



East Herts Council
Wallfields, Pegs Lane
Hertford, Herts
SG13 8EQ
Tel: 01279 655261

Your contact: Ian Sharratt
Tel: 01279 655261
Fax: 01992 531438
Our ref: Bishops Park improvements
Date: 9 February 2017

Dear Resident

Re: Plans for open space and play improvements in Bishops Park Open Space, Bishop's Stortford

We wrote to you recently to develop our plans and would like to thank you for the positive support we received for the project along with some very helpful ideas. We have now reviewed the project and have adjusted the plans to include some additional improvements in response to your suggestions.

The initial project outline was introduced to the Council's capital programme in 2014. The objectives identified were:

- To increase use of the open space and fulfil corporate objectives to promote health and wellbeing.
- To provide better facilities in the area for residents to engage in healthy activity. (The play equipment to encourage healthy activity for older children and adults).
- To improve access to the park for a wider audience by improving parking and enhancing the space for more activities.
- To improve pedestrian safety and provide a more welcoming entrance to the park.

The following provides answers to the questions you have raised and confirms details of the final works.

A new footpath will be installed to the north of the hedge line to separate pedestrians from vehicles and a new car park will be created in the corner of the playing field. This path will not replace the existing definitive public bridleway along the roadway. We will install signage to make it clear that pedestrians are invited to use the new path whilst horses and cyclists are to continue using the road. This will not deny walkers their right to use the bridleway should they wish.

The old temporary car park created by the original developers behind the houses in Snowdrop Close will be removed. Poor sight lines and the slope at the entrance made it difficult to access. A height barrier will be installed on the new car park to prevent any problems of misuse. There will be some loss of trees to accommodate the new car park but this will be offset by woodland trees planted to replace the old parking area. The remaining trees around the new car park will help to soften the visual impact of cars adjacent to the green space.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

We will incorporate the new interactive goal wall into the existing goal structure and will fit a new basketball post and backboard. We have reduced the adjacent height of the hedge to ensure good sight lines. This should help to keep it a safe place to play and to minimise any potential for anti-social behaviour. Maintaining the hedge at a lower height will promote thicker growth to minimise the potential for children trying to climb through it. We will plant up the one or two gaps. Additional lamp columns will be installed along the new path to switch off at the same time as the existing lamps along the road. These lamps will not be situated close to the goal wall as we do not think it appropriate to illuminate play spaces. The interactive goal wall will be programmed to switch off at a reasonable hour in the evening. We will set it to operate between 7:00am and 10:00pm.

We will be painting pitch lines on the tarmac in front of the new goal wall to add to the gaming experience. A new grass bund will surround the tarmac to help prevent balls from straying too far and for spectators to sit on during the summer. The existing benches will be retained.

A number of you have asked for an additional footpath to improve the link from Primrose Close into the space. We are pleased to confirm that by choosing a compacted limestone surface for all the new paths rather than tarmac, we will be able to accommodate this within the budget. We have used this surface in other parks and find that it provides a very stable footpath suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. In this way we are also able to install a new surface pad and kissing gate at the entrance in the top north east corner of the park leading out toward the college grounds. You reminded us that this sometimes gets quite muddy in wet weather.

We will include an additional footpath near the old parking area where pedestrians enter from residential areas to the south east. This new footpath will prevent the need to walk along the road from this point and will meet up with the new footpath by crossing the ditch and hedge line away from the bend at the entrance to the car park. Whilst this will create an additional point at which visitors cross the road toward the school, it will provide a more direct pedestrian route to the new facility and will afford both vehicles and pedestrians clear sightlines. It will cross the park through an existing glade in the woodland. We have enclosed a revised version of the plan to show this.

We considered a suggestion not to put the new footpath to the north of the hedge or the parking area but to retain the old car park and take a footpath diagonally across the space south of the road to meet up at the existing crossing point. However, the location of the new car park was chosen to be less hidden and to provide better access to the larger space to the north, particularly for visitors attending fitness sessions and the new play facility. The new footpath will provide access from the car park as well as an alternative to the road. We can reassure you that the new car park will not be significantly larger than the existing one but will be much easier to access and will provide a far more attractive facility. It will accommodate the same modest number as the old one, approximately 10 cars. You have noted anti-social behaviour in the past. We believe that moving the car park to this more open location will help the police to patrol. It will be designed to limit speeds around the car park by retaining islands of trees.

We have no plans to widen the road as it enters the park from Woodpecker Close. We understand that this will remain a point at which pedestrians meet traffic and will do whatever is possible to emphasise markings on the road and to improve signage. We have considered the way vehicles currently use the road across the park and have decided not to use this project to make any significant alterations in this respect other than providing the separate pedestrian route. Drivers should continue to be mindful of their speed. We will be installing an additional passing bay near the entrance to the park.

We are liaising with the police and they are not aware of any significant problems over recent times. If you do see any anti-social behaviour we would ask that you call the police, either by dialling 999 if you witness illegal activity or 101 to report something retrospectively or of a lesser urgency. The police are not always able to respond immediately but this helps them to allocate resources and could result in increased patrols if any pattern of anti-social behaviour emerged. With regard to the use of alcohol in our parks, the police already have powers to deal with underage drinking. If the police had sufficient evidence of problems involving adults in this park, we could consider using powers to control alcohol within the recently introduced Public Protection Order.

Neither overt nor covert cameras are an option for use in open spaces and particularly not near play areas. The law relating to private individuals and companies is different to public bodies but is guided by the same laws. Cameras in schools will be used with the express permission of parents. Cameras affixed to private buildings should not infringe on the public's privacy outside the property. Cameras in the town centres are overt and installed where the public's expectation of privacy is relatively low. In a public park however the expectation of being filmed is much lower. There is understandable concern relating to civil rights that public bodies do not impose on people's privacy for relatively minor issues. We would only use CCTV on our open spaces in the pursuit of serious crime and where its use is proportionate to the crime. This does not include anti-social behaviour or failing to clear dog faeces. Whilst the Council understands that there may be a small minority creating a nuisance on open spaces at times, the vast majority who enjoy its facilities do so responsibly and safely. The Council believes that most residents agree it is not acceptable to photograph or film children in open spaces where they should be able to expect their privacy.

One resident suggested a fenced area to run their dog without the fear that they might pick up a scent and reach roads outside the park. Whilst we understand that this is a worry, we regret that we will not install a secure dog walking area as part of this project. We are concerned that some owners would simply use such an area to let their dogs off the lead to exercise them without needing to maintain control or to pick up after them. We see our play areas being used in this way. We are keen to promote responsible dog ownership and for dog owners to have sufficient control of their pets to be able to let them run without the need for secure fencing. The majority of dog owners do look after their pets responsibly and pick up after them. It is important that dog owners are able to get their dogs to return when needed, not just for their own safety but for the benefit of other park users. Even in our parks where we have stock proof cattle fencing, there are still gates through which dogs are able to escape. We

may consider a separate fenced area as part of a future project in one of our larger parks if we are able to secure sufficient funding.

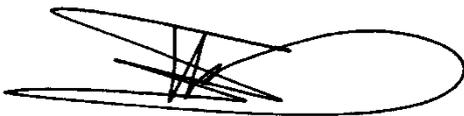
Your ideas about adding additional fitness equipment to the park are useful. We will include a marked running track around the perimeter to add a little extra provision for keeping fit and will look at the possibility of exercise equipment such as at Grange Paddocks in the future. You also asked if we could add to some additional play equipment for younger children into the existing play area. We are pleased to confirm we have been able to find sufficient funds to upgrade the play area slightly. We will incorporate a link into the play area from the new Primrose Close footpath through an extra self-closing gate and install a fun cone climber for 3 to 10 year olds.

Finally, it was mentioned that we might invest in walking routes which link amenities around the perimeter of the town. Whilst this is not something we have planned for this project, I would like to remind you that we have recently completed an initiative to create safe walking routes between five of our major parks in Bishop's Stortford including Bishop's Park. If you would like to explore these, please go to our web site at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/34052/Bishops-Stortford-Parks-and-Beyond-Walks> or pick up a leaflet in one of our offices.

We are now looking forward to getting on with the constructional work to deliver these improvements and will work with our suppliers to complete the project by the end of March 2017. We will display this information and the enclosed final design on our website. The web page is www.eastherts.gov.uk/bishopspark.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Sharratt', written over a horizontal line.

Ian Sharratt
*Environment Manager – Open
Spaces*
Environmental Operations

