

**IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERSIDE PARK HUNTINGDON  
(Report by Heads of Planning, Operations and Environmental Management Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Cabinet to consider the comments from the public and other bodies on the ideas for improving the Riverside Park and to make a decision on what proposals will be supported and their timescale.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 Cabinet at its meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008 agreed that the Council should engage with the public and others to obtain their views on a masterplan for the improvements to the Riverside Park. The estimated cost was £614,000 (see Annex 1 for breakdown) and money was included in the capital programme for this purpose.

- 2.2 The masterplan drawn up by officers of the Council had been adapted from the preferred option of the Consultants to suit the budget for this project but still addresses many of the issues set out by the consultants namely :-

- Poor links within the park and access to the town centre mainly due to the ring road
- Inadequate footpath/cycle routes and mooring points
- Lack of distinguishable gateway feature and arrival point for the town centre
- Negative impact of the existing car park and lack of space for park users
- Ecological and landscape features are not exploited to their potential
- Lack of distinctive and exciting leisure attractions or events – existing leisure facilities are under utilised (football pitches), in need of upgrading (boat hire facility) or do not appeal to a broad range of people
- There are a number of visual detractors from the site and a lack of visual stimulation
- There is a need to create a critical mass of facilities in the centre of the park

**3.0 THE COUNCIL'S MASTERPLAN**

- 3.1 For Area 1 (the formal park from the Bridge to Barracks Brook) the following improvements were suggested:

- Make the two entrance areas opposite the Bridge Hotel and along the ring road more welcoming
- In association with the Bridge Hotel entrance investigate the greening of the traffic island crossing
- Create a new footpath/cycleway parallel to the ring road inside the park
- Create a focal point with a shelter and seating in the centre of the park
- Improve the mooring facility and the paved area adjacent to Bridge Foot offices
- Remove certain trees and carry out new and more appropriate tree planting
- Clear river bank in certain locations to encourage easier access and improved and extra moorings
- Erect standardised signs inside and through the park together with interpretation boards

- 3.2 For Area 2 (the activity area from Barracks Brook to the north eastern edge of the playing field) the following improvements were suggested:
- Reconfigure the equipment in the play area and reduce the area in size to enable a wider landscaped walkway footpath to be created on the southern side of the car park
  - Retain tarmac path but remove chain link fence on the southern side of the playing field
  - Relocate one football pitch to Sapley Park and retain one adult sized pitch that would be sufficient to convert to 3 mini soccer pitches if necessary
  - Create an area of reinforced grass on part of the playing field closest to the Pavilion to accommodate the fair or circus and other events at times without losing the long stay car parking area
  - Create a Multi Use Games Area or youth equipment area on the playing field
  - De-formalise the playing field with additional planting and a less rigid management regime
  - Clear the river bank in certain locations to encourage easier access and improved and extra moorings. Improve the access to the slipway
  - Remove clutter at car park entrance by relocating recycling area and electricity pylon, removing fencing and creating a more attractive area around the pavilion and the entrance to the playing field
  - Encourage the redevelopment of the boat yard in accordance with the brief
  - Erect standardised signs and interpretation boards

- 3.3 For Area 3 (the Wildlife Area)
- Implement management plan to enhance the biodiversity and attractiveness of the area
  - Provide better signage to the car park in Church Lane and pedestrian signposts to the entrance to the Riverside Park at the Hartford end
  - Erect standardised signs and interpretation boards
  - Consider the development of a new car park opposite the end of American Lane

#### **4. THE CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The consultation took place over a 2 month period from October to December 2008. It consisted of an exhibition in the High street on a Wednesday (market day) and a Saturday adjacent to Sainsburys. At the same time a questionnaire was distributed explaining the proposals to local residents and to interested parties.
- 4.2 In addition officers explained the proposals at 4 meetings they attended during this period. Officers felt it was important that young people were involved in the process to obtain their views on the type of facility that they would like to see in the park. This involved workshops with the holiday play scheme in Huntingdon and a day's workshop in the Technology Department at Hinchingsbrooke School.

#### **5. THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The details of the consultation results are given in Annex 2.
- 5.2 There was a general feeling that many people did not want to see very much change in the park. There was a strong feeling against reinforced grass which would enable an activity area to be created on which the fair could be located. Their main objection being that it was a considerable amount of money to spend on something that would only be used on a relatively small number of occasions a year and could become overspill car parking. Immediate neighbours were also concerned that it would result in more noise disturbance closer to their homes. The creation of a focus in the formal

park by providing a shelter and seating raised concerns as they quoted the experience of 'undesirables' gathering in such places. There was support for improving moorings and whilst there was some support for a wider offer of play equipment particularly for teenagers, its location had to be carefully considered to avoid nuisance to local residents.

- 5.3 During discussions on the scheme, it became apparent that the park lacked a central entrance / meeting area. It is considered that a meeting area between the pavilion and the car park would make a major improvement to the use of the park. This has now been included in the proposals.
- 5.4 What people felt was also important was that the Park could be better maintained. This was particularly relevant to the wildlife area where it was pointed out that the paths were getting overgrown by vegetation and the area was not being managed in the most sympathetic way. Issue of flooding were mentioned and the need to raise the footpath in some areas by means of a boardwalk where water tends to hang about after a flood. People who regularly used this part of the park felt that the small car park was unnecessary as better signs to the existing car park at the Hartford end would be a cheaper solution. There were many general and specific comments made in the returned questionnaires. Many of these are reflected in the voting for the options and these have been used to make some of the changes to the scheme.
- 5.5 The consultation with the youth groups showed that rather than a formal MUGA/MUSA, they would prefer exciting equipment which gives a wider range of play activity and appeals to girls as well as boys. One group of local residents suggested that the youth play equipment be moved off the park to another site, but this does not fit in with the play strategy of incorporating this equipment in the wider park setting.
- 5.6 The Football Association have been contacted about the reduction of the number of football pitches to one and verbally have agreed to this. However they have not confirmed this in writing. They have also indicated that they would like to have the facility for junior football using smaller pitches.

## **6. THE WAY FORWARD**

- 6.1 The MTP shows an expenditure profile of:

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Total
55	510	50	615 (£000s)

- 6.2 The consultation shows that the majority of respondents are in favour of many of the proposed improvements to the park. The areas which are not supported are the reinforced grass, the structure in the formal park and the car park for the wild area. None of these are critical to the overall development of the park and if removed make a major saving to the scheme. A significant number of respondents to the consultation did request that the project include additional footpath improvements and these are now costed in Annex 1.
- 6.3 A Management Plan designed to improve the wildlife area of the park had been developed as requested in the consultation. The plan will require significantly increase levels of management and maintenance to this area on an ongoing basis and will require revenue funding. This additional cost is identified as £20k per annum. It is accepted that if this funding is not available, then this part of the project will not proceed. Extra greening of areas may also incur extra revenue costs which have not been included at this stage.

6.4 Because of the financial climate, it is considered that it would not be economically advantageous to carry out all the proposed work in the current financial year. Due to nature of the scheme, the work can be carried out over a period of time.

6.5 Annex 1 shows the proposed elements which could be carried out in 2009/10 and the remainder which will be carried out at a later date. Funding can also be sought for the future works from section 106 monies or grants.

6.6 The proposed profile is now

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
Capital	10	249	0	248	484 (£000s)
Revenue(extra)			20	20	Continuing (£000s)

6.7 There are still ongoing discussions with the owners of Purvis Marine as to the future of this site. Since there is an existing leaseholder on the site, this area was not included in the consultation. Cabinet will be updated at a later date on this matter.

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Annex 1 sets out the original breakdown in costs of the project and illustrates the changes that could be made as a result of the consultation exercise. Savings have been made by removing some items from the scheme but others have been added in to meet the needs of the future scheme

7.2 To reflect the financial climate, it is possible to split the work into phases. Annex 1 suggests that £249,000 be spent in 2009/10 and the remaining £248,000 at a later date, perhaps 2011/12

7.2 Extra revenue budget is requested to improve the maintenance of the park as the new management schedule. If the revenue budget is not increased, then the extra maintenance of this area cannot take place.

7.2 A total saving of £117,000 could be achieved by responding to people's views.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet–

(1) note the progress of the scheme and consultation to date

(2) approve the proposed new scheme as outlined in Annex 1 and the Conclusions, with the new cost profile for capital and revenue.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Environmental Management files  
Consultation documents.  
Riverside Park Masterplan, Gillespies

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## ANNEX 1

### SCHEME COSTINGS - CAPITAL

AREA 1 – THE FORMAL PARK	Original		Proposed	
			Phase 1	Phase 2
		timings		
Greening Traffic Island	15,000			15,000
Bridge Foot Moorings	75,000	rev		85,000
Reconstruct exist footpath	37,000		22,000	15,000
New Footpath	46,000		46,000	
Decorative paved areas	14,000			14,000
Focal Point Shelter	30,000	delete	0	
Seating and Information Boards	22,000		8,000	14,000
Planting scheme	72,000		30,000	32,000
Moorings		add	10,000	
Total Area 1	311,000		116,000	175,000
<b>AREA 2 – THE ACTIVITY AREA</b>				
Alterations to existing car park	6,000		6,000	
Create entrance area		add	25,000	
New car parking	25,000	delete	0	
Revision to play area	5,000		5,000	
Multi Activity area	34,000	delete	0	
Youth play area			34,000	
Reinforced grass area	114,000	delete	0	
Activity trail	10,000			10,000
Planting scheme	21,000		21,000	
Widen walkway through the area		add		20,000
Turning for slipway			7,000	
Total Area 2	215,000		98,000	30,000
<b>AREA 3 – THE WILDLIFE AREA</b>				
Seating and Information Boards	12,000		12,000	
Hartford road car park	20,000	delete	0	
Additional pathways		add		20,000
Total Area 3	32,000		12,000	20,000
<b>BUILD COST ALL AREAS</b>	<b>£558,000</b>		<b>226,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>
<b>DESIGN COSTS</b>	<b>£ 56,000</b>		<b>23,000</b>	<b>23,000</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>£614,000</b>		<b>249,000</b>	<b>248,000</b>

### SCHEME COSTINGS – REVENUE

**Extra revenue for Wildlife Area maintenance - £20k per year.**

## ANNEX 2 – RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

		Percentages			
<b>1</b>	<b>Do you agree that improvements are needed to the Riverside Park?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>	
	Yes	67	28	8	
	No				
<b>2</b>	<b>Were you aware of the park's size and the opportunities that exist within it?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>	
	Yes	85	9	9	
	No				
	<b>FORMAL AREA</b>				
<b>F1</b>	<b>Better entrance features</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	46	32	17	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F2</b>	<b>More notice boards, signs and interpretation</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	52	33	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F3</b>	<b>Green the traffic island by Bridge Hotel</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	51	29	16	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F4</b>	<b>Improve moorings</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	67	9	19	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F5</b>	<b>Improve area around bridge</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	74	9	11	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F6</b>	<b>Tree management &amp; new planting</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	74	14	6	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>F7</b>	<b>Create a central focus such as a gazebo</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	31	54	12	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
	<b>ACTIVITY AREA</b>				
<b>A1</b>	<b>Provide improved entrances</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	51	21	21	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				

		Percentages			
<b>A2</b>	<b>Better linkages between parts of the park</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	53	25	16	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A3</b>	<b>Provide short stay parking area</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	59	20	15	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A4</b>	<b>Create "collecting point"/ entrance near the pavilion</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	39	25	26	12
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A5</b>	<b>More notice boards, signs, interpretation</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	48	32	15	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A6</b>	<b>Retain one football pitch</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	62	21	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A7</b>	<b>Relocate recycling facilities</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	38	25	30	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A8</b>	<b>Create cycle facility from Bridge to wildlife area</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	61	26	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A9</b>	<b>Create area of fibre reinforced grass for events</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	34	50	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A10</b>	<b>Create area for youth play activities</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	50	34	9	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A11</b>	<b>Redesign play area</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	47	28	18	9
	Oppose				
	No Views				

		Percentages			
<b>A12</b>	<b>Provide turning area for the slipway</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	50	16	30	7
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A13</b>	<b>Management of existing trees + new landscaping</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	73	15	8	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>A14</b>	<b>Create fishing areas and better quality moorings</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	67	12	17	7
	Oppose				
	No Views				
	<b>WILDLIFE AREA</b>				
<b>W1</b>	<b>Improve the management of the wildlife area</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	84	11	2	6
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>W2</b>	<b>Encourage access into this area</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	67	17	8	11
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>W3</b>	<b>More notice boards, signs, interpretation</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	45	41	9	8
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>W4</b>	<b>Create fishing areas and better quality moorings</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	59	21	13	10
	Oppose				
	No Views				
<b>W5</b>	<b>Extra car parking off Hartford Rd</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>No Views</b>	<b>Unanswered</b>
	Support	27	52	12	11
	Oppose				
	No Views				