



1<sup>st</sup> February 2005

Report to City Council

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# Review of the Funding of the Aston Hall and Park Development Project



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Scrutiny Support Officer:

☎:

E-mail:

Ann D'Arcy

0121 303 1729

[Ann.d'arcy@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Ann.d'arcy@birmingham.gov.uk)

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# Aston Hall & Park Review

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## Aston Hall & Park Review

# Preface

**By Councillor Ray Hassall**

Chairman, Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee

and

**Councillor Ian Ward**

Lead Review Member, Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee



The conservation of the City's magnificent historic Aston Hall and Park is of national importance. However, to the local community, Aston Hall and Park provide much needed local leisure facilities. Since 1996 a great deal of work has gone into drawing up plans to both conserve the Hall and Park and provide facilities for the local area.

By the summer of 2004, the Committee started the Scrutiny Review because of concerns that problems had developed in securing the funding for the improvements planned. The local community understandably had great expectations that all the discussions since 1996 would soon result in action on the ground. Our Review Group of Members visited Aston Hall and heard evidence from local people and received information about funding packages. We saw that during the project there had been changes in leadership: within Aston Pride, of Cabinet Members and Senior Officers.

During the Review our concern was not to point fingers of blame, but to help achieve the funding needed for the project, before the deadlines expired. To this end, we met with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture as the review unfolded and wrote a letter to the Leader of the Council. In both instances we were sharing our initial findings and expressing support for the continuing discussions with Aston Pride and the Heritage Lottery Fund and alerting the Leader and the Cabinet Member to the requirement of Aston Pride that the City Council would need to make a financial contribution.

We accept that this Scrutiny Review could not in itself secure the funding, however it has played a very important part in raising awareness amongst



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Members, officers and the local community that unless we all work together, and quickly, the opportunity to develop the Hall and Park could be lost. The carrying out of this Review has had the effect of concentrating minds and bringing all stakeholders together to work constructively for the benefit of the Hall and Park.

The recommendations refer to the wider lessons to be learnt by the City Council from this Review. Our recommendations look to the future and relate to: finding resources to preserve and use our heritage at a time when other services are priorities; how to successfully administer complicated heritage projects which cut across corporate structures, and how to engage the emerging District structures in managing local sites in partnership with the community.

We are extremely grateful to all those who took the time to write to us, or come talk to us. We present this report in the positive and constructive spirit in which they gave their evidence.

Finally, we would like to thank all the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, especially Councillor Karen Hamilton, Councillor Reginald Corns and Councillor Chauhdry Rashid, who formed the Review Group and attended the many sessions necessary to hear all the evidence. Our thanks also go to Sue Griffith and Delphine Gibrat, for their hard work in assisting the Committee with producing this report.

Handwritten signature of Ray Hassall in blue ink.

**Councillor Ray Hassall**  
Chairman

Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee

Handwritten signature of Ian Ward in blue ink.

**Councillor Ian Ward**  
Lead Review Member

Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee



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# 1: Summary

1. In August 2004, Members of the Leisure, Sports and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee became concerned that there were difficulties in securing the package of funding required to develop Aston Hall and Park. Concerns were expressed since these difficulties, unless overcome, were threatening the whole project. The Committee asked a sub-group of Members from all parties to investigate the problems.
2. Our initial concerns were concentrated around the importance of securing funds from Aston Pride, whose initial support had been crucial to the promise from the Heritage Lottery Fund of over £4m. The negotiations between the City Council and Aston Pride over the period of the review were fundamental to the future of the project. The Review Group Members were able to support this process.
3. During the review we brought to the attention of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture the requirement of Aston Pride that the City would make a financial contribution of £1m.
4. By the time that this report is presented to Council, it is hoped that the package of funding will have been secured and our work will have helped this along.
5. During the course of the review, it became clear that there are wider lessons to be learnt by the City Council as a whole regarding the challenges of heritage projects. We recommend measures to improve corporate co-ordination at both Member and Officer level.
6. We heard evidence from the local community about how both Aston Hall and Park could meet their needs for leisure, sport and recreation in an intensely built up, multicultural urban area. We recommend that the emerging District Committee play a stronger role in managing and promoting the Park and that the Museums Service undertake further work to engage the local community with the Hall itself.
7. Finally, we recognise that Aston Pride is emerging from a difficult period of restructuring. We endorse the recommendations of the previous Scrutiny Review into Aston Pride. We saw evidence that progress is being made and support the Regeneration O & S Committee in their work to ensure that this is sustained.



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# 2: Summary of Recommendations

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1	That a Cabinet Member is identified as the Champion for Heritage projects in the City.	The Leader	April 2005
2	That a Heritage Strategy be drawn up to set out the City's priorities for protecting and enhancing our heritage.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader	September 2005
3	That a JNC Officer (within the Portfolio of the Cabinet Champion) should be identified to lead on the production of the Heritage Strategy and to coordinate bids to external funders.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader and Chief Executive	April 2005
4	That the principle is agreed that Heritage projects are allocated a Senior Project Manager with clear lines of reporting to the Heritage Cabinet Champion and JNC Coordinating Officer.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader	April 2005
5	That further work is undertaken to investigate additional ways that the Hall and local residents can be drawn closer.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	September 2005
6	That a review of the Aston Hall and Park Community Forum be undertaken with a view to better engagement and representation from the local community.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and District Chairperson	September 2005
7	That a Management Plan for Aston Park be drawn up in consultation with the local Community.	District Chairperson and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	December 2005
8	Progress towards achievement of these recommendations should be reported to the Local Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.  Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	July 2005



## Aston Hall & Park Review

# 3: Terms of reference

## 3.1 Reasons for Conducting This Review

- 3.1.1 The development work on the Aston Hall and Park project started back in 1996. During the development phase, it was expected that the partnership funding required by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) would come from a variety of sources including European funds (ERDF), regional funds (AWM) and Aston Pride – the delivery organisation of the government's New Deal for Communities programme. However, the bids for ERDF and AWM were not successful. A crucial stage was the successful application to the HLF in October 2003. At that time, the Aston Pride Board were very supportive of the project. However, in March 2003, the partnership organisation was disbanded. As discussions were reopened with the new Aston Pride administration in January 2004, there was an indication that the total amount of partnership funding would not be forthcoming. Aston Pride confirmed this in writing at the end of March and therefore a bid for Council funds was made in June to make up the shortfall.
- 3.1.2 During the summer of 2004, changes both at Member and Senior Officer level within the City Council coincided with the period when Aston Pride were rebuilding their organisation. However, by September 2004, it appeared that time was beginning to run out. The Heritage Lottery Fund had been patient and agreed to an extension to the time limit within which the Stage 2 Bid for the release of the promised funds had to be made. The new deadline is the end of March 2005. By then, partnership funding has to be in place. It was clear that some scrutiny work would be beneficial to ensuring the success of the project.
- 3.1.3 Whilst the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the review are set out in this report and presented to Council, there has been an element of "overview" to this work. The Overview and Scrutiny Members would not have achieved their objectives by waiting until the report went to Council before alerting Cabinet Members and Senior Officers to the urgent actions needed. Therefore, a meeting was held between the Lead Member for the review, Cllr Ian Ward, and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, Cllr John Alden. After this meeting a letter was sent from Cllr Ian Ward and Cllr Ray Hassall (with copies to the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr



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Ken Hardeman).

- 3.1.4 In addition, informal discussions were held both at Member and Officer level, with a view to ensuring that the initial evidence gathered was shared in order to support the achievement of the Aston Hall and Park Project.

### 3.2 Review Group and Terms of Reference

- 3.2.1 A cross-party group of Members was constituted within the Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct the review. Review Group Members were:

- Cllr Ian Ward (Lead review Member)
- Cllr Ray Hassall (Chairman of the Leisure, Sports and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
- Cllr Karen Hamilton
- Cllr Chauhdry Rashid
- Cllr Reginald Corns

- 3.2.2 The terms of reference agreed on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2004 were:

- 3.2.3 "This review is being conducted because failure to secure partnership funding for the Stage 2 conditional offer from the Heritage Lottery Fund by April 2005 will result in their offer of over £4m being withdrawn. If this were to happen, the development of Aston Hall and Park would not be achieved. Not only would this result in the continued physical decline of the historically important Hall and Park, it would also deprive local people of a range of valuable new community facilities. This would be particularly unfortunate as the project team have striven throughout to involve the local community in the development of the project. The issue is one of high public interest.

- 3.2.4 With this review, the Review Group will seek understanding of the difficulties the Aston Pride Delivery Partnership may have in committing funds to this project, and how these difficulties may be resolved to secure the partnership funding.

- 3.2.5 The objectives of the review are also to learn lessons in the process for achieving future funding for heritage projects in the City.

- 3.2.6 And to gain greater understanding of how the needs of heritage bodies can be reconciled with those of the community."

- 3.2.7 In September and October 2004, the Review Group took written and verbal evidence from 15 Council Officers, Members, and Community Representatives. Witnesses included the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, the Cabinet Member for



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Regeneration, the Head of Corporate Finance, the Acting Head of Community Museums, the Acting Head of Landscape Development, representatives from the Aston Pride Delivery Partnership Board and representatives from community organisations. The findings are presented further in this report.



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# 4: Findings – The Challenges of Heritage Projects

## 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Aston Hall is a magnificent Jacobean Grade I Listed Building of national importance. The Park (Grade II Listed on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest) is a vital area of public open space in a very densely developed multicultural area of Inner City Birmingham. These two identities do not always rest comfortably together and balancing the different expectations of the Hall and Park is challenging.
- 4.1.2 The Hall is owned by Birmingham City Council and managed by the Museums Service within the Directorate of Learning & Culture. The Park is managed by the Parks Service which is now within the Directorate of Local Services. The Park and Hall are situated within the Aston Hall & Park Conservation Area.
- 4.1.3 The project to develop the Hall and Park, which is the concern of this Scrutiny Review, strives to marry the protection and enhancement of the historic Hall and the improvement of the Park and the area immediately around the Hall (the historic gardens and Stable Range) for community use. During evidence taking the Review Group came to see that the project was complicated by the difficulty of balancing the needs of the Hall and Park.
- 4.1.4 The original project appeared to the Review Group to be primarily about the protection and enhancement of the Hall and its immediate surroundings (the gardens and Stable Range). Whilst the needs of the community for additional facilities were an essential part of the project, we heard evidence that many people perceived the project to be a heritage project. The project was initiated and managed by the Museums Service, in partnership with the Parks Service and the Heritage Lottery Fund were approached for funding. Initial ideas to recreate the enclosed character of the historic gardens with walls, railings and gates would have not only respected historical authenticity, but created a secure envelope around the House to protect it from vandalism. The erection of railings and gates in front of the Hall to enclose the East Courtyard would have been historically correct, (as shown in earlier drawings) enhanced the space directly in front of the Hall and enabled the



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protection of the entrance and front elevation at night.

- 4.1.5 Other parts of the project were more directly intended to meet the needs of the local community. The Stable Range was to be converted to provide improved community and visitor facilities, (toilets, shop/café) and a park rangers base. A new building, the Aston Regeneration Centre (ARC) was planned to provide a community exhibition/activity gallery and improvements carried out to the Park to enable more intensive use for sport and recreation. The ARC was subsequently dropped from the project and its functions transferred to the Stable Range and the Hall. However, as discussions continued with all those involved, it appeared that this balance within the project was changing. The Review Group heard evidence to suggest that over time, Aston Pride became more insistent that the project should concentrate more on facilities for sports and recreation in the Park rather than enhancing a historic building that many of the community felt no affiliation with. However, these changes in the balance affected the amount and sources of project funding that could be raised to enable the project to succeed.
- 4.1.6 At the point at which the Scrutiny Review was initiated in August 2004, it appeared possible that this instability would destroy the project completely, prevent funding being achieved and lead to widespread disappointment within the community, the City Council and HLF.

### 4.2 The National Context

- 4.2.1 There are approximately 400,000 Listed Buildings in the UK. Of these, only 8,000 are Grade 1 Listed and a further 16,000 Grade II\* Listed. Some are owned by local authorities, as in Aston Hall's case, some by major heritage organisations such as the National Trust and others by Charities, Trusts and private individuals.
- 4.2.2 The Aston Hall & Park project is not unique and lessons can be learnt from other historic building projects not only in Birmingham but through out the UK.
- 4.2.3 The BBC programme 'Restoration' has brought the needs of these buildings, and the complexities of finding ways to improve them and maximise their use to the local community, to the attention of the public. The winner of each of the two series has been promised a Heritage Lottery Grant of about £3m. Like Aston Hall & Park, all the buildings featured were in need of money, not only to prevent historic features from being lost, but to ensure a central place in the local community and an end use that would ensure the long term future of the building. More emphasis was given in the second series on the importance of the involvement of the local community and the support available to raise profiles and raise



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money. Several buildings featured needed a package of funding from a wide range of sources for about £10m, of which a Heritage Lottery Grant would provide on average about £3m. Sadly the 2003 Winner announced in August 2003 – Victoria Baths, Manchester – has not yet got a date for work to start on site, as the funding package is still under discussion. This illustrates that such projects are far from straightforward.

4.2.4 The Heritage Lottery Fund distributes money raised by the National Lottery to support all aspects of heritage in the UK. For the period 2002 – 2007 their aims are:

- To encourage more people to be involved and make decisions about their heritage
- To conserve and enhance the UK's diverse heritage
- To ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage
- To achieve a more equitable distribution of grants across the UK

4.2.5 Projects that care for and protect heritage are at the core of their work. The heritage must be preserved in order for other important benefits to flow from it – conservation is far more than an end in itself. Among the benefits are the many ways in which heritage projects can stimulate regeneration. Wider benefits include social, economic and environmental benefits. The English Heritage Lottery Fund can only fund a proportion of the total cost of any project. This proportion is usually about 40%.

### 4.3 City Wide Context

4.3.1 Birmingham has around 2,000 Listed Buildings, of which 23 are Grade I Listed. In addition there are 95 Grade II \* Listed Buildings and 13 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Some of these are in need of repair and enhancement for suitable uses. Where Grade I or II \* Listed Buildings or Ancient Monuments are "at risk", inclusion on the At Risk Register by English Heritage places a legal obligation on the owner to carry out work to prevent further deterioration.

4.3.2 The City Council owns 8 Grade I Listed Buildings – Aston Hall (the house, the stable range and the lodges are counted as separate buildings) the Town Hall, Victoria Law Courts, Curzon Street Station, Oxhill Road Mortuary Chapel and 122-124 Colmore Row. In addition, BCC owns 15 Grade II\* Listed Buildings. Four of these Grade II\* Listed Buildings are included on the At Risk Register. Aston Park is one of nine Council owned parks on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest. (see Appendix).

4.3.3 The City Council is involved in heritage projects in several different



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ways:

- Projects where the building is owned by the City Council and used for providing a City Council service. Examples of completed projects include Blakesley Hall and future projects being considered include Handsworth Library and Moseley Road Baths.
- Projects where the building is not owned by the City Council, but where advice is given to another organisation, including how to make any application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Whilst the organisation makes the application, the City Council plays a co-ordinating role with HLF.
- Projects of significant interest to the City or a local community where there is a partnership between the Council and another organisation, or where the Council has some part of the ownership. In this case there may be advantages in the bid to HLF being submitted and coordinated by the Council. Examples of completed projects include Cathedral Square. Projects being considered include Perrots Folly.
- Projects where the building is owned by the City Council but where future uses will be managed by a Trust or other partnership for public use.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments where their value is intrinsic, rather than as place to provide a service – Weoley Castle is currently on the At Risk Register.

4.3.4 The portfolio of properties that the City Council owns is considerable. The on-going requirement to maintain these properties places a huge commitment on the Budget. However, where the properties are Listed, significant additional costs are accrued. These buildings are inevitably old and fragile and the costs of maintenance are considerably increased by the need to respect the historic character of the building and use traditional techniques and materials. Historically, levels of maintenance of buildings have not always kept up with the deterioration of aging buildings and when urgent intervention has been necessary, there has been a tendency to seek a package of capital funds to restore the building. A number of Heritage Lottery awards have been recently successfully attracted to Birmingham. However, these projects are hugely complicated to administer - successfully bringing together funding from a wide range of sources demands very considerable time and commitment from a wide range of people and projects may take 10-15 years to complete. Where an application is made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, partnership funding is always required – HLF usually only grant fund about 40% of the project costs. However, identifying the money for partnership funds within the City Council Budget is extremely difficult. The demands from the statutory services of Housing, Education and



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Social Care are so great that prioritising spending on historic buildings can be difficult.

### 4.4 Aston Hall and Park

4.4.1 At the time of the bid to Heritage Lottery Fund in January 2003, it was expected that the partnership funding would come largely from Aston Pride. At that time, the original Aston Pride Board were very supportive of the project. However, in March 2003, the partnership organisation was disbanded. Discussions with the relaunched Aston Pride Board recommenced in January 2004. By February there was an indication that the total amount of partnership funding would not be forthcoming. By the end of March, this was made clear in a letter from Aston Pride, and therefore a bid was made in June 2004 to the City Council's Flourishing Neighbourhoods Fund<sup>1</sup> for £1m to make up the shortfall. The development project requires a range of funding sources to succeed, but several are dependant on each other. In summary the package proposed in October 2004 comprised: -

- Heritage Lottery Fund                    £4.15m
- Aston Pride                                    £4m
- Birmingham City Council £1m
- Other Sports Funding                    £0.67m
- Public Appeal etc                            £0.12m

4.4.2 The release of the promised Heritage Lottery Fund requires partnership funding to be clearly agreed and approved. This has to be demonstrated in the Stage 2 submission to HLF. The "match" must be against the heritage related elements of the scheme. The Review Group heard evidence that, as the project passes through the Aston Pride approval process, it is possible that the sporting element of the package will be seen more favourably than the heritage element. If the HLF eligible costs decrease, then the Stage 2 submission will be asking for a higher percentage contribution (around 60%) – although the total amount of cash requested will be the same. The HLF Regional Director has indicated that this will probably be acceptable; however the final decision is down to their trustees. The outcome could be a reduced cash offer for the project. The deadline for the Stage 2 submission (with evidence of all funding being in place) is the end of March 2005.

4.4.3 The amount of resources Aston Pride can contribute have been difficult to predict over the life of the project and the Review Group received several conflicting pieces of evidence as to the resources likely to be finally agreed. The likely amount was reduced by £1m

<sup>1</sup> Now "Capital Investment Fund "



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over the course of the lengthy discussions between BCC and Aston Pride during the summer of 2004. To make up the shortfall in partnership funding, a bid was made by the Museums Service for £1m to the Birmingham City Council Flourishing Neighbourhoods Fund<sup>2</sup> in June 2004. The Review Group heard evidence that the Museums Service were unsure of the process for determining their bid. Aston Pride's evidence made it clear that should no resources be available from Birmingham City Council, then Aston Pride would be unlikely to release their resources. In turn, the Heritage Lottery Fund would be unable to confirm any grant from them. The Review Group realised with concern that the funding package was seriously threatened.

- 4.4.4 The Review Group heard evidence that the demand across the City for resources to maintain Council owned properties (especially those of historical significance) exceed the budget available many times over. Since there comes a point when Listed Buildings (especially those on the "at risk" register) have to be repaired, a one off capital scheme is often the only avenue to secure the funds. For 2004/05, the previous administration agreed that the available funds for the Museums Service (to cover both the main Museum & Art Gallery and the six community museums, including Aston Hall) are:
- Maintenance contracts (alarm, CCTV, heating, lighting, environmental controls, etc) plus emergency call-outs - £154,876
  - General repairs to all buildings managed by the Museums Services - £104,551
- 4.4.5 For Aston Hall itself the spending on maintenance has been between £10,000 and £20,000 every year, depending on the urgency of repair.
- 4.4.6 The current Aston Hall and Park project includes minimal works to the Hall itself. These include restoration work to the South Wing, exhibition displays, fitting out and environmental controls. It is estimated that desirable work to the Hall in the future would include works to the roof, brick walls and stonework, and windows – approximate cost £5m. We heard evidence from the Museums Service that the intention was to make a further bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for work to the Hall itself as Phase 2 of the wider project. However, no work has been done yet to identify Birmingham City Council funds (or other funds) to act as partnership funding and it would be most likely very difficult to find an allocation within the Birmingham City Council Budget.
- 4.4.7 The City's budgetary pressures have resulted in the need to explore the capacity for services to generate income. The Museums Service at one time charged for entry to two community museums (Soho

<sup>2</sup> Now "Capital Investment Fund "



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House and the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter) but eighteen months ago charges were removed and seasonal opening was introduced. This was in line with national pressures to remove museum entrance charges. Across the City, commercial reviews have sought to develop ways in which services can maximise income generation. A commercial review has recently been commissioned by BMAG in response to recommendations by Birmingham Audit that the service becomes more strategic about its commercial operations objectives. Income generating ideas have been discussed, such as civil wedding ceremonies, letting for business and conference use. However, a balance is necessary between providing a service and running a business. Often increased use of historic houses results in deterioration of the fabric of the building. Another source of income for historic houses can be fund raising by "Friends" organisations.

- 4.4.8 As the search for funds to restore historic buildings goes on across the country, a variety of approaches have been used. Some authorities have transferred their buildings to Preservation Trusts. This has the advantage of enabling a wider range of resources to be attracted and also involve the local community more directly in the management and running of the facility. A more radical solution is to transfer nationally important buildings to a charity, such as the National Trust. However, this is not possible without a significant endowment of funds for future maintenance. Alternatively, properties can be granted to the National Trust on a long lease, obviating the need for endowment. The Trust, with its membership of 3.2 million members, has an enormous experience in marketing, maintenance and management. However, it imposes a significant charge for entry to properties, promotes them as tourist attractions rather than local facilities and requires significant security measures. This approach could not be considered for Aston Hall – although it would protect and enhance the House, it would be completely unacceptable to local residents. Fears were expressed during evidence taking that there is a suspicion that the City Council might be wanting to "sell off" Aston Hall. This is one of the causes of the feeling of distrust. Nevertheless, there are serious questions to be asked about how resources to maintain Aston Hall in the future will be found.



## 5: Findings – Providing for Leisure and Recreation

### 5.1 The Local Community

5.1.1 Throughout the evidence taking, the Review Group heard different views of what the “Local Community” wanted from the Hall and Park. The local area contains people with different views and the multi-cultural nature of Aston means that quite different cultural needs are articulated. Some of those giving evidence to the Review Group suggested that the voices of some groups in the community were not being heard, as they were drowned out by stronger voices. The Museums Service undertook extensive consultation during the development phases of the project and were sure that their initial plans reflected the outcome of that consultation. A huge consultation exercise was organised between 1998 and 2004 by the Museums Service. The consultation was very wide and there was an undeniable effort to be comprehensive and target all groups within the community. Over 2000 people were included in the survey, through door to door surveys, users surveys and postal surveys. The team have also worked closely with a number of bodies and agencies representing the community, among which are:

- Aston youth forum
- Local schools and colleges
- Black women’s network
- Neighbourhood forums
- Local youth workers
- Age concern

5.1.2 However, Aston Pride have contested how representative the consultation was. As a result, during the later stages of discussions with Aston Pride, amendments to the project were made. However, it also became clear during evidence gathering that there were different views of what the community wanted, from within Aston Pride. Some evidence suggested that the current scheme no longer reflects all the groups in the community - some groups such as the elderly, or Asian women with children, feel that they have been under-represented. It is for example the perception of these groups



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that Asian males have been over-represented in choosing which sports facilities should be built (cricket field as opposed to a bowling green or tennis court) or what work would be done for the children's play area.

### 5.2 International and Regional Visitors

- 5.2.1 The already diverse needs of the local users of the Hall and Park also need to be balanced with the needs of the regional or international visitors. These different groups of users do not necessarily have the same expectations or needs when spending a day at Aston Hall and Park. The views of national and international users were sampled during the consultation exercise, through a users' survey, and their views need to be incorporated into the project as well. For example, international visitors are more interested in the Hall itself and the historic Gardens than the sports facilities, but regional or city wide visitors would benefit from a renovated park and the development of sports facilities or children play areas.

### 5.3 Accessibility to the Courts and Gardens

- 5.3.1 The initial plans drawn up following the consultation by the Museums Service sought to marry the need to protect and enhance the Listed Aston Hall and develop the Park to facilitate further sports facilities. The proposals to enclose the historic Courts and Gardens had historical integrity and enabled a protective envelop around the Hall to be secured at night (vandalism to the historic Hall does occur). However, during evidence collection it became clear that some of the local community saw this as a hostile proposal designed to exclude the community. There was a suggestion that sometime in the future, local people would be excluded behind locked gates, charged for entry, and even the Hall and Gardens could be sold off. At the time of the initiation of the Scrutiny Review (August 2004) this issue had become a blockage that was preventing Aston Pride from supporting the project and the project seemed doomed to failure. Those giving evidence pointed to a lack a trust between Aston Pride and the City Council, but the difference of opinion could be interpreted as different expectations for the Hall and Park. During September City Council Officers and representatives from HLF amended the project in response to the concerns of Aston Pride.



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### 5.4 The Need for Sports Facilities

- 5.4.1 The evidence taken from Aston Pride clearly indicated that at that time (September 2004) their priority was for the project to deliver improvements to the Park, and facilities for sport, in addition to the conversion of the stable block for community use. We heard anecdotal evidence several times that local people thought this project was about improving the historic Hall. There were suggestions that some people thought the Park more important than the Hall. We also heard from several of those giving evidence that local people were concerned that Birmingham City Council seemed to have let the Park deteriorate. In its heyday there were tennis courts, a crown bowling green, well maintained paths and attractive gardens. Basic maintenance had been neglected, it was claimed, and now paths were broken and dangerous, and some people thought that the Park was an unattractive place to visit, made worse by burnt out cars and graffiti. Comparisons were made with other parks in the City, especially Handsworth Park where a major improvement scheme has started on site. It was confirmed by the Parks Service that national resources available for parks maintenance over the last few years had been inadequate.
- 5.4.2 The view given in evidence by Aston Pride is that the City Council is expected to finance that part of the project that will restore the Park to a 'normal' level of maintenance to enable new sports facilities to be provided. Aston Pride are keen to fund the sports facilities in partnership with several outside offers of funding from sports providers. However, if Aston Pride's support for the project is concentrated on sports provision, then their contribution becomes increasingly ineligible as partnership funding for the Heritage Lottery Bid. The result would be a decrease in HLF funding and a reduction of those parts of the project that are intended to protect and enhance the Listed Hall.

### 5.5 Use of the Hall Itself

- 5.5.1 Evidence from the Museums Service suggests that much has been done to make the Hall accessible to the local community. The following evidence was submitted by the Head of Community Museums:
- 5.5.2 *"As a Jacobean mansion house, Aston Hall was meant to intimidate and impress. As a community resource, however, we want to encourage local people to come in and visit so we have had to adopt a range of strategies to overcome Aston's grand architecture. Over the last eight years we have been hugely successful in reaching out to local people, and accusations that we don't do anything for the community simply do not stand up to scrutiny. The creation of the site-based posts of Curator/Manager and Assistant Development Officer in 1996 have had a significant impact in*



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*raising the site's profile within the local community. The house is now visited and used much more by local people, with many more community focused events and exhibitions, often organised in conjunction with youth workers and other partners.*

5.5.3 *Because the Hall is fundamentally a museum of historic interiors which cannot be radically altered, much of our effort has concentrated on a huge range of events, exhibitions and individual projects. These include:*

- *Aston Hall Asian Women's Textile Group - demonstrations and exhibitions of their work*
- *Artists in residence working with school and youth groups*
- *Indian dancing demonstrations*
- *The Royal Institute of British Architect's Project with local schools*
- *Regular and varied programmes of (free) holiday events for kids*
- *Sponsoring the Play Centre football team*
- *Storytelling sessions*
- *Free community evenings for Aston Hall by Candlelight*
- *Free bus trips from Aston to the City's other museum sites*
- *Participating in Aston Parish Church and Aston Manor Transport Museum's open days*
- *Acting as a free venue for any number of community conferences, open days and other community initiated events*
- *The newest initiative is the creation of a community exhibition space within the Hall itself which should be opened next year.*

5.5.4 *Quite apart from hosting various events, meetings, festivals etc in association with the 'new' partnership board, we also worked closely with Aston Pride to deliver a variety of major community events, notably the Aston Pride Festival and the Aston Pride Olympics (schools sports days). We have also set up the Aston Hall & Park Community Consultation Forum which is open to all. Finally we have been particularly successful in recruiting local young people from culturally diverse backgrounds. This has meant that the workforce is not only more representative of the local community but has sent out a clear message that Aston Hall and Park is as much for local people as visitors from elsewhere."*

5.5.5 However, evidence from Aston Pride suggested that local people do



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not see it as accessible. One suggestion was that rooms could be opened up in the Hall as meeting rooms and places for elders to sit during the day together with access to toilets.

- 5.5.6 It is apparent that care and protection of the building must be the chief priority of the Museums Service and the historic fabric is vulnerable. The intention would be that the converted Stable Range is the main focus for community activity rather than the Hall itself. However, the view of some parts of the community that the Hall is inaccessible to them adversely affects the enthusiasm of Aston Pride for the whole project.

### 5.6 The Future Management of the Hall and Park

- 5.6.1 The debate about who the Hall and Park belongs to is part of a wider issue. This was reflected in evidence gathering by calls for greater management by the community of the sports facilities proposed for the Park and in particular the proposed new pavilion. One of the ways to show the community the desire of the Council to listen to them and take their expectations into account would be to involve them more in the management of the facilities. Moreover, it is also one of the conditions likely to be imposed by Aston Pride to fund the project. This would develop among the local population a sense of ownership which, if it is already quite strong as regards the Park, is almost non-existent when it comes to the Hall. An enhanced sense of involvement by sections of the community, who may feel excluded at the moment, might reduce vandalism.
- 5.6.2 There are many forms that this involvement in the management of the facilities could take and there needs to be careful considerations as to which is the best adapted to the area and the particular status of some of the facilities (the Hall is a Grade I Listed Building). The local communities are pushing for "real" involvement as opposed to "cosmetic" involvement. Interviewees called advisory groups "talk shops" and made it clear that this was not regarded by local groups as satisfactory participation. Distinction needs to be made between the Hall itself, whose status implies particular requirements in terms of the form of management, the community facilities within the renovated Stable Range and the sports facilities, which the community would like to be more involved with.
- 5.6.3 Since April 2004, Devolution and Localisation are being implemented across the City with the intention of enabling more decisions to be made at the local level and ensure that services are more customer-focused. Each District (Aston Hall being within the Ladywood District) now has some delegated powers to deliver those services that have been localised. Each District Committee comprises the Members from the local wards and a District Director supporting the Committee and co-ordinating services within the District. Each District will develop its own service plans -



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Councillors and Officers will work with local residents, the Health, Police and Fire services as well as the voluntary and community organisations to provide a Community Plan for the area.

- 5.6.4 The District has responsibility for Aston Park via a service level agreement with the Parks Sports and Events Division of the Local Services Directorate. The District has been involved in some of the discussions about the Aston Hall and Park project during the past few months and has been keen to play a bigger role in the project to develop the Park. Therefore, arrangements for the future management of the Park need to be developed within the emerging processes of localisation and devolution.
- 5.6.5 In addition, the District Committee has responsibility for developing and implementing a Consultation and Engagement Plan, detailing how it will undertake this activity with communities in the District. With this in mind, it is likely that any consultation and engagement activity to be undertaken by the Museums Service will be closely aligned to and where possible integrated with the District's consultation and engagement strategy. This will in turn avoid the situation where the community may receive different messages from different parts of the Council.



## 6: Findings - Bid and Project Management

### 6.1 Political Champions

- 6.1.1 Aston Hall and Park is within the Aston Ward and the Ladywood Constituency. The involvement of the Members has been mostly through Aston Pride New Deal for Communities. In addition, the local Members were briefed by the then Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, Cllr Ian Ward and were supportive of the scheme. This was confirmed at Aston Ward Committee in February 2004 when Members thanked officers for all their hard work in achieving the Stage 1 HLF approval. In September 2004, Cllr. Mohammed Afzal was appointed to the Board of Aston Pride.
- 6.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture until June 2004, Cllr Ian Ward, was and remains fully supportive of the project. Officers briefed him in March 2004 on their concerns for the project. A new Cabinet Member, Cllr Nigel Dawkins, was appointed in June, just as the project reached a critical phase. At the end of August, the Cabinet Member resigned and was replaced. The current Cabinet Member, Cllr John Alden, was called to give evidence to the Scrutiny Review Group at the beginning of October.
- 6.1.3 At the beginning of November, Cllr Ian Ward as Lead Member of the Scrutiny Review, met with Cllr Alden to brief him on the interim findings of the review.

### 6.2 Officer Champions

- 6.2.1 Whilst the development work on the project had started as early as 1996, a crucial stage was the successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in October 2003. The Museums Service co-ordinated this work and the then Senior Assistant Director (Museums & Heritage Projects), was the officer driving the project forward, with the assistance of the Head of Community Museums, the Curator of Aston Hall and the Assistant Director for Parks and Nature Conservation. A Senior Project Co-ordinator in the Museums Service also assisted the project management. However, as the demands of the Town Hall increased, he was seconded to work on



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that project instead (and subsequently left the Council). At the end of May 2004, the Senior Assistant Director retired from the Council. His post was filled by the Head of Community Museums on an acting-up basis and acting-up was transferred down the line. The effect of this was to reduce the total level of senior officer support within the Museums Service. At the same time, the project to restore the Town Hall was at the stage of being extremely demanding.

### 6.3 Project Co-ordination

- 6.3.1 Since January 2004, when the new Aston Pride organisation re-entered the discussions on the project, the Acting Head of Community Museums has performed both the Officer Champion and Project Co-ordinating roles. The Parks Management Service were actively involved - these services were transferred from the Department of Leisure and Culture in April 2004 to the Directorate of Local Services when 'Going Local' went live. We heard evidence that these structural changes caused some difficulties in pulling together the different parts of the project, especially the involvement of the Sports Development Team. The depletion of project management staff within the Museums Service (and the dominating effect of the Town Hall project) also meant that financial co-ordination appeared difficult. During evidence gathering, Members found it difficult to understand the overall financial package since figures were appearing from different sources. When crucial questions were asked about the process of obtaining resources from the Flourishing Neighbourhoods Fund<sup>3</sup>, no one from within the Museums Service could advise the Review Group what the process was. The Review Group called the Assistant Director of Resources to give evidence, to clarify the current position. He advised that the process was evolving as a result of changes in political control and that Members would be considering bids as part of the wider budget setting process in the New Year.

### 6.4 The Complexities of Heritage Projects

- 6.4.1 The national context for Heritage projects has been set out earlier in this report. Within the City Council, the political responsibility for heritage projects lies with the portfolio in which the building sits. If the building is a museum or leisure project (e.g. Aston Hall) the responsibility lies with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture. If the building is a school (e.g. Moseley School), the responsibility lies with the Cabinet Member for Education and

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<sup>3</sup> Now "Capital Investment Fund"



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Lifelong Learning. If it is a library or swimming pool (e.g. Balsall Heath Library and Baths, Moseley Road), the responsibility lies with the District Chairperson in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, while regeneration projects (e.g. Curzon Street Station) are the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration. In addition, advice and support is frequently given by the Conservation Team to heritage projects throughout the City where sites are not owned by the City Council.

- 6.4.2 It was not clear to the Review Group where the responsibility for the co-ordination of heritage projects lies within either the political or officer structure of the Council. A further issue is that the Leisure, Sport and Culture portfolio now cuts across two Strategic Directorates of the City Council. It seems likely that the coordination of heritage project bids for external funding (including HLF) have been difficult to co-ordinate across the Council
- 6.4.3 Because heritage projects require packages of funding and significant community involvement, they are very demanding of officer time. Bringing together a package of funding from different sources is very difficult and time consuming especially when the timeline for each bid is different and some are conditional on partnership funding. In the case of Aston Hall, the uncertainty regarding the BCC funds adds to the difficulty, as it is potentially jeopardizing the whole package. If this bid fails, the partnership funding will be insufficient to secure the grant awarded by other sponsors like HLF. Because the decision for these bids is so close to the HLF deadline, there will be very limited time to try and identify other sources of partnership funding. In addition, public opinion about historic sites can be vigorous and insistent: emotions can run high when the future of buildings that have been significant to the fabric of the City is being discussed. It is essential that such complex projects, involving so many different factors, benefit from a strong drive and clear and efficient mechanisms for bid co-ordination.



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# 7: Findings - Aston Pride

## 7.1 Context

- 7.1.1 Since the inception of the Aston Pride New Deal for Communities in 2000, it has been envisaged as key source of funding for the Aston Hall and Park development project.
- 7.1.2 New Deal for Communities (NDC) is an Area Based Government Initiative launched in 1998. At the beginning of 2000 a community based bid was submitted by a group call the Aston Pride Partnership made up of Community Groups, Statutory Bodies, Residents, Neighbourhood Forums and City Councillors. In June 2000 the Government Office of the West Midland announced that Aston Pride Partnership had been successful and was awarded £54m.
- 7.1.3 As early as 1996 the then Department of Leisure and Community Services had realised that comprehensive action was needed to reverse the long term decline of Aston Hall and Park. Visitor numbers to the Hall had been declining and the Park was becoming increasingly unattractive due to lack of investment, vandalism and drug related criminal activity, limited facilities for visitors and residents and changes in local demography. A whole range of research was undertaken, culminating in the Aston Hall and Park Conservation Plan in 1999 and detailed public consultation carried out to find out the local communities needs. In 2001 extensive consultation was carried out to assess support for potential areas for development and a master plan drawn up.
- 7.1.4 In 2001, Aston Pride awarded the scheme £60,000 development funding and in 2003 nearly £950,000 for a range of key posts supporting the development scheme. Aston Pride's visible level of commitment did much to ensure the success of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in January 2003. In October the HLF awarded the project £337,000 development funding to work up to the final design stage and Stage 1 pass for a grant of £4,152,000 – subject to a detailed application within a year (October 2004) demonstrating securing sufficient partnership funding.
- 7.1.5 In 2001 Aston Pride was supportive of the project and their commitment was reflected in the confidence of the HLF to promise future funds. However, by October 2001, the Government Office of the West Midlands was beginning to express concern about the Aston Pride Partnership Organisation – in particular its governance



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arrangements and its ability to deliver its programme. The next year was a time of intense turmoil and difficulty within Aston Pride. The insurmountable problems resulted in intervention by the Minister and in March 2003, Aston Pride Partnership ceased to be the delivery vehicle for the £54m New Deal for Communities Programme.

7.1.6 A Scrutiny Review examining the circumstances leading up to Ministerial Intervention was carried out and was reported to the City Council on 6 April 2004.

7.1.7 In September 2003 Aston Pride was relaunched and a new structure was put in place comprising:

- A Board of 17 members including an independent Chair, 5 Agency Representative, 5 elected. Theme Group Community Representatives, 4 nominated Community Representatives, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and one Ward Member
- 5 Theme groups
- An interim Chief Executive and Deputy
- Officer support for the theme groups and for programme management and community involvement

## 7.2 Concerns

7.2.1 Contact with the relaunched Aston Pride was re-established in January 2004. By February 2004 the Museums Service were becoming increasingly concerned about the degree of support the new Aston Pride organisation was able to give to the project. Whilst appreciating the changes taking place with the Aston Pride organisation, concern was expressed by the then Senior Assistant Director (Museums & Heritage Projects) to the Acting Chief Executive of Aston Pride that the Aston Hall and Park project was not in the Aston Pride Partnership Board's Delivery Plan. The Plan was to be finalised in March 2004 for submission to the Government Office of the West Midlands.

7.2.2 The Senior Assistant Director's concern was reported to the then Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, Cllr Ian Ward, in an urgent briefing note dated 26 February 2004. It reported that the situation was reaching a critical point because not only did there appear to be a lack of commitment from the new Aston Pride organisation but also the deadline for submission to the HLF Stage 2 application was fast approaching – 31 October 2004. The Cabinet Member instructed that discussions should continue with Aston Pride to lobby support for the project and a letter of concern should be sent to the Aston Pride Acting Chief Executive. This was done.



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A month later, at the end of March, the reply stated that:

- 7.2.3 *“Aston Hall and Park were discussed at a recent Aston Pride Delivery Partnership away day where some concerns about the project were raised. A feeling of detachment from the hall, in particular, was felt by many of the community representatives and so there was some disbelief that this asset could become a key part of the community. Clearly more work needs to be done to ensure community ownership of the project. Other questions concerned the extent that this project is a standard package of solutions for such a site and the extent that it does meet the specific needs of the Aston community. Linked to this was a request for further information about the consultation that had been carried out. One proposal made was that a steering group be set up for this project which would consist of key agencies and community representatives. This would be one way to promote community ownership of the scheme. We would like to discuss this proposal with you in some detail. Aston Pride certainly is not in a position to fund all the shortfall from the HLF as this would be around 13% of our total ten year funding and, as your know, we have a wide range of outcomes we need to achieve. We would like to play a key part in getting other funders on board and realise that any possible loss of the HLF funding would have a significant impact on the revenue funding that we are presently providing”.*
- 7.2.4 We heard evidence that the new Aston Pride board was not happy with the project proposals at this time and that, if an application had been made, it is likely that it would have been rejected. Indeed the protocol is that Aston Pride has to issue an invitation for an application to be made, and no such invitation was made since Aston Pride considered there were unresolved issues. It appears that the Community Representatives in particular were adamant that the gardens and courts around the House should not be enclosed by fences/walls and gates. This view appeared predicated on lack of trust of the City Council with suspicion that the gates could be closed, excluding the community and enabling charging to be introduced or worse still, exclusion.



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- 7.2.5 The proposal to set up a Steering Group had already been addressed to some extent in creating the Aston Hall and Park Community Consultation Forum. However, between April and September 2004 many meetings were held between Aston Pride and City Officers to negotiate a revised scheme that would meet everyone's needs. Because Aston Pride appeared to be decreasing the amount of funds that they could give to the project, it was clear that alternative funds would need to be identified to complete the package and therefore in June 2004 a bid was made by the Museums Service to the Flourishing Neighbourhoods Fund<sup>4</sup>. However, at that time there was no evidence to suggest that Aston Pride's contribution was dependent on £1m contribution from the City Council, as suggested in the evidence submitted to the Scrutiny Review Group. Meanwhile BCC Officers were becoming concerned that support from Aston Pride was looking increasingly remote. There was also a desire on the part of Aston Pride to meet the HLF face to face, in part because of a mistrust of BCC. To enable HLF to understand the difficulties the project was experiencing, a joint meeting with Aston Pride, City Officers and HLF was held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2004. As the community representatives from Aston Pride had very clear views of what they wanted to see from the project, amendments to the design were made by City Officers to reduce significantly the enclosure details around the gardens and delete the re-instatement of the historic railings in front of the Hall enclosing the East Court. As a result Aston Pride invited an application to be made and this was submitted to them on 25<sup>th</sup> October. The Bid is for a total of £4.0m.
- 7.2.6 The new Aston Pride Delivery Partnership now has five elected Community Representatives (who lead the Theme Groups) and four nominated Community Representatives. In the past there had been criticism that the previous community representatives did not reflect the needs of the local community: tensions arose concerning their legitimacy. Aston is an area of very diverse communities. We assume that the new arrangements for selecting community representatives have been successful in overcoming any lack of confidence in the community. However, the Review Group did hear evidence from several witnesses that there are still sections of the community who do not feel that their views of the future of Aston Hall and Park are being taken into account by Aston Pride.
- 7.2.7 The Review Group heard that the extensive public consultation exercise carried out by the City Council to gather views for the Aston Hall and Park project (as documented elsewhere) was not wholly accepted by Aston Pride Community Representatives. Whilst the early proposals for the project were drawn up to reflect the consultation exercise, discussions during the summer of 2004 with Aston Pride and HLF resulted in City Council officers agreeing to amend the proposals to meet the views of Aston Pride.

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<sup>4</sup> Now "Capital Investment Fund"



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7.2.8 There was particular concern that amendments to alter the balance of the project away from the enhancement of the historic and heritage features of the site, and towards providing sports facilities, would reduce the resources available from Heritage Lottery Fund. In early November 2004 it appeared to the Review Group that the outcome of this shift of balance would be a reduction of the resources forthcoming from HLF. The effect of this would be to reduce the level of achievement in attracting external financial resources to the City. The New Deal for Communities programme, on which Aston Pride is based, has a requirement that funds are drawn from external sources to add to those from the government. Targets have been set for attracting these funds over the 10 year programme. The expectation is that, for every pound spent by Aston Pride, two pounds should be levered from external sources. The funds from HLF for the Aston Hall project would be a significant achievement against the targets, and a reduction in HLF funds would make it more difficult for Aston Pride to achieve them.

### 7.3 The Decision Making Process

7.3.1 As soon as the application for Aston Hall and Park was submitted to Aston Pride in October 2004, evidence was requested from Aston Pride Officers as to the likely approval process for the project. We heard that the following stages were part of the process: -

- Continued negotiations between BCC officers and the Community Reps
- Submission of the application to several Theme Groups
- Support sought from the Leaders of the Theme Groups
- Support sought from a meeting with Community Regeneration Advisory Group (CRAG), since the project cuts across Theme Groups
- Approval sought in principle from the Board at the end of November following recommendations from the Theme Groups and CRAG
- Further negotiations required and development of details
- Approval by independent panel, arranged by Aston Pride
- Full agreement to funding at the January 2005 Board meeting
- Cabinet Report to authorise project, arranged by BCC



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- Submission for approval to the Government Office of the West Midlands
- Detailed submission to HLF in February (final deadline of 31 March 2005)

7.3.2 We heard evidence from the Chair of CRAG (Community Regeneration Advisory Group) that he would recommend a grant of £2 - £2.5m including the condition that there should be more community involvement in the management of the Park, Hall and Sports facilities. In addition he expected a £1m contribution from the City Council, although increases in community involvement were as important. We heard that, in his view, the community are more interested in the sports facilities than improvement to the historic house and gardens. We heard evidence from the Chair of the Housing and Environment Theme Group – one of the several groups who would need to contribute. He reported that the group will propose the total grant of £2.5m to the project. His Theme Group will be meeting with the others in November to discuss their recommendations to the Board. Again, there was the expectation that BCC would put some money into the project themselves. We also heard evidence from the BCC officer acting as Manager to the Housing and Environment Theme Group who reported that £2m - £2.5m is the figure being discussed. However, it was reported that the project is not in the top five priorities of the new Board and only a small number of Board members see it as important. It appeared that Aston Pride are currently more interested in sports facilities than the heritage part of the project. The views of the Board were represented in evidence given by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration (A Board Member). He reported that whilst he had only been a Board Member since August 2004, he thought that relationships amongst Board Members were improving. He was confident that the Board would support the project to the full amount of the application (£4m) to ensure that HLF resources were secured.

7.3.3 However, the Board at its November 2004 meeting did not make a firm decision and negotiations are continuing.

### 7.4 Development of the New Aston Pride Organisation

7.4.1 The Scrutiny Review on Aston Pride, which was presented to Council on 6th April 2004, made several recommendations intended to secure the continued improvement of the organisation. The Review Group endorses the recommendations of that review. In order to ensure that Scrutiny Recommendations are implemented by the Executive, the Cabinet Member is required to report progress back to the Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis until all the recommendations are achieved.

7.4.2 At the Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on



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14<sup>th</sup> December 2004, the Acting Chief Executive of Aston Pride and the Assistant Director of Regeneration Services reported on the achievement of the Recommendations. Some Recommendations had been achieved fully, in other areas, significant progress had been made. A further report is due to the Regeneration O&S Committee in six months.



## 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

### 8.1 The Challenges of Heritage Projects

#### Heritage Champion

- 8.1.1 Finding resources for the care of our heritage, including buildings, sites and collections, is a national issue. Within Birmingham there are many Listed Buildings, sites and collections owned by the Council in need of resources. In addition, the owners of other Listed Buildings, sites and collections need advice and support from the Council if the City's heritage is to be preserved and used positively. Responsibility for our heritage is split between several Cabinet Portfolios and Directorates. To ensure a strategic corporate approach to priorities for action and financial support, it is suggested that one Cabinet Member (we suggest the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture) be identified as the Champion for our Heritage.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
1	That a Cabinet Member is identified as the Champion for our Heritage in the City.	The Leader	April 2005

#### Heritage Strategy

- 8.1.2 It is suggested that the Cabinet Champion draw up a Strategy to set out the City's priorities for protecting and enhancing our heritage. A JNC Officer (within the portfolio of the Cabinet Champion) should co-ordinate this work. The Strategy should include a summary of the needs of Council owned heritage buildings, sites and collections and an identification of the priorities for support to our heritage in non Council owned hands. It should clearly set out where the responsibilities for our heritage projects lie at both Member and Officer level, including how to ensure effective project management at a senior level. A realistic assessment of the need for resources should be set out. It is suggested that this strategy, once approved by Cabinet, should be used to set the priorities for protecting and enhancing the City's heritage buildings,



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sites and collections and to inform negotiations with external organisations.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
2	That a Heritage Strategy be drawn up to set out the City's priorities for protecting and enhancing our heritage.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader	September 2005
3	That a JNC Officer (within the Portfolio of the Cabinet Champion) should be identified to lead on the production of the Heritage Strategy and to co-ordinate bids to external funders.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader, and Chief Executive	April 2005

### 8.2 Project Management

8.2.1 Within the Strategy, individual projects will be spread across several Portfolios and Directorates. Important projects with complex strands of funding however need a clearly identified Project Manager. It is suggested that these Project Managers report regularly on progress to the Heritage Cabinet Champion and the JNC Co-ordinating Officer.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
4	That the principle is agreed that Heritage projects are allocated a Senior Project Manager with clear lines of reporting to the Heritage Cabinet Champion and JNC Co-ordinating Officer.	Cabinet Member as nominated by the Leader	April 2005

### The funding of the Aston Hall & Park Development Project

8.2.2 We are supportive of the discussions that continue with Aston Pride to seek the optimum funding possible.

8.2.3 We are supportive of the continuing work of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to ensure the success of this project and in particular, efforts to secure City Council funding.

8.2.4 The Lead Member for this review, Cllr Ian Ward, met with the Cabinet member, Cllr John Alden, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004 to express this view and confirmed this again by letter, from Cllr Ian Ward and Cllr Ray Hassall, to the Leader of the Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2004.

### Promoting the Involvement of the Local Community in Aston Hall

8.2.5 Aston Hall is a Jacobean building of significant importance, at both City and national level and Aston Park is on the register of Historic Parks & Gardens. Whilst it is essential that the UK's heritage is



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protected, conservation is far more than an end in itself. In such a multicultural area as Aston, creating a sense of local ownership of the building is less than straight forward. The "Friends" group (the Aston Hall & Park Community Forum) appears to have further potential here.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>5</b>	That further work is undertaken to investigate additional ways that the Hall and local residents can be drawn closer.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	September 2005
<b>6</b>	That a review of the Aston Hall & Park Community Forum be undertaken with a view to better engagement and representation from the local community.	Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture and District Chairperson	September 2005

### 8.3 Providing for Leisure and Recreation

8.3.1 The local community needs Aston Park to be a safe, attractive open space providing for a variety of needs – sports, play and somewhere quiet to sit and talk. The Council's policy of Devolution and Localisation can enable the local Ward and District to lead work aimed at involving the community in the management of the park.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>7</b>	That a Management Plan for Aston Park be drawn up in consultation with the local Community.	District Chairperson and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture	December 2005



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# Appendix 1 – City Council owned heritage sites and buildings

City Council owned Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Parks and Gardens of Special Interest.

### **Grade I "At Risk"**

Town Hall (current project)  
Curzon Street Station (current project)

### **Grade I**

Aston Hall  
Aston Hall Stables  
Aston Hall Lodges  
Victoria Law Courts  
Mortuary Chapel, Oxhill Road, Handsworth  
122-124 Colmore Row

### **Grade II \* "At Risk"**

Bells Farm, Bells Lane, Druids Heath  
Icknield Street School  
303 Icknield Street  
Moseley Road Library and Baths (current project)

### **Grade II \***

Blakesley Hall  
Nelson's Monument  
Council House and Extension  
City Arcade  
153-161 Corporation Street  
98 Edmund Street  
Soho House  
Springhill Library  
Ladypool Junior and Infant School, Stratford Road  
Highbury Hall  
Water Orton Bridge

### **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

Perry Packhorse Bridge  
Weoley Castle  
Hawkesley Farm Moated site  
Burnt Mound in Fox Hollies Park  
Kingsstanding Mound

cont....



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Burnt Mounds at Moseley Bog  
Kent's Moat  
Medieval Deer Park  
Metchley Camp  
Gannow Green Moat  
Burnt Mound in Woodlands Park

### **Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest**

Aston Park  
Sutton Park (National Nature Reserve and Scheduled Ancient Monument)  
Highbury Park  
Handsworth Park  
Key Hill Cemetary  
Warstone Lane Cemetary  
Witton Cemetary  
Brandwood Cemetary  
Cannon Hill Park