



CONSULTATION PAPER RESPONSES

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

I do not believe that Northwood house can produce sufficient revenue to maintain the house in a state that befits a Grade II listed building. I have read the Knight Frank report and think an open meeting should be called for the people of Cowes to be allowed to air their views. The Trustees are 'faceless people' to most towns folk, there is not sufficient transparency of the Trustees and their own agenda.

The only point we don't agree with is the contract appointment of All About Catering for the hospitality arrangements as our experience of this organisation is that they are very expensive and not very good. We would like to see this broadened, with perhaps, the opportunity for the community to do their own catering - ie. for those who might want a wedding reception at Northwood House but would prefer to organise their own outside caterers.

My only reservations is that 12 a. seems irrelevant, a non-issue? Also as regards 12.c are the tennis courts adequately used? If not the playground could be relocated to that area and considerably enhanced, encouraging more use of the park by families/visitors with children. (The toilets are close by too.)

Since there are no funds available to restore/preserve the house the trustees vision should be solely to preserve and improve the pleasure grounds.

I do not agree with possibly turning part of the house into residential flats or a care home. I can't see how this is compatible especially with the current public usage of the park grounds.

Any enabling development should be limited in scale, as far as possible within the footprint of the existing buildings and immediate service areas and should not encroach significantly on the parkland/gardens area

Leave the children's play area where it is, perhaps improving it in some way? Relocating the tennis courts first mentioned in the SW report is nonsense. It would be very expensive to build new courts. The money would be better spent on the House and Park. Not to build on the large grass area facing Park Gates. Visitors to the park remark on the view over the town of Cowes. Also when coming out of Cowes and seeing the trees surrounding St Mary's Church and glimpses of Northwood House in the background. Think of the grass area Ward Avenue, an overflow car park during Cowes Week and other events that bring trade to Cowes.

I feel strongly that no part of the grounds should be considered available for property development.

The original deed gave the house and grounds to the Townspeople of Cowes. By what mandate do the Trustees have to the authority to carry out their proposals? Selling off small parcels of land will not be the answer to the Problem. The Trustees should ask Ruth Watson and the Channel 4 programme 'Country House Rescue' for advice and the publicity would be good for the project and maybe put into perspective the problems.

It does seem complicated. Transparency must be ensured, i am not sure that there is enough transparency at the moment.

Thought it was somewhat stodgy and not really clear about how you are going to finance things - is it just going to be another talking shop of the 'great and good'?

As long as the future of the parkland area is fully protected particularly against any future development.

Take soundings from the people of Cowes and get the feel of local people.

It can only be a HOTEL and conference centre and the it should be advertised properly to find interested parties. Maybe any Trustee with vested interest should resign and people with commercial experience be invited to become Trustees or form an advisory committee. The outbuildings can be converted and extended in keeping.

I favour an approach similar to that adopted in the case of the Royal National Hospital in Ventnor i.e. pull the house and community hall down and use the rubble to create more parking thus increasing the income available for the upkeep and development of the pleasure grounds perhaps with a small cafe providing teas, coffees and light lunches.

The house must not detract from the park, and if i had to make a choice, i would protect the majority of the park and sacrifice the house.

Point 9 needs very careful consideration. I would favour a residential or nursing home, or both, over a boutique hotel which is far less likely to help the locals. Has a day care centre for handicapped children been considered? Could one of the buildings be considered for a play group or nursery? Children's activity centre during school holidays ie tennis week – photography week – nature week etc. Residential respite centre for those just out of hospital or to give carers a well-earned break by caring for those they look after 365 days a year. Points 11 and 12: the park is a joy for the people of Cowes – old or young. The children's area is in a perfect position – under the trees for shade and not interfering with others. It does need upgrading the like the one at Gurnard near the Woodvale and there is plenty of room for things for more advanced climbing things for 8-10 year olds. Why spend a vast amount of money in relocating the tennis courts? They are fine where they are.

Re potential uses of the House: None really meet the Trust's objectives as originally specified. Try and keep it as near as possible.

Keep away from any developers. We do not want an estate built. Remember it is for the people of Cowes not the developers who are here today and gone tomorrow.

12c the children's play area is reasonably located, but could be enhanced eg Gurnard play area at the Woodvale. Tennis court is more of a problem. It needs to be leased to club - similar to the Bowls club. No new buildings under any circumstances whatsoever. It can be a prestigious business address for Hedge Fund Managers. Get the city involved. I do NOT agree or support the commercial development as a Hotel, Nursing Home etc as suggested by Frank Knight or residential development of any kind. Better use would be a day care centre, a nursery facility, very important to bring social activity into the House.

Re structure of the Trust: The devil is in the detail. It needs explicit definition.

Re potential uses of the House: all are unacceptable. They DO NOT meet Trust objectives as originally specified.

To achieve the objective of 'benefiting the people of Cowes' you have to put social use at the core of the plan. The current working parties are a start - 'the people' have to feel and believe that 'ownership' matters.

I believe a hotel and conference centre would only work if there was redevelopment at the rear of the House which would mean among other things the demolition of the Community Centre. More onsite parking would also be needed.

I wish the Trustees the very best of luck and I utterly condemn those who use the [?] to anonymously attack them. All critics should be prepared to say who they are.

Like present use and perhaps a few apartments. As at present. Weddings, elections, receptions etc.

I believe that a social club based in the house with a drinks licence, commercial kitchen and 2, 3 or 4 overnight stay rooms would provide a foundation use of the buildings. All, or most of the sports and political clubs could be invited to invite their members at a nominal fee per member. This would encourage Cowes residents and friends to use the premises as an alternative to the other, in the main, restricted choices.

Encourage back the Register Office on a nominal cost lease and repair of their area of House contract. Northwood House and Park are a perfect setting for marriages, and for the highly sensitive act of registering births and of deaths. IWC will be very short of space in Newport.

there are a number of points that need to be revisited. Replacing trees and shrubs, there is 3 potential problems with this a) vandalism b) watering newly planted specimens during drought conditions, many trees were lost because of lack of watering in past years c) honey fungus the Park is riddled with this disease. Bark chippings and gravel on paths, not wheelchair friendly, the materials are easily scattered

Serious thought should be given to including a cafe or tea garden in the house or park to enhance the facility for residents and visitors alike. What about seasonal catering along the lines of Mottistone, Quarr Abbey, Rylstone Gardens? This could 'divert' visitors who use the car park before they go down into the High Street. It's important to provide facilities which can be used by the GENERAL PUBLIC in whatever scheme is adopted. This would provide a steady income stream from many customers rather than just relying on fewer one-off event bookings, etc.

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On the west coast of Normandy are three towns only 3km apart, Granville, St.Pair sur Mer and Jullouville, and each has its own imposing building housing a restaurant and ----- a casino !!

I am not convinced that any of these options will in themselves generate sufficient income for the house to be financially viable.

I think the grounds and the house are under potentialised for event hosting. Private, corporate and public events should be targeted more. I understand there are restrictions due to the current

condition of the property and grounds but nevertheless I think with the right kind of publicity and marketing a great deal more could be achieved in the way of attracting potential event organisers.

I have placed 'boutique hotel' as my first choice partly because the House could make a lovely small hotel and partly because Cowes desperately needs such a hotel.

Failing 1, would favour a development that at least allowed some public access to the principal rooms

I walk through Northwood Park at least four times a week and I do love it and the house. That green lung is one of the most important aspects of the town to me and the house is a piece of living history. I hate to think of bad things or neglect happening to them. I suppose the house - as it would need so much money spent on it - would have to be sold, but please keep the park for the recreation of the inhabitants of Cowes - which is what it was left for. I think it would be a good idea to sell the house to Abbeyfield, if they had the money to buy it. Reasons why that house would work brilliantly as an Abbeyfield:

- people would probably pay quite a bit to have lovely rooms on the top floor (once restored)
- there is another Abbeyfield nearby, for friends
- nearby are church and bowling green - important for such people as would be the inhabitants
- sea view, people walking dogs and playing tennis - important for watching (inhabitants need something nice to look at) but in tranquil location
- space for lovely public rooms downstairs
- plenty of parking
- there could be a cafe, perhaps in the rotunda, which was also open to the public. It would get plenty of custom from visitors to the Abbeyfield residents and the dog-walkers and parents with small children always in the park. I would suggest Tiffins be asked to run it, as their cafe in the high street is brilliant and they know what they are doing and what people want to eat and drink

But please keep the park for the inhabitants of Cowes. It is a lovely, refreshing place to go and it's the only such one we have.

The pleasure park concept is wrong, this has been a municipal park since 1929 before then a private park. Moving the tennis court and childrens area would be unnecessary expense. The park already has a pleasure park feel which can be enhanced without major changes or cost. Locals see this as their park any perceived threat will make support the Village Green application much stronger.

I support a change in the managing structure which results in a strong business input and removes the restrictive nominating body element. As seen at the Town council the conflict between the 2 bodies frustrate the Trustees and gives the council no say. Better to appoint Trustees with required expertise. I have serious concerns about a system where the future of this vital area stands or falls depending on volunteers with or without the skills to run a major business.

Maybe unrealistic but I oppose any development that removes public access to the principle rooms. Hopefully letting office space and some development of the stable, community hall, caretakers flat area including (regretably) perhaps a small area of park, together with maximum use of the house and lawn for weddings etc will create enough income to slowly restore the house.

Need better skilled Trustees. Do not separate park from house. I have more serious concerns ie trust composition and powers. I'm not sure why there was no public meeting?

No sacrifice of land: leasing is selling. All hell will break loose if you start leasing (aka selling land). Why no events in house?

[question on devoting car park income to the Park] We were not allowed to mention car park remember? When? 10 years 15 years too vague.

At the moment the place isn't being used regularly why not? There is no PR or events – you need outside help. I would like to see some actual visible improvement in both the park and the house to prove that you have a real interest in both – and not an ulterior motive?

Document too long and too many vague points and no detail. We do not want park separated from house. Frank Knight report only talks about enabling development why no English Heritage report?

what long term plan? There are no regular events. No experts to help with PR - no transparency. No openness no minutes from meeting. House is secondary to park. Park is and should be priority. Do not separate trust. Tree work over long weekend a disgrace!!! You know nothing about trees

start using the place!! Must keep rooms for community events

I found the entire document hard to understand. Lacks specifics. Why no public meetings? The whole trust needs to be looked at. Who are all the Trustees?

Are you really interested? Should have had meeting for public. Very poor PR skills.

More use of community hall. Repair stable block. Start having events in house.

Volunteer work has been great. Frank Knight report added confusion. I have lived here 45 years NO leasing or development of park lost too much already. Car park too expensive. Why no weekly events in house. Lot of very unhappy residents about driving business away from house

I am against any enabling development or any other form of reducing the area of the park as it shown on the deed of gift or the 2002 scheme. I firmly believe that with proper management and letting of the house and community hall at competitive rates, this, combined with grants available there should be no need for any changes. The present trustees have to show that everything has been tried in a professional manner first.

I disapprove of any decrease of park area because:

1. you never get it back as countless landed families have found out;
2. if 12 is to go ahead, and the trustees have read the Scott Wilson report they will realise that for the park to survive and the recommendations implemented there must be no loss of land. I believe these suggestions are not the trustees' ideas but they were taken from the SW report.

I agree with a trading company. It was something I tried to get the chairman to understand when I was a trustee. John Harrison offered countless times to advise on this. Other than the above the Trustees have to stop their insistence on everything being confidential, publish all charity commission correspondence and have open discussion first.

Park upkeep at say £40,000 should only be about ⅓-¼ if estate run correctly

I propose that the Trustees employ a manager or prove that they have the ability to manage, obtaining a true possible income before any of the above is considered

The estate should not be split up. I propose that at least one year of true accounts and proper management showing the true potential before any decisions are made on releasing land or the house to a third party. So far the trustees have not realised the true income potential as there is no effective management structure operating. At present the trustees find it impossible to even do their returns to the charity commission, let alone manage the estate and its income. The beneficiaries of the gift should not lose their inheritance because of the present trustees inability to manage. We have fought long and hard to save the northwood house charity for the present trustees to sign any of it away because of their own inadequacies. PS is the consultation paper the latest 'vision statement'? If not where is it?

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relocating tennis courts not essential; costs could be prohibitive. The refurbishment of a putting green may be an attraction; KF report has serious implications re future access of general public; English Heritage co-operation could be helpful

unsure about relocation of tennis courts as a priority; the house and grounds need to be a focal point and attraction for holiday coach parties and create income which could then be invested

establish museum facilities ie maritime, heritage, past Cowes industry

the retention of NWH as a public amenity and the park must be a long term project. A start has been made and deserves every encouragement for future success. Cowes without the park would be a very uninteresting town

we congratulate the trustees on their work and wish you all success in achieving its [the consultation paper's] aims. We do support all that the trustees are doing and it does need to be said that NWH and its grounds are an asset that Cowes cannot afford to lose.

[THIS IS FROM AN ANONYMOUS RESPONDENT BUT IS OBVIOUSLY FROM A PERSON KNOWN TO THE TRUST] Last year the Managing Trustees were in a unique position of being bequeathed an oasis of a National Institution in the heart of Cowes in the form of an estate consisting of a fine house and garden, and a beautiful park with valuable assets including property, and a magnificent collection of fine rare trees, all to be treasured. What more of a wonderful business opportunity could anyone wish for? It may have come in a run-down condition with no staff or money, but it does have an assured income from the public car park on its land and has significant potential for exploiting a wide range of marketing opportunities. Not many people have such luck handed to them on a plate to make a go of. This consultation paper is far too premature and defeatist in tone, the thread running through it being to fragment the estate and to consider disposing with parts of it, such as the fine Nash designed Church Lodge. This would be sacrilege, and quite the wrong way to go, as it is even to consider at this time a future use of the house. It is far too early to consider such things before you are even up and running, which at present you are a long way from being. The first thing to do is to get the park, and the useable parts of the house going again, by way of exploiting the full range and huge variety of fund raising opportunities available to you, many of which are not available to other trusts. You are so lucky. Once you are up and running to then concentrate on getting the house back into tip top condition again. You talk about it needed £3.5m to repair. That is a drop in the ocean to raise compared with what many other Trusts have to raise, and do so, but do not attempt to do this until you are seen and known as a going concern, which it will become a matter of success breeding success. When you have repaired the house, then and then only, consider a future

for it. As I write, there is no one working in the park where there is so much needing to be done to get it back up to scratch again. Likewise the house is all shut up. This is the case most days, with no signs whatsoever of any commercial activity going on anywhere. You seem also to have fluffed the car park. I now use the park & ride, which while less convenient is more cost effective for me to do so. Clearly your current business plan is not working. Presumably the managing trustees are experienced in managing estates of this nature, otherwise they would not be trustees, so please, on our behalf, tear up the consultation paper, which is little more than a recipe for property developers to move in and knock down the house and develop the estate, and exercise this experience by managing the estate as a whole in a professional manner. If the managing trustees are not experienced for undertaking the duties of managing the estate, they should resign and make room for others who are, starting with the chairman of trustees. The best of luck – we are in your hands – don't let us down.

I feel that it should always be available for use by the public

The efforts of the Trustees should be commended but the house cannot sustain the occasional function and keep itself a viable and self-financing business. If the right company were approached - Malmaison + Hotel du Vin - the site could be developed as a boutique hotel. The Barn & Community Hall turned into bedrooms along with the upper floors of the house. An expense but the alternatives do not afford the local residents the use of the house as it stands.

Where do the Trustees think the £1.5m shortfall is going to come from? The house & park are an important part of the community but who think an residential home for senior citizens gives the weak that privilege. At least a hotel gives locals the facilities of the function rooms.

I would like to see House & Park available for use by all Islanders as is the present Cowes Yacht Haven, weddings, dinners, exhibitions etc. and not split into House (1) & Park (2). It is appreciated this has to be done piecemeal.