

North Lodge Park, Cromer

Proposals for discussion on the future of the Park

The survey conducted by the Friends of North Lodge Park in March/April 2015 concluded that the overwhelming majority of respondents wanted the Park to remain a

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

priorities

The priorities identified from the survey are:

- open the café
- improve the concrete area
- provide a children's play area
- sustainable planting with well managed flower beds and grass areas
- establish designated areas in the Park, such as play areas, picnic areas, quiet areas
- generate events and activities to bring the Park to life for all ages, including putting
- make the Park a recreational destination for North Norfolk
- establish and manage a sustainable financial plan.

These priorities are the principal factors in shaping this discussion document.

Park hub the café

Opening the café in North Lodge Park in the summer after 2 years of neglect, has highlighted the importance of a community hub to bring life into the Park. Throughout the last four months the focal point provided by the café has brought life back to the Park; the success of Cakes and Crepes has drawn visitors to the Park to visit the café.

It is proposed the Park is developed around the café, enabling the Park life to radiate from this hub, 12 months of the year. This means maximising the use of the old bowling green, the old croquet lawn, the concrete area, the rose garden and the areas close to the café.

Whilst the café is too small to fulfil this function fully, it is not thought justifiable in the medium term to relocate to new premises. Therefore, development of the café within its current location is proposed.

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.

children's play old bowling green

There is a priority call for a young children's play area; one idea we are looking at is to develop a top quality young children's play area on the old bowling green. This area has been neglected too long to make it viable as a bowling green, and its location close to the café, pre-school and town suggest this as a good location.

However, creating a unique play area meeting our aspirations of the best in the region could take time; in the meantime it is proposed to invest immediately in adventure play equipment for this area (which could be relocated when the final solution is installed).

boating lake The boating lake is a popular part of the Park, and this facility should be retained. However, its position does restrict opportunities for the café being a significant income generator for the Park. An idea we would like to explore is to relocate the boating lake with the development of the old bowling green, replacing it with a paved Park Plaza, opening onto the events area, with a splash area for children and ground fountains. This would allow wider redevelopment and use of the café.

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.

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.

sports and games concrete area There is a need for a teenage and young adult play area. A multi-use games area (MUGA), with teenage targeted play equipment could be installed on the concrete area, with landscaping around to reduce the impact of the harsh lines of such an installation. The sub-base already in place would make this a quick and effective solution and instantly improve the area and provide a much needed space for older children. Whether this should be a purely recreational space or built to Sport England guidelines for competition use and to provide a potential revenue stream needs further examination.

The old putting office could be developed as a club house for clubs using the MUGA or a community space for young people, and this used as a base for relocating the Park toilets.

rose garden The Rose garden should be retained as a quiet place; a wheel-chair access point could be opened on the drive to facilitate better use of the area. The pergolas need urgent repair, and the roses need attention and replacing. The pre-school have already been given a corner of the garden to help with their educational activities. It is proposed that an art trail by local sculptors is developed round the roses.

gardens The clock flower garden should be retained, but reduced to a more manageable area, with easier access and the surrounding borders brought back to life and colour.

The large putting lawn should be retained as a recreational and picnic area. The putting holes should be retained to allow summer weekend putting events. The borders around these areas need to be brought back to life with seasonable and sustainable planting. Through facilitating occasional vehicular access to this lawn by widening the path to it, the area could also be used for occasional fetes and festivals.

The area over the bridge could be developed as a picnic area, with more entrances created to allow fuller access from Cliff Drive and the cliff top. The demand for a wooden 'trim trail' could be investigated for this area. The flower borders here should be reduced and relocated to provide beds of sustainable plants with year round colour. An international art commission could provide a major artwork to be placed in this area, increasing the attractions making the Park a destination beyond the local community.

sunken gardens

Being the area closest to the town commerce, the sunken garden behind the Rocket House could be developed as a craft market area, with the thatched collectors cabin restored, and the shelter developed into pop-up shops. Further beach hut style stalls could be placed around this area. This would help draw the town into the Park and bring shoppers to the east side of Cromer, and help satisfy the demand for short term shops. This idea could also bring important income to the Park.

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.

interactive trail

It is proposed to examine the feasibility of an interactive trail round the Park, with trail points linking tablets and smart phones to information or activities; such a trail would link with other trails proposed around the town. Such a trail could be historical, educational and fun. Park-wide wifi could be implemented to enable full use of this. Option for further use of the wifi, such as large screen for art or displays, should be researched.

financial plan

Development and management of the Park needs to be within the framework of a long term sustainable financial plan, with an adequate maintenance budget and seed funding for major projects, with full community involvement in the day-to-day management and priorities as well as the longer term developments.