

NORTH
WALLS
PARK
PLAN
WINCHESTER

October 2021



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1_ INTRODUCTION

1.1_Background

North Walls Recreation Ground is a 12ha area of recreation and sports land located in Winchester City Centre. It is host to the River Park Leisure Centre which closed its doors in 2021, when the leisure provision transferred to the newly developed Sport and Leisure Park at Bar End Winchester.

The recreation ground will be facing new challenges as a result of the relocation of the leisure centre. The Council was therefore looking to commission a consultant team to develop a vision into a new design ("Park Plan") for the recreation ground.

1.2_Our Terms of Reference

Boyle+Summers, Feria Urbanism and UBU Design were appointed by the City Council to create a Park Plan, developed through a programme of community engagement for North Walls Recreation Ground, Winchester.

The key requirements of the project brief were as follows:

- **Design and delivery of an engagement and communications strategy:** Building on engagement work previously undertaken in March 2018, representative of the key stakeholders and inclusive of all those interested in the recreation ground and its future development.

- **Production of a park plan and design:** Working with the City Council to identify the preferred options and to test these at set stages with the community and key stakeholders. The Park Plan needed to take into account adjacent facilities such as Winnall Moors Nature Reserve and Hyde Abbey Garden and their links with the recreation ground. Whilst important to the setting and attractiveness of the recreation ground, the River Park Leisure Centre site, due to be redeveloped, does not form part of the Park Plan.

The key issues and opportunities identified by the consultant team to be addressed in response to the brief and through subsequent discussion with the City Council were as follows:

- The City Council has an exciting opportunity to develop a strategic vision and high-level design for the recreation ground
- The Park Plan and design should explore options for sport, recreation and community facilities which are ambitious but not unrealistic
- The existing sports pitches, tennis courts, skatepark and the indoor and outdoor bowls and canoe club buildings are to be retained for existing users
- Other constraints include the car park at Hyde Abbey Garden and the weak bridge over the River Itchen which prevents access for large vehicles
- Previous consultation has identified a preference for an area of water play within the recreation ground
- Consider enhancements for ecology and wildlife

- Explore opportunities for further income generation (eg. crazy golf, recycling plastic bottles, cashless donations)
- Proximity of Winnall Moors Nature Reserve (designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) and River Itchen as a Special Area of Conservation - SAC)
- The design needs to include a perimeter track suitable for the Parkrun. Parkrun is a popular event which can result in worn paths which have an impact on the maintenance of the recreation ground
- There is a desire from the community for increased access to the river and water, which needs to be considered alongside the impact and potential disturbance on wildlife (further environmental assessment is required)
- Ongoing engagement with users/groups of the recreation ground will be critical in ensuring the success of the Park Plan and design
- The Park Plan will provide a framework which can be used for funding applications to help in delivering the various aspects of the recreation ground.

The plan opposite shows the North Walls Recreation Ground.

Recreation Ground Location



Part of the entrance to the recreation ground from Park Avenue



The River Itchen is a key feature of the recreation ground



Generous green open spaces at the northern end of the recreation ground



2_ OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Our initial options appraisal work involved understanding the nature and use of the recreation ground. This involved the consultant team:

- visiting the recreation ground to see how it was used
- background information (documents and plans) and meetings with City Council officers from the Natural Environment and Recreation Team
- previous engagement (section 2.2) and initial key stakeholder engagement (section 2.3).

2.1 Recreation Ground Analysis

North Walls Recreation Ground is an important informal recreation and community resource set within a pleasant and peaceful environment. The 12ha recreation ground is mainly used for sports pitches, including cricket and rugby, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor bowling greens, a canoe club, a skate park and play area. The recreation ground is also used for football training, rugby training and other fitness activities including a large Parkrun weekly event. There is a popular cycle path. Hyde Abbey Garden is an essential part of the recreation ground. To the east is Winnall Moors Nature Reserve. It has impressive rivers running throughout together with a number of pedestrian bridges allowing access.

Other activities take place in the recreation ground, such as the Winchester Round Table Bonfire and Fireworks, Hat Fair and Cheese and Chilli Festival.

A summary of the diverse range of activities taking place within the recreation ground is shown opposite.



Team sports such as volleyball



Cycle routes



General exercise and running



Popular Skatepark attracting a wide range of users























Rambling

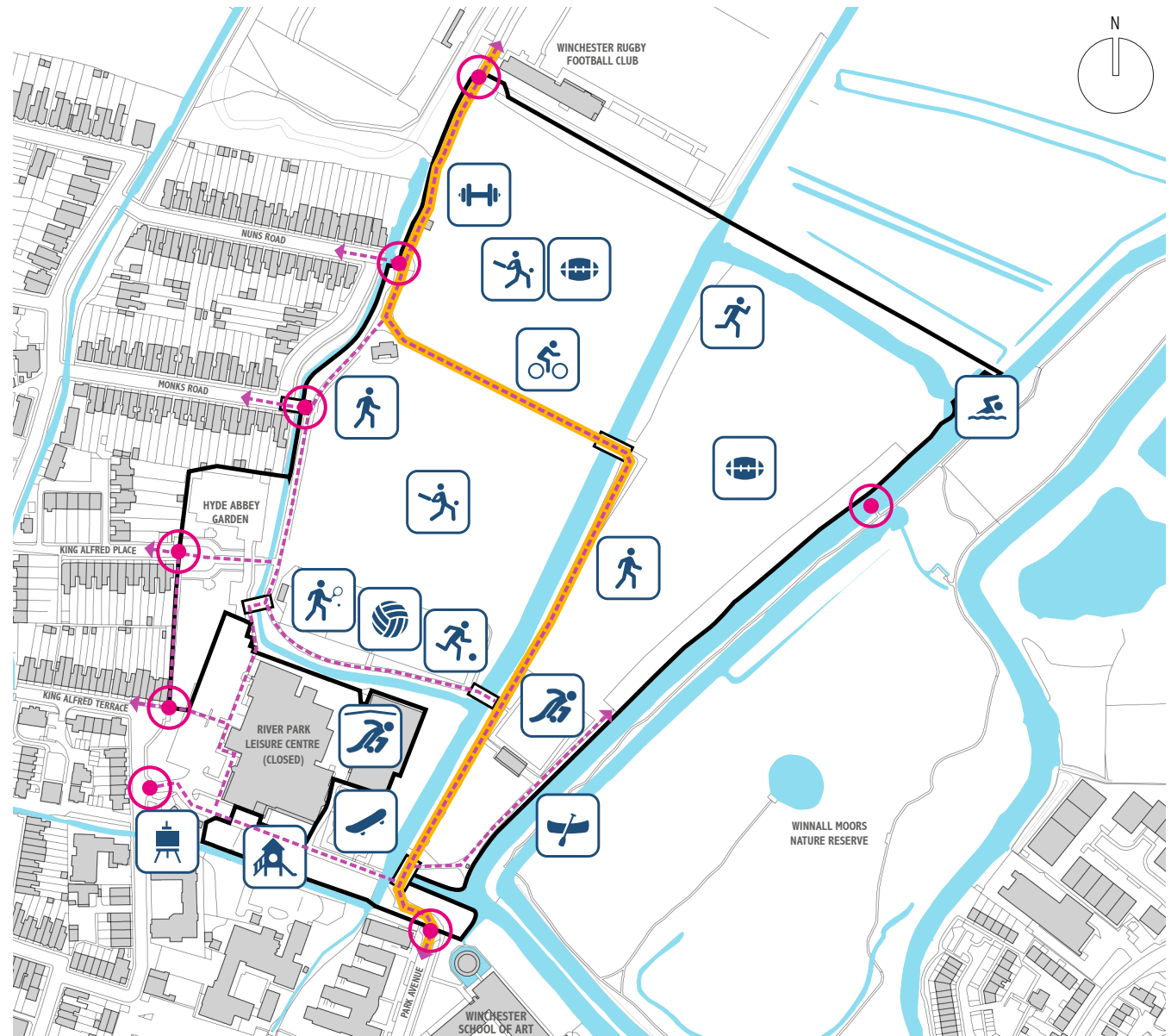


A gentle stroll in the great outdoors

Recreation Ground As It Is Used Today

The plan on this page shows the distribution of activities across the recreation ground observed over three days by the consultant team. The list is not exhaustive.

- | | |
|--|---|
|  North Walls Recreation Ground |  Cricket |
|  Entrance Point to Recreation Ground |  Tennis |
|  Walking Route |  Informal Volleyball |
|  Main Cycle Route |  Football |
|  Rugby |  Bowls |
|  Running |  Indoor Bowls |
|  Wild Swimming |  Canoeing |
|  Personal Fitness |  Skatepark |
|  Cycling |  Children's Equipped Play Space |
|  Walking |  The Colour Factory (on edge of Recreation Ground) |



Recreation Ground Images



Water is an important element of the recreation ground experience and valuable wildlife habitat



One of the main routes through the recreation ground where seating faces towards the path only



Large expanses of open green space, mature trees and sky are key qualities associated with health and well-being



An existing informal path by the river



The Banana Bridge is a point of interest, though it needs refreshing and is difficult for manual wheelchair users to cross



Existing path in need of upgrading

2.2 Previous Engagement

Prior to this piece of work, public engagement on North Walls Recreation Ground was undertaken over two days in March 2018.

This engagement was carried out through a combination of face-to-face meetings at a marquee within the recreation ground and survey form. It was designed to build a clear understanding of who was using the recreation ground and how it was being used, the challenges and demands presented by the site and to identify future opportunities to overcome these and to provide new and improved facilities.

Just over 800 people attended the event within the recreation ground. The engagement identified that the majority (68%) of people using the recreation ground came from within the St Bartholomews Ward. Walking proved the most popular way of getting to the recreation ground with the main entrances used being Gordon Road and Park Avenue.

The engagement highlighted the attractiveness of the recreation ground for walking, enjoying wildlife, cycling and running. People also valued the open green space, sports facilities, natural environment and fact that it is accessible and free to use. The Skatepark attracts people from a wider area.

The engagement identified a strong demand for a path around the perimeter of the recreation ground, cafe and toilet facilities, Lido/ open air pool/splash park, an outdoor gym area and upgrade to the pavilion.

For more details refer to the separate North Walls Engagement Event 22nd & 23rd March 2018 Results of Public Consultation.

2.3 Initial Stakeholder Engagement

Initial engagement was carried out with a number of key stakeholders supplied from a list by WCC (refer to separate First Stage Consultation Summary: Walking Tours North Walls Park Plan, December 2020 for the list of recommended consultees).

This initial engagement was carried out through a series of walking tours over three days during September and October 2020 (29 and 30 September and 1 October). The aim was to engage with local users in the recreation ground setting in order to find out first hand any issues facing the site and ideas about its future. One of the key benefits of walking around the recreation ground in groups was the opportunity to exchange experiences and share ideas with one another face-to-face (socially distanced).

A total of 25 stakeholders joined the walking tours from a list of 60 (42% turn out).

The walking tours engagement identified that the recreation ground was valued as a green, unique corridor with an informal character used by many as a convenient route to access the city centre. The large open space and sky were special qualities that should be retained. It provides a convenient opportunity to exercise for different levels of ability.

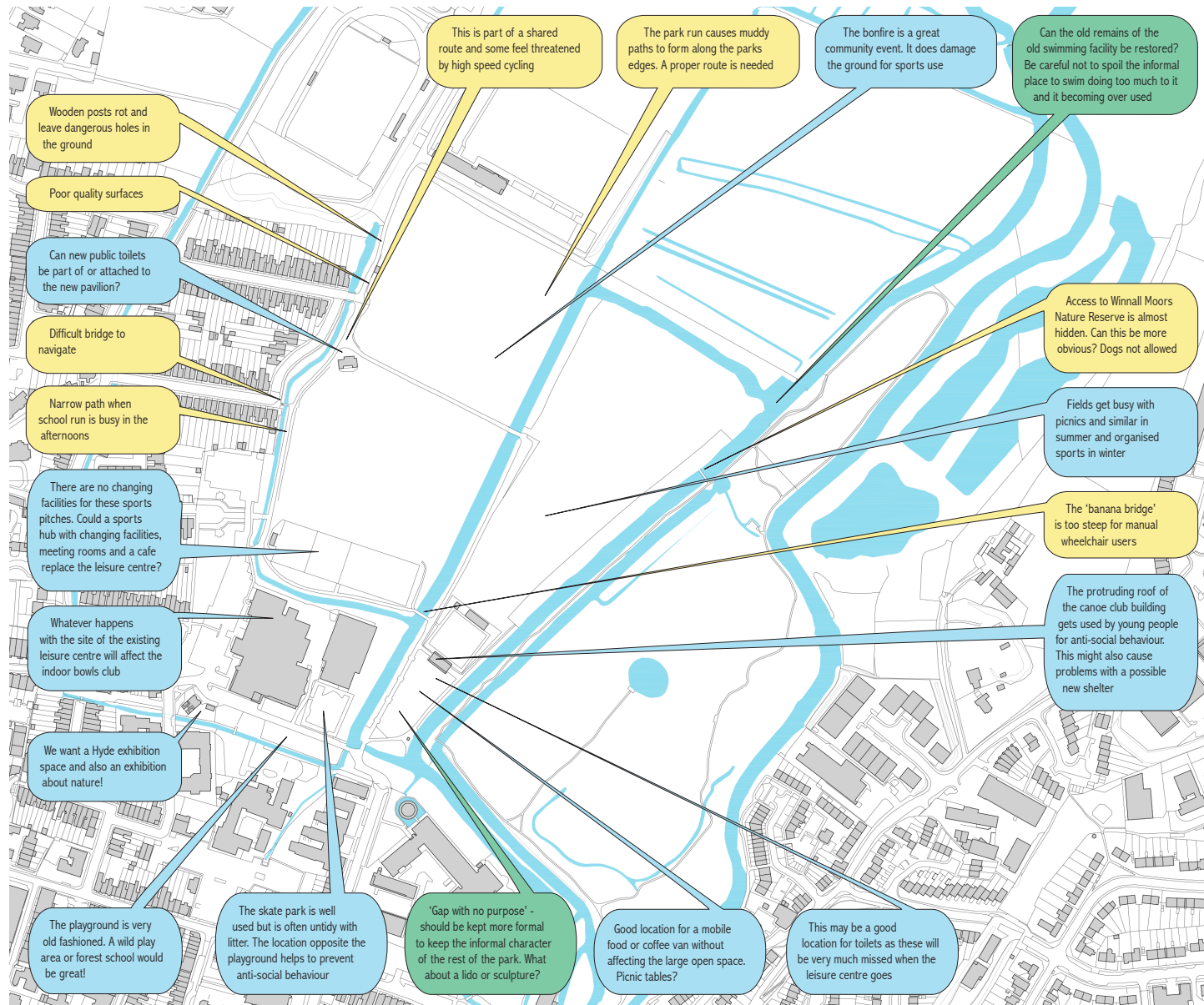
In terms of improvements, it was felt by many stakeholders that the recreation ground needs a general tidy up and no major change. The relationship between the site and the river was identified as a potential improvement opportunity, together with the existing network of paths which could be changed to provide better routes around the recreation ground.

In addition, the stakeholder engagement confirmed the need for a recreation user group that should meet regularly to help manage and monitor the site.

A number of specific comments were made by stakeholders about locations within the recreation ground. These are shown on the plan on the next page.

For more details about the initial stakeholder engagement refer to the separate First Stage Consultation Summary: Walking Tours North Walls Park Plan, December 2020.

Key Stakeholder Comments About The Recreation Ground



Access point with historic Hyde Abbey Garden



Worn path by the river

2.4_Options Generation

A long list of development options was generated by the consultant team following a review of strategic documentation, current recreation ground operation, previous and initial stakeholder engagement and through experience and knowledge of recreation ground developments.

The development options were presented to the Council Working Group for discussion and agreement. The development options list then formed the basis for the second stage of engagement with the wider community.

2.5_Wider Community Engagement

Engagement was subsequently undertaken with wider stakeholders and the general community during the summer 2021 to seek feedback on this long list in order to further inform the Options Appraisal.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time, the community engagement was carried out entirely online and consisted of an introductory video, series of themed sheets (5 in all) presenting the Initial Draft Park Plan, online questionnaire and question and answer session with the consultant team, publicised on the Council's consultation platform - www.winchester.gov.uk/northwallsriverpark.

The series of themed sheets are available to view in full on the Council's consultation platform. Sheets 3 and 5 from the list effectively showed the proposed ideas and layout for the recreation ground (highlighted):

- Sheet 1: North Walls Park Today – summary of how the recreation ground is currently used
- Sheet 2: North Walls Park Outdoor Rooms Approach – concept of outdoor rooms to help organise how the recreation ground is used
- **Sheet 3: North Walls Park Suite of Ideas – ideas about what can go on within the recreation ground**
- Sheet 4: North Walls Park Impressions – sketches of how some of the areas within the recreation ground might look
- **Sheet 5: North Walls Park Picture Board – precedent images for some of the ideas and potential features for the recreation ground**
- North Walls Park Survey Form – online survey questions

Section 4 of this report provides feedback from key stakeholders and the wider community on the Initial Draft Park Plan.

3_ INITIAL DRAFT PARK PLAN

3.1 Initial Suite of Ideas for Improvement

Sheet 3: North Walls Park Plan Suite of Ideas used in the wider community engagement presented the initial long list of project ideas.

The broad descriptions for each improvement idea are set out below and located on the following page.

Initial improvements ideas list:

GRAND ENTRANCE & PLAZA

- 1 Park Avenue entrance redesigned with grand archway or totem feature to celebrate arrival. New paving, landscaped seating area & mobile coffee van
- 2 Plaza style multi-functional space with outdoor area for events, water fountains for play, seating & public toilets
- 3 New bench seating to face both ways - to the pathway & the river

PLAY & SKATE

- 4 Skatepark enhancements to develop a youth hub
- 5 Potential pop-up portable / mini golf by the river & Riverside Indoor Bowling Club
- 6 Upgraded play space with equipment to encourage exploration & play for young & older children
- 7 Repaint Banana Bridge (yellow) as an existing feature within the Park

TOWER

- 8 Potential new sculpture / observation tower to provide spectacular views over the park with a helter-skelter slide or climbing wall

PITCHES & PICNICS

- 9 New perimeter track for all-weather conditions which could include distance markers
- 10 Resurface with new seating & inspiring artwork to form a memorable place within the Park
- 11 Potential new bridge associated with the perimeter track to increase access around the Park
- 12 Nun's Walk northern entrance redesigned to celebrate arrival at the Park
- 13 Improve Nuns Road entrance with resurfacing & by replacing the existing vehicle barriers with more attractive design

- 14 A new park canopy / solar powered shade structure for enhancing the green space, creating a comfortable & cool space, & reducing the Park's energy footprint

- 15 Resurface & widen the main linear path through the Park

SPORTS & FITNESS

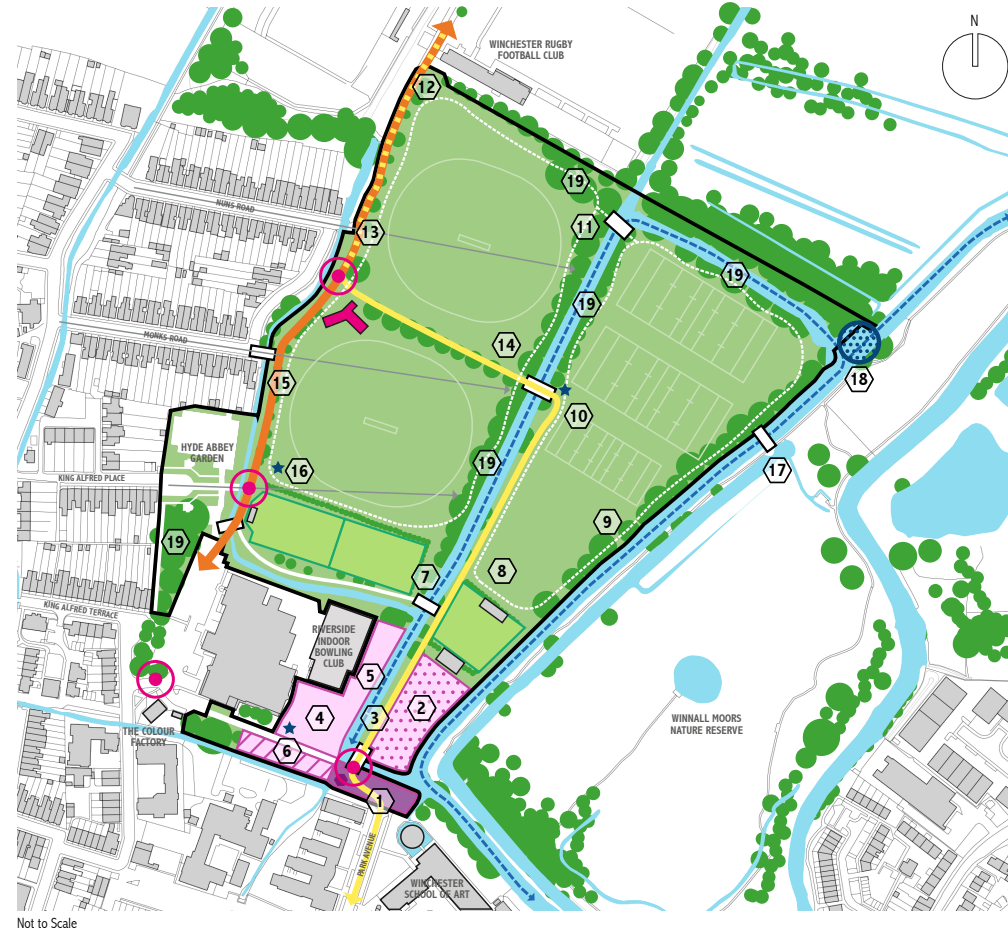
- 16 Outdoor fitness & exercise equipment with multi-functional area for all weather classes

QUIET & WILDLIFE

- 17 Improve Winnall Moors Nature Reserve West Entrance
- 18 Reinstate historic river access with improvements to the river bank
- 19 Quieter areas with biodiverse planting & features such as natural shelters to encourage wildlife

Initial Draft Park Plan Suite of Ideas

- North Walls Park Boundary
- Linear Path
- Pedestrian & Cycle Path
- New Perimeter Track
- Key Node - Information Point
- Park Avenue Arrival Space
- Play Space Reimagined
- Skatepark Enhancements
- Multi-Use Plaza: Events Space/Water Jets/Seating/Picnic/Toilets/Recycling
- Mobile Coffee Van
- Historic River Access
- Winchester & District Canoe Club Route
- New Cricket Pavilion (Planning Consent 20/01011/FUL)
- Water Fountain for Drinking
- Bridge
- Street View to Park
- River
- Existing Trees



Not to Scale

IDEAS FOR THE PARK

GRAND ENTRANCE & PLAZA

- 1 Park Avenue entrance redesigned with grand archway or totem feature to celebrate arrival. New paving, landscaped seating area & mobile coffee van
- 2 Plaza style multi-functional space with outdoor area for events, water fountains for play, seating & public toilets
- 3 New bench seating to face both ways - to the pathway & the river

PLAY & SKATE

- 4 Skatepark enhancements to develop a youth hub
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- 16 Outdoor fitness & exercise equipment with multi-functional area for all weather classes

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- 17 Improve Winnall Moors Nature Reserve West Entrance
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3.2_Initial Picture Board

Sheet 5: North Walls Park Plan Picture Board used in the wider community engagement presented a high-level layout for the recreation ground and precedent images of how some of the concepts and ideas proposed for the recreation ground might look.

An extract of Sheet 5 is provided opposite.

The precedent images were sourced from a wide range of contexts and locations with the aim of getting a flavour for the aspirations for the recreation ground and how key features could come forward. The images did not represent any final designs.



The popular Skatepark opposite the playground in the southern part of the recreation ground



The tennis courts and 3G pitches towards the centre of the recreation ground



Existing bridge with stepped access to Monks Road



Remains of historic swimming platform

Initial Draft Park Picture Board

The following precedent images show how some of the concepts and ideas for the Park might look. They are not final designs



19 Drinking fountains to help reduce the number of single-use plastic bottles



15 A new northern entrance feature that could frame views into the Park



17 Solar trees could create shaded meeting places for people to lounge & linger



14 Potential new bridge to increase access around the Park



19 Outdoor gym equipment to provide a range of physical & health benefits



16 Attractive supporting stand for bicycles that also serves as a bollard



6 Inspiring adventure play space where little kids & big kids could climb, slide, roll & run

9 Example track distance marker



9 Perimeter track of self-binding gravel for a natural appearance



13 Wildflower patches would create lively feeding & nesting grounds for wildlife



13 Bug hotels could be part park art & part winter habitat for beneficial insects



Not to Scale



8 An iconic observation tower could help raise awareness of one's wider surroundings



10 Wayfinding & interpretive signs coordinated across the Park with other items, eg. lighting & seating



3 Two-way facing benches could be linked to form long, linear seating areas



12 An inspiring artwork, such as a mirror labyrinth, could act as a memorable place



2 Multi-functional events area with interactive water jets / sprays



2 New public toilets



1 A mobile coffee van for drinks & snacks



1 Birdbox signs that also light up at night



6 Winding play structure



7 Consider repainting the Banana Bridge yellow



4 Skatepark enhancements such as a youth shelter



5 Pop up, movable adventure golf hole system



1 Simple, spacious eye-catching feature that could frame the entrance to the Park



4_ STAKEHOLDER & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

4.1_Key Findings

The wider community engagement ran for five weeks from 10 May – 11 June 2021 and generated a total of 580 responses. The question and answer session was held on 26 June between 7.30-9.00pm.

The Council's Natural Environment and Recreation Team has produced a summary of the community engagement findings in presentation format (see separate Result of North Walls Park Plan Public Consultation June 2021 document). The consultant team produced a summary of the more qualitative feedback. Again, the full version can be viewed as a separate document (North Walls Park Second Stage Consultation Summary Qualitative Results 2021).

The key headline findings were:

- A total of 580 responses to the online survey
- 80% of respondents lived in the Winchester Town area
- 74% of people surveyed agreed with the vision statement
- 63% of people surveyed supported the Outdoor Rooms Approach
- The top 3 priorities identified were:
 1. Plaza / multi-functional space with toilets
 2. Quieter areas with wildlife planting
 3. New perimeter track
- Generally, all proposals received positive support except the tower which 53% of people were unresponsive.

Overall, the wider community engagement provided good levels of engagement with local people. It was extremely useful in capturing the views and opinions of local people on the current recreation ground offer and providing an indication of preferences from the long list of potential development options.

It is worth noting that there was an issue with the functioning of the survey form initially, where the postcode requirement was not working. This resulted in some no responses to this question. Respondents were also not required to complete all sections of the survey.

Demographic Information

The online survey asked respondents to include their postcode to understand where people lived. The majority of respondents, 80% lived within Winchester Town and 6% from the Winchester Parishes.

Sheet 2: Initial North Walls Park Plan Outdoor Rooms Approach & Sheet 3: North Walls Park Plan Suite of Ideas

Vision Statement

Positively, 74% of the 580 respondents were supportive of the proposed vision statement. Conversely, only 21% of respondents indicated they were unresponsive.

There was a clear desire amongst respondents to place an emphasis on nature and simple designs (34 comments), without a reliance on new landmark structures within the recreation ground (25 comments).

Outdoor Rooms Approach

Over 60% of respondents agreed with considering the recreation ground as a series of diverse & complementary outdoor 'rooms', though some found the term confusing.

17 further comments were made about maintaining some flexibility to how the recreation ground is used. Other suggestions received for outdoor room ideas included, in order of priority: a lido (49 comments), permanent cafe (33 comments) and paddling pool (13).

Prioritisation of Improvements

The online survey asked respondents to rank their top 5 ideas from the proposed improvements list, where 1 was the top priority. The results, in order of priority were:

1. Plaza / multi-functional space with toilets
2. Quieter areas with wildlife planting
3. New perimeter track
4. Upgraded play space
5. Reinstate historic river access

These results demonstrated that there was strong support for the proposed plaza / multi-functional space with toilets. Quieter areas with wildlife planting ranked the second highest closely followed by a new perimeter track.

The online survey asked respondents to give their support and comments on each of the proposed outdoor rooms.

Grand Entrance & Plaza -

Positively, 74% of respondents were supportive of the proposed plaza / multi-functional space with toilets and water play area, closely followed by the proposals for new bench seating (73%). Conversely, 29 comments were made about the new plaza leading to a loss of green space.

There was demand to keep the entrance design simple, natural and in keeping with the area, supported by a permanent cafe with outdoor seating which would act as a social hub within the recreation ground.

There was also support for upgraded and well-placed two-way benches that would allow for various views of the river and recreation ground.

Play & Skate -

The current children's play area and equipment is outdated and requires replacement. 74% of respondents were supportive of upgrading the play space. Improvements to the Skatepark were also popular with 62% of respondents supporting a new hub with equipment store. Comments were made about involving Skatepark users in developing enhancements for this area.

39% of respondents were supportive of repainting the Banana Bridge. More specifically, respondents were not supportive of painting it yellow, with 182 comments made about choosing another colour. Rather it should be a neutral or rustic colour more in keeping with the character of the recreation ground.

Whilst 38% of respondents were supportive of pop-up mini golf, it was seen by many as unnecessary and potentially leading to a loss of green space within the recreation ground.

Tower -

53% of respondents were against the proposals for a landmark sculpture-observation tower, on the grounds it would be out-of-keeping with the recreation ground (79 comments), would be costly (73 comments) and potentially encourage anti-social behaviour (60 comments). Only 30% of respondents supported the idea and 15% were unsure.

Pitches & Picnics -

A total of 68% of respondents supported the idea of a perimeter track within the recreation ground. It is envisaged that the path surfacing would be in keeping with the informal and natural character of the area. Similarly, respondents supported the resurfacing of the main linear path (54% of respondents) and proposals for a new pedestrian bridge to increase access within the recreation ground (52% support).

There was also support identified for improving both Nun's Walk and Nuns Road entrances into the recreation ground, with simple and easy to maintain designs, though these were not ranked as high priorities.

Less than half of the respondents (48%) were supportive of the proposed new solar canopy and shade structure.

Sports & Fitness -

Two thirds of respondents (66%) were supportive of a designated all-weather area with some equipment provided for exercise and fitness classes, though 44 comments were made about it being proposed in the wrong location. Concerns were raised about its visibility from Hyde Abbey Garden which is seen as a more relaxed and contemplative space and its proximity to the cricket pitch.

Quiet & Wildlife -

Positively, 78% of respondents indicated that they were in favour of quieter areas with wildlife planting within the recreation ground. 73% of respondents also supported reinstating historic river access. A light touch high quality response was seen as being key to this particular improvement, though there was also concerns about the impact on wildlife and the river environment.

Overall, respondents were very supportive of the outdoor rooms approach and many of the proposed improvements.

Sheet 4: Initial North Walls Park Plan Impressions

Sketch Impressions

Respondents were asked to identify which sketch impressions of 5 of the key proposed ideas for the recreation ground they liked or disliked.

In terms of the most liked the findings were:

- Perimeter Track (125 liked)
- Plaza (123 liked)
- Play Area (98 liked)
- Fitness Area (59 liked)

Conversely, both the Tower with 142 responses and Park Entrance with 77 responses were disliked by respondents.

Sheet 5: Initial North Walls Park Plan Picture Board

Following on from Sheet 4 and the sketch impressions, respondents were asked to like or dislike a selection of precedent images for particular features, such as entrance signs, play equipment, seating and the perimeter track.

Overall, respondents were supportive of the majority of the precedent images, with 13 out of the 17 images receiving more likes than dislikes. The most popular images were:

- No.6 play space structures, 141 likes
- No.13 wildflower patches and bug hotels, 126 likes
- No.9 perimeter track and distance marker, 102 likes

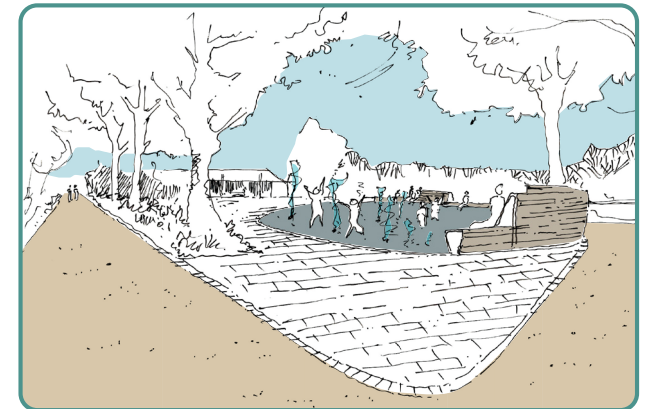
In terms of less positive responses:

- No.8 iconic observation tower, which was not needed with 121 dislikes
- No.7 Banana bridge painted yellow, with 114 dislikes
- No.15 new northern entrance feature to frame views into the recreation ground which was not needed, with 55 dislikes

Finally, the online survey asked respondents for any concerns they had about the proposed ideas for the recreation ground. 76 respondents indicated they were concerned about the adjacent River Park Leisure Centre site and its future impact on the recreation ground. This was followed by future maintenance of the recreation ground (39 respondents) and new structures spoiling the natural area (34 respondents).



Perimeter track: a new all-weather measured course for people to use. The track would be in keeping with the character of the park helping to reduce the impact on the environment & other park users



Plaza: a multi-functional space which could be used for outdoor performances, events & play. It would be a focal meeting point with toilets & seating. There could be a series of water play activities including water jets & shallow pools



5_ FINAL PARK PLAN

5.1_Introduction

Following a thorough appraisal of the feedback from the stakeholder and public engagement, the consultant team reviewed the initial Park Plan sheets to consider whether there might be any required changes as a result of the engagement.

A number of potential proposed changes were identified in light of the feedback received which were subsequently discussed and agreed with the City Council's Working Group.

This section describes the changes agreed together with the rationale and presents the final revised version of the Park Plan (revised sheets).

5.2_Agreed Amendments to Park Plan

Clear themes running through the engagement have been to ensure that proposed improvements to the recreation ground enhances biodiversity and the natural environment, are managed effectively to protect against anti-social behaviour and ensure the proposed investments are well-maintained and sustainable in the long-term.

Vision Statement

This has been amended to highlight the importance of nature, biodiversity and the river context. Reference to landmarks forming part of the improvements within the recreation ground have been removed.

Outdoor Zones Approach

As noted in Section 4.1, some confusion was raised amongst key stakeholders and the wider community regarding what is meant by outdoor 'Rooms.' As a result of this feedback, it was agreed to use the term Outdoor 'Zones' which is more widely understood in terms of land use and planning.

Grand Entrance & Plaza

Feedback identified that the main Park Avenue entrance and multi-functional plaza should be designed in a simple, natural appearance/way in keeping with the informal character of the area. A permanent cafe and toilet building is now included. At the detailed design stage it should be noted that proposals for this part of the recreation ground will need to consider flood risk.

River Access

Increasing access to the river has proved popular with key stakeholders and the wider community. At the same time, concerns have been raised with regards to the potential disturbance to wildlife and quality of the river. As a result, river access (children's paddling area) is proposed along the middle river within the recreation ground, away from the Nature Reserve to the east, rather than in the north eastern corner of the site, where historically wild swimming has taken place.

Children's Paddling Area

Feedback identified a strong desire for improved access to the river. As a result of this feedback, it was agreed that a children's paddling area be created on the middle river where children currently feed the ducks, as part of the Main Entrance and Plaza outdoor zone.

Dipping Platforms

Two dipping platforms to the north of the middle river have been added with the aim of providing safe access to the water's edge. Platforms are a great way to encourage and facilitate engagement, such as net dipping, with the aquatic environment whilst also providing a spot to stop and appreciate the views to be found in the recreation ground.

Perimeter Path

The multi-use perimeter path within the recreation ground has been amended to show links to the gravel path to the immediate east of the bowling green and towards the main entrance to the south, as well as from the side of the tennis courts to the Banana Bridge. These will increase access across the recreation ground.

In due course, the construction materials for the path should be discussed with stakeholders to ensure the path is accessible for all park users.

All-Weather Multi-Functional Area for Exercise & Fitness Classes

As noted in Section 4.1, this proposal has been relocated to north of the existing Outdoor Bowls Club, on the site of the former Tower proposals. This followed concerns regarding its visibility from Hyde Abbey Garden and proximity to the cricket pitch. Exercise and fitness equipment needs to be long-lasting.

Kickabout Area with Goal Post

An area with a goal post has been provided to the north of the all-weather multi-functional area for exercise and fitness.

Sculpture-Observation Tower

As a result of lack of support due to concerns raised about a landmark fitting in with the character of the recreation ground, potential anti-social behaviour, cost and loss of green space the tower proposals have been dropped.

Pop-Up Mini Golf

Pop-up mini golf was seen as unnecessary and potentially leading to a loss of green space within the recreation ground. Proposals for pop-up mini golf have therefore been dropped.

Park Canopy / Solar Powered Shade Structure

The proposals for a new park canopy incorporating solar powered shade structures have been dropped following a lack of public support.

Other minor amendments

A series of further minor amendments were agreed including:

- In general, all entrances to the recreation ground are in need of tidying up, with detailed designs kept simple. Information points will be provided at each of the key entrances (as shown on Sheet 3: Suite of Ideas page 25)
- There is support to repaint the Banana Bridge, just not yellow
- Any artwork within the recreation ground should be appropriate to the informal character of the area, ie. low key and with an emphasis on the natural environment
- Enhanced lighting for the main routes within the recreation should be considered
- Consider changing the name of North Walls Recreation Ground to River Park to better reflect its location and purpose

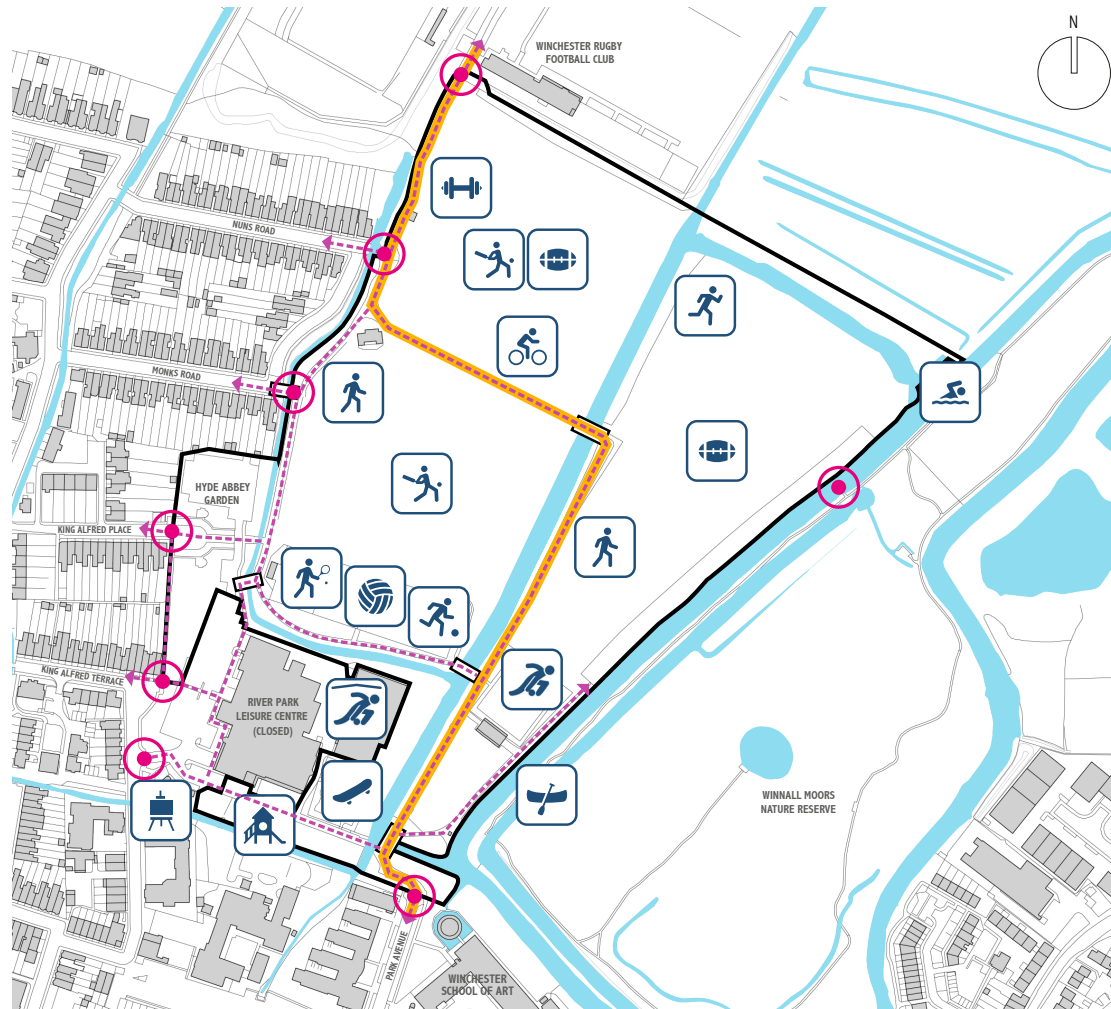
5.3_Final Park Plan (Revised Sheets)

The amendments described above have been incorporated into a Final Park Plan and set of themed sheets. These are shown over the following pages.

1 NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN: AS IT IS TODAY

FINAL

-  North Walls Park Boundary
-  Entrance Point to Park
-  Walking Route
-  Main Cycle Route
-  Rugby
-  Running
-  Wild Swimming
-  Personal Fitness
-  Cycling
-  Walking
-  Cricket
-  Tennis
-  Informal Volleyball
-  Football
-  Bowls
-  Indoor Bowls
-  Canoeing
-  Skatepark
-  Children's Equipped Play Space
-  The Colour Factory (on edge of Park)



Not to Scale

Other activities take place in the Park, such as the Winchester Round Table Bonfire & Fireworks, Hat Fair and Cheese and Chilli Festival

PARK-WIDE USE & DIVERSITY

Today, the 12ha Park is mainly used for sports pitches, including cricket and rugby, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor bowling greens, a canoe club, a skate park and play area. It is also used for football training, rugby training and other fitness activities including a large Parkrun weekly event. There is a popular cycle path. Hyde Abbey Garden is an essential part of the Park. To the east is Winnall Moors Nature Reserve

The Park has impressive rivers running throughout together with a number of pedestrian bridges



2 NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN: OUTDOOR ZONES APPROACH

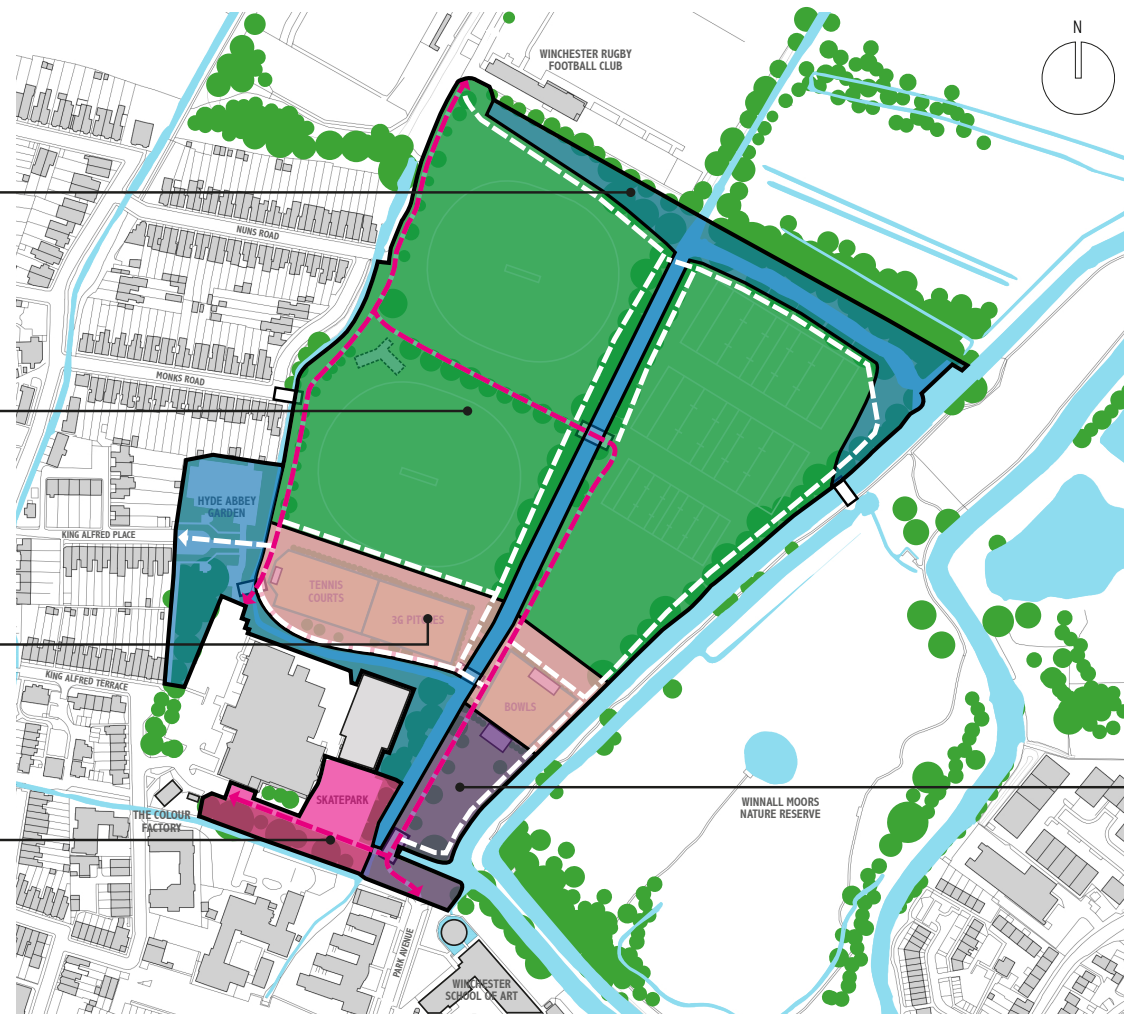
FINAL

QUIET + WILDLIFE
 Biodiverse planting & habitat providing quieter places & amenity for park users. The river edges retain a naturalistic character with dipping demands at key locations to meet the demand for access to the river - in an environmentally acceptable way

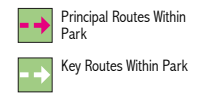
PITCHES + PICNICS
 Community, club & grass roots use with occasional major events, such as the Bonfire & Fireworks. A new cricket pavilion has been consented. A new bridge & perimeter path are critical pieces of the public realm, providing a meandering all-weather route in keeping with the informal character of the Park

SPORTS & FITNESS
 A new outdoor fitness area with equipment for all weather classes north of the Outdoor Bowls building, which will complement the tennis courts, 3G pitches & outdoor bowls

PLAY & SKATE
 Easily accessible from the pedestrian & cycle network of the Park. Imaginative & stimulating play landscape with climbing areas & opportunities to learn about habitat & ecology. Skatepark enhancements



Not to Scale



PARK VISION

Great parks are made up of great places, with a diverse combination of things to do throughout the day & throughout all seasons

North Walls will continue to be a great park loved by a great city community, evolving to deliver all the things one would want from a modern park - function & beauty, activity & quiet, exploration & play, events, strong river context, with nature & biodiversity at its heart, unified yet diverse

The Park already has unique identities
 We can consider the Park as a series of diverse & complementary outdoor zones which will form the basis for providing a whole host of focused activities, events & environments

An environmentally sustainable Park will enable people to live active & healthy lifestyles, with biodiverse green spaces, learning & play, a clean river, a network of walking & cycle paths & recycling initiatives

MAIN ENTRANCE & PLAZA
 A simple redesigned main arrival space to the Park. A compelling & memorable visitor attraction - a high quality setting to allow a range of diverse activities & events to occur, including water play area, cafe & toilets, & new seating. Opportunities for temporary pop-up food stalls



5.4 Summary of Final Suite of Ideas for Improvement

The final suite or list of 18 improvement ideas for the recreation ground are presented below and shown in full on Sheet 4 on the next page.

Final improvements ideas list:

MAIN ENTRANCE & PLAZA

- 1 Park Avenue entrance designed in a simple, natural way in keeping with the informal character of the area. New paving, landscaped seating area
- 2 Plaza style multi-functional space with outdoor area for events, water fountains for play, seating & permanent cafe/toilet building
- 3 New bench seating to face both ways - to the pathway & the river
- 4 Children's paddling area by side of river

PLAY & SKATE

- 5 Develop Skatepark hub/equipment store with existing Skatepark users
- 6 Upgraded play space with equipment to encourage exploration & play for young & older children

- 7 Repaint Banana Bridge as an existing feature within the Park

SPORTS & FITNESS

- 8 Outdoor fitness & exercise equipment with multi-functional area for all weather classes

PITCHES & PICNICS

- 9 Kickabout area with goal posts
- 10 New multi-use perimeter path with discrete distance markers and appropriate surfacing for all-weather conditions
- 11 Resurface with new seating & sympathetic artwork to form an attractive place within the Park
- 12 Potential new bridge associated with the perimeter path to increase access around the Park

- 13 Nun's Walk northern entrance tidied up/redesigned in a simple way

- 14 Improve Nuns Road entrance with resurfacing & by replacing the existing vehicle barriers with more attractive design

- 15 Resurface the main linear path through the Park

QUIET & WILDLIFE

- 16 Improve Winnall Moors Nature Reserve West Entrance in a low-key sympathetic way

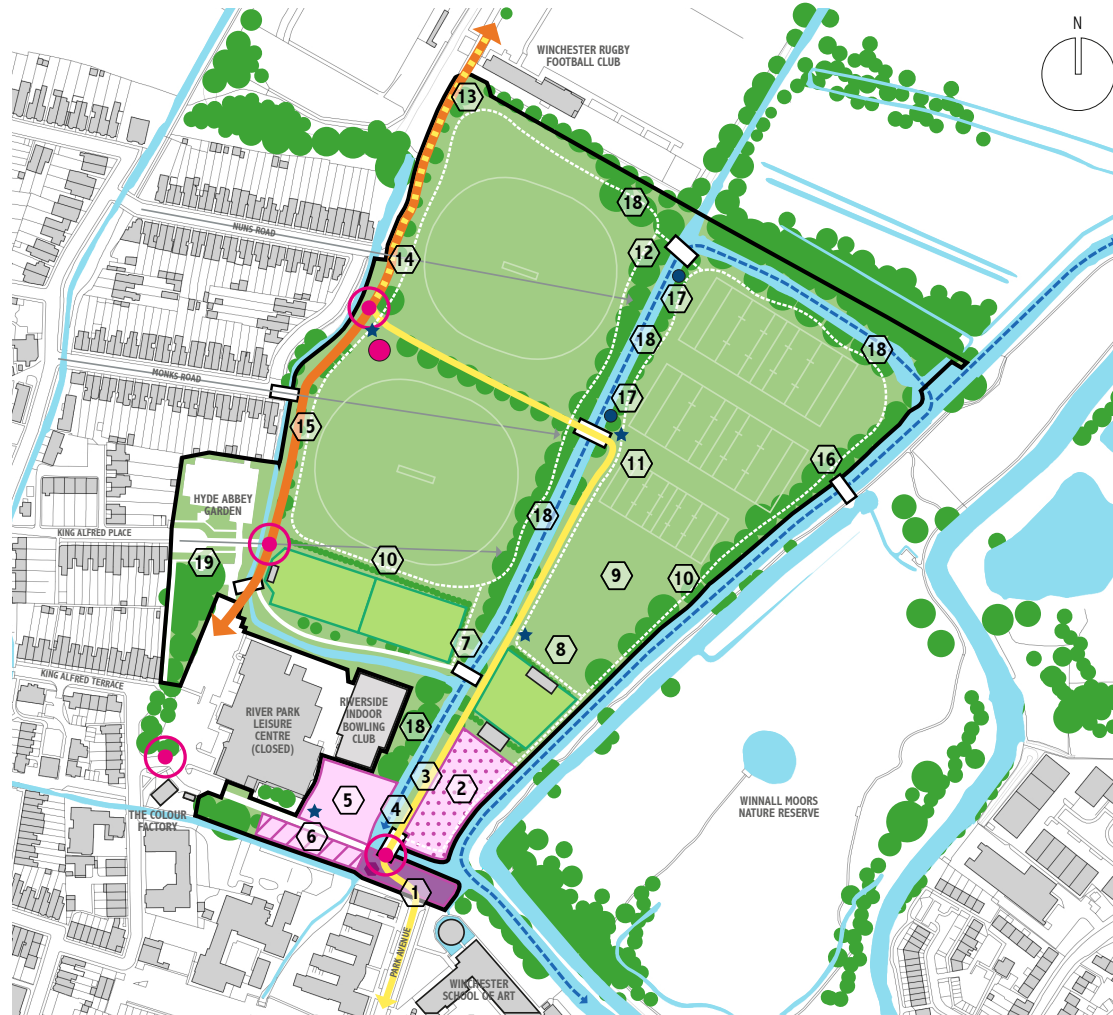
- 17 Dipping platforms along riverbank to encourage & facilitate engagement with the aquatic environment (net dipping)

- 18 Quieter areas with biodiverse planting & features such as natural shelters to encourage wildlife

3 NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN: SUITE OF IDEAS

FINAL

-  North Walls Park Boundary
-  Linear Path
-  Pedestrian & Cycle Path
-  New Multi-Use Perimeter Path
-  Key Node - Information Point/Part of City Wayfinding Strategy
-  Park Avenue Arrival Space
-  Play Space Reimagined
-  Skatepark Enhancements
-  Multi-Use Plaza: Events Space/Water Jets/Seating/Picnic/Cafe/Toilets/Recycling/Temporary Pop-Up Food Stall
-  Winchester & District Canoe Club Route
-  New Cricket Pavilion (In Design Development)
-  Dipping Platform (Net Dipping) By River
-  Water Fountain for Drinking
-  Bridge
-  Street View to Park
-  River
-  Existing Trees



Not to Scale

IDEAS FOR THE PARK

MAIN ENTRANCE & PLAZA

- 1 Park Avenue entrance designed in a simple, natural way in keeping with the informal character of the area. New paving, landscaped seating area
- 2 Plaza style multi-functional space with outdoor area for events, water fountains for play, seating & permanent cafe/toilet building
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PLAY & SKATE

- 5 Develop Skatepark hub/equipment store with existing Skatepark users
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- 7 Repaint Banana Bridge as an existing feature within the Park

SPORTS & FITNESS

- 8 Outdoor fitness & exercise equipment with multi-functional area for all-weather classes

PITCHES & PICNICS

- 9 Kickabout area with goal post
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QUIET & WILDLIFE

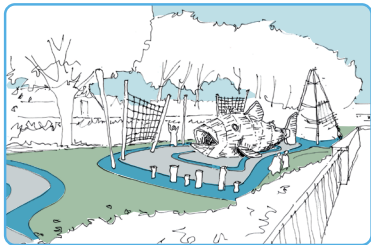
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4 NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN: IMPRESSIONS

FINAL



PERIMETER PATH A new all-weather measured course for people to use. The path would be in keeping with the character of the park helping to reduce the impact on the environment & other park users



PLAY SPACE A re-imagined theme-inspired children's space which could include walkways, a feature fish or ship, bridges, a tubular slide, nets, a sensory space & seating with tables. An interactive fun & learning space for children



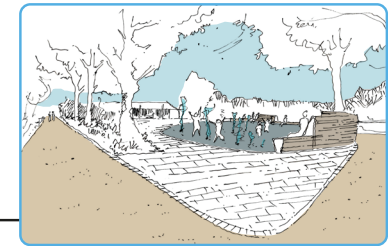
Not to Scale

SKETCH IMPRESSIONS

The following sketches give an impression of how we think some of the locations within the Park might look



OUTDOOR FITNESS A designated area for fitness & training encouraging community health. An all-weather area for exercise classes (eg. yoga, pilates) & range of simple gym pieces, which could incorporate disabled & wheelchair users



PLAZA A multi-functional space used for outdoor performances, events & play. It would be a focal meeting point with permanent cafe-toilets building & seating. A series of water play activities including water jets & shallow pools will add further interest to this key space

5 NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN: PICTURE BOARD

FINAL

The following precedent images show how some of the concepts and ideas for the Park might look. They are not final designs. The numbers used correspond to the list of improvement ideas on Sheet 4



8 Drinking fountains to help reduce the number of single-use plastic bottles



17 Dipping platforms (net dipping) at river edge



12 Potential new bridge to increase access around the Park



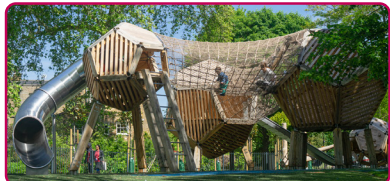
17 Dipping platforms at river edge (information & net dipping only)



8 Outdoor gym equipment to provide a range of physical & health benefits



14 Attractive supporting stand for bicycles that also serves as a bollard



6 Inspiring adventure play space where little kids & big kids could climb, slide, roll & run



Not to Scale



5 Adventure play that provokes curiosity and stirs the imagination



6 Winding play structure



5 Skatepark enhancements & youth hub/equipment store



1 Simple welcome sign in metal & timber

10

Example path discrete distance marker



10

Perimeter track of self-binding gravel for a natural appearance



18 Wildflower patches would create lively feeding & nesting grounds for wildlife



18 Bug hotels could be part park art & part winter habitat for beneficial insects



4 Paddling area and place to feed the ducks



Wayfinding & interpretive signs coordinated across the Park with other items, eg. lighting & seating



3 Two-way facing benches could be linked to form long, linear seating areas



9 Kickabout area with goal posts



2 Multi-functional area with interactive water jets / sprays



2 New permanent cafe & public toilets



1 A mobile coffee van for drinks & snacks/pop-up food stalls



11 Artwork low-key, based on the land & natural environment



1 Simple, entrance feature that helps announce the park & generates a sense of city pride



6_ NEXT STEPS

The green and blue infrastructure at North Walls Recreation Ground is highly cherished and a valuable resource for city life, health and well-being. As a multi-functional and intergenerational space, the recreation ground contributes towards the character, diversity and distinctiveness of the city landscape. It is used for a wide variety of purposes by many people, groups and organisations of all ages.

This Park Plan recommends an overarching strategy for taking improvements to the recreation ground forward over the next 5-10 years. The Park Plan is a living document and will adapt and change to take account of new information and to prepare and deliver an annual action plan. It sets out clearly the priorities for the key stakeholders and wider community at this time.

In the context of climate change and the strong desire to protect, enhance and restore the natural environment, it will be key that improvements within the recreation ground are aligned with the Winchester City Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2021, Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2030 and emerging Green/Blue Infrastructure Framework.

The Council's website www.winchester.gov.uk/northwallsriverpark will be used to keep all those interested informed of progress on the project.

Together with all of the consultation information to date and the final Park Plan, this will include an **Action Plan** which will be published in due course showing the priorities and timescale for implementation.

Further work is required to transform the proposed improvements into detailed workable designs in due course.

Our recommendations for future action are as follows:

Park User Group

Establish a 'Park User Group' that meets twice yearly to coordinate events, develop a calendar of participation, share ideas regarding stewardship and generally provide input to the successful development and implementation of the Park Plan.

Children's Engagement – Play Space

Set up a dedicated engagement process with local children and parents/carers (especially those at St Bede's, including teaching staff) to further develop ideas for upgrading the children's play space. Results from this engagement will better inform how funds can be best invested in upgrading the space and providing new equipment.

Perimeter Path Engagement

The involvement of key users, such as Parkrun, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and disability groups will be critical to get the layout and details right. Wider engagement with other groups (e.g. buggy fit, children's sports, U3A) that could also benefit from this feature is also recommended.

Integration of artwork, typography and distance marker posts should also be considered.

Physical Training Engagement

The installation of dedicated features and facilities installed for use by physical training instructors and others will also benefit from focus groups. The outcomes will help to ensure the right equipment of the right quality is installed.

Involvement of Local Artists

Adjacent to the park is The Colour Factory and Winchester School of Art. Both organisations can be engaged and/or commissioned to develop details such as the new park identity, new colour schemes and typography, and repainting of the Banana Bridge as part of the Action Plan.

Potential Funding Sources

Improvements to the recreation ground have the potential to attract funding from a wide range of sources due to the proposed diversity of services (ie. sport and physical activity, disability equalities, ecological and educational programmes, youth development, health and well-being and community-focused activities). A review of potential funding streams should be carried out to help the City Council fund the proposed developments.

Many of the potential funds are available to community organisations such as sports clubs, charities and trusts as well as statutory bodies, and in some cases, it may be deemed more appropriate for a club or community organisation to be the main applicant to a specific funding opportunity.

This document provides a 'one stop' report that can be used to support multiple funding bids.

New Name and Identity 'River Park'

A recommendation is to rename the park and recreation ground from North Walls to River Park to better reflect the qualities of the site. Careful consideration is required about when and how the name is changed. This is perhaps best done in conjunction with the installation of the first phase of changes eg. upgraded play space, entrance features and the announcement of the new name can be part of the publicity around the new investment.

