

Title of Report	Rename Aske Gardens to Joe White Gardens
For Consideration By	Council
Meeting Date	27 September 2023
Classification	Open
Ward(s) Affected	Hoxton West and Hoxton East & Shoreditch
Group Director	Rickardo Hyatt, Group Director Climate, Homes and Economy

1. Summary

- 1.1. In 2020 [Hackney Council announced](#) a review to understand the presence of statues, memorials and place and building names in Hackney; to understand the history reflected and how representative this was as a diverse borough.
- 1.2. Five names were identified as symbolic of racist histories due to their links with either profiteering from the Transatlantic 'Trade' of enslaved Africans between 1660 to 1834, or imperial history that greatly disadvantage indigenous communities.
- 1.3. During this work Robert Aske (1619-1689) was suggested by a local resident who had identified his connection to the Royal African Company (RAC). Further research confirmed his investment in this company, which between 1672 and 1731, transported 187,697 enslaved people on company-owned ships (653 voyages) to English colonies in the Americas, 20% of whom died on the journey.
- 1.4. Aske held stock in the RAC from 1671, at a time when it was paying out a high return to investors. Aske would have been fully aware that this return was made through this unethical and inhuman 'trade'.
- 1.5. Aske had no heirs, but left a sizable estate to the Worshipful Haberdashers Company for charitable purposes. At his death in 1689, his Will directed that £20,000 was to be used to buy a piece of land within one mile of The City [of London] to build a hospital and school for poor members of the Company. The remaining £12,000 was left to form the Haberdashers' Aske Foundation, of which the Company was to be Trustee. The charity was incorporated by a private Act of Parliament in 1690 and remains active today.
- 1.6. In 1692 land was purchased in Hoxton and the original hospital and school was completed in 1695. The present building was completed in 1827, with a

greater focus on education provision. In 1898 the Aske Schools moved from Hoxton and the building was purchased by the London County Council, and the open space (now known as Aske Gardens) in front was designated a public space.

- 1.7. Removing the name of Aske from the Gardens has less immediate impact on residents, compared to removing it from the housing block (Aske House) or road (Aske Street), affecting residents' addresses.
- 1.8. Renaming the Gardens provides the opportunity for public learning that offers contextualisation of the Aske name alongside a name that represents Hackney's African-Caribbean heritage.
- 1.9. Naming the Gardens after Joe White offers a new narrative that celebrates a Hackney resident whose contribution to the lives of young black men in the 1980s and 1990s remains a positive legacy that can inspire others. It also contributes to the wider narrative of diverse stories for a more inclusive public realm, elevating stories of people contributing to a better society.
- 1.10. Joe White (1962-2002) grew up in Hackney, attending local schools. He became an inspirational teacher and basketball coach after a successful career as a professional Basketball player. As a player he achieved success in the senior league and earned several caps with Team GB.
- 1.11. As a youth coach he remains one of the most successful in UK's basketball history winning 14 National schools titles and 18 National club titles. In the process he developed some of the country's best players, two went on to represent Great Britain at the 2012 Olympics, coaching many more that went on to professional careers.
- 1.12. Joe's legacy is also measured through the many hundreds of lives he changed through sport; his lessons went beyond the court and equipped a generation of young inner city people to survive and succeed.
- 1.13. This Gardens is therefore fitting for Joe White due to its provision of sport facilities (tennis and basketball courts).
- 1.14. Joe White was suggested to the Hackney Naming Hub. Community engagement and research uncovered a strong sense of community that values his actions with a continuing legacy 20 years after his death.
- 1.15. It is supported by the local African-Caribbean community and basketball fraternity.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve the removal of the name of 'Aske' from Aske Gardens and rename the green space, Joe White Gardens.**

2.2. To install an information board, located in a prominent position close to the basketball court (north entrance). This will contextualise the small park's new name, as well as the removal of the old name.

3. Background

3.1. In 2020 the Black Lives Matter movement, on both sides of the Atlantic, was galvanised by the murder of African-American, George Floyd by police officers. This was compounded by the growing evidence of pandemic data highlighting its disproportionate impact on Black and Global Majority communities due to health and wealth inequalities and the continuation of systemic racism.

3.2. On 7th June the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down by protesters in Bristol. Two days later the Canal & River Trust in collaboration with LB Tower Hamlets removed the statue of Robert Milligan.

3.3. [Hackney Council announced](#) a review to understand the presence of statues, memorials and place and building names in Hackney. The project included alongside health and education inequalities as part of the Council's Anti-racism/BLM motion, passed at the [July 2020](#) full council meeting.

3.4. Five names were identified as symbolic of racist histories due to their links with either profiteering from the Transatlantic 'Trade' of enslaved Africans between 1660 to 1834, or imperial histories that greatly disadvantage indigenous communities. The list of five names (symbols) and the sites affected are listed in [background document 1](#).

3.5. All the names represent histories that have a legacy in contemporary society through racism and Afriphobia towards African, and African-Caribbean communities. For this reason this work has close associations with the Council's [anti-racism motion](#) and the developing anti-racism plan. Racism in other forms also persists, but these are not reflected in the five names identified.

3.6. In collaboration with the project steering group a procedure for reviewing contested names was established, where a recommendation for removal (or further consultation) can be formed. This stepped approach can be adapted should further contested names come to light be they represent anti-Semitism, homophobia, misogyny, or ableism, and informs the introduction of new names.

3.7. This is not about removing history but about questioning the on-going presence of histories where the legacy remains impactful through overt and systemic racism and increasing representation of Hackney's often hidden histories.

3.8. Currently, there are no contested names linked to other protected characteristics or ethnicity.

- 3.9. In November 2020 the [Hackney Naming Hub](#) was launched to crowdsource naming suggestions that could support the ambition for a more inclusive public realm, with a focus on names that symbolise local communities and shared values.
- 3.10. This resource was used to form the long list of names when renaming the Gardens formerly known as Cassland Road Gardens in 2020; the longlist to renaming Rhodes Estate and Community Hall, and naming new Wimborne and Buckland developments in Hoxton West.
- 3.11. Since the naming of Kit Crowley Gardens (2021) the bus stop name has been updated for consistency, and public realm wayfinding around the Museum of the Home (previously called Geffrye Museum) has been replaced.

4. Comments of the Interim Group Director of Finance

- 4.1. The cost of replacing the Gardens' signs will be met from existing Parks and Green Spaces revenue budgets.
- 4.2. The cost of design, manufacture and installation of the information board contextualising the name change will be met by the existing Culture Budget as a minimal and one-off expense.

5. VAT implications on land and property transactions

- 5.1. No applicable

6. Comments of the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

- 6.1. The Council has various powers dealing with its functions in respect of parks or other green spaces; however, unlike with streets or buildings, there is no specific statutory power dealing with renaming of such areas.
- 6.2. Article 4.7(g), Part Two of the Council's Constitution (Sept 2023) provides that the function of 'changing the name of the area or any part of the area' is exercisable by Full Council only.
- 6.3. Other than set out, there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Appendices

Background documents

1. List of sites affected by names symbolic of racist histories
2. Information sheet: Robert Aske
3. Information sheet: Joe White

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SIGNED:



DATE:

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