

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 05 October 2021

Report of: Director, Net Zero Exeter and City Management

Title: Northbrook Park Update

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the public consultation recently held on the future of Northbrook Park and to consider the proposed next steps.

2. Recommendations:

That Executive:

1. Note the results of the public consultation
2. Approve in principle the next steps set out in this report for further developing the proposals for North Brook Park, subject to a detailed proposal to Executive at a future date.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

North Brook Park occupies a crucial strategic location which provides a green link between two of our most important green spaces. The site performs a critical function for the movement of wildlife and it represents a natural green infrastructure connection for people to move between parks and traffic free routes into the Quay side, Marsh Barton and the City Centre beyond. Improving the biodiversity, accessibility and usability of this key park is of prime importance and it is only right that the residents of Exeter have had a good opportunity to shape the proposals.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?

Developing these proposals further will require input from officers in both Exeter City Council Public and Green Spaces teams and from Devon Wild Life Trust.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

The section 151 Officers notes the costs set out in the appendix. This report is for Executive only and therefore will not commit the Council to any funding. A further report will therefore be required if funding is expected from the Council, which will need to be considered in line with the Council's current financial position.

6. What are the legal aspects?

At this early stage, it is anticipated that the Council will grant a further lease to DWT and that the Northbrook Park will be incorporated within the existing management arrangements with DWT, although other management options will be considered.

It will be necessary for Council Officers within the Public and Green Spaces team to work with the Council's Corporate Property team to ensure that any transfer of the land is in accordance with statutory requirements.

In accordance with the section 151 Officer comments, in the event that there are financial implications, then further consideration will be given to the proposals.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The Monitoring Officer has no additional observations.

8. Report details:

The main report 'Northbrook Park Proposal Update' is attached to this paper as appendix 1.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

- 9.1 The strategic location of Northbrook Approach means that enhancing the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the site contributes strongly three of our key priorities in the Corporate Strategy and the principles contained within the vision for Liveable Exeter. They are:
- 9.2 Tackling Congestion and Accessibility. The potential for this site to link up existing green, traffic free travel routes, provides opportunities for people to move into the Quayside, Marsh Barton, the City Centre and the wider city. Making sustainable green travel options more attractive and accessible can only help to promote alternatives to car use.
- 9.3 Building Great Neighbourhoods. The quality of the local environment directly impacts the quality of life for our residents. Exeter has always ranked very highly as a great place to live and this site offers a great opportunity to further enhance our natural environment and open up the green space to greater public use.
- 9.4 Promoting Active and Healthy Lifestyles. The link that Northbrook provides between Riverside and Ludwell Valley Park provides a great opportunity to enhance walking and cycling infrastructure. The green link will open up the possibility of longer recreational walking and cycling routes and the enhancement of the greenspace will encourage more people to visit and enjoy it.
- 9.5 The importance of the Northbrook Approach and the links with Ludwell and Riverside Valley Parks must also be viewed in the context of the Liveable Exeter Garden Villages vision. The higher density development with a reduced reliance on the use of the private car means that the quality of our green spaces and the active

and green travel links they provide, gain even greater significance. Northbrook provides the strategic link to enable greater connectivity between our greenspaces.

9.6 Planting the right trees in the right place can also aid carbon sequestration and whilst there is an inevitable gap between planting and effective carbon absorption, planting for the future is still the right thing to do. The proposals will also increase and enhance the biodiversity of what is currently a pleasantly green but not particularly ecologically rich site.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

There are no significant risk to this proposal providing that the funding can be secured to deliver the proposals.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 The proposals to enhance Northbrook Park have been warmly supported by those who took part in the consultation. Should those proposals be developed they will contribute to our ambitions to increase biodiversity and to become carbon neutral by 2030 in the following ways:

- By linking up existing, traffic free travel routes to large parts of the City which will make sustainable, green travel options more attractive and accessible;
- By increasing biodiversity on the site, including a community orchard and wild flower planting; and

- By rewilding the Northbrook to improve the aquatic environment.

13. Are there any other options?

As with any piece of land there are a large number of alternative uses which could be considered. However the council has already committed to keeping this as a publically accessible green space. The public consultation has clearly supported the proposals we put forward and we recommend that they are progressed as proposed.

Director, Net Zero Exeter and City Management, David Bartram

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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