

St George Park – Ideas, Views & Options

This Document

This document is intended to support the activity of the St George Community Planning Group and will be updated frequently. It is not a record of final decisions. It is not endorsed by or a policy statement of Bristol City Council.

If you would like to be involved in the [Planning Group](#), please contact the co-ordinator Rob Acton-Campbell (rob@troopers-hill.org.uk).

If you have comments, questions, corrections, suggestions or ideas for this document, please contact Nick Burroughs (nick@mantology.org).

Last updated 29 January 2019.

Summary

The Planning Group was formed after meeting in August 2018 between residents, Councillor Asher Craig, the Friends of St George Park, the St George Community Network, other local Councillors and our local MP.

Currently:

- The Planning Group has an advisory role, representing the community to the City Council in enabling St George Park (and some other community buildings) to support the community.
- Over 20 residents are involved in the Planning Group which meets every one or two months.
- The Friends of St George, in conjunction with the Wetlands Wildlife Trust, have produced a plan to improve and conserve the park lake and island.
- Wesport operate the refurbished tennis courts for the City Council from 2019.
- Students from UWE have developed and presented ideas for the park to the Planning Group.

Actions:

- The Planning Group visited Page Park on 15 January 2019 to learn from their experience.
- The Planning Group will create a survey to get local views on the student's ideas and promote this in the Redfield and St George Voice
- Councillor Craig is managing the selection and installation of new toilet facilities in the park.
- The City Council will refurbish the café kiosk in early 2019

The Planning Group will meet again early in 2019.

St George Community Planning Group

The aim of the group is to develop and move forward plans for St George Park (and some other community buildings) to better support and meet the needs of the community.

The group welcomes anyone interested in the St George Park or community facilities in St George.

Rob Acton-Campbell (rob@troopers-hill.org.uk) is the Planning Group co-ordinator.

Background

St George Park with the adjacent library and community centre are owned by Bristol City Council and managed by them or on their behalf by other organizations.

The park has been described as “one of Bristol’s hidden gems” and attracts visitors from all over Bristol and beyond. It has a lake, many mature trees and wildlife as well as other facilities in various states of repair.

The lake needs repair to deal leaks, crumbling walls and surrounds. The Friends of St George Park have produced a draft plan to renovate the lake as well as to support and encourage local wildlife.

The City Council is considering the future of the library and community centre as well as the other facilities and the park. It wants to reflect the opinions of the local community in these plans as well creating an economically sustainable community resource.

What Is Included?

St George Park has:

- Areas of green space and many mature trees including the south “avenue” path
- A lake with an island
- Wildlife including various wild and water fowl, owls, bats, foxes and squirrels.
- A small kiosk café
- A central bandstand now supporting community planters
- Five tennis courts
- A skateboard park and activity area
- Two bowling greens
- Small buildings adjacent to the tennis courts and bowling greens
- A main entrance at the junction of Church Road and Chalks Road

Also included are:

- St George Library
- St George Community Centre

Potentially included (subject to City Council internal issues and clarification)

- Toilets by the main entrance (closed in 2018)

Park Open Spaces

The park open spaces are all the green areas and paths which cover most of the park. These are currently maintained by the City Council who cut the grass, clear leaves, manage the trees, empty bins, maintain the paths and the lighting.

The open spaces include features such as the tree avenue along the south side path, the bandstand and the glade in the northwest corner.

The Friends of St George Park have an active Facebook page and have developed a plan for the lake (see [Lake & Surrounding Area](#)) and organize litter pickups.

In the summer the park attracts many visitors to picnic, barbecue, sunbathe, play and relax. This brings problems of litter and damage (e.g. from barbecues) in part due to inadequate bin provision but also because people are unaware or ignore park byelaws which are not enforced.

The John Deasy Play Park is used continuously by younger children, parents and carers, though the current lack of toilets is a problem.

There are many regular park users who pick up litter and report park issues.

The park is used continuously by people as a thoroughfare and is part of the Bristol cycle route. There are many dog walkers which results in some uncleared dog waste. The park is also used by joggers, personal trainers and an informal Sunday children's football club, has hosted open air plays.

There is occasional criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. This has included muggings and joy riding cars.

Lighting in the park is limited to the north-south route from Park Crescent, around the play area and up the hill to Church Road.

The park also hosts the Redfest in August. This is a one-day community event, finishing at 9p.m. with music, entertainment and stalls. The 2018 event was notable for being well organized with a prompt clean up.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	The provision of public toilet facilities has been the single most discussed issue. This includes location, maintenance and whether to charge. Needs to be included in any plans	The City Council will provide toilets in the first part of 2019.
2	Provide more scope for communal gardening – per UWE	Potentially an issue with storage of tools? Is there demand / interest?
3	What other facilities do people want or value? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling secure when using the park • Improved paths • More bins / improved rubbish collection • More benches • Better lighting • Improved signage • Support for outdoor exercise and activities 	
4	Identify key park features for special attention such as the avenue on the south path?	
5	Implement a Park Wildlife policy including management of green spaces	See section " Natural Environment & Wildlife " below.
6	Consider ease of use as a thoroughfare including people on foot, cyclists, small children, dog walkers, joggers.	
7	Consider how to persuade certain people to be more considerate park users (litter, barbecues)	

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
8	Make the bandstand more of a feature.	Enhance the planters? Exhibit sculptures? Use it as a performance space?
9	Improved environment (and bat) friendly lighting	
10	What can be done to minimize criminal and anti-social behaviour?	Talk to police and other agencies. Enforce byelaws. Have a clear idea what to do when things happen.
11	Should the park adopt the vision set out by Bristol Parks Forum? See Draft Vision 2030 (full link in Resources & Links section).	
12	Who manages the concession for the ice cream van? Should this be reconsidered given concerns over sugar intake?	
13	Look at reinstating the drinking fountains. This would be a convenience for visitors and could reduce the amount of plastic bottle litter.	Page Park got a grant from the Drinking Fountains trust to do this.
14	Do nothing – maintain the current situation?	

Lake & Surrounding Area

The lake and island are a key feature of the park. The island is home to wildlife including ducks, a heron and squirrels. The lake has two aerators, one of which operates continually. Part of the path around the lake has been fenced off due to concern over the stability of the walls. The lake also leaks. Repairs are complicated by a major sewer running beneath.

The Friends of St George Park, in conjunction with the Wetlands Wildlife Trust, have produced a draft plan to refurbish the lake including making the east end into a marshy habitat and building a walkway across the lake on the west side of the island.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Proceed with the FSGP plan to refurbish the lake.	Status, timescale and funding currently unknown. Needs to be co-ordinated with other park plans.
2	Include management of the lake and surrounding area in a Park Wildlife policy.	See section " Natural Environment & Wildlife " below.
3	Maintain the current no fishing park byelaw.	This helps sustain the lake ecosystem, tie into the Park Wildlife policy
4	Do nothing.	Probably not feasible in the medium term as the leaks and decay will become serious.

Natural Environment & Wildlife

The park offers a range of habitats and wildlife including water fowl, squirrels, foxes and owls. There is also thought to be a bat population. There is no active management or policy on the environment towards conservation or preservation other than applied by the Council to trees, mowing and clearing.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Create and implement a park environment and wildlife policy with guidance from appropriate organizations and the Council.	

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
2	Encourage local schools and other groups to become involved in the park environment.	
3	Identify other possibilities to promote the environment and natural habitats.	
4	Make park users aware of the park environment and their impact (good & bad) on it e.g. litter in the lake and stale bread.	
5	Do nothing – maintain current council policy on mowing and clearing.	

Café

The Council plan to refurbish (or rebuild – currently unclear) the café kiosk during the first part of 2019, including providing a covered seating area. The previous operator of the kiosk has left, and it is currently not known who or how this will be managed in future.

The buildings adjacent to the kiosk include one used by the bowling club and the park-keeper's store. These also provide a hangout for groups of people including at night when they are not lit.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Convert the unused / dilapidated buildings on the south side of the bowling green to be a café including providing some seating on the grass area outside (UWE proposal)	These are believed to already have power and plumbing.
2	Add additional facilities such as meeting space and internet access.	How does this relate to or duplicate what is decided for the library & community centre?
3	Combine the café with the library and community centre to get a livelier attractive environment.	Where would this be?
4	Build a café on the old bandstand as this is an impressive central location with views across the park.	The area currently has community garden planters. Building on it would significantly change views of the park and would be intrusive?
5	Cafés don't necessarily make money but can attract people to the park and buildings. Southville community centre makes money from operating a day nursery.	Need to understand the economics of a café plus any other activities – would it be neutral, generate cash or require subsidy?
6	Do nothing – maintain the existing kiosk arrangement after the 2019 refurbishment.	

Community Centre

The Community Centre lease is expiring in 3 years (check?). It is currently on a peppercorn rent with the Community Centre group responsible for repairs and maintenance. It offers a community meeting space, kitchen and limited parking. Access to the park is through a lockable gate. The building is not particularly attractive.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Sell the land for development and use the proceeds to fund development of the park.	

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
2	The community centre location is far more accessible than the library location. Rebuild it to become the library and community centre.	
3	Is there a need for a “community information hub”?	Can this be better defined, or examples found?
4	Do nothing – maintain the existing arrangement.	

Library

The City Council has decided not to close the library which currently offers internet access as well as lending books and renting DVDS. It has direct access to the park and is a small local library with limited parking. The building has no historical or cultural significance.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Enhance and extend the library including a learning hub and views over the park (per UWE study).	
2	Move the facilities provided by the community centre to the library.	
3	Extend the library upwards to provide accommodation that could be rented to provide income.	
4	Provide facilities to support local small businesses (e.g. hot desking, meeting spaces, internet).	
5	The library is at the highest point in the park and is less accessible to those with impairments or small children. Move the library to the area occupied by the community centre or the revamped café.	
6	Sell the land to the south west of the library for development and use the proceeds to fund development of the park.	People would object to this as eating away at the park. It would also spoil the skyline and south facing views from within the park.
7	An enhanced library would presumably have to offer refreshments. How would this affect the park café?	
8	Do nothing – leave the library unchanged.	

Park Entrances

The main park entrance is at the corner of Church Road and Chalks Road leading down to the bandstand area. There are several other entrances and the north and northwest sides are open.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Make the main entrance a feature to attract people to the park – UWE proposal includes making the park entrance more visible from Church Road.	
2	Look at the other park entrances – provide consistent signage to locations and about the park	
3	Consider what should be done with the disused public toilets by the main entrance	Per Asher Craig these are managed by the City Council Highways department not Parks and may not be available for inclusion

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
4	Do nothing apart from routine maintenance.	

Wellbeing & Fitness

The park currently has:

- The John Deasy Play Park (see below)
- Skateboard Park & Activity Area (see below)
- Tennis Courts (see below)
- Bowling Green (see below)
- Jogging Markers
- Cycle Paths

Some of the park paths are designated cycleways shared with pedestrians.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	What other wellbeing and fitness opportunities should the park provide?	Talk to local groups. Include in survey.
2	The jogging markers are worn and need refurbishing or reworking	

John Deasy Play Park

The play park is at the centre of the park next to the bandstand. It is an enclosed dog-free area, recently refurbished with metal railings and new gates. The area is designed for young children and has a slide, swings, climbing area and other play equipment.

The play park is popular and well used. Some families use the grassy area on the west side of the play park as a secure picnic area.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Is this the best place for a play park?	
2	The equipment in the play park is reaching the end of life and will need replacing soon	
3	Are there charities or organisations that will help or provide grants?	
4	Do nothing apart from routine maintenance.	

Skateboard Park & Activity Area

The skateboard park and enclosed basketball court are on the west side of the park. The skateboard park is popular and well used by children, young people and adults.

Per [The Skateparks Project](#) “St George’s is a great skatepark It is a large park ... It is a good place for beginners and experienced riders and you should definitely check it out if you are in the area.”

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Skateboarding will be an Olympic sport in the 2020 Olympics. Is there an opportunity to use this to promote the park?	
2	Skateparks Project mentions that Wheelscape built and have subsequently refurbished the skate	Can Asher Craig find out more?

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
	park. Do they have any interest in further participation?	
3	Do nothing apart from routine maintenance.	

Tennis Courts

Following a successful tender, Wesport have taken over management of the five tennis courts as of 2019. They plan to provide various affordable options to support frequent and casual players and encourage greater use of the courts. The courts are being refurbished with investment from Bristol City Council and the Lawn Tennis Association.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Engage with Wesport to keep everyone informed of what is going on and look for opportunities for joint activities?	
2	Concerns were expressed at the December Planning Group meeting that Wesport's plans for controlling access to the courts would prevent access to the equipment needed for the community garden.	

Bowling Greens

Per Councillor Craig, the Bowling Club has a long standing informal / non-contractual relationship with the City Council for the use of the bowling area and nearby building. There are two greens, one of which appears to be unused.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Could the second unused green be put to better use?	
2	The bowling club will potentially be affected by any plans around the buildings.	
3	Contact the bowling club to understand their needs and plans. Involve them in the discussions of wider park plans.	

Heritage

The park has been established for over 100 years. The Barton Hill History Group have looked at the park history.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Work with Barton Hill to identify key historical features of the park and in the wider history of Bristol	
2	See if anyone already involved with the park would like to follow this up	

Engaging & Involving the Community

The park and associated buildings (library, community centre) are shared community resources owned and managed by the City Council. The Council wish the future of the park to reflect the wishes of the community as far as possible.

The catchment area for St George Park is much larger than the immediate area, it is the local park for many Easton residents and attracts visitors from further afield. The skateboard park attracts people from a wide area.

The park is not used as a resource by local schools.

	Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1	Who / which groups or organizations should be contacted directly to ask if they want to be involved?	
2	How will the wider community be engaged or offered the chance to express their views?	Survey planned along with article in the St George & Redfield Voice
3	Do we need a website to promote the park? See for example http://www.friendsofpagepark.co.uk/ .	Friends of Page Park saw involvement and awareness of local community as vital. Could we also produce a poster that could be displayed in park and by shops and businesses encouraging involvement?
4	Who has an interest in the park for particular use? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowling club • Wesport for tennis • Redfest organizers • Nature & wildlife groups 	
5	Should schools be contacted to be involved in the environmental and wildlife aspects?	
6	Consider park users will be supported / affected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a thoroughfare 24 hours a day • Casual users • Dog walkers • Adults & children using play area • Library users • Community centre users • Council staff maintaining the park • Police & emergency services 	
7	What groups could be involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth • Religious / cultural • Health & wellbeing 	

City Council Role & Policy

The City Council owns and has responsibility for the park and associated buildings. The Council operates within a statutory framework as well as setting its own policies and providing capital and operational funding.

It would be useful to have a basic understanding of how this works.

Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1 The Planning Group will produce proposals from the community for the future of St George Park. What does the Council require to decide on these? What is the budget cycle?	
2 How will the capital and operating costs of proposals be calculated and by whom?	
3 What role will the Planning Group / community have in progressing the changes and supporting them longer term?	
4 It is likely that there will be a need for some external grant funding, how will this be managed and by whom?	
5 How will funding decisions and priorities be set?	

Sustainability

It is important to consider how any activities that are not the responsibility of the City Council will be sustained and coordinated. The Planning Group is an informal organization and presumably will disappear once its job is done.

Options / Ideas / Considerations	Comments
1 What non-council participation will be required going forward and how will it be provided. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the park related to the community • Implementing and developing any environmental / wildlife policy 	Potentially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centre group • Friends of St George Park
2 Identify the key areas that need to be supported and find one or more enthusiastic individuals to keep an eye on these areas.	

Timescales

Activities that are already in progress or are planned:

- Refurbishment of tennis courts and management by Wesport
- Replacement of play park railings and gates by City Council
- Installation of toilets and café seating area on existing site in January 2019 with £145,000 in from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) by City Council
- Repair and improvement of lake and surround in accordance with proposals developed by Friends of Saint George Park. Status, funding and timing unknown.
- Creation of a proposal to the Council by the Planning Group for the items covered in the document

It is likely that the wider changes will occur over the next two or three years.

Experiences of Other Parks

Page Park

The Friends of Page Park (FoPP) were kind enough to host a visit on 15 January 2019. Key points:

- FoPP emphasised that raising awareness and support within the local community was key.
- £2.2m project over approximately 3 years, including £1.6m from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
- Other funding from various sources including S106 / CIL
- Project included restoration of clock tower building, water fountain, paths, walls & railings around the park as well as the café building.
- Café building (including community room) was approx. £900k (budget was £650k)
- Funding also paid for project officer and activity officer to encourage activities in the park, both employed by South Gloucestershire Council.
- Project has been 10 years from inception.
- First HLF application was turned down, HLF very helpful in advising changes (bandstand restoration removed) for second successful submission.
- HLF applications written and submitted by South Gloucestershire Council officers.
- Grant was 2 stages, first stage award paid for detailed designs for planning permission etc and some of the costs of putting together the stage 2 bid.
- Plan for community trust to run café failed, now run commercially with whole building leased from the Council. Operators very supportive of FoPP (e.g. allow use of community room free of charge).
- Toilets (including outside accessed toilet) only available when café is open.
- Railings will be installed over next few weeks (to replace those removed during the war); the whole park will then be locked and not accessible at night. Park has a perimeter wall already.
- Council highways dept is behind programme on path resurfacing.
- HLF have been very supportive and accepting of changes in budget and timing.
- See www.friendsofpagepark.co.uk/heritage-lottery-fund.html for more information and photos of work in progress.
- FoPP has raised other funds – including for the bandstand.
- FoPP are paying directly rather than through the Council for the new composting area despite having to pay VAT.
- FoPP are very keen to see the role of activity officer extended and are trying to find a grant for this.
- FoPP not always in agreement with council (e.g. location of play area) but generally good relationship.
- Original plan was to rebuild existing pavilion rather than separate café but issues with bowls club, leases etc. Theoretically café building could be extended to replace pavilion in the future.
- FoPP has got a grant from the Drinking Fountains trust to reinstate the disused fountain.

Resources & Links

Bristol Parks Forum <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/>, see also “Draft Vision for 2030 and Beyond” <http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/DraftVision2030.pdf>

Friends of Page Park <http://www.friendsofpagepark.co.uk/>

Friends of St George Park <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1891001547805369/>

Skateparks Project <https://www.skateparks.co.uk/bristol/st-georges-skatepark/>

Wetlands Wildlife Trust, Slimbridge <https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge/>