

## Case study Heritage Counts 2015

Theme demonstrated by case study:	Relevant to themes of Positive Local Management, and Repair and Maintenance
Name of project/group:	Rainham Hall
Location:	Rainham, London Borough of Havering
Duration (if applicable):	Four years - planning, development, work and delivery

### Short description of project:

Rainham Hall is an early 18<sup>th</sup> century house which was offered to and accepted by the National Trust (without endowment) in the late 1940s, who tenanted it out until 2011. The project will make Rainham Hall, its outbuildings and gardens, a dynamic and vibrant cultural and community hub, and will help to deliver the vision for Rainham as one of London's growth areas. The project has been developed in partnership with the London Borough of Havering (LBH) and is central to the "place-making" agenda for Rainham that integrates Rainham village, Rainham Hall and Rainham Marshes.

The project addresses Rainham's future: population and housing growth; economic development and diversification; and quality of life - heritage and history, nature, biodiversity and green space. A number of community groups have worked with the Trust and its partners to ensure that Rainham Hall offers facilities and opportunities that are relevant to local people, now and in the future. It represents a quiet revolution in how the Trust opens a property to the public. Collaboration with members of the community is fundamental to how the project has been developed, and how Rainham Hall will operate in the future. The project has received funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Veolia.



The Rainham Hall prior to the project (Photo: Nic Durston, National Trust).



The Rainham Hall in January 2015 (Photo: Nic Durston, National Trust).

What would have happened without this project/group?

The stable block was included on the Building at Risk register due to its condition and the lack of identified use. An important aim of the project was to ensure that all buildings were repaired and conserved as part of a viable and sustainable plan, and that they could be used in ways that are compatible with the vision of Rainham Hall as a vibrant hub for the community and visitors. The building has been repaired and restored so that it will function as a café on the ground floor, and as a learning and community space on the first floor. The first floor will be fully accessible, with a new lift installed in the southern end of the building, which was used as a brew house. Fully accessible toilets are located on the ground floor, thanks to the addition of a sympathetically designed extension.

Without this project, and its support and funding, the National Trust would have had no choice but to let out Rainham Hall on a commercial basis, severely limiting public access to what is an architectural treasure and a wonderful local resource - when tenanted, public access was limited to less than 100 hours a year.

How did the project achieve its objectives?

The project will have achieved its objectives thanks to: 1) a hard-working and diligent project team; 2) strong partnerships both with strategic organisations (including London Borough of Havering, Veolia and Heritage Lottery Fund), and local community groups; and 3) a growing group of dedicated volunteers, many of which are local people who have volunteered for the Trust for the first time.

The project has also benefitted from a creative partnership with Central Saint Martins, which - through a carefully managed process - gave the project team the confidence and belief to undertake a radical approach to how Rainham Hall will engage the local community and other visitors. By offering sequential programmes, under the over-arching theme of “Who’s Living at Rainham Hall”, the project / property will continually present new opportunities for visitors to explore aspects and themes of Rainham’s history, through the perspective of the very many people who have lived in Rainham Hall over the course of nearly 300 years. This will help visitors to see Rainham as a place of change and transformation and, as such, looks ahead to Rainham’s future as much as to its fascinating past.

What difference has it made? Main outcomes and outputs.

The project has brought an incredibly important local resource into public use, and has involved community groups and individuals in every stage. The project’s main outputs and outcomes are:

- *Conserve and restore the stable block and make it structurally sound, thereby*

*removing it from the Heritage At Risk register*

- *Improve the property's conservation performance indicator (internal National Trust performance measure) through the restoration of the stable block*
- *Develop the ground floor of the stable block into a café*
- *Renovate the first floor of the stable block for use as a community and events space*
- *Dramatically increase accessibility of the Hall and the garden*
- *Conserve and restore a number of rooms in the Hall*
- *Focus on engaging diverse groups, that reflect the local audience*
- *In conjunction with local groups, develop an interpretation scheme, creating opportunities for learning and participation*
- *Develop an educational programme in partnership with local schools*
- *Develop a mixed programme of events in partnership with local groups to provide the means for a diverse audience to engage with the property*

The project is set to achieve all of these outputs - and various measures and mechanisms are in place to evidence this.

What were the main lessons learnt or challenges would anything be done differently?

The project did change direction at a key stage when detailed testing of a number of financial assumptions that the business plan had been based on was undertaken. This gave the project group the confidence to look at how the project needed to address the local audience in a bolder and more radical way, rather than opening a property with a single and flat narrative of a certain owner in a point in time. This insight led the group to work in collaboration with Central St Martins, the local authority and local groups to really understand what Rainham needed and how Rainham Hall could offer an engaging experience that would attract key audiences, especially local families, and what would motivate them to make repeat visits – in other words, how could they be best make Rainham Hall an essential part of the community's life, rather than the traditional National Trust property offer.

The project group have also learnt a lot about working with and through a dynamic combination of contractors, architects, creative partners and local people to achieve the project's vision.

What is the future for the case study?

Rainham Hall will be open to the public six days a week, all year round. Under the theme of "Who's Living at Rainham Hall?", every 18 months or so there will be a new programme at Rainham Hall, each one focusing on former residents. The first programme will be based on John Harle, the merchant who had the Hall built in 1729. The next programme will tell the story of how Rainham Hall was used by Essex County Council as a children's nursery in the

1950s. The third programme will tell the story of Anthony Denny, a high profile designer and photographer who lived at Rainham Hall in the 1960s and undertook important interior design work in the building.

These programmes will be developed with the extensive involvement of community groups from Rainham and beyond, including groups in Romford, Hornchurch, Dagenham and other places in East London and Essex. In addition, the project group will form partnerships with museums and other cultural institutions (local, London-specific and national) to ensure that these programmes engage people at all levels. The project is an early exemplar of the National Trust's strategic aim to provide experiences that "move, teach and inspire".

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