

[sharmav@parliament.uk](mailto:sharmav@parliament.uk)

Dear Mr Sharma

I am one of your constituents living on The Trees Estate, Ealing W5. I am writing regarding the proposed “regeneration” of Gunnersbury Park and I would very much like to know where you personally stand on this matter.

The consultation document sent out by the Regeneration Board representing Ealing and Hounslow councils was felt by many residents – most even – to be unfair in its presentation offering us the choice between selling off 5.6 acres of valuable woodland (next to the M4 motorway and bordering Lionel Primary School) – or seeing the continued degradation of our park and its buildings.

The favoured development, and it was very clearly marked as the favoured one in the consultation, would destroy over 400 mature deciduous trees, plus cover other parts of the park with private buildings and car parks.

We feel so strongly about the need to preserve this green space that we have formed a pressure group called STIG ( Save Trees In Gunnersbury : [stiglondon.co.uk](http://stiglondon.co.uk) ) which has so far attracted immense support and interest from all areas of the community, press and various councilors.

Our main objective is to persuade Ealing and Hounslow Councils to re - think the very leading questionnaire that they rushed out. Whilst we all agree that the buildings of Gunnersbury Park should be preserved (I am a regular visitor to the museum with my small children) - it is sheer madness to be chopping down hundreds of mature trees to make way for a yet another (luxury) housing development.

Whilst investment in the park is clearly needed, there are other options with regard funding the upkeep of the museum and preservation of other listed buildings in the park. The proposed development is way too ambitious and expensive, and the price of losing over 5 acres of woodland and hundreds of trees is simply too high.

For me this is an environmental issue but there is also a legal one to be considered. The park is protected by a covenant left by the Rothschild family who stipulated that the park remain in use only for public leisure. I cannot tell you how depressing it is that the majority of residents have little faith that the council will abide by the law of this country and honour this covenant; rather the majority feel that with some flashy expensive lawyers which we as a community cannot possibly counter, the covenant will be slickly bypassed in order to push the development through.

Is there a national policy in place which sees our parkland as up for grabs simply because it does not “pay for itself” and therefore easy prey for developers? If so this is an issue that will have national importance and be of interest to the national press. Gunnersbury Park will be held up as a precedent showing that with the right lawyers, covenants can be sidestepped and public parkland can be turned into private housing as soon as there is a shortfall in funding.

Other parks in Ealing such as Lammas and Walpole, surrounded by middle class communities, have clearly received more investment and love over the years. For Gunnersbury, there seems nothing but a bitter shifting of responsibility between the two councils charged with looking after it. The only thing they agree on is the need to cut the parks' annual grant. But this park serves us well, it is the biggest

open green space for many miles. Of course it is famously home to the Mela which I as a local resident love and look forward to each year. Hundreds of children rely on this park as their access to a little bit of woodland where the huge trees have their dominion. Teenagers play on their bikes in the threatened woodland, and Lionel Primary School children look out of their classrooms at trees sooned to be axed, which have been there for hundreds of years. Is it your choice to bulldoze this area in order to build houses, which in turn will part-fund a £43 million regeneration of the parks buildings turning them into an all singing all dancing conference centre and restaurant that will be expected to pay for themselves in future years. Mr Sharma, do you agree that a park is a public ammenity, not a business?

The buildings of Gunnersury Park clearly need investment, and English Heritage have made it clear that they will not let Ealing Council get away with continuing to neglect them. Indeed they will hold Ealing up as a bad council which has not managed its listed buildings with due care. But surely there can be a more imaginative and long sighted approach to raising the necessary funds to upkeep the buildings? To sell off acres of public green space and chop down hundreds of trees should not even be offered as an option, let alone presented to us as the only feasible one in a skewed consultation cooked up by Jura, a firm of consultants in Scotland who specialise in controversial property developments.

We demand at the outset a new consultation that presents the choices in a fair and realistic manner making clear the impact that this development will have on our community and our environment.

If you should wish to read anymore about our issues with the proposed developments, please go to [stiglondon.co.uk](http://stiglondon.co.uk) We are holding a public meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September and we expect a big turnout. No doubt people will want to know where our MP stands on this matter or perhaps he doesn't care ?

I do hope to hear from you soon

Many thanks for your thoughts on this.

Yours Faithfully  
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