



Halstead Heritage Park - an alternative vision

Funding & Delivery

This brief paper outlines our preliminary ideas for gathering the resources needed to deliver our alternative vision for Halstead Heritage Park.

Halstead 21st Century Group has been formed by local residents. We are not developers or experts in development economics, but we have knowledge of our local community and expertise on this particular site. This insight, along with common sense, suggests that as this site has been allocated for development for the past 50 years or more without implementation, the viability of a commercial project has to be questionable. This is understandable given the difficult terrain, the existence of historic air raid shelters, the boggy ground, natural springs and the poor site access.

So, perhaps it's time for an alternative approach?

We believe that the site does have an exciting future. Our idea is that major benefits for Halstead and its residents could be unlocked and resourced by working with the site features rather than against them. In our plans, this would largely involve restoring and enhancing the landscape and the physical and natural assets within it. We have worked with local residents to create a new vision for the site, which has been named the Halstead Heritage Park.

So how can this alternative vision be funded?

We understand that resources are needed to deliver this plan. We have produced four short topic papers to illustrate a new masterplan for the site, which cover Housing, Wildlife, Play and Heritage. Please refer to these papers and you will see how we envisage a broad spread of activities and community benefits across the site. In doing so we believe that the project may appeal to a range of grant-giving bodies and charities. These organisations invariably only provide funding to associations with a charitable purpose, such as Halstead 21st Century Group. A private commercial developer would be ineligible. Also, as a community group we are more able to generate local funding from within the community itself. The project is one that would be owned by the community and represent their interests and needs.

The housing suggested for one part of the site could not be funded in this way but our strategy is to limit this small development to an area with less challenging ground conditions. It would still no doubt be a more expensive site to build upon compared to other sites within the town but it is possible that a socially responsible housing provider might make it work.

Where do we begin?

To begin, we need an agreement to lease the site. This need not be for the whole site as we believe it would be difficult to reach agreement with all landowners at the same time. Instead, our plans have been drafted whereby each of the zones corresponds to either a single or dual land ownership. In this way we are able to concentrate efforts on smaller land parcels and bring the vision together in manageable phases. The order in which this may happen is not critical.

At the same time we will seek the assistance of the Institute of Fundraising, the Prince's Regeneration Trust and local agencies.

We would also very much like Halstead Town Council and Braintree District Council to help us. An early initiative will be to undertake a skills audit amongst our members and to enhance this valuable resource through a programme of training and mentoring. Community 360 (community360.org.uk) will be asked to assist in broadening our volunteer base to bring forward the specific skills we lack to advance our project.

Of course, some additional professional services will be needed that may not be available from local volunteers and we will therefore seek financial assistance from:

The Architectural Heritage Fund: This organisation is able to provide grants and advice to voluntary organisations and has specific programmes for **project viability studies**.

Heritage Lottery Fund: The Resilient Heritage Programme is a grant scheme that enables organisations to up-skill and prepare for taking on new responsibilities and roles.

After training, organisational development and completion of a viability study we will be equipped with a better understanding of the constraints and opportunities and some hard data such as:

- the scope and phasing of the ideas
- the costs involved in delivery and maintenance
- the delivery structure and future governance
- confirmed sources of capital and revenue funding

Without prejudice to this work and based upon advice we have already received we believe that it will be important to demonstrate some tangible improvements to the site at an early stage once site owner agreements have been reached. An early project could see the site tidied

and made safe. Rubbish needs to be cleared and hazards should be taped off. Information boards could be fitted at the boundaries of the site to provide details about what is going on and these could be regularly updated. There exists a wide choice of national and local funding sources for such work including Awards for All, Sainsbury's and the East of England Co-operative Society.

The more substantial works that follow may well be eligible for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Subterranea Britannica (subbrit.org.uk) and the Essex Heritage Trust. There are many more grant giving organisations and we are confident that every element of the masterplan can attract funding from these sources in addition to the funding that we will need to raise locally. We thereby envisage the restoration of the above ground air raid shelter into a heritage centre, the restoration of the semi-submerged air raid shelters into learning centres, storage sheds and wildlife habitats and the revival of the old orchard and allotments (see our Topic Papers for further information).

Furthermore, we expect to meet the criteria of numerous funding bodies who support projects with strong community outcomes such as Essex Community Foundation. Above all, we will direct our efforts into ensuring that this initiative mobilises the community in a spirit of cooperation and common endeavour.

In this way, **Halstead Heritage Park** will have an enduring, positive, social and environmental impact on the town's future.

More information

There are 4 additional topic papers available to describe each of the elements of the Alternative Vision. These are for the Play Haven, the Heritage Zone, the Wildlife Zone and the proposed housing.

You can read more about this project as well as the other topic papers on Halstead 21st Century Group website:

halstead21stcentury.org.uk

Dates for future meetings of the Group are posted on the website. All are welcome and attendance is free.

You can email Halstead 21st Century Group with comments and ideas at:

info@halstead21stcentury.org.uk

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