

# North Lodge Park, Cromer

## Proposals for discussion on the future of the Park

### SUMMARY

In April 2015 the Friends published a report on the views of the community about the future of North Lodge Park, with a proposal for a second survey to collect detailed responses to more specific plans for the Park.

In August 2015 the Friends were granted a licence for the cafe in the Park and have worked with North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) to bring new life back into the Park. The Friends have been overwhelmed at the strength of support from the community and visitors for the Park, and for the work of the Friends. There is no doubt that the Park holds a very special place in many people's memories.

The message that comes across time and time again is that the community want the Park to be a well maintained safe, community place, with flowers and lawns; a special place of heritage and memories.

Towards the end of 2015 NNDC asked the Friends to propose ideas for improvements to North Lodge Park. The ideas were published in December and the feedback received forms the basis of this report.

Thanks to the 364 people who gave feedback on the ideas proposed; added to the 750 responses given to the first survey over 1100 opinions have been expressed about the Park, showing the Park remains a key focus for the community.

There is overwhelming support for the ideas proposed: over 85% of responses supported the proposals. The message that comes across time and time again is that the community want the Park to be a well maintained safe, community place, with flowers and lawns; a special place of heritage and memories.

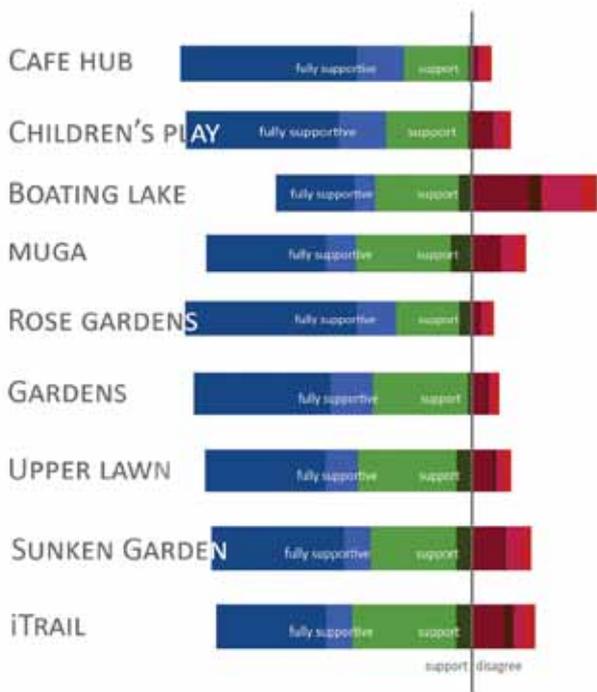
The strongest positive response, with 93% in support, is to use the cafe as a hub for life in the Park. Many commented on the huge success of the cafe and how it has already provided a much needed focal point for the community.

There is also very strong support (over 90%) for the renovation of the gardens, including the Rose garden. Comments made in support of these renovations show that the community wants the Park to be a well maintained green space full of colour.

The proposal for the children's play area also generated much support with 87% in favour; supporting comments wanted to make this a priority.

One idea received much less support: 40% of responses were against moving the boating lake.

As part of the proposals, the Friends asked for feedback on using part of the Park for a car park as this is always raised in discussions on the Park. Just over half of responses were against the use of any part of the Park for a car park. Where there was support for using part of the Park for car parking the concrete area received the most support, but with the caveat that it was done in keeping with the nature of the Park and enabled the Park to be properly maintained.



colour key

# ACTIONS

The two surveys have given a very clear picture of what the community and visitors want to see in their Park. The challenge is to find ways to realise these plans.

Recent developments indicate that there could be significant change in the way the Park is managed.

The Prior Information Notice (PIN) just announced by NNDC indicates they are looking to find a partner to help manage the Park.

They have also expressed an intention to create a 55 space car park centred on the concrete area.

1. The Friends request that NNDC moves ahead as quickly as possible with the process (PIN) of finding a partner for the Park so there is not a prolonged period of stagnation
2. The Friends ask that NNDC and all potential future partners base their proposals on community wishes, as outlined in this report, and that NNDC assesses future partnership bids in relation to the extent to which the interested parties will:
  - safeguard the beauty of the Park as an open green space with well maintained lawns and flower beds using sustainable plants where possible
  - continue to develop the cafe as a community hub from which life in the Park radiates, with events and activities that involve all members of the community and attract more visitors
  - reflect the wishes of the community in the creation of a new creative children's play area on the old bowling green
  - make best use of the upper lawn as an activity area for older children and young adults.
3. The Friends' Spring 2015 report suggested a Trust could provide an excellent way of managing the Park for the community. The Friends will further explore this opportunity; an ideal solution could be a partnership of those with greatest interest in the Park as a special place for the community and visitors.
4. Over the next 12 months the Friends will seek to create a working relationship with NNDC so that the priorities identified in this report can be taken forward as quickly as possible. If the Friends are given the opportunity they will:
  - work to ensure the cafe continues to provide a community hub for the Park
  - engage with the community to design a creative play area on the old bowling green and seek funds for this project
  - work with the community to improve the appearance of the boating lake in its current position
  - restore the rose garden and provide improved access
  - provide a covered area for events by moving and restoring the old wooden bandstand/shelter
  - work with NNDC to remove unnecessary barriers around the Park to improve access
  - engage community groups, particularly younger residents, in designing an activity area on the upper lawn
  - engage with the Cromer Chamber of Trade to discuss the potential for pop-up shops in the sunken garden, and look for funds to restore the collectors cabin
  - explore the development of an iTrail that would complement the special character of the Park and create links with Cromer.
5. The Friends will seek to clarify NNDC's plans to implement a car park in North Lodge Park, in particular:
  - the spaces and access would be contained completely within the concrete area and that no beds/lawns will be removed
  - the budget would be sufficient to ensure the parking is created in a sympathetic way that meets all planning requirements and complements the nature of the Park
  - the funds created would enable NNDC to ensure the Park will be well maintained
  - the allocation of parking on part of the Park would not have a negative impact on the quality and interests of those responding to the PIN.

Its charm is that it is slightly old-fashioned and different from any other part of Cromer.

364  
responses

it is wonderful that it is becoming a 'park for the people' inspired and shaped by them. What a wonderful sense of community.

The only question I have is where is the money coming from?

85%  
positive

Thank You for bringing our lovely North Lodge Park back to life

157  
additional  
comments

## Introduction

A simple questionnaire was produced (available on paper in the cafe and online) to request feedback on the ideas published at the end of 2015. There were 2 main parts to the questionnaire, the primary part listing the 9 main areas for improvement and views on whether there should be parking in the Park, and a second part giving space for comments and further suggestions.

Where percentages are given in the report these relate to the number of responses to that question as not all questions were answered by everyone who submitted a response.

364 responses to the questionnaire were received, 306 online and 58 on paper.

To allow for more space on the questionnaire for details on the proposed ideas, no questions were included to ascertain the profile of the respondent, although it is thought that most respondents are older people (in the Spring consultation 44% were over 60 and 32% between 40 and 60).

There were 9 responses which were completely against everything despite some of the comments on these wanting to see a well maintained park. 22 responses were fully supportive of all ideas.

## Overview

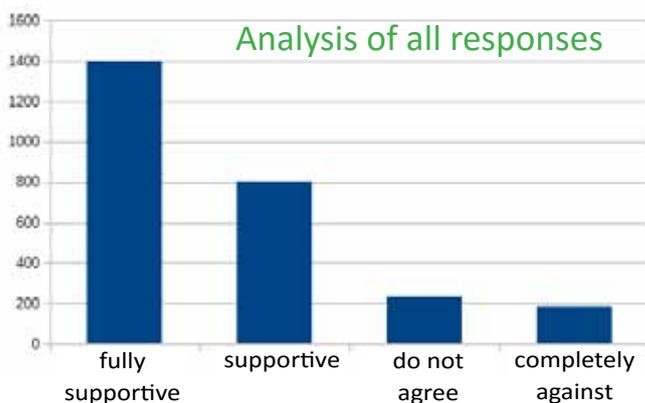
With over 360 responses to the questionnaire, added to the 750 responses in the Spring, we have well over 1100 opinions on North Lodge Park showing the continued passion the community has for this gem at the heart of Cromer.

There was over 85% positive support for the ideas proposed supporting the development of the Park within the framework of the desire to keep the Park a:

*Quintessential family seaside cliff-top park, with well maintained lawns and flower beds, full of life and activities for all*

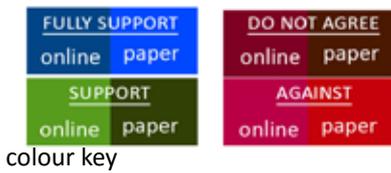
There was overwhelming support for the proposals (from over 2500 question responses across 350 questionnaires over 85% were supportive), which suggests the proposals were in line with the community wishes.

Of the 157 responses adding extra comments, over 50% commented on their support for the Friends, their desire to see the Park as a peaceful well maintained Park, and an asset to attract people to the area, although a few cautioned against over-reliance on volunteers who are in short supply.



There was some concern (12%) for how funding for the projects would be found, and for the ongoing Park maintenance. There was also concern regarding clarifying the Park ownership and strategy for the Park.

Whilst the ideas were well received, there were several comments requesting that any plans don't over-commercialise the area as the priority for the Park is gardens. Any events - while supported - should be restricted to 'one a month' to avoid introducing too much noise in the Park too often.



## Cafe Park Hub

The proposal to use the cafe as a hub for the Park, with park life radiating from it received overwhelming support with over 93% of responses being positive (72% fully supportive and a further 21% supportive). This was the most popular idea in the proposals.

Do you agree with this proposal to develop the Park around the cafe?



There was real support (over 50% of comments) for the current cafe and how

it has brought life into the Park.

So many people quote their memories of the cafe, boating lake and the Park and really appreciate the cafe being at the centre of Park life.

**CONCLUSION:** The community support the cafe as a community hub from which life in the Park can radiate

Any development should be in keeping with the historical park

## Toilets

The toilets which form part of the café/pre-school block need redevelopment; relocating these could provide an opportunity to enhance the hub provided by the café, working with the pre-school to find ways to share the space.

**CONCLUSION:** Consider improvement of toilets in medium-term plans.

## Children's Play

Support for developing a children's play area on the old bowling green received positive support from 87% (60% fully supportive and a further 27% supportive). of responses. There were 3 requests to keep bowls in the Park, with the note that with better promotion it could be made a real attraction.

Do you agree with this proposal to use the old bowling green for a children's play area?



Several comments, whilst supportive, cautioned against implementing

anything which would spoil the location next to North Lodge (Grade II listed) and the vista towards the crescent and beach.

Several responses expressed caution to ensure that child safety was given a high priority (here and elsewhere in the Park).

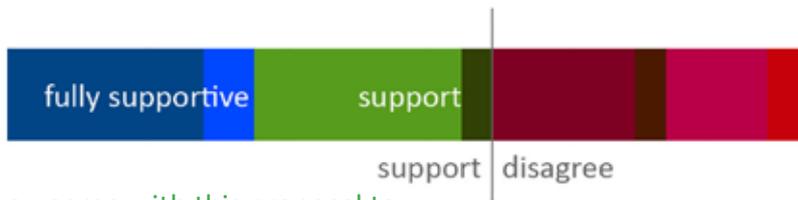
It was suggested that the 'Play Box' in the cafe could be expanded to include outdoor games equipment and family games; a covered play area could be provided.

**CONCLUSION:** Give priority to development of children's play area on the old bowling green.

Great care has to be taken in order to maintain the character of the park, which has always been considered a gem within Cromer to visitors and residents alike.

## Boating Lake

The idea for moving the boating lake received least support of all the proposals with only 60% support (31% fully supportive and a further 29% supportive) and 40% against.



Do you agree with this proposal to move the boating lake?

There were also a number of comments (18%) against the proposal, many quoting the lake's heritage, the harmony between the cafe and boating lake and the pleasure sitting in the cafe watching

boats on the lake. A few comments suggested making the lake smaller rather than moving it to give more space round the cafe. Several comments suggested improving the look of the boating lake looks.

**CONCLUSION:** Respect views of community and leave boating lake in current position but improve its appearance.

*the boating pond is an iconic and historical part of the park*

## Events area

To provide an events area it is proposed to install a covered stage between the café and old croquet lawn, giving a double aspect stage for performances. The old wooden shelter on the concrete area would be moved immediately to provide a basis for this. Electricity could be installed to make the area more useful. The old croquet lawn would be retained to keep the vista towards North Lodge, and to allow casual bowls and croquet as and when required, with special weekends to encourage these activities.

**CONCLUSION:** MOVE the old wooden bandstand/shelter to create an events area.

*it has however become a little run down and needs a lot of TLC please upgrade it for everyone to enjoy*

## Vehicles

Vehicle access in the Park is a major concern, both the number of vehicles and their speed. To eliminate unauthorised vehicles a proper controlled access point is required; to reduce speed the area in front of the performance area could be paved to show drivers that it is a pedestrian area. Ideally, access to North Lodge would be limited at weekends to allow events without the danger of vehicles. The addition of speed controls, such as speed bumps, could also be considered.

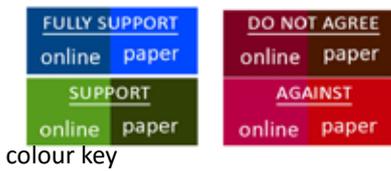
**CONCLUSION:** Find effective ways to reduce the number of vehicles in the Park.

*What's happened so far is huge and a winner.*

## Fences

Across the Park it is proposed to review the barriers – many of the fences are past their best and serve no purpose other than to prevent access. Where possible the barriers should be removed.

**CONCLUSION:** Remove unnecessary barriers around the Park.



colour key

## Concrete Area

There was support for installing a MUGA on the concrete area from 82% of responses (46% fully, 36% supportive). There were many comments supportive of the proposal to provide activities for older children, with some suggestions of placing this with the 'trim trail' on the upper lawn. Some responses expressed concern that the area might be noisy which

could deflect from the tranquillity many wished for in the Park. There was a call to engage with schools and other youth groups to better define requirements. Roller skating is another activity suggested.



Do you agree with this proposal for a MUGA on the concrete area?

Several comments were made to support all efforts to provide activities for all, especially older children.

**CONCLUSION:** Engage young adults in the future plans for the Park.

*your survey sets out brilliantly 'proposals of change'*

## Rose garden

There was 92% support (69% fully, 23% supportive) for improving the rose garden, with several positive comments about creating a new entrance off the drive. However, there were a couple of comments suggesting the rose garden was beyond saving and that the area could be better used to relocate the pre-school or even as a disabled car

park. There was appreciation of the quiet nature of the rose garden and some concern (particularly amongst those against the proposal) that opening another entrance could spoil this.



Do you agree with this proposal for the Rose Garden?

There was appreciation of the quiet nature of the rose garden and some concern (particularly amongst those against the proposal) that opening another entrance could spoil this.

**CONCLUSION:** Restore the rose garden and open it up to encourage more use.

*Sounds really great :)*

*I adore North Lodge park, however feel we should move with the times.*

## Gardens

There was 91% support (59% fully, 32% supportive) for improving the gardens, but there were several caveats that there should not

be a reduction in the number of flower borders. Some suggestions were to develop a sensory garden, a community garden, a 'food for free' area, sustainable planting and more trees. There were some suggestions



Do you agree with this proposal for the Gardens?

of involving local businesses to sponsor flower beds.

There continues to be support for putting in the Park and some calls for this not to be restrained to just a few weekends.

The overwhelming theme across most of the comments was for the Park to remain a place of well maintained flower beds and lawns and that any developments should bear this in mind.

**CONCLUSION:** Retain the gardens as special places, using annual and sustainable plants, amidst well maintained lawns

*The quality of grounds maintenance and planting needs to be improved and access for vehicles to be strictly limited and controlled.*

FULLY SUPPORT	
online	paper
SUPPORT	
online	paper

DO NOT AGREE	
online	paper
AGAINST	
online	paper

colour key

## Upper lawn

There was 88% support (50% fully, 38% supportive) for improving the upper lawn area ('over the bridge'). Comments supported an outdoor gym in addition to the 'trim trail'. The idea of opening up the area was supported in the comments, but the installation of pathways

was suggested to prevent muddy paths, and to make it accessible to wheel chairs users.

There were a number of suggestions to put the MUGA in this area.



Do you agree with this proposal for 'over the bridge'?

I would like to see the thatched building made better, but feel the area around the sunken garden should be kept as a peaceful place.

**CONCLUSION:** Open up the upper lawn and engage further with the community for discussions regarding gym/Hiit/trim trail equipment.

## Sunken gardens

There was 82% support (51% fully, 31% supportive) for using the sunken garden for pop-up stalls and shops, with emphasis in the comments on urgently restoring the 'collectors cabin'.

There were a number of suggestions regarding engaging with the local chamber of commerce. Concerns were expressed over the potential mess and smells particularly if 'fast food' stalls were allowed. A few questions were raised about whether there was a real demand for such facilities, and a number of requests to leave the area as a quiet space

with benches for people to sit and admire the views. There was even a request for the area to be made into an amphitheatre.

**CONCLUSION:** Restore the collector's cabin and start discussions with the Chamber of Trade regarding the creation of a commercial area.



Do you agree with this proposal for the sunken garden?

It's a lovely area. Please use it wisely.

## Interactive Trail

There was 80% support (42% fully, 38% supportive) for developing an interactive trail in the Park. A few comments would prefer the Park to be technology free so that visitors can enjoy the natural environment.



Do you agree with this proposal for an interactive trail?

There appears to be something here for everyone: young, teenagers, elderly, able and disabled. What more could Cromer wish for?

**CONCLUSION:** Explore The potential of a sensitive iTrail in the Park with the wider opportunities of working across Cromer to develop trails for visitors, residents and younger members of the community.

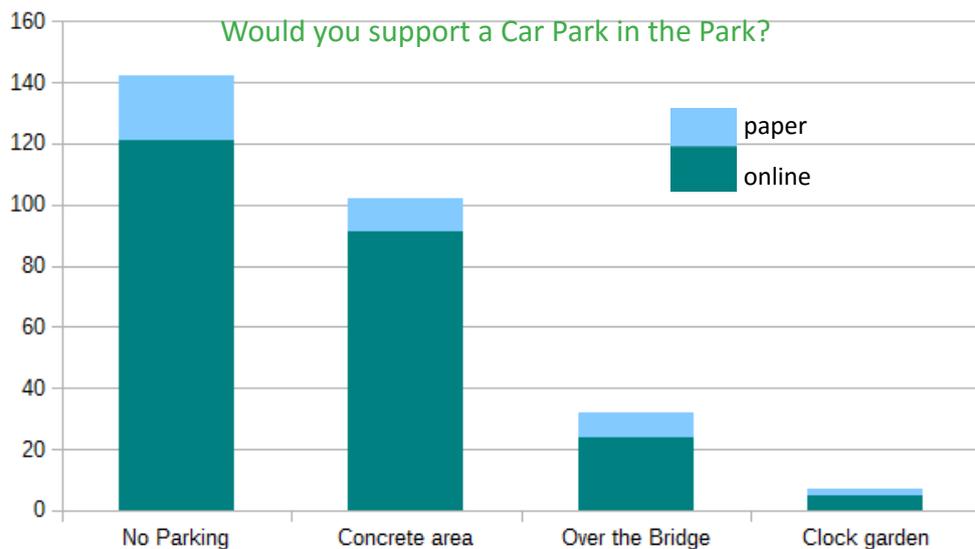
If all the ideas were completed or carried through there would be no room for parking. There are enough spaces elsewhere – this area is for walking sitting and enjoying traffic free

## Car Park

In all discussions about the future of North Lodge Park it isn't long before a car park is mentioned. With this in mind, the Friends decided to ask what the community's current views are on using some of the Park as a Car Park.

Of the 364 questionnaires returned, 283 completed the car park question. Of these just over 50% (142 vs 141) were against all parking in the Park. The majority of remainder (36%) would support use of the concrete area for a car park, but no where else. A small number (11%) supported the use of the upper lawn and an even smaller number (2%) supported parking on the 'clock garden'. A few (3 responses) selected more than one option.

Keep cars out of the park. It should be totally pedestrian for the safety of users.



From the comments added it is clear that many respondents supporting some parking presume that money raised would be used to maintain and improve the Park, and added caveats regarding the nature of the car park (in keeping with the nature of the Park, well screened), and with priority for disabled drivers. There were also a number of comments regarding eliminating all vehicles from the Park, with those parked by North Lodge being made to use the car park, child safety was the main reason.

North Lodge Park was the main focus for our holidays as children in Cromer & holds very fond memories. Its rundown state in recent years was so sad to see on our visits with our young children. To see it brought back to its former glory providing a focal point for young people, children & families would be fabulous & its redevelopment deserves support from locals, repeat visitors and of course the council & local ventures.

Cromer is a beautiful place that has so much to offer residents & holidaymakers and North Lodge Park should be at the heart of it.

Our children should be able to enjoy it in the same way we did.

I can't wait to come back this summer to support the venture.

The survey was completed before NNDC announced their intention to put a 55 space car park on the concrete area.

**CONCLUSION:** There are strong views about the issue of a car park in North Lodge Park. The majority of responses are against all parking and there is little support for any parking beyond the concrete area and even then only with caveats. Further details are required from NNDC regarding their intentions, in particular:

- the spaces and access would be contained completely within the concrete area and that no beds/lawns will be removed
- the budget would be sufficient to ensure the parking is created in a sympathetic way that meets all planning requirements and complements the nature of the Park
- the funds created would enable NNDC to ensure the Park will be well maintained
- the allocation of parking on part of the Park would not have a negative impact on the quality and interests of those responding to the PIN.