its annual budget being cut over a number of years. Current proposals to move towards a more secure future for the Park will

impact on the annual revenue budget, resulting in less funding for operations in the short term and so could accelerate decline.

- 4.2.7 The Rothschild covenant (**Appendix G**) does not allow the Park be used for ‘any purpose other than as a public park or sports ground and that the mansion houses and buildings on the property shall not at any time ... be used except for such public purpose as may be ancillary to the use ... and that no building or erection other than a building or buildings for use for public purposes shall at any time ... erected on the property’. It is thought that the original covenant is no longer binding, however the covenant on some of the land sold on for building purposes which is substantially the same as that given by the Rothschilds, is. It is likely that a change in the covenant would have to be sought, as it has been previously, should it be proposed that one or more of the buildings be used for primarily non-public purposes.
- 4.2.8 The current management and funding structure within Gunnersbury Park, and the size of the conservation deficit means that external funds will have to be sought in order to reverse the decline. Large funding bodies, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, may be willing to support some applications, but it is unlikely that all necessary funds will come from public sources. Private investment in the Park may come at a cost to public access but this is a situation that has to be seriously considered.
- 4.2.9 A number of the buildings as well as some outdoor areas are currently used or have the potential to be used more fully for commercial use and development (including hiring and events use). Conflicts may arise between use and development, conserving the Site’s historic fabric and ecological value and public interest and use. Allowing further activities could increase existing conflicts as well as potentially generate conflict between different operators. In addition, if public funding is secured to aid the restoration of the Park, a degree of public access will be required.

#### *Local Community Involvement*

- 4.2.10 Gaining and maintaining local community support for the Park is also vital. Although there is a Friends Group at Gunnersbury, it is vital that the needs of all local users and the wider community are understood and their representatives involved in the development of any proposals that are made about the Park. It is also essential that the community is engaged in learning about the Park’s past so that the message of the Park’s significance is taken out into the wider community, helping to support the Park’s sustainability in a less tangible sense.

### *Policy and Objectives*

**POLICY A: Decisions relating to the management, conservation and enhancement of the Park should respect and develop its significance whilst being committed to the principles of sustainability.**

4.2.11 The above policy will be implemented through the following objectives.

**Objective 1:** Enhance the management structure of the Park to support all the other policies, with the appointment of a political owner/champion.

**Objective 2:** Adopt the Conservation Management Plan as formal guidance for the Park, so that all decisions are made with explicit regard to the Statement of Significance.

**Objective 3:** Seek and maintain an appropriate level of long term funding and staff resources for the management and enhancement of the Park.

**Objective 4:** Achieve a mix of appropriate, sustainable and inclusive use for the Site's buildings and landscape, which respect and are not detrimental to the Site's historic fabric, natural heritage and setting.

**Objective 5:** Take into account the views and needs of the local community in future decisions relating to the conservation, management and proposed enhancement of the site.

**Objective 6:** Investigate how links can be re-forged between the Park and residents and actively support community involvement in the Park.

### **4.3 Theme C : Landscape**

4.3.1 The Site's landscape is perhaps its most significant asset. The landscape has evolved and changed over many centuries reflecting the needs and aspirations of the various personalities and organisations that have owned or managed the Site. The Park is also a substantial resource for the local community and visitors; the setting for a number of nationally significant buildings; and important for nature conservation. The landscape of the Park is maintained by CIP.

### *Key Issues*

4.3.2 The primary issue facing the Site's landscape are focused on:

- Conserving the Site's historic character and form;
- Enhancing the quality and character of the current landscape;
- Resolving the relationships between the built heritage and the landscape;
- Addressing the lack of a long-term strategy; and
- Maintenance and Repair.

#### *Conservation of the Site's Historic Character and Form*

4.3.3 The Site has a 300-year history. This has resulted in an amalgam of design features from a range of periods. The character, form and structure of many of these features and the general landscape character within which they are situated has, through the years, tended to become degraded and lacking distinctive character. This reflects a management strategy that has focused on municipal actions rather than the historic landscape issues. Major features such as the historic gardens have survived largely intact and the broad underlying character of the Park can still be traced within the management zones, but in places the landscape has become homogenous and now lacks the sense of being the high quality designed landscape it once was.

4.3.4 Small incremental changes have had a vast detrimental impact on the overall form of the Park in quite a short time-span. The cumulative impact of such changes can be seen throughout the Park. However, there is considerable potential for restoring historic landscape features on the Site. This should occur within the context of a site-wide Landscape Strategy.

4.3.5 Although not suffering as dramatically as the built heritage, the landscape is suffering for general neglect. The most vulnerable aspects of the historic landscape are outlined below in **Table 4.1**.

**Table 4.1: Landscape Features and their Condition**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Consequence if status quo maintained</b>
Round Pond	Generally good	Gradual deterioration, becomes more municipal in nature
Potomac Pond	Overgrown and seen as a no go area	Rapid decline and loss of any original specimen trees.
Horseshoe Pond & Bridges	Remnant feature, infilled by the Rothschilds	Bridges become unsafe and need removing. Further infill and loss of interpretation
Italian Garden	Generally good	Gradual deterioration, becomes more municipal in nature
Rose Garden	Generally good	Gradual deterioration and becomes more municipal in nature as on periphery of site.
Rose Baskets	Generally good	Gradual deterioration, becomes more municipal in nature
Japanese Garden	Poor with large areas infilled.	Loss of feature and horticultural diversity
Rockery	Generally good although contains Japanese Knotweed. History uncertain.	Japanese Knotweed spreads to other areas of the Park
Gothic Ruins (open space within)	Poor, unused	Continued deterioration, no-go area created
Walled Garden (east boundary)	Generally good, lacking planting structure	Gradual deterioration, becomes more municipal in nature
Terrace	Fair, loss of historic fabric and municipalisation has already occurred	Future linked to houses, continued deterioration
Driveways	Poor	Gradual deterioration
Pathways	Fair / Poor	Continued user of inappropriate materials and ad hoc repair and maintenance. Loss of historic material as continued provision of inappropriate traffic management signs/ casual parking etc.
Specimen trees / woodland	Unknown	Deterioration and loss through ad-hoc management
General horticultural interest	Poor	Deterioration with loss of historic planting and general horticultural interest.
Parkland	Fair / good	Gradual decline due to ad hoc replacement with no historic reference
Kitchen garden	Poor	Some improvements by Capel Manor. Continued commercial use maintaining separation.
Park Entrances	Poor	Gradual deterioration and municipalisation

*Enhancing the Quality and Character of the Current Landscape*

- 4.3.6 The majority of the detailing of the landscape is representative of the urban parks culture of 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and is considered to be generally unsuitable for a Park of this significance.
- 4.3.7 The Park is vulnerable due to the constant pressure of economic, road and airport developments. Traffic congestion along the Great West Road and M4 and the nearby Heathrow Airport are a major concern in environmental terms, giving rise to air and noise quality impacts. Antisocial behaviour and lack of social cohesion are key issues in the elaboration of a political and social strategy for the LBE and LBH, and Gunnersbury Park plays a major role in this strategy.
- 4.3.8 Tarmac surfacing currently dominates the hard surfacing of the Park. It is recognised that access has to be maintained but there are plenty of alternative surface treatments that could be utilised, which are more in keeping with the historic nature of the Park. The landscape furniture is generally of below average quality and does not convey a sense of cohesiveness, distinctiveness or high quality design. Key areas in the Site's landscape are also overlooked or neglected. All this reflects the past management of the Site as primarily a municipal park and does not reflect the Site's history; its role as a visitor destination or its status as a Grade II\* designed landscape.
- 4.3.9 There is a need to carry out programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of the Park's overall landscape and individual character zones that reflect its many roles and varied history. The quality and character of the landscape are important aspects of the Park's identity and should not be overlooked.

*Resolving the Relationship Between the Built Heritage and Landscape*

- 4.3.10 The interactions between the landscape and the built heritage are an important aspect of the Site's character and significance. This interaction falls into two broad groupings: immediate setting and interrelationships.

Immediate Setting

- 4.3.11 The immediate landscape setting of some buildings on the Site is considered unsatisfactory both in terms of visual amenity and historical sensitivity. Many of the materials used in the hard surfacing surrounding buildings have been standardised and, for the most part, paths and hardstanding are now tarmac. There is case for reviewing these areas and considering the insertion of materials such as flags, gravel, or other modern but sympathetic materials.

Other issues affecting the immediate setting of the buildings include the removal in the past of related landscape features, such as urns and statues, as these features were often conceived as part of the original design of the building and form a substantial element of the authenticity and significance of a structure.

- 4.3.12 These areas, and many others across the Site, need consideration and the immediate settings of the significant buildings should be assessed with remedial action planned to enhance the situation. The remedial works should look to retain historical fabric and utilise more sympathetic materials to create a contemporary but respectful setting. Where appropriate and achievable, historically authentic materials should be used.

#### Inter-relationships

- 4.3.13 The visual inter-relationships between buildings, and landscape features, form part of the Site's landscape character and structure. These relationships are currently under appreciated and require analysis, interpretation and in some cases reinstatement/enhancement. For instance, the views from the terrace towards the gardens. These 'designed' features create a sense of structure to the landscape and can enhance the visitor experience and appreciation of the landscape. Care is required to maintain these relationships through long-term management and restoration.

#### *Addressing the Lack of a Long Term Strategy for the Landscape*

- 4.3.14 All of the above issues, and policies need co-ordinated consideration and attention to ensure that the issues are adequately resolved. This can be achieved through a 'Masterplan', which seeks to create a clear direction for the development of the landscape in line with historical precedents and modern requirements/constraints. Such a plan or similar document is required to guide the future development and management of the landscape.
- 4.3.15 Currently there is no comprehensive up-to-date agreed plan for Gunnersbury Park. Although with the best intentions in mind, a number of initiatives have begun only to be superseded by a second wave of plans and proposals. The result is often no firm strategy or solution. In addition, there are feasibility studies and plans produced on what seems to be an *ad hoc* basis without being part of a wider, longer-term strategy.

#### *Maintenance and Repair*

- 4.3.16 The funding issue clearly places constraints on what can be achieved at Gunnersbury in terms of maintenance and repair. This has contributed to the inability of the maintenance

staff to simply keep up with the rate of decline, let alone reverse it. The issue of funding has been addressed in **Section 4.2**). The Maintenance Plans (**Appendix H**) should form the basis of these Forward and Annual Works Programmes.

### *Policy and Objectives*

#### **POLICY B: Conserve and enhance the Park's distinctive landscape character and structure**

4.3.17 The above policy will be implemented through the following objectives.

**Objective 7:** Future change within the immediate setting of significant buildings should be directed towards enhancing these areas, with regard to historical precedents and taking into account future management issues.

**Objective 8:** Develop a Masterplan for the Site to address the issues and policies identified.

**Objective 9:** Develop a 10-year Forward Works Programme as well as a structured and prioritised Annual programme of Works, which will guide the maintenance and repair works for the Park.

## **4.4 Theme D : Built Heritage**

4.4.1 The Site has a rich built heritage. There are 21 listed buildings or structures and a number of artefacts of historical significance. The buildings on the Site are maintained by CIP.

### *Key Issues*

4.4.2 The key issues regarding the conservation of the Site's built heritage are:

- Condition of Fabric;
- Lack of Sustainable Use; and
- Funding.

*Condition of Fabric*

4.4.3 Of the 21 designated buildings and structures within the Park, nine are included on the English Heritage at Risk register and two buildings have been lost already: the dairy and the fountain.

4.4.4 The diverse built heritage requires that in some instances particular maintenance and restoration methods and materials are used. The building fabric is generally in very poor condition, due principally to a history of poor maintenance and inappropriate repair or ‘improvement’. Maintenance works have been undertaken in an ad-hoc nature, often utilising inappropriate materials and techniques. Many buildings have been subject, in the past, to inappropriate repair and restoration. Some of the principal issues include:

- Use of waterproofed renders;
- Use of cement mixes for repointing;
- Use of Gypsum plasters and plasterboards internally;
- Plasticised paints; and
- Historically incorrect colours.

4.4.5 These issues need to be addressed as part of a long term prioritised programme of repairs and maintenance for the built heritage based on the Schedules within **Appendix H**. In addition to purely historic concerns, there is also a need for the buildings to be maintained in line with current Health and Safety Legislation and particular economic constraints. This means that particular care is required with the choice of materials used.

*Lack of Sustainable Use*

4.4.6 The twelve historic buildings that could be used on a regular basis, if brought up to an acceptable standard, can be broken down into two groups: those that can be currently used (despite the amount of work required) and those that cannot. The latter group consisting of:

- East Stables;
- West Stables;
- Potomac Tower;
- Model Farm; and
- East Lodge.

4.4.7 Of the former group, there is limited daily use of all but Gunnersbury Park House and West Lodge leaving, Gunnersbury House, Princess Amelia's Bathhouse, the Temple, the Orangery and North Lodge, vacant the majority of the time.

4.4.8 The following table lists the built heritage assets which exist on site, along with their importance, condition and the consequence if the status quo is maintained. **Appendix H Table 1** gives a brief description of urgent repair needs and approximate estimate costs for the work.

**Table 4.2: Buildings within the Park and their Condition**

<b>Building (B)/ Structure (S)</b>	<b>Importance</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Consequence if status quo maintained</b>
East Stables (B)	Grade II*	BAR A <sup>75</sup> Unusable	Continued deterioration Total loss within 2/3 years
Gunnersbury Park House (B)	Grade II*	BAR C <sup>76</sup> Partly tenanted	Continued deterioration Total loss within 10-15 years
East Lodge (B)	Grade II	BAR A Unusable	Continued deterioration Total loss within 2 years
East Lodge Archway (S)	Grade II	BAR A	Continued deterioration Total loss within 2 years
West Stables (B)	Grade II	BAR A Unusable	Continued deterioration Total loss within 2/3 years
Potomac Tower (B)	Grade II	BAR A Unusable	Continued deterioration Total loss within 10-15 years
Gothic Ruins (S)	Grade II	BAR A	Continued deterioration Total loss within 10-15 years
Gunnersbury House (B)	Grade II	BAR C Partly tenanted	Continued deterioration Total loss within 10-15 years
Boundary Wall (S)	Grade II	BAR C	Continued deterioration Total loss within 10-15 years
Temple (B)	Grade II*	Renovated	Gradual deterioration
Orangery (B)	Grade II*	Renovated	Gradual deterioration
Princess Amelia's Bathhouse (B)	Grade II	Renovated	Gradual deterioration
North Lodge (B)	Grade II	Partly used	Gradual deterioration
Kitchen Garden (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
North Entrance Gates (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
East Archway (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
South East Archway (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
South West Archway (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
Lamp Standards (S)	Grade II		Gradual deterioration
Dairy (B)	Grade II	Removed	
Fountain (S)	Grade II	Removed	

<sup>75</sup> English Heritage Building at Risk Category A – Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed.

<sup>76</sup> English Heritage Building at Risk Category C – Slow decay, no solution agreed.

<b>Building Structure (S) (B)/</b>	<b>Importance</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Consequence if status quo maintained</b>
Model Farm (B)	Local importance	Suffered arson attack. Unusable	Continued deterioration
West Lodge (B)	Local importance	Partly tenanted	Gradual deterioration

4.4.9 A feasibility study for the sustainable future of all buildings should be undertaken. As all buildings, with the exception of the Model Farm, are listed, due regard will have to be given to the requirements of English Heritage within this process. It will be necessary to prove that the solution chosen is the most beneficial for the long-term conservation of the building. With regard to buildings where repair may be seen as economically unviable for restoration, it will be necessary to prove that this is the case and that an alternative proposal for preserving remaining fabric is adopted.

#### *Funding*

4.4.10 The reversal of decline within the Park's built heritage depends on finding sustainable uses for all buildings. The buildings that are likely to be most attractive to potential investors are Gunnersbury Park House, Gunnersbury House and the East and West Stables, which are also the buildings with the largest funding needs. Feasibility studies will need to be carried out in order to ascertain the viability of any potential use, however the following guidance should be adhered to:

- Planning restrictions i.e. listed building consent, local planning policy, DDA, will need to be considered;
- Public accessibility to the Park is key, and uses that also require large sections of the park to be closed to public access should not be allowed;
- New buildings and structures should be limited in size and extend within the historic core of the Park and within direct views to the historic core, and should only be allowed if they are deemed essential to the survival of the building;
- Each building and use should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. No types of use can be ruled in or out as they may prove to be the only viable option.

4.4.11 A priority order for buildings has not been suggested as it is likely that natural forerunners will be established during the feasibility stage. That being said efforts should be focussed on Gunnersbury Park House, Gunnersbury House, and the Stables.

### *Policy and Objectives*

#### **POLICY C: Conserve and enhance the Park's built heritage assets.**

4.4.12 The above policy will be implemented through the following objectives.

**Objective 10:** Carry out works to improve the physical condition of the building so that they can be removed from the Buildings at Risk register.

**Objective 11:** Prepare a set of guidelines for the proper care of the historic building fabric and implement a comprehensive monitoring and reporting programme for the built heritage.

**Objective 12:** All building projects should be supervised by a recognised built heritage professional. Contractors working on the repair or alteration of any building or structure, however small, should be required to demonstrate their knowledge and experience of appropriate materials and techniques.

**Objective 13:** Undertake and implement the findings of a feasibility study for the Park's buildings so that a sustainable use, which respects the buildings historic nature and setting, can be found.

## **4.5 Theme E : Archaeology**

4.5.1 The Site contains a number of recorded archaeological sites and findspots.

### ***Key Issue***

4.5.2 It is likely that, across the full extent of the Site, groundbreaking activities will disturb archaeological deposits. It is important that staff can recognise these deposits and that they are recorded.

### *Policy and Objectives*

**POLICY D: The archaeological remains and potential of the site should be conserved.**

4.5.3 The above policy will be implemented through the following objective.

**Objective 14:** All development involving groundbreaking work should be accompanied by an appropriate level of archaeological assessment and/or mitigation in order that the archaeological record is preserved.

### **4.6 Theme F : Historic Associations**

4.6.1 The historic associations of the Site, both through associations with significant architects and those owing the Estate, are a part of its significance.

#### *Key Issues*

4.6.2 The key issue is that these associations are generally under recognised and promoted. It is considered important that this deficit is addressed, and that the historic associations of the Site are actively promoted. The most appropriate tool for redressing this balance is the Interpretation Strategy.

### *Policy and Objectives*

**POLICY E: The historic associations of the Site should be recognised.**

4.6.3 The above policy will be implemented through the following objective.

**Objective 15:** The historic associations of the Site should be disseminated through the aegis of an Interpretation strategy, business plan and education plan.

### **4.7 Theme G : Collections**

4.7.1 There are a wide number of collections throughout the Park; ranging from the Museum through to horticultural collections.

### ***Key Issues***

4.7.2 The key issues facing the collections include:

- The future of the Museum within Gunnersbury Park; and
- A lack of understanding regarding other collections within the Park.

### ***The Future of the Museum***

4.7.3 The major collections within the Park are those contained within Gunnersbury Park Museum. With the challenge of finding suitable sustainable uses for the buildings within Gunnersbury Park, it may be necessary to relocate the Museum and its collections. However, it should be noted that it is likely that the Victorian Kitchens will remain *in situ*. Although the Museum and its collections have always been located within the Park, the current premises does not serve the museum fully i.e. it does not meet required standards for storage and archiving, and neither does it serve the building well i.e. the carriages may well be damaging the flooring. The solution for the museum is outwith the scope of this document and a full options appraisal and feasibility study needs to be commissioned and its findings implemented.

### ***Other Collections***

4.7.4 Other collections within the Park include, specimen tree collections, horticultural collections and architectural statues and elements. These collections are not fully documented and therefore are not understood which is endangering their preservation.

### ***Policy and Objectives***

**POLICY F: Ensure the long-term conservation and development of the collections.**

4.7.5 The above policy will be implemented through the following objective.

**Objective 16:** Undertake and implement a feasibility study regarding the future location of Gunnersbury Park Museum, whether this be within Gunnersbury Park or not.

**Objective 17:** Fully document the remaining collections and their significance so that their conservation and development can be further explored.

## 4.8 Theme H : Local Community and Visitors

4.8.1 Gunnersbury Park's civic and amenity functions are vital to the local community and wider visitor groups. The Park has experienced varying levels of popularity over the past 90 years.

### *Key Issues*

4.8.2 The key issues regarding the local community and visitors are:

- Provision of Sports facilities
- General Visitor Facilities;
- Regular and effective visitor surveys and visitor experience audits;
- Security and Vandalism; and
- Interpretation and Understanding.

### *Provision of Sports Facilities*

4.8.3 Since its opening in 1926 Gunnersbury Park has been renowned for its sport and recreation facilities, for all levels. Today large areas of the Park are given over to sports provision including football pitches, tennis courts, pitch and putt, cricket etc. However, generally this provision is declining in standards of maintenance and use. Just one example being the lack of changing facilities since the Model Farm changing rooms suffered an arson attack. Gunnersbury Park Governing Board are currently discussing the proposals for a Sporting Hub within Gunnersbury Park. The exact details of the Hub are beyond the scope of the Conservation Management Plan, however the following guidance should be adhered to:

- New build should be limited and generally outwith the historic core, and specifically with limited impact on any historic buildings, features or there setting;
- Historic and significant views should be respected when siting any new facilities; and
- Historic landscape structure and features should be respected and strengthened.

4.8.4 A decision as whether or not a new sporting hub is to be provided within the Park, and if it is, what form the facilities are likely to take will be essential in guiding the Park masterplan, influencing the future of the existing park buildings, funding and management.

*General Visitor Facilities*

4.8.5 Existing visitor facilities and their condition within the Park are set out below.

**Table 4.3: Existing Visitor Facilities within the Park and their Condition**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Condition</b>
Infant Play Area	Well located near café, but remote from toilets. Bin stores for Gunnersbury Park House located close to play facilities. Play facilities in fair condition.
Junior Play Area	Play facilities generally in good condition. Nearby toilet block closed.
Pitch and Putt	Generally in good condition. Amount of use unknown. Questionably location within centre of historic core.
Bowling Greens	1 in use, 1 derelict. Pavilion in fair condition. Good location adjacent to car park.
Café	Forms an important hub within the park. Distracts from the setting of adjacent historic Round Pond and Temple. No toilets. Building fabric in poor condition and subject to vandalism.
Tennis Courts	7 in use, 7 derelict. Those in use poorly maintained. Not generating income for the Park.
Round Pond – Boating	Boating facility closed.
Potomac Lake – fishing	Fishing club closed
Cricket Pavilion and Pitch	Pavilion in poor condition and subject to vandalism. Pitch well maintained.
Sports Pitches	Drainage an issue for some pitches. No changing facilities. Damage to surface caused by vehicular access during Mela.
Toilets	Located at Gunnersbury House in poor condition, with no disabled facilities. Radar key operated disabled toilet located north side of Model Farm.

4.8.6 In order to attract a high number of visitors, and particularly to encourage repeat visits, high quality visitor facilities must be provided in suitable locations across the Park, i.e. toilet provision close to catering and play facilities. It is important that visitor facilities are inclusive and provide for the physical needs of all visitors. These needs range from the provision of toilets suitable for people with disabilities, to catering for special dietary

requirements at cafés. This inclusivity of service is particularly important to the Park, as visitors would otherwise have to leave the Park in order to access other facilities.

- 4.8.7 It is important that visitor facilities are well managed, with obvious regimes for cleanliness and highlighted opportunities for customer feedback. Visitor attractions are often evaluated by visitors on the quality of their visitor facilities, such as lavatories and catering, and Gunnersbury Park should ensure that it is not alienating potential repeat visitors through a low standard of provision.
- 4.8.8 Health and Safety issues are becoming more prominent an issue in public parks than ever before and this should be taken into account when discussing Gunnersbury Park. Currently a number of health and safety issues have been identified including the bins being located directly next to the children's play area and the increased number of large trees which are being damaged by extreme weather.
- 4.8.9 The parking area is currently degraded but does not detract greatly from the overall Park due to it being situated behind the Kitchen Garden. However, it is not a welcoming entrance to the Park and does not form a good first impression for visitors.
- 4.8.10 Visitor services should contribute to the visitor's understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the Site and its management. The provision of orientation materials and clear signposting both at the entrances and at suitable locations across the Site is vitally important to providing for visitor needs.
- 4.8.11 It is essential that the provision of high quality visitor facilities, both in the past and in the future, should not impact upon the significance of the Site and its landscape. Rather these facilities should be sensitive to their surroundings and should be complementary to the characters of the landscapes within which they are situated. Future opportunities to upgrade the facilities will facilitate the removal of insensitively designed facilities located in inappropriate locations.
- 4.8.12 The café currently forms a 'honey pot' area, due to its proximity to the children's playground and availability of seating. This is not necessarily a negative issue, but should not be allowed to distract from development in other areas of the Park.

*Monitoring Visitor Impact*

- 4.8.13 There is a general perception that the conservation of the Site would be enhanced by dispersing visitors around the Park, relieving pressure on ‘honey-pot’ areas. The impact of visitors on the Site is more complex than this perception allows, with some areas of the Site being more vulnerable than others. Gunnersbury Park must implement a sophisticated strategy for monitoring the impact of visitors on the Site and its assets, which takes into account the varying vulnerabilities of these assets and their surroundings. This strategy must be fed into a responsive visitor management system that can quickly divert visitor attention and avert incipient problems.

*Security and Vandalism*

- 4.8.14 Security on the site is currently dealt with by Park’s Staff with occasional visits by Community Police Officers. There are no dedicated Security Staff. It is aimed that physical access into the Park and its attractions should be improved whilst maintaining the safe and peaceful atmosphere of the historic park.
- 4.8.15 Gunnersbury Park is a publicly accessible place and as such is vulnerable to vandalism. This has been recently borne out by the arson attack on the Farm Changing Rooms, a building of historic interest and clear practical function. Graffiti can be seen across the site, including on signage, the cricket pavilion etc.
- 4.8.16 Within isolated parts of the Park there is a lack of sense of security, particularly around the Potomac Pond and Gothic Tower. The more these areas are seen as ‘no-go’ areas the worse the problem becomes.

*Interpretation*

- 4.8.17 Interpretation of the Site can be provided through a variety of means. These could include:
- Orientation facilities;
  - Exhibitions;
  - Leaflets;
  - Books and guides;
  - Guided tours;
  - Direct interaction with staff.

4.8.18 It is important that Gunnersbury Park develops a co-ordinated Interpretation Strategy, which should ensure that:

- Messages communicated about the Site are clear and co-ordinated;
- Approaches to interpretation cater for a diversity of audiences and learning styles;
- The interpretation provided about the Site promotes engagement with the Site, and deepens visitors' knowledge and understanding;
- The interpretation materials provided promote the uniqueness and significance of the Site without compromising or devaluing its integrity;
- The interpretative strategy provides intellectual, and if appropriate physical access to a variety of the Site's assets, including staff.

4.8.19 There are many key themes that could be interpreted for visitors, however, most of these are under-utilised and under-represented. These key themes include:

- The Park's rich and complex history;
- The built heritage, archaeological, archival and material culture remains of this history;
- The conservation and management of the Site;
- The Park's ecology / natural environment;
- The Park's role in terms of climate change.

4.8.20 It is now widely accepted that the visitor experience at a site begins long before the visitor enters through a gate. The provision of appropriate and informative promotional materials that aid the visitor in finding and arriving at the Site, and which enable them to orientate themselves to the key interpretative messages before they arrive, will considerably enhance their visit. Some materials, such as maps, already exist and it is important that Gunnersbury Park continues to supply, expand and improve these visitor resources, alongside expanding their availability and distribution.

4.8.21 Both the promotion of the Site provided in anticipation of a visit to the Park, and the interpretative and orientation materials provided on-site have the capacity to alter visitor movements around the Site by influencing what people perceive as desirable to visit. The Interpretation Strategy is a powerful tool in the management of visitors and their impact on the Site. In this way the Interpretation Strategy is a pro-active tool in the conservation management of the Site.

*Understanding*

- 4.8.22 There are several areas in which additional work should be undertaken in order for the Site's significance to be better recognised; such as ecology, hydrology (a comprehensive map of the hydrology of the Park would help towards alleviating current water-logging problems experienced due to the large number of underground watercourses running through the Park) and developing a greater understanding of visitor numbers and make-up.

*Policy and Objectives*

**POLICY G: Continue to offer a variety of safe, secure and inclusive opportunities for visitors in a high quality environment.**

- 4.8.23 The above policy will be implemented through the following objectives.

**Objective 18:** Develop and implement a recreation, events, education and training programme for all sectors of society and on a variety of levels, formal and informal, whilst retaining the Parks existing facilities, character and protecting its significance.

**Objective 19:** Monitor visitor impact relative to the varying vulnerabilities of assets and their surroundings. This monitoring should be fed into a visitor management system that can modify visitor dispersal as necessary.

**Objective 20:** Formalise the security arrangements for the site, in liaison with the local police force.

**Objective 21:** Provide high quality and appropriate visitor facilities that are sensitive to the significance of the Park, whilst being inclusive and responsive to the changing needs of visitors.

**POLICY H: To provide a clear, high quality and consistent message and interpretative vision that links the whole Park and its different components.**

- 4.8.24 The above policy will be implemented through the following objectives.

**Objective 22:** Research, create and implement a co-ordinated and inclusive strategy for

interpretation, to improve on-site and off-site understanding of all components of the Park.

**Objective 23:** Continue to support and improve education provision throughout the Park through programmes and events to offer learning opportunities that are inclusive and accessible to all.

## 4.9 Theme I : Nature Conservation

4.9.1 Gunnersbury Park is designated as a nature conservation Site of Borough Importance, Grade II. The Site has the potential to contain important habitats and species, predominantly on a borough level, more so for the east end of the borough than the west, as it is a large green oasis in an otherwise hard landscape – in contrast to the western situation where there are many green spaces.

### *Key Issues*

4.9.2 The value in the site is the mixture of habitats, some relatively old, and the range of species in the urban context. Despite its designation, the lack of a detailed baseline survey means that the current state of the resource cannot be fully determined. There has been a lack of commitment to introduce nature conservation elements and management techniques as an integral and legitimate part of the estate's management approach – built heritage and recreational issues having consistently been given higher priority. The priority for future works should be based on a better understanding (through survey) of what currently occurs, and linked with the local and regional Biodiversity Action Plan priorities.

### *Policy and Objectives*

**POLICY I: Conserve and enhance the Park's nature conservation.**

4.9.3 The above policy will be implemented through the following objective.

**Objective 24:** Monitor, manage, protect and enhance the nature conservation interest on the Site and develop a site-wide ecological management strategy

#### **4.10 Recommended Priorities For Action**

4.10.1 The complexity of the Park's resources and the number of issues which face it has led to the formulation of 9 Policies and 24 Objectives. For a park of this size, complexity and significance this number of Policies and Objective is not unusual but for ease of implementation the key issues and recommended priorities for action have been outlined below.

##### ***Key Issues***

4.10.2 The key issues are:

- lack of clear management and maintenance structure;
- limited and decreasing funding;
- deterioration of built fabric and landscape, most prominently the buildings identified as being at risk;
- poor visitor facilities; and
- declining use.

##### ***Priority Actions***

4.10.3 The priority actions are:

- Establish a clear management regime and structure to take Gunnersbury Park forward, including the appointment of a Political Champion;
- Adopt the Conservation Management Plan as formal guidance;
- Carry out works to buildings at risk, to stabilise their condition and commission feasibility studies for all buildings to determine a sustainable use;
- Commission a feasibility study for the location of Gunnersbury Park Museum;
- Complete the Sports Hub feasibility study;
- Finalise and adopt the Masterplan; and
- Investigate alternative sources of public and private funding to implement the Conservation Management Plan and Masterplan.

## **4.11 Implementing the Plan**

- 4.11.1 It is important to follow through on the objectives of the Plan to ensure the necessary improvements are made. This is especially true as the ‘do nothing’ option would result in the significant loss of the historic buildings on the site, would be detrimental to the landscape and would be impossible to reverse. Without timely, effective action now, there is a risk that Gunnersbury Park, as it exists today will not survive.
- 4.11.2 For ease of understanding **Figure 4.1** shows a visual interpretation of the major physical actions needed within the Park.