



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Name of Committee
CABINET**

Directorate: Governance and Resources

Corporate Director: Ian Thompson

Date: 5 March 2007

Report Title	Delapre Park Bund – Report on Consultation process
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Key Decision	YES
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1. Recommendations

1.1 That Cabinet notes the results of the consultation process undertaken concerning the future of the Delapre Park Bund, summarised in the attached report at Appendix 1 by the former Interim Corporate Communications Manager. Cabinet in particular notes the balance of opinion expressed against the need to remove the bund and the weight of expressed views against the Council incurring costs in removing the bund.

1.2 That Cabinet, in light of the outcome of the consultation exercise, resolves not to take any further action concerning the removal of the bund.

2. Summary

2.1 At a Cabinet Meeting on 19 December 2006, it was noted that planning permission for the removal of the Delapre Park Bund had been granted. It was reported that the estimated costs of removal and subsequent making good of the land were calculated to be between £148,000 and £294,000, depending upon the percentage of material that might have to be disposed of in a landfill site. It was further noted that the provisional costs of installing timber bollards, as an alternative measure to prevent unauthorised access of cars onto the park, were £28,000 to £37,000.

2.2 At the same meeting it was noted that a consultation exercise with local

residents was to be undertaken concerning their views about the potential removal of the park bund and the prevention of unauthorised vehicular access.

- 2.3** The consultation exercise has been completed and the results have been analysed in the attached report at Appendix 1. These show that 61% of respondents living in areas closer to the bund considered that the bund should be left in place. This increased to 67% of all respondents (when the views of Borough residents in other parts of the Town were included).
- 2.4** The consultation exercise found that 77% of respondents living in areas closer to the to the bund felt that it was not a good use of public funds for the Council to remove the bund. This figure was almost exactly the same as that for the overall sample of respondents (including those from other areas of the Town).
- 2.5** Some complaints were received about the conduct and methodology of the consultation process. All of the complaints were addressed and the comments made by the individuals concerned have been included in the "COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK" section of the Report at page 6.

3. Report Background

In 2005 a bund was installed running parallel to London Road along the Delapre Park frontage, as part of a larger scheme (including Delapre Golf Club), to prevent the entry of unauthorised vehicles. The installation of the Bund has been unpopular with some residents.

At full Council on 26 June 2006, a resolution was passed requiring officers to make a planning application for the removal of the bund and to investigate the costs of doing so (and funding sources) and the costs of possible alternative measures to protect the park.

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

4.1 The first option is to leave the bund in situ. The bund does presently serve its original purpose of preventing unauthorised vehicular access to the park. This is unpopular with some local residents, particularly some of those who live on the London Road. This option involves no action and no additional cost to the Council.

4.2 The second option is to continue discussions with English Partnerships (EP) and any other development organisations, concerning their potential requirement elsewhere for some of the material making up the bund. As reported to Cabinet on 19 December 2006, there would still be a substantial cost in removing to landfill any residual inert material of a type not required by a third party and for making good the land. There would also be considerable noise and disturbance to residents during the civil engineering

process that would be required to remove the bund, make good the land and put in place alternative protection measures.

4.3 The third option is for the Council to choose to make capital resources available to arrange for the removal of the bund material to landfill, to make good the land and to put in place alternative security measures. This would involve disturbance and noise to residents as per 4.2 above and would necessarily require the Council prioritising this use of capital funds over other schemes.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

Option 4.1 would involve no additional use of Council resources.

Option 4.2 would involve continued officer time in trying to identify and discuss potential arrangements with third parties for the removal by them of part or all of the bund. Upon the assumptions made in the report to Cabinet on 19 December 2006, the likely residual costs of the Council in dealing with the remnants of the bund after 80% removal (assuming willing party found), after making good the ground and the installation of softwood bollards would total c. £180,000. There would thereafter be maintenance costs in connection with the bollards installed.

Option 4.3 would involve officer time in preparing and supervising a scheme of removal of the bund, making good the land and installing alternative security measures. The likely total costs, as identified previously, would be in the region of £330,000. There would be ongoing maintenance liabilities with any alternative system of park protection installed.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

There are no substantive risks associated with leaving the bund as existing.

The removal of the bund would require the Council to meet substantial costs - possibly in excess of those estimated above. Any major removal works would involve causing significant disturbance to local residents.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Parks; Regeneration
External	Borough Residents; Delapre Park Action Group; Ward Councillors

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
N/A
Corporate Plan
Priorities for 2006/2007:
1. Listen to Local People and provide the services they need.
4. Make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live.
5. Manage the Council's finances effectively.

B: Other Implications

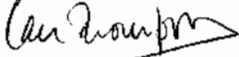
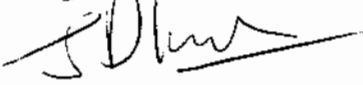

Other Strategies
Corporate Capital Strategy <i>n/a</i>

Finance Comments
<i>None</i>

Legal Comments

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Full Council 26 June 2006	Council Minutes	Council archive on modern.gov/internet
Cabinet 19 December 2006	Cabinet Report & Minutes	Council archive on modern.gov/internet

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author	Simon Dougall – Asset Manager		8177
Corporate Manager	N/A	-	-
Director		13/2/07	8744
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)		28/2/07	8335
Section 151 Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)			



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Northampton Borough Council

Results of Delapre Park bund consultation survey December / January 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2005 a bund was installed running parallel to London Road along the Delapre Park frontage, as part of a larger scheme by the Delapre Golf Club to protect the golf course similarly, with the view to preventing entry of unauthorised vehicles. The installation of the bund has been unpopular with some residents.

At Full Council on 26th June 2006, a resolution was passed, in summary, that a planning application for the removal of the park bund be lodged, to identify the likely costs of the work and potential funding and to look at alternative protection measures for the park and their costs. Any future decision to remove the bund will be a cabinet decision. As part of Cabinet's decision-making process, a consultation survey was commissioned to canvass a broad spectrum of public opinion. This report describes the methodology and outcomes of that survey.

2. METHODOLOGY

The primary survey sample was drawn from residents of Far Cotton and Cotton End¹; some residents living in the northern part of Merefield, and Hardingstone were also included. The number of households registered for council tax within that area number approximately 4,000. The sample size was 400 and represents approximately 10% of all households. To ensure that the distribution of addresses was both random and uniform, one in ten addresses (every tenth address) was selected from the council tax register.

A second random sample of 300 addresses throughout the entire town was also surveyed. The rationale for the second sample is that the financial consequences of the council removing the bund would affect the entire town in terms of the financial provision the council was able to make for other services, amenities and facilities.

To ensure that the survey met rational and objective criteria and was not prejudiced by subjective influence, the samples were made using automated selection methods and were not screened or filtered by any officer of the council.

¹ The area demarcated by London Road, Towcester Road and Mere Way.

Statistical significance and bias

A response rate of 27% for the primary sample and 24% overall was achieved. The sample was biased statistically through the addition of a group of 17 complainants whose views were already known to the council. The complainants' group as a proportion of the sample and responses is:

Sample	Number	Number of complainants	% of complainants
Overall	717	17	2.4%
Primary	415	15	3.75%
Whole town	302	2	0.67%
Responses	Number	Number of complainants	% of complainants
Overall	169	15	8.86%
Primary	111	13	11.71%
Whole town	58	2	3.45%

The responses to the question of whether the bund should be removed or left in place are analysed below with and without the complainants.

A number of respondents (mainly the complainants) commented that they felt the survey questionnaire to be loaded or biased towards keeping the bund in place. They claimed that by focussing on finance rather than other considerations, the council was trying to prejudice the outcome in favour of leaving the bund in place. Some of the complainants also alleged that the council had deliberately inflated costs in order to prejudice public opinion against their cause. It was decided to use the upper limit of costs in the survey since engineering projects of this size frequently over-run cost estimates and that the higher cost should be used as a budget should the project proceed. The range of costs for the removal of the bund and the installation of fencing was between circa £194,000 and £330,000. It might be argued that in surveys of this type there is little difference in public perception of such large amounts and that the use of the lower figure would probably have produced the same survey result.

3. RESULTS

1. We asked, "Should the bund be removed or left in place?"

Sample with complainants	Removed		Left in place	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Overall	52	30	113	67
Primary sample	43	39	67	61
Whole town	9	15	46	79

Of the overall sample with complainants, 21 respondents, who wished the bund to be removed, stated that bollard fencing or some other suitable barrier should be erected in place of the bund.

Sample without complainants	Removed		Left in place	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Overall	37	22	113	67
Primary sample	30	27	67	61
Whole town	7	12	46	79

2. We asked if the respondents believed that the removal of the bund represented good use of public funds or if they were opposed to public funds being used in this way.

All respondents	Good use of public funds		Good use		Opposed	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Overall	24	14	131	78		
Primary sample	18	16	85	77		
Whole town	6	10	46	79		

Note

Not all respondents answered all questions hence the percentages do not total 100%.

4. COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Comments from those in favour of removing the bund	Number of comments
Inadequate prior public consultation	16
Damage to scenery (aesthetics), trees, wildlife, environment, drainage	11
Golf club should pay for its removal	10
Costs of removal inflated in survey - biased or loaded survey questionnaire	8
Bad planning (planning permission for erection of bund should not have been granted)	5
Does not do the job for which it was intended	5
Makes access difficult for elderly and disabled	3
Increases traffic noise	1
Increases bikers nuisance	1

Comments from those in favour of leaving the bund in place

	Number of comments
Council should put its funds to better use	33
Does the job intended (in part or in whole)	28
Aesthetics acceptable; Bund does not damage environment	14
Campaigners reflect the interests of a small number of local residents	6
Inadequate prior public consultation	5
Plant bulbs, flowers, grass seed	4
Improves personal safety	1

5. COMPLAINTS AND VOIDS

Complaints

Four complaints were received about the survey all of which came from known complainants. Three complaints were received from Mrs Pamela Varnsvery of the Delapre Park Action Group. Of these, two were received by the council directly and one via the ombudsman. All of Mrs Varnsvery's complaints were addressed and resolved to her satisfaction and a response was made to the ombudsman (who had referred the complaint back to the council) by the complaints' unit that described how her complaints had been resolved. A further complaint was made by Mr W J Clifton and his comments were included in the analyses above.

Voids

Three responses were void. Their receipt was recorded in the number of responses received but their detail was excluded from the analysis. One response answered all questions "yes" and was meaningless. Another was from a councillor who had been inadvertently included in the whole town sample. We believed that it was best to exclude the response as the councillor was privileged and able to participate in the council decision. A third questionnaire had been photo-copied and passed to someone who had not been included in the original sample.