

BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to: Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee
20 January 2021

BEAUCHAMPS FIELD OPTIONS AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Report by: Councillor Harrison, Chairman of the Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee

Enquiries to: Grant Taylor, Head of Culture and Health
grant.taylor@basildon.gov.uk or 01268 206662

Enclosures: None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides the Committee with an update regarding progress made since the approval of the recommendations that were considered at the Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee meeting on 4 November 2020 concerning the options and future management of Beauchamps Field in Wickford.

The project is progressing well and a number of items have been explored in further detail following November's meeting. A table detailing the breakdown of each element of the project along with costs and an anticipated timescale for delivery is shown below:

Item	Details	Cost	Timescale	Comments
Site Safety and Access Works	Works to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hardening of entrance points at four locations to prevent pooling and excess wear in the winter• Installation of access gates and inhibitors at the four entrance points• Repair and make safe drainage head walls• Creation of two footbridges over drainage ditches.• Removal or making good of existing fencing.	£20,000	April / May 2021	Works are necessary in order to ensure that the site is safe and accessible for members of the public.
Woodland Area	Purchase and planting of 3,500 trees of a variety of species in an area of almost 3 hectares (to include glades and rides) and the ongoing upkeep of the woodland for two years.	£5,000	February / March 2021	A discount of 60% has been applied to the cost of this element as agreed by the Woodland Trust.
Wetland Ponds	Creation of six wetland ponds.	£8,000	September 2021	The timescale reflects the optimum time for creating the wetland ponds.
Wildflower Meadow	Preparation and sowing of 5,000m ² wildflower meadow.	£5,000	September 2021	The timescale reflects the optimum time for sowing the wild flower meadow.

Item	Details	Cost	Timescale	Comments
Community Orchard	Supply of 200 fruit trees.	£5,000	November 2021 – February 2022	The cost is for the supply of the trees only as it is anticipated that planting will be undertaken by the community. The timescale reflects the optimum time period for planting to take place.
Signage	Interpretation Boards will be installed as part of this project in order to provide information regarding matters relating to biodiversity and environmental factors relevant to the site.	£4,000	September 2021	To raise and increase awareness about environmental factors and biodiversity.
Pathway from Runwell to Battlesbridge	Creation of a Riverside Walk from Runwell to Battlesbridge.	Unknown at this stage	Unknown	Discussions are ongoing with the Environment Agency and Essex County Council.

As illustrated by the timescales above and subject to external funding being secured to contribute to its successful delivery, it is anticipated that the majority of elements of this project will be completed by the end of February 2022.

CORPORATE PLAN PROMISES:

- A place where everyone prospers
- A place to be proud of

WARD(S):

Wickford North

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the progress update report for the future use and management of Beauchamps Field.

BACKGROUND

Approval was granted at the Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee meeting on 4 November 2020 for the Beauchamps Field site in Wickford to become an extension of Wickford Memorial Park, creating a corridor of biodiversity between Wickford Memorial Park and Giddings Copse, two sites that are currently managed and maintained by Basildon Council. The site will provide an approximate additional 26 acres of enhanced open space for the use and enjoyment of the community.

Initial concepts for the site have since been developed and defined further, which will result in the site providing an effective contrast to the many formal facilities and amenities situated within Wickford Memorial Park by offering a more informally managed area of high biodiversity to expand on the pollinator work currently being undertaken throughout the borough.

The project has been divided into several different elements and details regarding each element have been provided below. A diagram has also been included for illustrative purposes. Member investment of £17,000 has been allocated to this project and approval was given at November's Committee meeting for external funding opportunities to be explored to contribute to the cost of the delivery of the works.

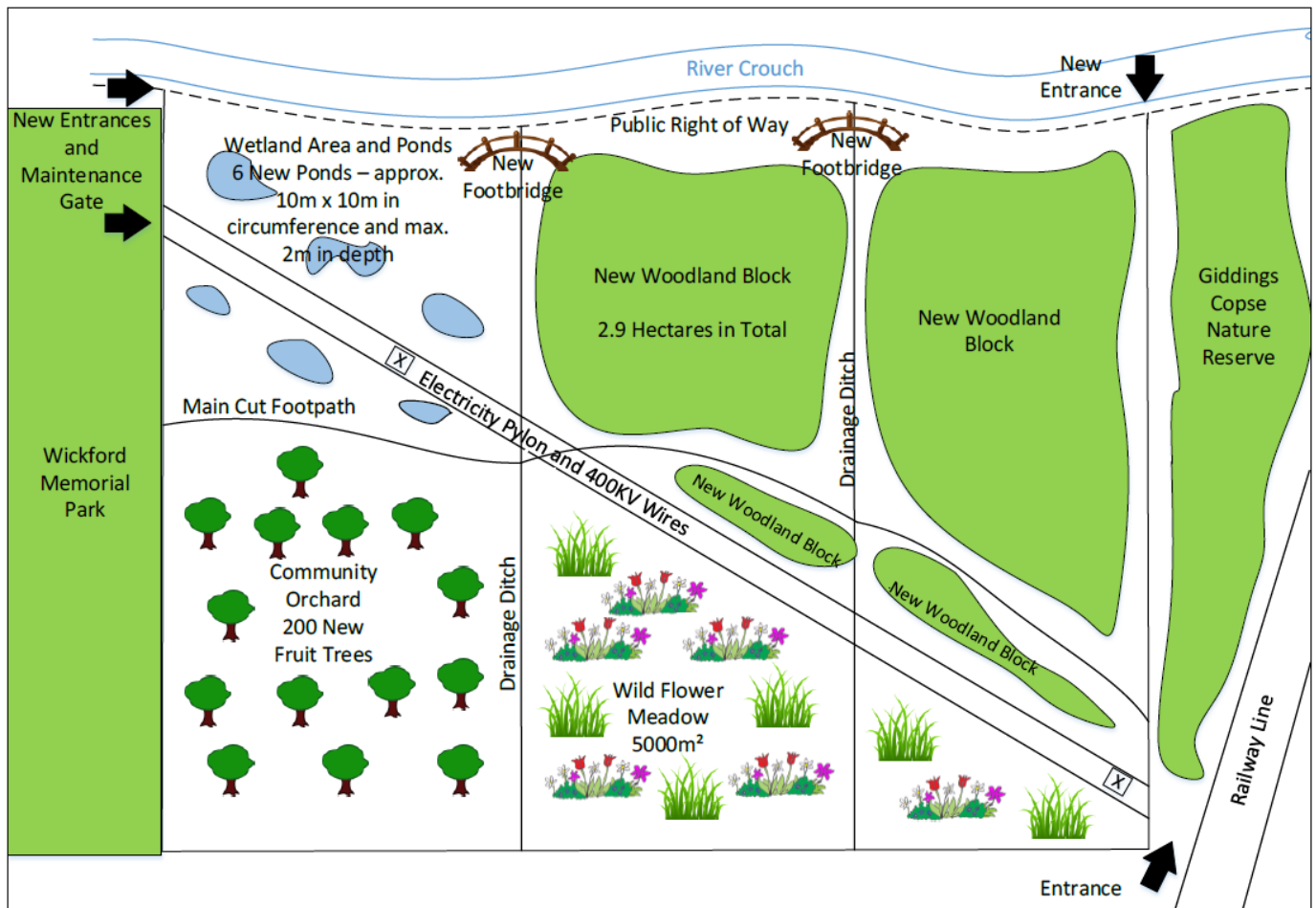


Diagram not to scale - for illustrative purposes only

1. Site Safety and Access Works

The site has not previously been accessible to the public due to its leased status and designated usage and some works are now required in order to ensure that the site is safe for the public to access and use. Works will include:

- The hardening of entrance points at four locations to prevent pooling and excess wear in the winter and the installation of access gates and inhibitors.
- The repair and making safe of drainage head walls.
- The creation of two footbridges over the drainage ditches.
- The removal or making good of existing fencing.

These works are a priority and will be started in February/March 2021. It is anticipated that they will be completed by April/May 2021 subject to ground conditions for access to the site. The total approximate cost of these works is £20,000. Some of the Member investment funding will be used as a contribution towards this cost with the remainder being met from existing service budgets.

2. Woodland Area

A woodland area of almost 3 hectares and consisting of 3,500 trees of a variety of species will be created, which will include glades (an opening within a woodland that can either be coppiced or left as grassland) and rides (a linear trackway designed for access). The Woodland Trust are supporting this element and will supply, plant and upkeep the woodland area for a period of two years at a total cost of £5,000. This has been discounted substantially by the Woodland Trust and offered to the Council at 60% of the usual cost.

The ideal time of year for planting trees is between November and March and it is anticipated that these works will be undertaken by the end of March 2021 from existing service budgets.

3. Wetland Ponds

6 wetland ponds will be created, measuring approximately 10m x 10m each in circumference with a maximum depth of 2m. The ponds will provide wetland habitat for a variety of invertebrates to further enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The cost of creating the 6 wetland ponds is £8,000 and external funding opportunities are being explored to contribute to the cost of the delivery of the works. Subject to external funding being secured, it is anticipated that this element of the project will be undertaken in September 2021.

4. Wildflower Meadow

An area of approximately 5,000m² has been designated for the preparation and sowing of a wildflower meadow at a cost of £5,000. External funding opportunities are being explored to contribute to the cost of the delivery of these works. Subject to external funding being secured, it is anticipated that this element of the project will be undertaken in September 2021.

5. Community Orchard

The cost for the supply of 200 fruit trees is £5,000. External funding opportunities are being explored to contribute to the cost of the purchase of the trees. Subject to external funding being secured, community tree planting initiatives will be developed with local community and voluntary groups in order to undertake the planting of the trees. This element of the project will be undertaken over the course of the winter season 2021-22.

6. Signage

Interpretation boards will be installed at the site at a cost of £4,000 in order to provide environmental information relating to the site to raise and increase awareness about environmental factors and the importance of biodiversity. External funding opportunities are being explored to contribute to the cost of the signage.

7. Pathway from Runwell to Battlesbridge

Discussions are ongoing with the Environment Agency and Essex County Council regarding the creation of a Riverside Walk from Runwell to Battlesbridge, which will pass through the Beauchamps Field site. The cost of these works is currently unknown and will be explored further over the coming months, with the Council working with the Environment Agency and Essex County Council in relation to securing the necessary funding.

Total Project Costs – £47,000 (This total excludes any costs for the Riverside Walk as the cost for this element is currently unknown).

The elements mentioned above will greatly enhance the biodiversity of the site and the area as a whole by providing a variety of habitats, the make-up of which will be established through environmental surveys once the works have been completed.

The site will be managed and maintained by the Council's Parks and Countryside service but it will also provide important opportunities for the voluntary sector and the local community to work with and support the Council to improve the natural environment and positively contribute to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those involved.

External Funding

Funding options are currently being explored to contribute towards the cost of the delivery of this project. An application will be submitted to the next funding round for Veolia Environmental Trust, which will be open for applications from 4 February 2021 with funding decisions being made on 8 June 2021.

Options are also currently being explored to work with other interested parties and Community Groups in order to access funding that the local authority may not be able to access.

A further report will be presented to a future Committee meeting to provide an update on progress regarding the Riverside Walk element of the project and progress concerning funding for the project as a whole.

OPTIONS

The project has been developed and defined in line with the recommendations that were approved at the Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee meeting on 4 November 2020.

LEGISLATION/POLICY

There are a number of approved policies and strategies in place which relate to certain aspects of open space provision and the contribution that this makes to health and wellbeing:

- Corporate Plan 2019-22
- Leisure and Cultural Policy 2020-25
- Health and Wellbeing Policy 2018
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020

The project also contributes to the delivery of the Council's Pollinator Action Plan.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Corporate Plan Promises

- A place where everyone prospers:
 - People are healthier, happier, independent and active – the Council will encourage the involvement of the local community through volunteer groups

- to become involved in tree planting initiatives and support the future management and maintenance of the site.
 - Improved mental health provision and support for mental wellbeing – the site will provide opportunities for the local community to be physically active, connect with others, learn new skills, give to the community and enjoy the outdoors, thus, positively contributing to people’s mental health and wellbeing.
- A place to be proud of:
 - Increased pride in the borough and community – parks and open spaces are a focal point for residents when determining what is important to them about where they live. The provision of an additional area of enhanced open space, which is accessible to the public, positively contribute to residents’ views.
 - The borough has attractive open spaces and public realm that are clean and tidy – the creation of a number of different environmental features within the area of land will ensure that it is attractive and enticing to residents.
 - A borough that helps people stay healthy; with places to spend time outdoors and enjoy – the area will provide a space for residents to enjoy nature and be active. The local community and local voluntary groups will be encouraged to support the Council and, in this way, their involvement will positively contribute to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Financial Implications

The total project cost is £47,000 (excluding Riverside Walk). Ongoing maintenance of the site will be undertaken from existing service budgets.

A contribution of £17,000 has been allocated to this project through Member Investment. The remaining £30,000 will be funded partly from existing service budgets and by sourcing external funding opportunities. Completion of some elements of the project will be at risk if the necessary external funding cannot be secured, resulting in these elements being delayed until the required funding is available.

Risk Management Implications

Relevant risks and opportunities in connection with this matter have been considered and are referred to in the body of the report, as appropriate.

Diversity, Inclusion and Community Cohesion Implications

The site will be open for all to enjoy and will provide opportunities for the local community and local voluntary groups to contribute to the site, be physically active, connect with others, learn new skills, give to the community and enjoy the outdoors, thus, promoting a sense of civic purpose and community belonging for those involved. A Service Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this project and presented to the Committee as part of the next update report.

Other Relevant Considerations

None.

Background Papers

None.