



Friends of  
West Ham Park



Friends of West Ham Park

Plant Nursery Site - Online Public Consultation

7.30pm Tuesday 9 November 2021



# About Friends of West Ham Park

- ▶ The Friends of West Ham Park are a group of local residents who love and use the park regularly.
- ▶ We are independent of the park management and ownership.
- ▶ We were formed to help the local community gain the most benefit from the park through increased involvement in activities and making people aware of nature on their doorstep.

- ▶ We undertake voluntary activities including:

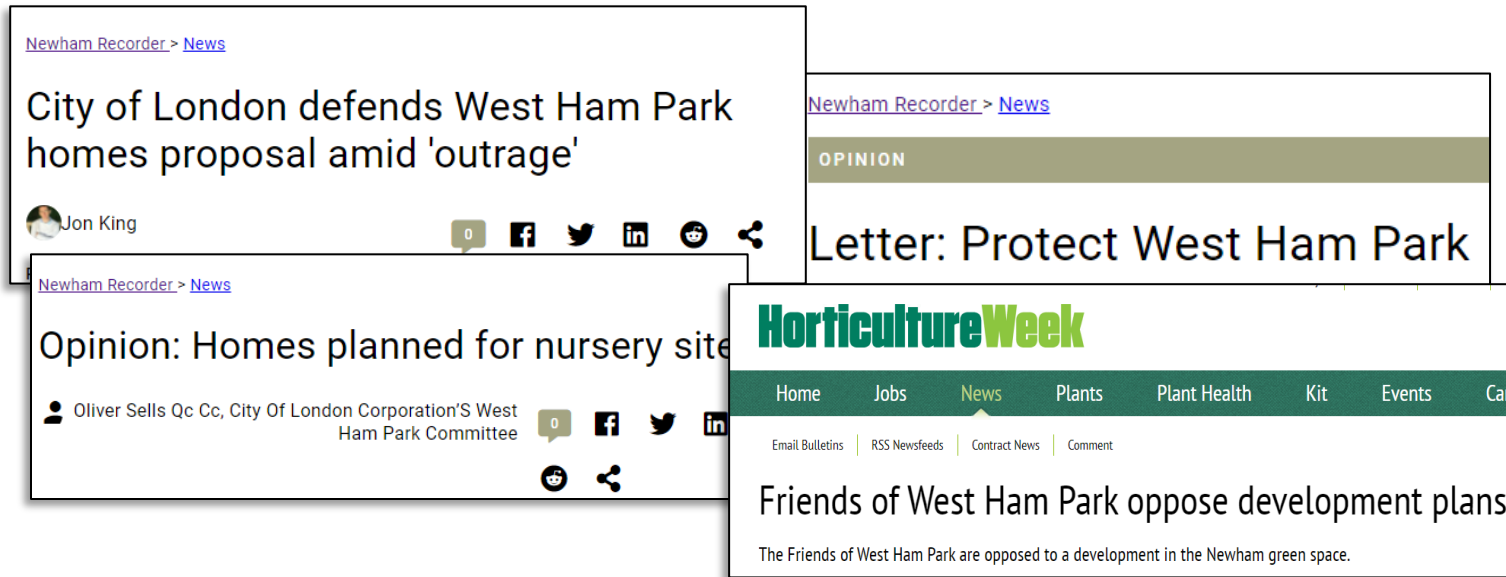
- ▶ Bat walks
- ▶ Litter picking
- ▶ Leaf pile
- ▶ Park in the dark
- ▶ Vegetable garden



**Park  
in the Dark**

- ▶ Anyone can join, there is no cost, and we welcome new members.

# Purpose of Meeting – Inform & Listen



The collage consists of several overlapping elements:

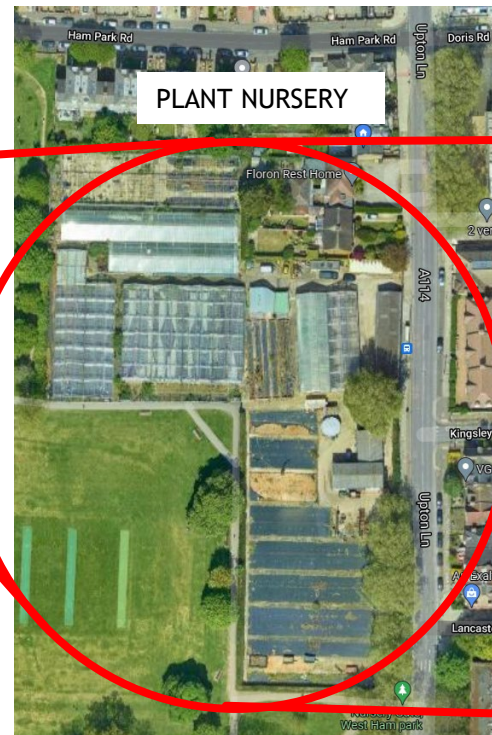
- A snippet from 'Newham Recorder > News' with the headline 'City of London defends West Ham Park homes proposal amid 'outrage'' and the author 'Jon King'. It includes social media sharing icons.
- A snippet from 'Newham Recorder > News' with the headline 'Letter: Protect West Ham Park' and a sub-header 'OPINION'.
- A snippet from 'Newham Recorder > News' with the headline 'Opinion: Homes planned for nursery site' and the author 'Oliver Sells Qc Cc, City Of London Corporation'S West Ham Park Committee'. It includes social media sharing icons.
- A screenshot of the 'HorticultureWeek' website. The navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Jobs', 'News', 'Plants', 'Plant Health', 'Kit', 'Events', and 'Care'. Below the menu are links for 'Email Bulletins', 'RSS Newsfeeds', 'Contract News', and 'Comment'. The main headline reads 'Friends of West Ham Park oppose development plans' with a sub-headline 'The Friends of West Ham Park are opposed to a development in the Newham green space.'

- ▶ **INFORM** you of the details of the proposed residential flats development of the plant nursery within West Ham Park - as we understand it.
- ▶ **LISTEN** to what you think.

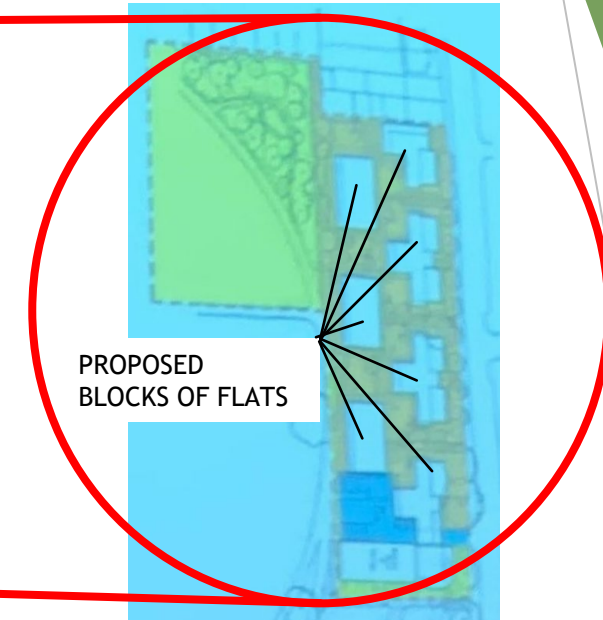
# Overview



Friends of  
West Ham Park



Source: 2019 Corporation of  
London Public Meeting 19 Dec 19



- ▶ Substantial plant nursery and greenhouse area.
- ▶ Previously supplied plants for use by the City of London.
- ▶ Shut down several years ago as it was deemed by the Corporation of London to be no longer economically viable.
- ▶ Sits within Grade 2 listed park.
- ▶ Plan of Corporation of London to develop approximately half of the nursery into large residential blocks of flats.





# Misconceptions / Fake News?

**“The nursery site is not part of West Ham Park.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site sits within the park based on the official HM Land Registry deeds and Historic England's Grade II register, where the nursery site is specifically mentioned.

**“The nursery site has never been open to the public.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site has approximately trebled in the 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily expanding into previously publicly accessible parkland based on official Ordnance Survey maps.

**“The nursery site is a brownfield site.”**



**INCORRECT**

The nursery site is not a registered brownfield site according to the official Newham Brownfield Register.



# Need for Housing in Newham

- ▶ Clearly a need for more housing in Newham.
- ▶ However, should it be at the expense of parkland?
  - ▶ Newham has the lowest proportion of public open space per person in London. This situation has been highlighted during the pandemic.
  - ▶ Busiest corner of park that being developed.
  - ▶ Affordable / social housing does not appear to be part of the plan.
  - ▶ Once parkland is developed it is lost forever.

# History of the Park

Kitchen garden of Ham  
House now nursery site

Map 1869



Cedar House residence of Elizabeth  
Fry, Victorian social reformer, now  
Territorial Army base

Ham House now part of  
Ornamental Garden

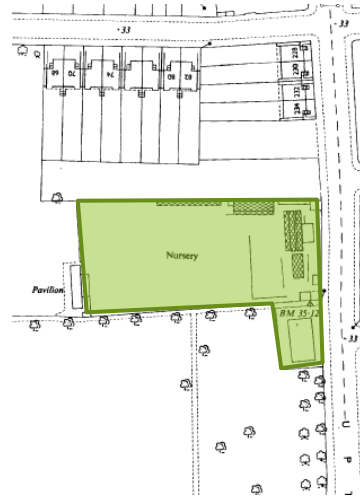
- ▶ West Ham Park is a 77-acre Grade 2 listed green oasis in East London.
- ▶ Previously the private park for Ham House which was owned by the Gurney family who founded a bank which was later merged into Barclays.
- ▶ The Park was purchased, at a below market price, in 1874 from John Gurney provided that it was to be held on trust forever:  
*“...as open public grounds and gardens for the resort and recreation of adults and as playgrounds for children and youth”*
- ▶ A significant portion of the monies to purchase the Park was raised from local public donations.
- ▶ The West Ham Park Charity is constituted as a charitable trust with the City of London Corporation as the corporate trustee.

# History of the Nursery Site

- ▶ Although public do not currently have access the site has never been developed and remains as green open space comprising plant beds, greenhouses and sheds.
- ▶ Approximately trebled in size over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century most significantly to the South. Most of the additional areas consumed into the Nursery appear to have had full public access previously.
- ▶ Always part of the Park and is within the boundaries of the Park as recorded at the HM Land Registry and is included within the areas subject to the Grade 2 listing at Historic England.
- ▶ Corporation of London has not maintained the site for the last 6 years allowing it to become derelict and dangerous possibly to strengthen their position that it is a problem site that needs development.



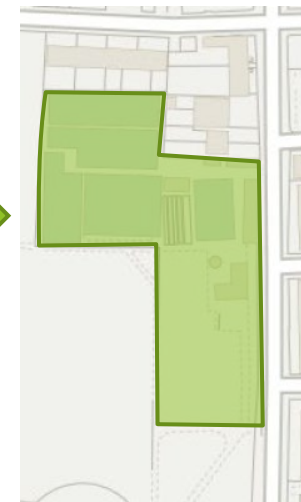
1919



1950



1971



Current





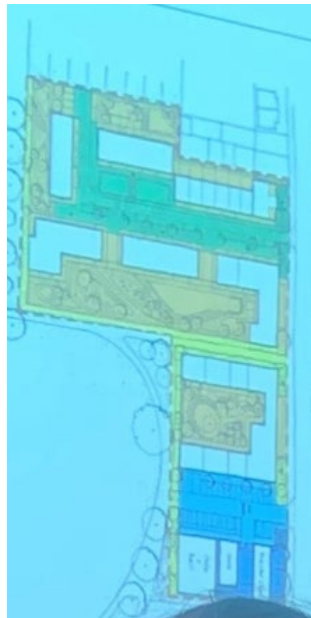
# Proposed Development

- ▶ After significant pressure from Friends of West Ham Park members and other stakeholders the Corporation of London revealed their already selected plan for the nursery site in a public meeting on 11 December 2019.
- ▶ Three options had already been considered and decided on by the Corporation of London:
  - ▶ Return to parkland
  - ▶ High density – all residential blocks of flats
  - ▶ Medium density – approx. half parkland / half residential blocks of flats – **SELECTED OPTION**

Return to parkland



“High” density

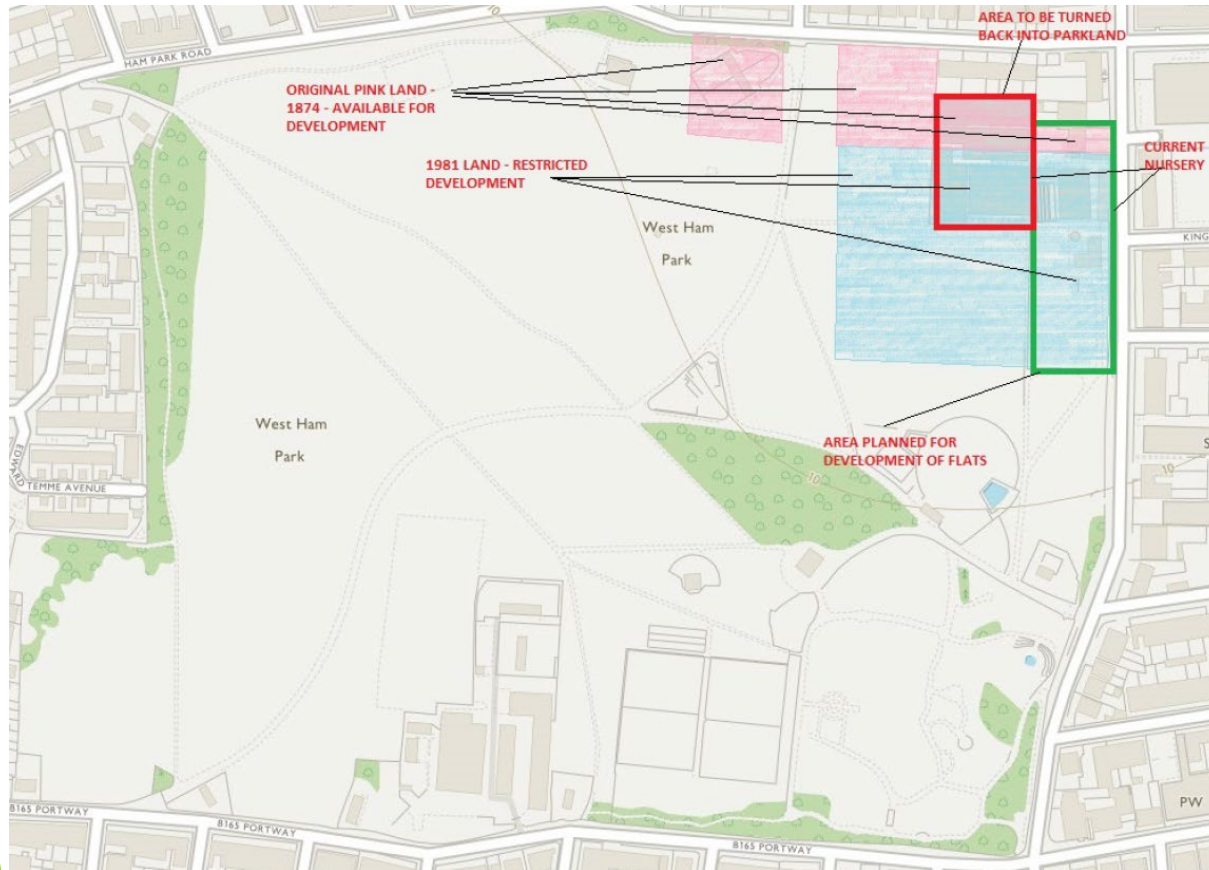


“Medium” density



**Selected option  
by Corporation of  
London**

# Charity Commission Governance



- ▶ West Ham Park Charity governed by two primary documents.
  - ▶ 1874 Indenture – original charity document
  - ▶ 1981 Scheme – amendment of original charity document
- ▶ Pink areas defined in 1874 Indenture potentially allows development of buildings. Some areas previously pink in the North-East were developed in c.1880's.
- ▶ Blue areas defined in 1981 Scheme to regularize the incorrect use of parkland as a non-public nursery site.
- ▶ Blue areas "...used as land whereon the Trustee of the Charity may effect developments, as in its discretion it considers would **enhance the enjoyment of the Park...by the beneficiaries...such as nurseries and glasshouse**"
- ▶ Through correspondence with the Charity Commission, it appears it has accepted the Corporation of London stage view, allowing the development to progress to the next stage as:
  - ▶ "...enhance the enjoyment..." can mean via an indirect manner by generating income that then can be used to provide enhancement.
  - ▶ Appears to have been accepted without any commitment to maintain current funding. Giving the opportunity to over time to reduce funding from the Corporation of London.
  - ▶ Definition that "...nurseries and glasshouses ..." can be also be extended to residential housing.
  - ▶ These decisions by the Charity Commission may have inadvertently opened large additional areas of parkland to development.
- ▶ We have and will continue to object to the Charity Commission's incomprehensible interpretation of the documents.

# Corporation of London's – Possible Next Steps



Possible surveyors inspecting nursery site –  
summer 2021

- ▶ Difficult to know exactly what the planned next stage is by the Corporation of London as they have deliberately tried to be as opaque on information as possible – excluding members of the public where the plans are discussed and refusing Freedom of Information requests.
- ▶ However, it appears that the Charity Commission process may have completed.
- ▶ Soft market testing exercise to developers commenced in summer 2021, undertaken by Savills.
- ▶ We believe that dependent on the outcome of marketing exercise planning permission process may start as early as spring 2022 with a public consultation to also be potentially undertaken.
- ▶ Believe that planning permission will fall under the jurisdiction of Newham Council.

# Suggested Alternative Uses by FWHP





# Next Steps - David versus Goliath?

- ▶ Difficult to start campaign when plans are deliberately made as opaque as possible – nothing firm to object to.
- ▶ Campaign of attrition:
  - ▶ Plans for nursery commenced at least 5 years ago (could argue that it started in 1981!) and may last for several more.
  - ▶ Keep our powder dry! Only start a full-blown campaign when plans publicly submitted.
- ▶ Therefore, current focus to:
  - ▶ Understanding the stage of the development process and explaining this to other interested parties.
  - ▶ Listen to local community and all stakeholders for views and develop viable alternative options.
  - ▶ Build allies – including from the local community, relevant conservation & other organization and politicians – who can be called upon to quickly support a full-blown campaign.
- ▶ A main purpose is to get more local people involved - any help gratefully received!



# Your Views and Q&A

