Grappenhall and Thelwall Parks - Design and Management Strategy January 2025

Expressions of Interest

Background

Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council (the Council) is committed to maintaining and improving the open spaces within its local environment and developing its parks to a high standard.

The parks within the Parish provide a vital opportunity for our residents to enjoy the outdoors. They provide an environment for all generations to relax, socialise and exercise. In addition, sustainable habitats in our parks provide an abundance of wildlife.

The Council recognises the important role that its parks played in helping local residents through some difficult times during the Covid pandemic of 2020/21, particularly in relation to mental health and the contribution they make to managing the impacts of climate change.

The population of the Parish is expected to grow significantly over the next 15 years as a result of the residential development proposed within the recently adopted Warrington Local Plan. Whilst the new development will require the provision of public open space/play areas to support it, the existing parks will also play an increasingly important role in providing for the recreational needs of local residents.

The Council owns and maintains two parks (Jubilee Park and Diamond Park) within the Parish. The parks are well maintained, regularly reviewed and updated. Both parks are locked overnight and park caretakers, employed by the Council, inspect the parks daily, remove litter and empty the bins, inspect the play equipment daily and clean it if necessary, reporting any matters requiring attention to the Council officers.

Jubilee Park

Jubilee Park in Grappenhall is the larger of the two parks. It is surrounded by established residential development and is accessed off Euclid Avenue and Chester Road. A number of residents of the adjacent houses have formed unauthorised gates from their rear gardens into the park.

The park originally referred to as Euclid playing field includes a secure children's play area with play equipment for ages up to 13 years, a football goal, basketball hoop and basket swing for older children. It also includes outdoor gym equipment for adults, a recent addition aimed at improving the health and well-being of local residents.

There are a number of benches within the children's play area and a picnic table/bench in the central path that runs through the park. A wooden bench is sited under the trees close to the Euclid Avenue entrance.

There are established trees and hedgerows along the boundaries of the park adjacent to the rear gardens of the surrounding houses. Some of these trees are now of a notable size and whilst safe there are increasing concerns from residents that overhanging branches from edge trees and shrubs are encroaching upon neighbouring gardens and impacting upon light levels. A number of trees have been planted within the central area of the park including some fruit trees and an edible hedge.

A willow weaved structure is sited adjacent to the fruit trees. There is a mounded area within the central area and a wooden statue adjacent to the mound.

Jubilee Park is used by a wide range of residents including parents/carers with young children, older children and youths, adults and dog walkers. It is also used as a cut through by pedestrians avoiding having to walk along the busy Chester Road (A56).

Diamond Park

Diamond Park in Thelwall is essentially a young children's play area. It too is surrounded by established residential development and is accessed off Barley Road. As with Jubilee Park a number of residents of the adjacent houses have formed unauthorised gates from their rear gardens into the park.

The park includes children's play equipment for ages up to 13 years. There are a number of mushroom seats under the trees within the central area of the park and fairy doors have been carved into some of these trees. A stone mosaic has been installed close to the entrance to the park made from stones painted by local children during the Covid pandemic. However, this has not worn particularly well. There is also a box for book exchange near the park entrance.

There are a number of benches within the park including a picnic table/bench. In good weather parents arrange informal meet ups and picnics after school.

There are established trees and hedges along the boundaries of the park adjacent to the rear gardens of the surrounding houses.

Diamond Park is used essentially by parents/carers with young children. A large number of childminders use the park on a regular basis. Dogs are prohibited within Diamond Park.

The Brief

The Council is looking to develop a '21st century design and management strategy' for its existing parks. The strategy will set out a vision for the future of each park, provide a long-term strategy to guide their future management in terms of both purpose-built play equipment and natural space, provide a framework for future work programmes, support the budget setting process and identify financial requirements.

The Council recognises the need for an environmentally friendly approach, however experience of play equipment made from wood has led to concerns regarding hidden rot and the short-term nature of equipment made from wooden materials. Contingencies for taking an environmentally friendly approach would need to be encompassed in the strategy.

We want to ensure that as many of the opportunities in our parks can be accessed by people of all ages and with a range of abilities.

It is envisaged that Jubilee Park will aim to cater for multiple age use. The Council acknowledges that, as is the case nationally, there is a lack of good quality provision locally for older children and teenagers. Teenage provision often tends to be dominated by wheeled play and ball games which are almost exclusively used by boys. Therefore, any new provision aimed at older children and teenagers should have regard to this.

The Council is keen that any designs/developments in Jubilee Park provide also for adults. The provision of social space for sitting and chatting and spaces where different age groups can socialise together is considered important.

Diamond Park is envisaged to remain as a young children's play area although it should be important not only in providing young children with equipment for physical play but also providing the opportunity for creativity and encouraging imaginative and free play. As with Jubilee Park the provision of social space for sitting and chatting and spaces where different age groups can socialise together in Diamond Park is considered important.

The strategy should address the natural space in the parks and consider both the existing landscaping/planting and the potential to undertake future improvements having particular regard to the adjoining residential properties.

We are inviting tender briefs from suitably qualified landscape architects and play space designers. At this stage we require details of your suggested approach to

developing a design and management strategy for the two parks to include a recommendation(s) for appropriate public consultation, your experience in this field (with examples), your understanding of what we are seeking to achieve and some sense of your scale of charges and timescale for undertaking the strategy.