

**OXMOOR ACTION PLAN –
PROGRESS REPORT ON OPEN SPACE DEVELOPMENTS**

(Joint Report by the Heads of Community Services and Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to progress the implementation of the proposed improvements to the green space in Oxmoor, relating particularly to the site on the corner of Coneygear Road and Buttsgrove Way, identified as “Coneygear Park”, and the creation of “neighbourhood gardens” and “doorstep greens”. These improvements form one of the main components within the Oxmoor Action Plan.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Oxmoor Action Plan was adopted as Interim Planning Guidance by the Cabinet on 9 January 2003. This followed an extensive programme of community involvement including a ‘Planning for Real’ exercise funded as part of the wider Single Regeneration Budget project for the area. The resulting action plan was subject to specific public participation in November and December 2002. Members will recall receiving the recent Interim Planning Guidance Report from the Head of Planning Services detailing the progress of the whole Oxmoor Action Plan at the Cabinet meeting on 12 February 2004

2.2 One of the essential components of the Action Plan is to provide additional and improved play and recreational facilities, using the benefits gained from the development of land for housing. The Action Plan identified a new park on the open space at Coneygear Road and proposed a network of neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens developed in response to local need and wishes.

3. CONSULTATION ON CONEYGEAR PARK

3.1 A wide ranging consultation exercise was undertaken during the period October 2003 to February 2004. The consultation ascertained what facilities the local community would like to see developed in a park. The exercise consisted of meetings, consultations and workshops as follows:

- a first meeting with the occupiers of the housing closest to the park on the southern and eastern boundaries;
- two open public meetings at the St John’s Hall on Mayfield Drive and at the Medway Centre;
- consultation with various local community groups including Oxmoor Community Action Group, Moor Play, and Thongsley Residents Association;

- workshops in the four local primary schools, the secondary school and the special school within the catchment area of the park, together with a workshop at Skeels Court;
- meetings with various organisations including Huntingdon Town Council, Huntingdon Youth Centre, Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership and the early years' group at the Butts Grove Centre.

The detailed outcomes of the consultation are attached as annexes.

- 3.2 In summary, most people consulted support the idea in principle of making the area more attractive and/or providing additional play and recreational facilities in some form. There is support for the idea of making the park more attractive: a pleasant place with surfaced paths, trees and seats. People want to retain existing facilities: dog walking and the football area. The open feel of the field is valued.
- 3.3 Local support for the project is high. The area has the potential to be a highly successful community park, working with the local communities, providing appropriate facilities in a safe environment. However, it also has the potential to be a failure if real fears of misuse are not addressed from the beginning and throughout its life.
- 3.4 Residents whose houses are adjacent to the field are extremely concerned by proposals to improve facilities because they fear that they will be misused and mismanaged. The concerns they express are shared by many of the consultees. Consequently, any proposals for the area must address these concerns.
- 3.5 Many consultees consider a presence on site, such as a modern park ranger or play leader, at times of potential high usage, critical. This would have the benefit of providing imaginative play and informal organised games together with a safe supervised environment. In addition, a person of this nature could be responsible for site maintenance in consultation with local people as at Barford Road, St Neots.
- 3.6 A wide range of particular facilities and activities has been suggested. There has been an emphasis on both imaginative play structures and the provision of family type games and facilities such as crazy golf or boules. People would like to be able to sit and have light refreshments and have toilets available. Many people would like a water feature on site 'like the one at Papworth'. There is widespread support for an area for ball games including cricket and football and some support for a multi sport surface and a multi purpose wheeled activity area.
- 3.7 Consultation has suggested some excellent imaginative means how these facilities could be provided. Many of these ideas could be implemented using a facilitator with artistic and building skills, working with the young people that designed them.

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD GARDENS AND DOORSTEP GREENS

- 4.1 Doorstep greens are the linear greens that typically houses front onto¹. Neighbourhood gardens are the larger open spaces surrounded usually on more than two sides by housing¹. The treatment of both types of amenity is negotiated with the local community. The sites are then jointly managed and maintained by the community and the local authority as in the case of Sudbury Meadows (The Paddock) and Barford Road, both in St Neots. Again, this approach will require a dedicated ranger/facilitator. Some considerable success with this approach has already been had in Oxmoor through the employment of a Ranger funded by charitable sources, who has worked with the local community on improving and managing open spaces which have been identified as being in particular poor states of repair.
- 4.2 It is envisaged that doorstep green and neighbourhood garden development will be rolled out across Oxmoor as both the Council and the local communities identify suitable sites.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In order for the Council to meet the aspirations of Oxmoor residents and to deliver the open space elements of the Action Plan, progress towards these elements needs to be made alongside or ahead of the development of other open spaces for housing and other non recreational uses.
- 5.2 In the first instance, it is proposed that there is a phased approach to the development of Coneygear Park which will encourage local usage and a sense of ownership to develop. The establishment of a 'Friends of the Park' group would facilitate this further. The first phase of implementing the scheme would be to create a basic infrastructure into which various specific facilities may be inserted if or when it is considered appropriate, after further consultation. The infrastructure would include some or all of the elements identified in Annex 2. It is expected that the costs associated with developing this first phase together with additional facilities will require a budget in the region of £300,000.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A total sum of £755,000 will be available for the development of Coneygear Park, neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens as a result of the sale and development of other open space in the area for housing and non recreational uses. In addition, a sum of around £46,000 is available to be applied to the Coneygear Park development as a result of a section 106 payment from the Kings Ripton Road housing development.

¹ Community Land Use, Civic Trust Regeneration Unit, September 2001

- 6.2 It is proposed that £300,000 of the total sum of £801,000 is allocated as a budget for the development of Coneygear Park. The remaining £501,000 would be used as a fund to generate an annual revenue sum of £33,400 for a period of seventeen years.
- 6.3 At this stage it is expected that the annual revenue sum would fund the costs of a Ranger operating in Oxmoor and an adequate development and maintenance budget which would be supplemented from external funding sources as available. However, final decisions on staffing would depend upon the review of open space management within the District to be conducted later this year.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That Cabinet approves the creation of a “Coneygear Park” at the junction of Coneygear Road and Buttsgrove Way in consultation with the local community.
- 7.2 That Cabinet approves the application of funding for the creation of Coneygear Park as outlined in section 6 above.
- 7.3 That Cabinet approves the development, management and funding of neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens as outlined in the report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Oxmoor Action Plan, held in the office of the Head of Planning Services.
Community Land Use: An Open Space & Play Strategy for the Oxmoor Estate, Huntingdon, held in the office of the Head of Community Services.
Consultation Documents, held in the office of the Head of Community Services

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What people like about the area at present

It is a lovely open space within a relatively built up area-it is liked for *'the feeling of being on top of a hill with wide views'*.

'It is good for walking dogs as they can run about freely.'

'It is good for kickabout football and for running around.'

'It does not attract vandalism and misuse because there is nothing there to attract trouble'.

What people do not like about the area at present

'Copious dog fouling-not safe for people to run around or play on the area.'

'Dumping of garden waste.'

'Quantities of litter that catch in the hedgerows particularly on the eastern boundary.'

'Some loitering on the north east side of the park.'

'The very soggy ground, particularly run off towards the southern boundary.'

'The lack of pavements on the northern and western boundaries.'

'The fact that both Coneygear Road and Butts Grove Way are dangerous to cross: most parents do not allow their children to cross these roads by themselves.'

'The area is boring and has very few recreational facilities.'

What people fear might happen if any new facilities such as play equipment were put on the park

'That it will attract more people, inevitably leading to noise &/or disturbance near the houses.'

'That some of the people it attracts will vandalise anything put there.'

It will encourage people to congregate and there will be anti social behaviour such as drinking and swearing and drug taking.

'There will be an increase in rubbish.'

'The value of adjacent homes will fall.'

Loss of dog walking facility.

Loss of football area.

'Loss of the feeling of openness and wide views.'

'Places for people to hide behind.'

SUGGESTED PLAY AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

CHILDREN	YOUNG PEOPLE	FAMILIES
Jungle Area Obstacles Aerial Runways Climbing Frames Rope Activities Plastic Tunnels for crawling through Monkey Bars/Fireman's Poles	Assault Course Climbing Wall	Puppet Shows Picnic Area Fair Barbecues Kite Flying
Animal type multi Slides and Swings Interesting Play Equipment Roundabouts	Go Karts Skateboard Area BMX Track Skate Area Track for Battery Cars	Bowls Crazy Golf Croquet Skittles
Water Feature Paddling Pools	Cricket Football Hockey	Rounders Cricket
Games marked out on play surface ie: Hopscotch and Snakes and Ladders with tactile surfacing Sandpit	Basketball Netball Kick Ball Wall Tennis	Volleyball Open Air Theatre Performance Space
Toadstools Maze (wide enough for wheelchairs) Tree Houses Sculpture Play ie Swings of Monkeys, Slides of Dinosaurs	Concrete Table Tennis Trampoline	Dog Walking Area
Toddlers Play Area		Trim Trail Jogging and Cycling Track

'NICE THINGS FOR EVERYONE'

A Park Ranger	Refreshments
Fruit Trees	Funky Paths with tactile surfacing
Quiet Area	A Sports Teacher
Children's Cafe	Scented Garden
Sculptures	Shelter
Split function paths – for cycling and walking	Trees
Flower beds and scented garden	Seats
Boules	Shade

ANNEX 2

COMMUNITY PARK: SUGGESTED COMPONENTS FOR THE FIRST PHASE I

- Pavements along Coneygear Road and Buttsgrove Way on the perimeter of the park.
- Safe crossing points across Coneygear Road and Buttsgrove Way into the park
- Gated fencing along the road boundaries to prevent people running into the road.
- Surfaced paths (but not 'tarmac runways') with lighting.
- CCTV
- Drainage to prevent waterlogging and run off.
- Enclosed dog walking area with dog fouling fines enforced.
- Hedges cleared out and managed properly- some people want them removed, some like the screening they afford.
- Litter and dog bins.
- Seats
- Trees
- Toilets