



ACTIVATING OUR COMMUNITY TO PROTECT THE CAPABILITY BROWN LANDSCAPE OF WIMBLEDON PARK.

Research Report by RJB Creative
Commissioned by Capability Brown Society
April - June 2021



CONTEXT + METHOD

EVERYBODY CAN BENEFIT FROM PROTECTED HERITAGE LANDSCAPES AND IT IS CRUCIAL THAT LOCAL COMMUNITY VOICE IS AT THE CENTRE OF DECISION MAKING.

Wimbledon Park - a major Grade II* listed heritage landscape designed by Capability Brown - is at risk of urbanisation and development by the All England Tennis Club (AELTC).

To ensure any development work is environmentally regenerative and enhances local community health and wellbeing, the Capability Brown Society sought to understand local opinions and to generate ideas for improving the plans moving forwards.

PLANS MUST BE BUILT HAND-IN-HAND WITH OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Our methodology involved surveying and qualitative interviewing 40 Capability Brown Society members and 12 local park goers (no financial incentive given) between April - June 2021.

In this report you will find major statistics and headline findings, needs, challenges and recommendations for the AELTC from the local community viewpoint.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

> **100% AGREE ON 3 BENCHMARK STANDARDS** that any building on the Grade II* listed park and garden must be judged against:

- 1. Regenerate and protect environmental health
- 2. Nurture the wellbeing of the local communities
- 3. Enhance the historical Capability Brown features.

> **80% DISAGREE WITH THE CURRENT PROPOSALS** (60% strongly disagree and 20% somewhat disagree)

> **28% THINK IT IS RIGHT** that a private members club **CAN BUILD ON OPEN-PARK LAND FOR IT'S PRIVATE AND CLOSED BENEFIT.** and closed benefit.

> **67% SEE NO BENEFIT FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY** in current plans.

"This green space is not only a core part of our heritage, it provides an incredibly valuable role in physical and mental health and wellbeing."
Capability Brown Member

"This area is part of the "green lungs" of London. I am totally against the destruction of any green space in the city, but especially this one which has a unique historical and natural character." Capability Brown Member

"The AELTC proposal is the biggest chance of retaining some Capability Brown aspects that Merton council or The Wimbledon Club will not deliver." Capability Brown Member

“It is hubris, showing no consideration at all for the impact on the locality and causing further damage to the historic park. The All England Tennis Club can afford to find, buy and equip another stadium - it does not need to extend their present tennis facilities into Wimbledon Park.” Gilly

Drummond OBE DL Hon FLI VMM

“I fail to understand how a huge stadium is by any stretch of the imagination in keeping with the heritage of this beautiful open space.” S. Wilson

“I support the plans because they have pledged to introduce public access through the creation of a new park, with public access all year round to the tennis courts themselves.” Capability Brown Society member

“Destruction of the golf course seriously compromises the natural landscape and the enhancement to local wildlife. Presumably if the lake is opened up, the angling club will disappear, which will lead to poaching of fish stock, antisocial activity around the lake, and no careful management of the lake bank side area. It will be a blot on the landscape.”

Capability Brown Society member

“I believe the AELTC have sufficient space and courts. Tennis is also often for children with privilege and is not a community sport. There’s no benefit for us.” *Capability Brown Society member*

“It will be like Disneyworld bringing in lots of tourists during Wimbledon fortnight itself. They will spend time within the vicinity in the Museum and vendors on-site but bring nothing to the borough itself.”

Capability Brown Society member

NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

DESPITE VALUING THE SAME 3 BENCHMARK PRIORITIES, THERE IS A DIVISION IN TRUST AND BELIEF IN THE AELTC'S ABILITY TO DELIVER THE PLANS. THIS LACK OF CONSENSUS AND CONFUSION SHOWS THAT KEY COMMUNITY NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET.

Urgent needs across the local community include:

1. Detailed and immersive plans accessible to all local community groups
2. Proactive transparency in AELTC's actions and proof that community benefit is being delivered over the long term
3. Confidence in AELTC's ability to deliver against 3 benchmark priorities
4. Continuous consultation with local and marginalised communities during development and build stage

"It can't be a surprise that a business wants to maximise profits from a huge asset. Merton were foolish to practically give the land away in the first place. I don't agree with the proposals at all." Capability Brown Member

"The AELTC is proposing to do more for this park than anyone has done, in order to remedy the 'at risk' status, not worsen it." Capability Brown Member

CHALLENGES FACING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

THE PROBLEMS FACING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY ARE SHARED BY ALL AND DEPEND ON AELTC'S ABILITY TO DELIVER ON THEIR PROMISES + BENEFITS.

ONLY 20% AGREE WITH THE CURRENT PLANS, BASED ON PROMISES OF YEAR ROUND ACCESSIBILITY TO LOCAL RESIDENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION AND YEAR ROUND EMPLOYABILITY BENEFITS.

Urgent challenges which must be overcome to gain approval from the 80% who disagree with plans include:

1. Accessibility for people of all ages, identities and ethnicities
2. Equitable decision making for marginalised local communities
3. Year round access and benefit to local communities

"The landscape will be reduced, and the cricket/tennis courts removed, plus the angling club, all to ensure that non locals can then use the facilities that AELTC want to create. These plans do not respect local users." Capability Brown Member

"Our children need space to play and be, there is already a shortage of green space and Wimbledon Park is a key part of many of our children's lives." Capability Brown Member

VOTED IMPROVEMENTS TO PLANS

TO MAKE THE CURRENT PLANS FIT FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WE HAVE A PRIORITISED LIST OF CHANGES AS VOTED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

1. 48% oppose the 8,000 person Show Court completely and/or want it moved into the current AELTC tennis site.
2. 36% oppose the 38 tennis courts completely.
3. 4% think the 38 tennis courts should be decreased in size and can only go ahead if they are accessible all year round (e.g. free of charge) to local communities.
4. 8% support current plans

“I have no problem with tennis courts on the land per se but I do disagree with the huge building that will dominate this part of the park ie the new show court”. Capability Brown Member

“Expansion is necessary to protect the status of Wimbledon as the world's best tennis event, but it is the extent and design that is at issue.” Capability Brown Member

“I believe the landscaping they will do alongside the extra tennis facilities for the whole community is actually bringing back much of what has been lost from the Capability Brown days”. Capability Brown Member

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AELTC

RECOMMENDATION 1 = The AELTC must deliver more detailed plans that are transparent, detailed, immersive, visual. The plans must clearly deliver more benefit to wildlife and local marginalised communities than the current status.

RECOMMENDATION 2 = The AELTC must listen to the strong views of the local community and consider replacement of the 8,000 person showcourt on your mainsite.

RECOMMENDATION 3 = To promote diversity and equity the AELTC must include local community voice at a decision-making level at regular intervals during the development build. The AELTC must consider employing a diverse Youth Board to embed diversity and inclusion into the development for future generations.

RECOMMENDATION 4 = The AELTC must regularly prove it is delivering against the 3 major benchmark priorities and benefits. The AELTC must co-create a risk mitigation plan with the local community if any harm to environmental and community health is done.



**END. THANKS FOR
READING.**



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