

**CONEYGEAR PARK AND IMPROVEMENTS TO OPEN SPACE IN
OXMOOR
(Report by Head of Community Services)**

1 SUMMARY

This report was requested by Cabinet after having received a report on the matter in April 2004. It updates Members on progress towards the implementation of the proposed improvements to the green space in Oxmoor, relating particularly to the site on the corner of Coneygear Road and Butts Grove 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 At its meeting on 22 April 2004, Cabinet approved the creation of Coneygear Park and the proposals for the funding and management of the Park and the development of neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens. A total sum of over £800,000 is to be applied to these projects as a result of the sale and development of other open space in the area for housing and non recreational uses and the use of existing resources generated through development in the immediate vicinity. The resources will be applied to generate the capital development of the first phase of the Park and to generate a long term revenue budget to fund the neighbourhood garden and doorstep green schemes.
- 2.2 The provision and enhancement of open space in Oxmoor is a central and critical element of the Oxmoor Action Plan. The Plan relies upon improving the housing mix through new development to release resources to undertake the improvement to open space required.
- 2.3 Currently, there is a significant acreage of open space in Oxmoor. However, much of it is highway verge, small areas of mown grass with little or no leisure value or larger areas which often generate conflict of use amongst local communities. The Plan pays particular regard to the latter areas by involving local communities in identifying appropriate landscaping treatments and then developing and maintaining those treatments. Details of a pilot approach of this type are noted below. The Plan also recognises that additional housing development will in itself generate new open spaces which will need to meet the Council's quality standards and hence further enhance the open space offer in Oxmoor.

Neighbourhood Gardens and Doorstep Greens Pilot

- 2.4 It has been possible to pilot work similar to that envisaged for the neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens. The Countryside Services section has employed a Ranger using funds from the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Project and the friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. The Ranger has been working with residents in the Judson Court area (see Annex A) to improve the local open spaces which were identified as particularly poor in a survey of Oxmoor open spaces conducted in 2002. The Ranger has provided the plants and residents have planted and maintained fruit trees, herbs and some vegetables, as a healthy eating scheme has been encouraged. She has also worked with a wide range of the community to involve them in caring for the environment in which they live, in order to maintain the sustainability of the project. A sample of photographs from the project are attached as Annex B. Colour versions of these and others will be on display at your meeting.
- 2.5 The Ranger will leave at the end of March when some of the funding runs out. However, the project will be the model on which the new Coneygear Park Ranger will base work on neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens. It is expected that this will begin in the autumn of 2005, after the summer activities organised by the Ranger have concluded, and that these will take three years to develop. It is critical for the success of this approach that the local communities involved are fully committed. Nevertheless, it is expected that the ranger will seek to develop at least one scheme in each of the "quarters" of Oxmoor as identified in the Action Plan and shown in Annex A. On-going support will be given to each scheme after implementation to maintain and manage the improved open spaces in a satisfactory condition. Support will continue to be given to the areas planted over the last two years.

Coneygear Park

- 2.6 The open space design and management consultants, Parklife, have been engaged to develop a master plan for the Park. Their initial ideas were submitted in December 2004 and agreed in principle with officers. The final master plan is due in early February 2005. Tender documents will be issued by April and the tender analysis report with recommendations by May. It is hoped that construction will start during June 2005. Phase 1 construction should be finished in September 2005. Further consultation has also taken place with residents in the immediate vicinity of the Park.
- 2.7 It has been acknowledged that the initial construction will provide the basic infrastructure of the Park, but that additional on-site facilities will be built as the funding released by development becomes available. This phased construction is reflected in the master plan.
- 2.8 In order to emphasise the community benefits arising from the generic Oxmoor developments, of which the Park is one, some consideration has been given to an official opening. Assuming that construction proceeds as envisaged, early thoughts include a bonfire and fireworks on Saturday 5 November. Further consultation will take place on this matter, including with Huntingdon Ward Members.

- 2.9 Critical to the development of the Park and its place within the community will be the appointment of the Coneygear Park Ranger. It is expected that the post will be filled by May. This will enable the post holder to be involved with the construction of the Park whilst developing a summer programme of activities. The post holder will be line managed by Countryside Services and supported by the Parks Service and will also be responsible for the development of neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens as noted above.

3 CONCLUSION

Progress towards improving open space in Oxmoor through the creation of a new community park and the development of neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens has proceeded in line with the report received by Cabinet in April 2004. The open space improvements are part of a package of wider improvements in the area which are critical to generate the resources to implement, manage and maintain the open space developments.

4 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet notes the progress towards the construction of Coneygear Park and the plans to develop neighbourhood gardens and doorstep greens in Oxmoor.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Oxmoor Action Plan
Report to Cabinet 22 April 2004.

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