

REPORT TITLE: NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN

DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kelsie Learney, Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management

Contact Officer: Susan Lord Tel No: 01962 848533 Email slord@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ST BARTHOLOMEW

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to deliver the final version of the Park Plan for North Walls Recreation Ground developed by the Boyle and Summers Consultant Team. It is recommended that Town Forum accept and adopt the Park Plan which provides the masterplan for the future of this important site. Adoption of these documents enables the progression of the project to the next phase and detailed proposals for the improvements can then be produced.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Park Plan as attached at Appendix One is adopted by the Town Forum.
2. That Town Forum authorises the development of the proposals to the implementation stage including consideration of funding options.

IMPLICATIONS:**1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME****1.1 Tackling the Climate Emergency and Creating a Greener District**

The creation of a Park Plan for North Walls Recreation Ground, will allow the City Council to identify and deliver ongoing maintenance and enhancement management options for the open space, including supporting the use of the sports pitches and recreation ground for the future.

1.2 Vibrant Local Economy

The proposed improvements within the plan including the addition of a café will bring increased revenue to the City and the park improvements will add to the overall enhancement of Winchester City Centre benefitting the wider economy.

1.3 Living Well

The Park Plan supports the priority of "Living Well" which seeks to maintain and enhance open spaces and parks that support good mental and physical health for residents of all ages. The improvements in the Plan will improve accessibility to the park for all user groups.

1.4 Your Services, Your Voice

All improvements in the Park Plan have been directly influenced by the public through an extensive engagement programme. The implementation phase of the project will be based on the priorities given by the public through the consultation and further engagement will take place with stakeholder groups and organisations during the next phase of the project as it moves towards delivery.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Funding for delivery of the Park Plan was secured from a Central Government grant to identify and deliver improvements to parks. This funding allowed the Council to employ external consultants to create the Park Plan and undertake the necessary engagement work.

2.2 The financial implications of delivering the actions identified in the Park Plan will be considered as part of the implementation programme and a further report will be brought to Town Forum detailing the project phasing, priorities and options for funding. However, Winchester Town Forum has already allocated £150,000 to deliver the play area refurbishment in financial year 2021-2022.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Legal and Procurement implications of delivering the different aspects of the Park Plan will be considered as part of the implementation phase of the project and will be the subject of a future report to the Town Forum.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any workforce implications of delivering the Park Plan will be considered as part of the implementation phase of the project and will be the subject of a future report to the Town Forum.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 North Walls Recreation Ground including the pavilion, tennis courts, ATP and play area is owned by Winchester City Council.
- 5.2 There are no implications for any existing property or assets proposed as part of the Park Plan. Any future implications will be considered as part of the implementation phase of the project and will be the subject of a future report to the Town Forum.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 In March 2019, an engagement event was undertaken at North Walls Recreation Ground which was attended by over 800 people. The feedback from this event was provided to the consultants as a starting point for the Park Plan.
- 6.2 The second phase of consultation held in May / June 2021, led by the consultant team, received 580 responses and was used to refine and develop the proposals in the Park Plan. Feedback from this consultation was provided to the Town Forum meeting on 16th September 2021.
- 6.3 There will be further engagement with stakeholder groups and organisations as the detailed proposals for the individual elements of the plan are worked up. There will be ongoing communication with all interested parties to keep them up to date with the project as it progresses.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 North Walls is a vital green space in the centre of Winchester which is greatly valued by local people and provides significant health and wellbeing benefits as well as sporting opportunities. The Park Plan identifies opportunities for improving this vital asset and broadening its accessibility as well as identifying opportunities for environmental enhancements.
- 7.2 An ecological impact assessment has been commissioned and the results of this will form part of the implementation phase of the project.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSEMENT

- 8.1 Officers have had regard to the Council's duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equalities Act 2010. There are no identified adverse impacts to anyone with a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010 or as regards to human rights.
- 8.2 The proposed improvements to the open space will improve accessibility and usability for all users.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 None required.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Funding from Central Government was provided for the funding of the Park Plan. The Town Forum have already allocated £150,000 for the refurbishment of the play area	There may be opportunities for income generation that will be considered as part of the next phase of the project.
Exposure to challenge	There has been considerable consultation about the Park Plan with all interested parties.	
Innovation		This is the first time the Council has produced an overall Park Plan for North Walls. It will allow the council to identify areas for opportunity; areas for income generation; areas for improvement and provide support for key users
Reputation		Enhanced reputational opportunities as the project moves into the delivery phase and ensures the Council is meeting customer needs and developing an open space fit for the future.
Achievement of outcome	The Park Plan will be delivered through a phased implementation programme	There are opportunities to seek grant funding to help deliver the priorities in the

	to facilitate achievement and this will be clearly communicated and publicised.	Park Plan
Property		There is an opportunity to improve WCC property through provision of new facilities on site.
Community Support	Ensure that WCC engages with known users, local residents and wider groups/individuals	There is a significant opportunity to build on the engagement already undertaken and encourage more people to value and use the North Walls Recreation Area.
Timescales	Park Plan needs to be completed by Dec 2021 to allow further actions to go forward	
Project capacity	Consultants were employed to undertake the delivery of the Park Plan due to insufficient in-house resources.	

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 North Walls Recreation Ground is the largest open, flat area of land owned and managed by Winchester City Council. Comprising an area of 12.4 hectares (30.7 acres), it is primarily used for formal sport including cricket and rugby, informal use such as dog walking and jogging, and as a route into and out of the city centre. It is the location for the adult and junior weekly park run; and is used for events such as the annual bonfire, Cheese and Chilli Festival and Hat fair. In addition, the site supports a canoe club; indoor and outdoor bowls clubs; a cricket pavilion; an Artificial Turf Pitch; tennis courts; a skate park and a play area. The River Itchen runs through the site, which sits adjacent to the Winnall Moors Nature Reserve on the edge of the South Downs National Park.
- 11.2 The City Council held an initial engagement event in March 2019 which was instrumental in identifying user requirements and providing baseline information to better understand how this complex site is currently being used. This information alongside the visitor survey undertaken in 2018, discussions with existing users, individuals and groups clearly identified the need for a co-ordinated approach to enhancements made to the North Walls Recreation Ground.
- 11.3 In 2020, a Central Government Grant was used to appoint consultants to develop a Park Plan to ensure that this site continues to meet the needs of users and local residents; is fit for purpose going forward; is able to balance the needs of a variety of users; identifies opportunities for enhancements, accommodates organised sports groups; and helps the Council continue to deliver its wider aims

as identified within the Carton Neutrality Action Plan, the Council Plan and other key documents.

- 11.4 Consultation on the draft proposals was undertaken in May / June 2021 and a full report on the feedback was presented to the last meeting of the Town Forum. All feedback from the consultation has been used by the consultant team to revise and refine the proposals to produce the final version of the Park Plan which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 11.5 The key changes that have been made to the plan since the consultation are:
- Revision of the entrance from Park Avenue to a simplified design
 - Inclusion of a permanent café and toilets as part of the plaza
 - More natural colour for painting of the banana bridge
 - Pop up mini golf has not been included as part of the new plan
 - The tower has been removed from the plan
 - The location of the multi-functional fitness space has been changed
 - Addition of middle river access for paddling close to the water play area
- 11.6 The report also proposes that the name of the site is confirmed as River Park as it currently has a number of different identities and that a Park User Group is set up to provide input to the successful development and implementation of the Park Plan.
- 11.7 It is proposed that Town Forum accepts this version of the Park Plan and authorises officers to commence the development of the proposals to the implementation stage including consideration of funding options.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 It would be possible to undertake the necessary works as individual projects but the site is complex and there is greater benefit to be gained from an overarching plan rather than focussing on individual elements.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

Verbal presentation given to Town Forum, NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN,
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS FROM CONSULTATION EVENT, 16th September 2021

WTF283, PARK PLAN FOR NORTH WALLS RECREATION GROUND, 18th March 2020

WTF280, PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENT – 5 YEAR PROGRAMME UPDATE, 23rd
January 2020

CAB3093, RIVER PARK LEISURE CENTRE – FUTURE USE OF SITE,
31st October 2018 CAB3190, RIVER PARK LEISURE CENTRE –
FUTURE USE OF SITE, 23rd October 2019

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – North Walls Park Plan