



Friends of
West Ham Park



Friends of West Ham Park
Plant Nursery Site – Update Meeting
7.30pm Thursday 2 February 2023



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:

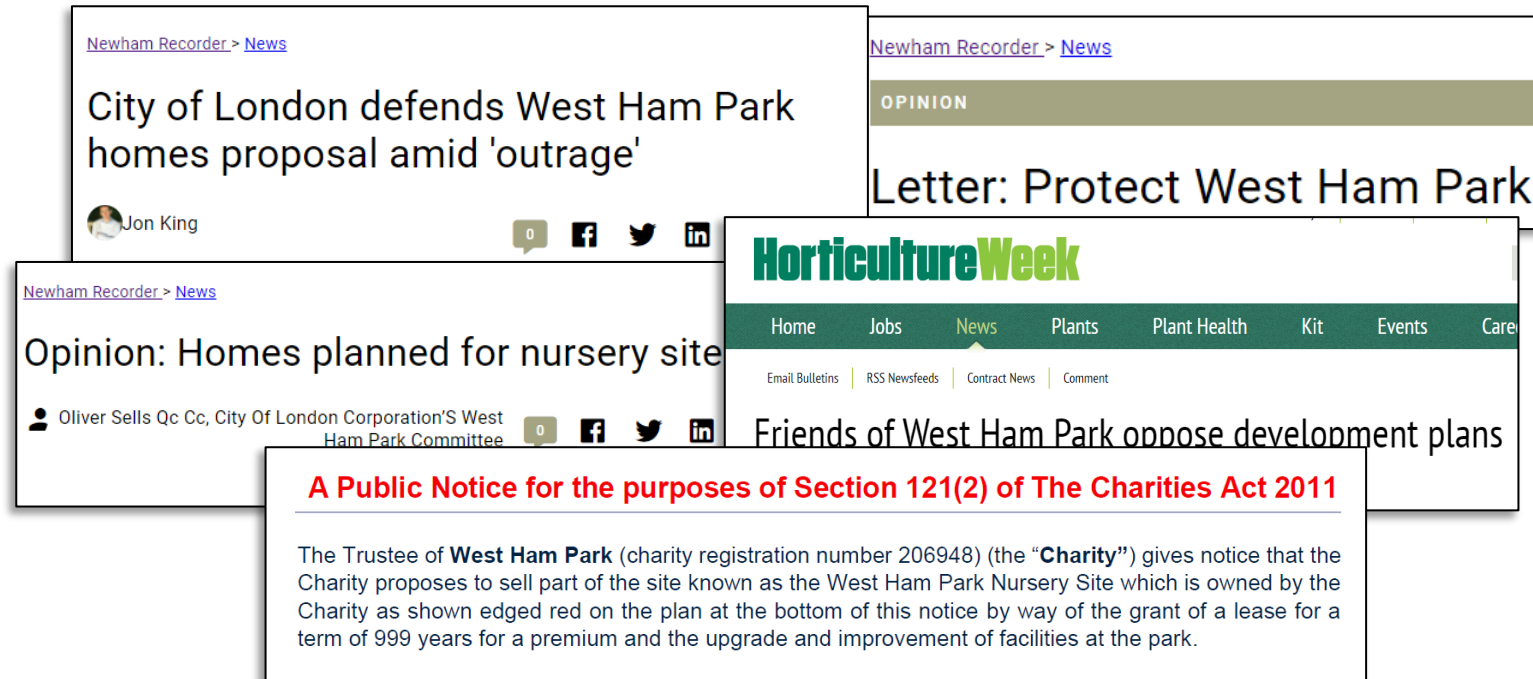
- ▶ Bat walks
- ▶ Litter picking
- ▶ Leaf pile
- ▶ Park in the dark
- ▶ Vegetable garden



**Park
in the Dark**

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

Purpose of Meeting – Inform, Listen & Respond



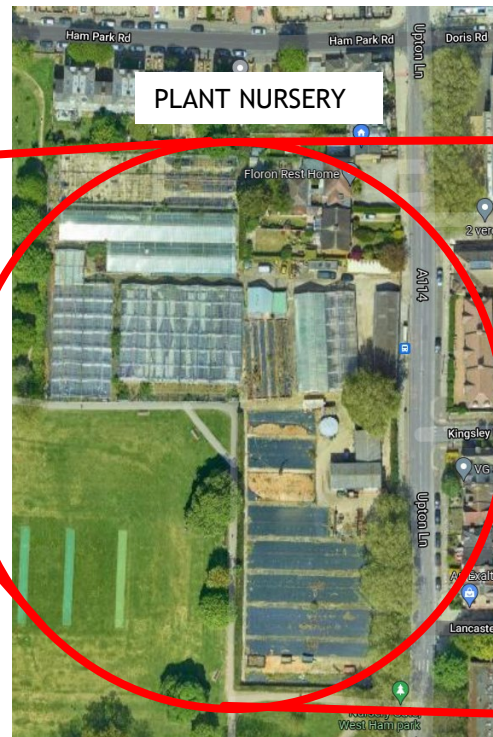
The collage features several overlapping screenshots. At the top left, a news article from 'Newham Recorder' is titled 'City of London defends West Ham Park homes proposal amid 'outrage'' by Jon King. To its right is another article titled 'Letter: Protect West Ham Park'. Below these is a screenshot of the 'HorticultureWeek' website with a navigation menu (Home, Jobs, News, Plants, Plant Health, Kit, Events, Care) and a sub-menu (Email Bulletins, RSS Newsfeeds, Contract News, Comment). The main article on the website is titled 'Friends of West Ham Park oppose development plans' by Oliver Sells Qc Cc, City Of London Corporation'S West Ham Park Committee. At the bottom center is a white box with a red header: 'A Public Notice for the purposes of Section 121(2) of The Charities Act 2011'. The text inside the box reads: 'The Trustee of **West Ham Park** (charity registration number 206948) (the "**Charity**") gives notice that the Charity proposes to sell part of the site known as the West Ham Park Nursery Site which is owned by the Charity as shown edged red on the plan at the bottom of this notice by way of the grant of a lease for a term of 999 years for a premium and the upgrade and improvement of facilities at the park.'

- ▶ **INFORM** you of the details of the proposed residential flats development of the plant nursery within West Ham Park - as we best understand it.
- ▶ **LISTEN** to what you think.
- ▶ **RESPOND** in a thought-out, coordinated manner to maximise affect.

Overview



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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.



Previous Public Notice – March 2022

A Public Notice for the purposes of Section 121(2) of The Charities Act 2011

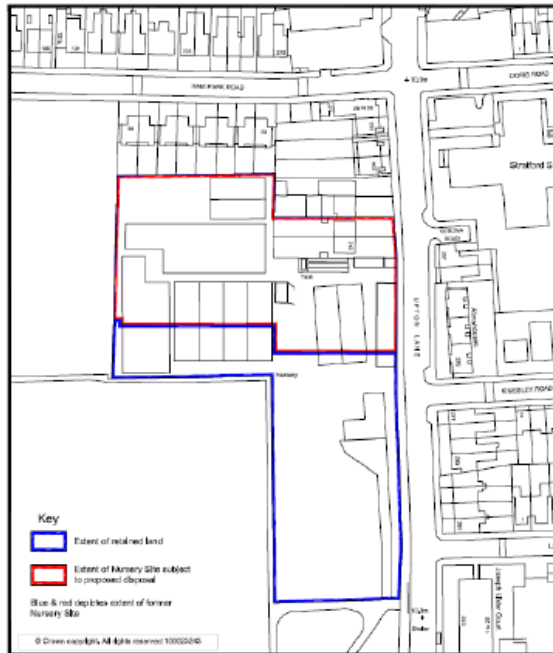
The Trustee of West Ham Park (charity registration number 206948) (the "Charity") gives notice that the Charity proposes to sell part of the site known as the West Ham Park Nursery Site which is owned by the Charity as shown edged red on the plan at the bottom of this notice by way of the grant of a lease for a term of 999 years for a premium and the upgrade and improvement of facilities at the park.

The Trustee of the Charity has marketed the property using national marketing with an advertisement in the Estates Gazette published on the 10th July 2021 and otherwise marketed the Property in line with advice from its appointed agent (Savills).

Any representations or comments in relation to the proposed transaction should be sent for consideration to the following address by no later than 16th April 2022 for:

The Trustee of West Ham Park c/o Savills, 33 Margaret Street, London, W1G 0JD For the attention of Alex Soskin (alex.soskin@savills.com) and Hugh Bushell (hbushell@savills.com).

Dated: 16th March 2022



- ▶ Public Notice currently at the entrance of the Park and in the Newham Recorder early 2022.

- ▶ Charities Act 2011 Section 121(2):

“(2)The land must not be conveyed, transferred, leased or otherwise disposed of unless the charity trustees have before the relevant time—

(a)given public notice of the proposed disposition, inviting representations to be made to them within a time specified in the notice, which must be not less than one month from the date of the notice, and

(b)taken into consideration any representations made to them within that time about the proposed disposition.”

- ▶ What it told us - that the red area is in effect for sale (999 year lease) and going through Charity Act procedure to affect this.
- ▶ What it did not say is - what land will be used for, how will it benefit the Park and what happens with the blue area of the nursery site.
- ▶ **THANK YOU!** - Many objections (and we believe not a single supportive one) from local residents, politicians and conservation organizations.
- ▶ Apart from acknowledging objections we don't believe any other information about this process has been given out.

Preferred Developer Chosen & Corporation Next Steps



- ▶ 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.
- ▶ We are continuing to object, including getting specific legal advice, to the Charity Commission, but it appears that the Charity Commission process may have completed or be close to completing.
- ▶ Believe that soft market testing exercise to developers has been undertaken by Savills, a property agent.
- ▶ Believe that a preferred developer, Cala, has been selected and negotiations on possible sale (which are likely to be dependent on planning permission) are ongoing.
- ▶ Dependent on the outcome of this sale process between Cala and the Corporation of London planning process may commence in 2023.
- ▶ Believe that planning permission will fall under the jurisdiction of Newham Council.



- ▶ Cala Group
(<https://www.cala.co.uk/about-cala/the-cala-group/>)
 - ▶ One of the UK's largest house builders.
 - ▶ Owned 100% by Legal and General, which is a very large financial services and asset management group.

Newham Council – Local Plan Consultation



Friends of
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- ▶ Informal discussions with Councilors appears to suggest more opposition than support to nursery development within the council.
- ▶ A “Local Plan” document is prepared every few years which sets out the Council’s views on a range of different local issues, including planning, and how it intends to base its future policy, decisions and efforts.
- ▶ A new Local Plan for next few years is currently undergoing public consultation. This consultation closes on 20 February 2023.
- ▶ In Newham:
 - ▶ Least publicly accessible green space per person of any London Borough.
 - ▶ Provision of play space for children is even worse, with only 10% of the national standard.
 - ▶ West Ham Park already provides 12% of the Publicly Accessible Green Space.
- ▶ The population is expected to increase by 2038 by c.100,000 people.
- ▶ Requirement for at least 70 hectares of new open space and parkland - that means creating more than 2 new parks the size of West Ham Park. The updated Local Plan has proposals to create this much new open space.
- ▶ Unfortunately, on close inspection of this draft Local Plan the Nursery Site is highlighted as an area for potential housing rather than parkland.
- ▶ Unclear whether this is a deliberate action or an omission, however not helpful if proposed development goes to planning.





Next Step of Campaign

- ▶ We are now working very closely with several leading conservation campaign groups – specifically Campaign for Protection of Rural England (London Branch). Plan for our campaign:
 - ▶ Thought out campaign.
 - ▶ Co-ordinated campaign.
 - ▶ To maximise effect of campaign.

- ▶ **BIG ASK**: Proposed next steps of the campaign in this order:
 1. Objections to Newham Council Local Plan through formal online consultation.
 2. Objection to Newham Council Local Plan through letter to Mayor of Newham.
 3. Objection of development to Cala, the preferred developer.

- ▶ **FIRST STEP - We are asking for you to respond to the Local Plan public consultation now:**
 - ▶ We will send an email with detailed instructions on how to object.
 - ▶ Please do immediately – there is very little time here. **We would like all responses in by Sunday 15 February 2023.**
 - ▶ Should take less than quarter of an hour.
 - ▶ We want the responses to be personalized but with some common themes and will provide some suggested points / language. Please no derogatory or abusive language!

- ▶ We revert on the next 2 campaign steps after 15 February 2023.



Your Views and Q&A





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Appendix





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 20th 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.

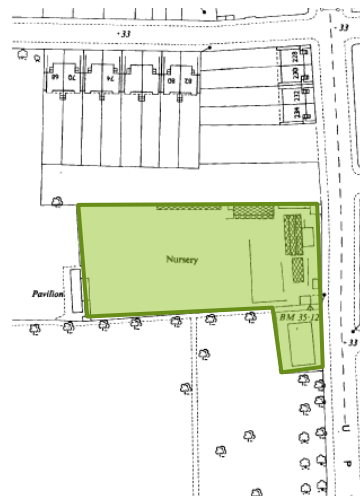


History of the Nursery Site

- ▶ 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 20th 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 7 years allowing it to become derelict and dangerous possibly to strengthen their position that it is a problem site that needs development.



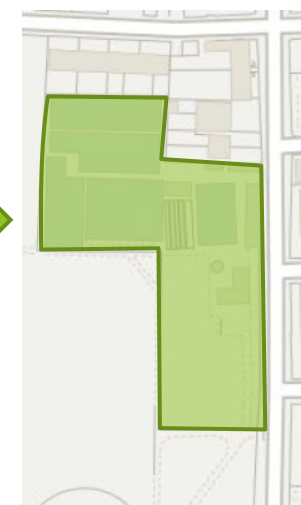
1919



1950



1971



Current



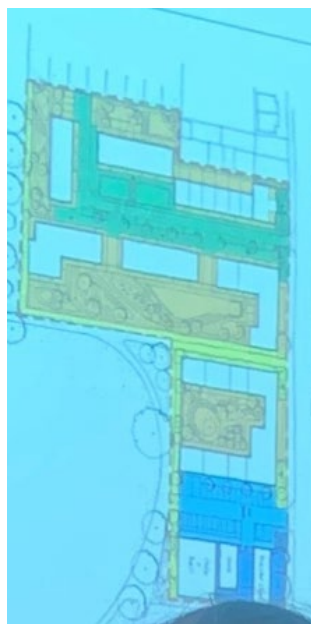
Proposed Development *as presented in 2019*

- ▶ 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 IN 2019**
- ▶ Due to Public Notice made in March 2022 it is now unclear what their plans are.

Return to parkland



“High” density

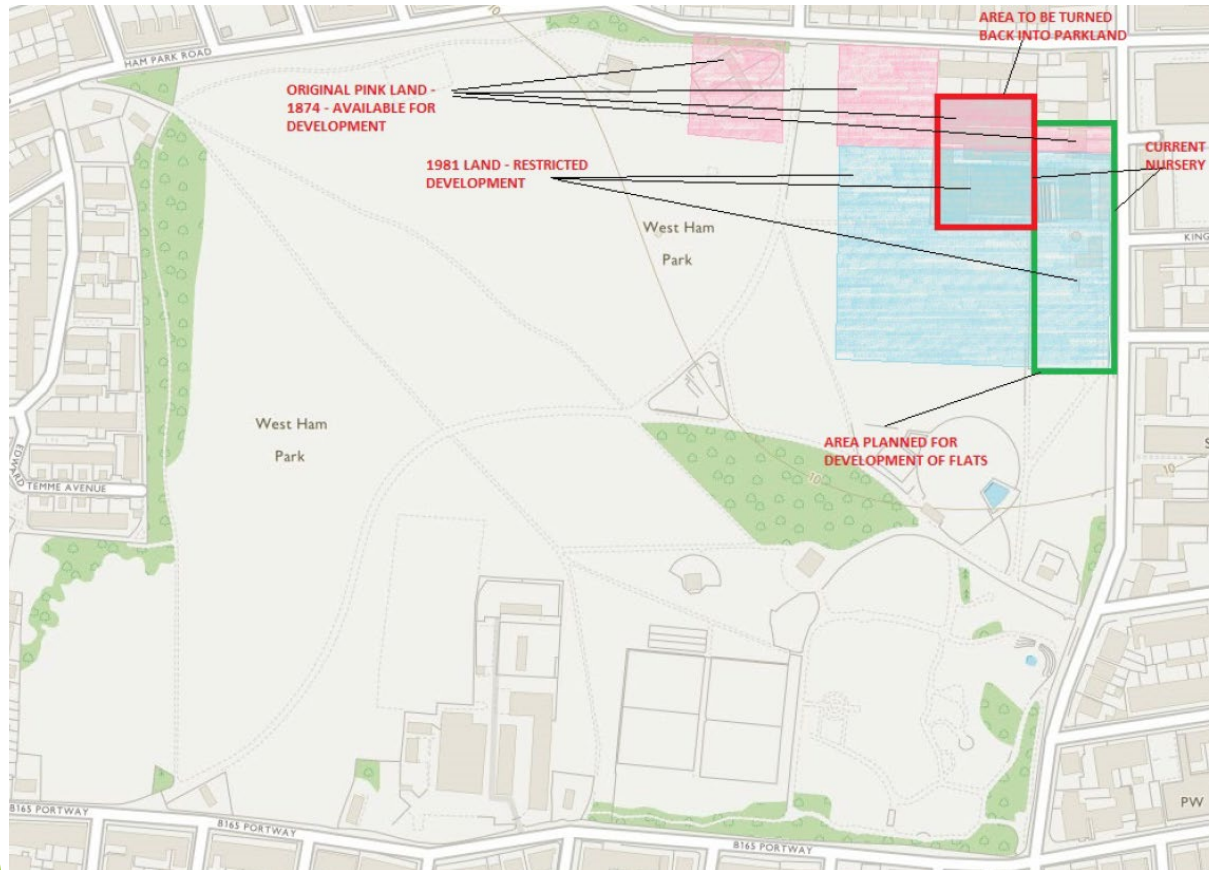


“Medium” density



Selected option as presented by Corporation of London in 2019. Exact development plan, as indicated by area proposed for sale, likely to have been amended since.

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 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 greenhouses..." 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.

Suggested Alternative Uses by FWHP

