

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 13 May 2024

Title: Major Projects

Contact Officer: Project Officer

Background

As Members are aware, Witney Town Council's Open Spaces Strategy cited 5x themes to deliver improvements for our community: Parks, Sport, Leisure, Infrastructure & Effectiveness.

This report aims to provide you with an update on the major projects linked to Parks and Recreation, which are: Wheeled Sports Park, West Witney Sports & Social Club and the Courtside Master Plan for the hub at The Leys.

The Leys - Wheeled Sports Park

Recap: The old park was built almost 20 years ago and needed modernisation. Community feedback and resident survey results requested an improved wheeled sports park, which caters for more abilities, promotes inclusivity and is suitable for more wheeled sports equipment (Skateboards, BMX, Scooters etc). Bendcrete were successfully awarded the contract in September 2023 and the park was completed (and officially opened) in March 2024.



Current Situation

- The park is proving to be very popular. On weekends the site has experienced over 50 people using the park at any one time, consistently throughout the day. Verbal feedback from the Skating & Scooter community is very positive, with no negative comments. They enjoy the variety, flow and transitions, which is improving their skills.

Witney's Park has also become a "destination park" attracting wheeled enthusiasts from other towns and counties.

- Naturally, popularity has given rise to some challenges:
 - **Litter:** Officers have observed a significant increase of litter in the park. The operational team are inspecting and cleaning daily, however its challenging to stay on top of it. To address this issue, officers have relocated the large bin outside the mini golf to the entrance of the wheeled sports park. In addition, they have also asked Bendcrete to supply a large bin to place inside the park and the Council comms team plan to publish online communications politely asking users to use the bins or take their rubbish home.
 - **Anti-Social behaviour:** The Council has received a small number of reports regarding anti-social behaviour at the park. Reassuringly, the park has proved to be self-policing and the signage has been effective, enabling users to report issues to the police. Officers will continue to monitor this activity, but there have been no incidents in the last 3 weeks.
 - **Event enquiries:** The informal "Skate Jam" was held at the park on 20th April. This annual event is organised by local enthusiasts and is a respectful, fun and well-mannered event. Whilst it was very positive and united the younger skateboard community, they occupied a large section of the park for a few hours, which excluded other users and prompted a couple of complaints. Since this event the Council has received further requests from other groups and coaches asking to use the park. With the benefit of hindsight, officers have taken valuable learnings from the Skate Jam event, which has prompted them to review Council protocol on granting WTC permission to use. This is currently ongoing and will be used when assessing our requirement to run coaching sessions for beginners and girls.
 - **Graffiti:** it's an accepted part of the culture within any skatepark, but there are some examples which are poor and ugly. Officers are currently assessing the feasibility of running a competition to invite local graffiti artists to design and create some artwork in accordance with our brief which will focus on "youth", "colour", "inclusivity" & "Witney". It is hoped this artwork will make the park more vibrant, welcoming and deter further vandalism.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26th June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

- Bendcrete have used recycled materials within their design and renovated large section of existing park to avoid wastage.
- WTC are looking to address litter issue with more bins in the vicinity of park.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- This report is an update of progress with this project and risks associated with delivery will be managed by Council Officers.

Financial implications

- The final budget for the project was £157,975. WTC contributed £100,000 and were awarded £57,975 funding from FCC Community Action Foundation.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

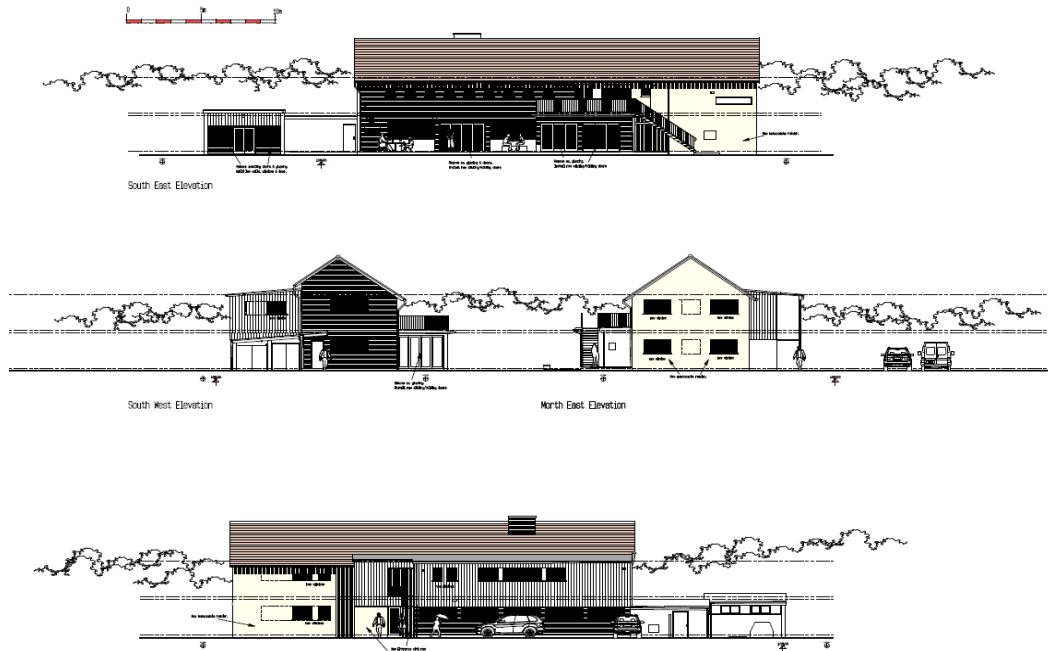
West Witney Sports & Social Club (WWSSC)

Recap: WWSSC is one of Witney's largest outdoor spaces, offering a large variety of sports facilities (Football, Cricket, Tennis, Bowls, Projectile Range). Built in the 1950's, the building needs major interior and exterior refurbishment to ensure it remains a premier recreational location for Witney's residents, whilst improving the appearance, energy efficiency and user experience.

Current Situation

- Planning Permission was approved in December 2023 with a requirement to demonstrate adequate drainage provision.
- WTC are currently exploring funding options and applying for grants to support this project, with the Community Ownership Funding Level 3, Sports England and the National Lottery being the main targeted funders.
- At the design and specification stage to prepare to procure and tender.
- Anticipated construction start date is November this year subject to the co-ordination with the new depot build.

Architect drawings



Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26th June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

- The project specification will include energy efficiency initiatives with detail to follow as the project advances.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- This report is an update of progress with this project and risks associated with delivery will be managed by Council Officers.

Financial implications

- The project costs will be made up of Section 106 funds and a WTC contribution with the potential to be supported by grants.
- A new lease agreement is in the process of being produced to recover this investment and at the same time build a sinking fund for future improvements.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.

The Leys - Courtside Hub

Recap: Courtside are a community interest company dedicated to increasing physical activity and promoting a sense of community through the transformation of local parks. The current activities at The Leys are adventure golf, netball and tennis with a café (Coffee Shed). Courtside lease the land from Witney Town Council (WTC).

In late 2022, Courtside ran a public consultation regarding a proposed multi-activity hub in The Leys. This resulted in a design for an open, flat, wheelchair friendly, flexible design allowing for 20+ sports activities to be offered. In addition, a new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) will offer extra free activities, which is important for our young community.

Current Situation

- Awarded Grant from the Community Ownership Fund, matched by contributions from WTC & Courtside.
- Planning Permission conditions were satisfied at the end of February.
- Their contractors have broken ground, but an unexpected issue has resulted in extra work, which has delayed the proposed completion date to mid-September.
- A planning application is being produced for a new WTC depot to be built at the West Witney recreation ground.
- The following pictures provide a visual of the improvements being made however please note the car park in the new complex has not been updated to reflect the amendments made in the planning application to reduce its size in include a marked crossing.





Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates:

- The project intends to include energy efficiency initiatives to include a photo voltaic system in the new pavilion.
- In addition, the construction company will be evaluated on its environmentally friendly construction processes and materials.

Risk

In decision making, Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. This report is an update of progress with this project and risks associated with delivery will be managed by Council Officers:

- Project presents no risks to Splashpad opening, events and sports fixtures in the Leys.

Financial implications

- The project costs are estimated to be circa £1.25m with WTC contributing £250,000, the community ownership fund providing £650,000 and the remaining £350,000 from Courtside.
- A new lease agreement is in the process of being produced to recover this investment and at the same time build a sinking fund for future improvements.

Recommendations

This is a project update however any feedback is always appreciated.