

**Brief for Conservation Plan &**

**Management and Maintenance Plan**

**Victoria Park &**

**Watercress Fields**

**Ashford**



1. **Introduction**

We are starting work on our second-round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People programme for Victoria Park and Watercress Fields in Ashford, Kent. To help us develop our project and support our second round bid we would like to appoint an experienced historic landscape professional to work with us to research and prepare Ashford Borough Council’s conservation plan and management and maintenance plan in line with current HLF Parks for People guidance.

This brief sets out our requirements, how interested practices should tender, the deadline for responses, and how the tender will be evaluated.

1. **Background Information**

Victoria Park and Watercress Fields are Ashford’s largest and most central municipal park, set in a riverside location within 10 minutes’ walk of Ashford town centre. Although valued as an open space, the park currently fails to play a meaningful role in the social life and fabric of the town and does not enhance the character, identity and vitality of the south Ashford community.

Opened in 1899, the park now includes the grade-II\* listed Hubert Fountain, tree lined walks, a secret garden, play spaces, sports facilities, a community building, the Great Stour river, bridges, a community orchard, the open areas of Watercress Fields, and also forms an important part of the Ashford Green Corridor and pedestrian and cycle route between the town centre and south Ashford communities. The Great Stour river is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, because it is largely natural in character and supports a wide range of submerged, emergent and marginal aquatic plants.

The park faces a number of issues including the quality of facilities, few activities, movement patterns, lack of physical connection with the surrounding high-rise blocks and other housing facing Watercress Fields, and poor links to the town centre. The site also fails to make best use of its built, natural and cultural heritage and does little to connect people to place.

Both the area immediately surrounding the park and the wider town are going through a period of tremendous renewal and expansion - there is significant development planned and taking place along the northern boundary of the park and towards the town centre.

This project will assist in unlocking the heritage potential of the site and help to ensure it can meet the needs of existing and future park users. It will provide training and education opportunities and create a sustainably managed park that welcomes the new generation of people arriving in the area.

This project is an exciting opportunity to deliver the Council’s Five Year Corporate Plan, Priorities 3 & 4:

* Active & Creative Ashford: “Planned improvement to key public space and parks – Victoria Park”, and
* Attractive Ashford – Environment, Countryside, and Tourism & Heritage: “To safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape”

The project will also be key in delivering aspects of the recently produced Open Space Strategy and Green Corridor Plan (incorporated into the strategy at appendix 3) – available from our website: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/the-environment/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy/>. It will also help to improve links to the town centre, in terms of encouraging more people to visit and use the park, creating physical links, better interpretation, and with the opportunity of tandem events between park and town.

The plans submitted to HLF in February 2017 focused on the need to:

* Respond effectively to the pressure of housing growth around the park and reduce the likely associated environmental impacts in the immediate area.
* Create an attractive destination promoting and celebrating flagship open spaces, existing heritage and addressing lost heritage features.
* Instil local civic pride and ownership to the public realm.
* Support the hosting of high quality events, using the trusted local brand of the ‘Create Music Festival’ and others, providing a positive platform for groups, clubs, artists and organisations.
* Encourage engagement from a range of partners that provide ongoing activities for the park in the longer term.
* Fulfilling the Council’s obligation to maintain Victoria Park in optimum condition.
* Ensure the park fulfils its function as a community hub and place for recreational activity including meeting spaces and physical activity.

Community engagement is a core element of the project. Engaging existing and potential visitors in the project will help to foster community cohesion, ensure the capital works and activities address community needs, and help to develop an increased sense of ownership of the park and its facilities.

We recently created an in-house grounds maintenance service called Aspire Landscape Management. They have already delivered a significant improvement in the quality of maintenance standards at Victoria Park and Watercress Fields.

More information is available in the appendix, including:

* Round one application form
* Visioning and Masterplanning Report, December 2015
* Design Report, February 2017
* Condition survey of fountain

The site is approximately 21ha in size and located on Jemmett Road, Ashford, TN23 4QD, grid reference TR 00537 42262.

1. **Our requirements**

The Conservation Plan is an essential component of the development phase of our project. It is the key document for helping us to understand the significance of the built, social and ecological heritage of Victoria Park and Watercress Fields, why it is valued, by whom, and how we need to maintain it in the long term for the benefit of local people. The Management and Maintenance Plan will set out how these overarching principles should be translated into long term management and maintenance actions.

The general approach, format and layout of both plans should be informed principally by the latest HLF Parks for People guidance, available on their website.

However, we are very keen to ensure that both plans are useful tools that will help to shape our decision making and future work, rather than very lengthy and potentially inaccessible documents. It is very important that the final plans are accessible to the public and staff so the language and format used must be clear, concise and where possible jargon-free.

We expect to be closely and regularly involved in the development of the plans – our project manager will act as the Client and first point of contact for the commission but the successful tenderer will also be expected to work closely with other members of the wider project team.

We recently created an in-house grounds maintenance service called Aspire Landscape Management. They have already delivered a significant improvement in the quality of maintenance standards at Victoria Park and Watercress Fields. The successful tenderer will be expected to work closely with Aspire to ensure that the Management and Maintenance Plan is a practical document and that the contents can be delivered effectively.

It is important to note that the preparation of the Conservation Plan and Management and Maintenance Plan will take place at the same time as capital and activity plans are developed for our round 2 bid, so the successful tenderer will be expected to coordinate their work with other members of the consultant team, particularly where the Management and Maintenance Plan and activity, volunteering and training plans.

We will expect regular updates on progress (by email or phone) and early notification of potential budget, programme or other issues.

1. **Project Programme**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Who** | **When** |
| Specialist surveys | Client | Late 2017 |
| Conservation Plan | Tbc | January – April 2018 |
| Activity Plan | Tbc | January – April 2018 |
| Public consultation event 1 | Tbc | April 2018 |
| Design work | Tbc | March – August 2018 |
| Public consultation event 2 | Tbc | July 2018 |
| Planning & Listed Building application | Tbc | August – September 2018 |
| Management and Maintenance Plan | Tbc | July - August 2018 |
| Prepare second round application | Project Manager | September 2018 |

The draft Conservation Plan should be prepared by the end of April 2018 and the final plan completed by the end of June 2018.

The Management and Maintenance Plan should be ready by the end of August 2018. The MMP will also need to be updated once the capital works are complete in 2020.

We expect to submit our round 2 bid to HLF in September 2018.

1. **Community Engagement and Consultation**

Other appointed consultants will organise and coordinate the community engagement process, publicise events, produce consultation materials and manage communication with the public and other stakeholders.

The successful tenderer will be expected to work closely with ABC officers, Aspire, and other specialists on the project team, as well as attending at least one public event as part of developing the plans. Once appointed, we will work with the successful tenderer to plan opportunities for stakeholder and public engagement in the development of the plans.

1. **Wider project team**

The successful tenderer will be expected to work collaboratively with other members of the project team in developing our second-round application to HLF. Other key members of the team will be:

* ABC Client Officer
* Consultant Project Manager
* Consultant Community Engagement Officer
* Consultant producing Activity, Interpretation and Evaluation Plan
* Consultant design team including landscape architect, architect, engineers and QS

We will be appointing all the team members mentioned above directly.

1. **Additional surveys**

We have already produced the following documents (attached as appendix) and some of the information will help to inform the Conservation Plan, including historic maps, site survey, key constraints:

* Visioning and Masterplanning Report, December 2015
* Design Report, February 2017
* Condition survey of fountain

We are also in the process of commissioning the following specialist surveys and will provide the results to the successful tenderer as soon as they are available:

* Topographic survey
* Tree survey
* Ecology survey
* Building condition surveys

Potential sources of additional information that the successful tenderer will be expected to assess include:

* Kent History and Library Centre
* Ashford Archaeological and Historical Society
* Records about the International Exhibition of 1862 including RHS Lindley library, V&A, Royal Albert Hall library
* Ashford Library
* Local newspaper archives
* Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

The list above is not exhaustive and tenderers should allow for additional research as necessary to inform the conservation plan.

1. **Project Outputs**

* Draft(s) and Final Conservation Plan
* Draft(s) and Final Management & Maintenance Plan
* Attendance at meetings with other project team members, stakeholders and the public
* Attendance at public consultation as required

Draft and final outputs should generally be provided to us electronically in PDF format.

ABC will retain copyright of all the material produced in the context of this commission and will have the right to reproduce any material provided and distribute the material in part or whole to any organisation or individual it determines, at no extra cost. The lead consultant should clear the copyright for any illustrations or other material used. The outputs may be made publicly available.

1. **Insurance**

The successful tenderer will be expected to provide evidence of current Professional Indemnity Insurance (no less than £5m).

1. **Tender process**

**Tender programme**

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| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Date** |
| Tender issued | 20 November 2017 |
| Tender returns due | 6 December 2017 |
| Tender evaluation | 7 December |
| Interviews | w/c 18 December |
| Kick off meeting | w/c 15 January 2018 |

**Tender submission**

To be considered for this project, you will need to submit:

1. A brief method statement on no more than three sides of A4 that
   1. sets out your approach to researching and producing the plans
   2. demonstrates you can present information in an accessible and concise way
   3. identifies any sub-consultants or additional surveys that may be needed to inform the Plan
2. A programme setting out key tasks, how long you expect them to take and demonstrating you can deliver the Plan within our programme (two sides of A4).
3. Examples of other similar projects or sites where you produced Conservation Plans and MMPs (e.g. HLF-funded, historic parks, similar budget; no more than four sides of A4).
4. A fee proposal to provide the services outlined in the brief, as well as any additional allowances you feel may be necessary to achieve the end result and day rates for key staff. Please provide a breakdown of your fee as follows (two sides of A4):
   1. Conservation Plan
   2. Management and Maintenance Plan

**Tender evaluation**

Your tender submission will be evaluated as follows:

* 70% of your score will be based on the quality of your tender submission (i.e. your response to question 1 (weighted 30%), 2 (weighted 10%) and 3 (weighted 30%)
* 30% of your score will be based on your fee proposal (question 4) where the lowest price will score 30% and higher prices will score less as a percentage of the lowest price

Your response to questions 1, 2 and 3 will be marked using the following scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Judgement** |
| **0** | Statement is unsuitable and / or suggests unacceptable risk |
| **2** | Statement fails to meet requirements in a significant way |
| **4** | Statement fails to meet requirements in some way |
| **6** | Statement meets all the requirements (“par”) |
| **8** | Statement exceeds requirements and adds some value |
| **10** | Statement exceeds requirements and adds significant value |