



Friends of Eastwood Farm

Response to Area Green Space Plan – Ideas and Options Paper

Eastwood Farm Local Nature Reserve

Introduction

This response was put together by the Friends of Eastwood Farm committee following a meeting held in the Council Depot on Friday 27th August 2010. This was not a public meeting but a range of regular park users were invited.

The meeting was led by Rob Acton-Campbell and Julian Thomas, Community Park Keeper. In addition to the three members of the Friends of Eastwood Farm committee, six other park users were present. Rob & Julian outlined the AGSP process prior to detailed consideration of the options for Eastwood Farm. The AGSP questionnaire was used as the agenda for the meeting.

More details of the proposals and Area Green Space Plan Process can be seen at www.bristol.gov.uk/agsp from where the questionnaire can also be downloaded.

Response Summary

- There was strong support for the creation of a 'park within a park' in the area around the existing children's play area.
- It was agreed that the driving issue for all other areas of the nature reserve was the impact on its wildlife.
- It was agreed that more needed to be done to raise the profile of the reserve and increase its use, but any work would need to be informed by wildlife considerations.
- The production of an updated management plan for the reserve should be completed before any other works are considered.

Response to Individual Options

1. Create more opportunities for play and exploration around the wetland areas such as timber board walks, stepping stones and improved bridges. [M]

While it is clear that the dipping platform on the bomb pond is a popular feature, we are concerned that board walks etc around the lagoon area would have a detrimental effect on wildlife. The island is used for nesting by swans and one of the best features of the reserve is seeing herons at the side of the lagoon. We would not therefore want any works done around the lagoon.

2. Extend and improve play area to cater for toddlers to teenagers. [H]

3. Incorporate a multi-use-games-area within the play space. [M]

4. Create a formal entrance to the play area with planting. [M]

5. Make the formal entrance and play area dog-free. [L]

These four items refer to creating the 'park within a park' around the existing play area. Providing there is adequate consultation on the details then these would be strongly supported by the group. Many of those at the meeting were dog walkers and they accepted that this area should be dog free and did not object to the fact that this might mean walking slightly further to access the nature reserve.

It should be noted that vehicular access to Beese's passes between the 'park-within-a-park' and the LNR. Consultation with the proprietors of Beese's should take place with regard to traffic calming or limited restriction. The LNR entrance should also be enhanced here (better fencing/gate).

6. Improve all entrances with signs, gates, better fencing and paths - particularly the main entrance at Whitmore Avenue. [M]

We strongly agree with this proposal. As well as the main entrance at Whitmore Avenue the entrance adjacent to Beese's car park should be a priority.

7. Create a series of clearly way-marked paths to allow greater access to all areas, adapt some paths to allow access for wheelchair users, parents/carers with buggies, cyclists and horse riders. [VH]

Improved way-marking is important and some paths could be improved, however we wish to maintain the rural feel of the site. Some paths require boots to be worn in winter, this is not a problem but a feature that should be expected in a rural setting. Providing paths for horse riding would need to be very carefully thought out to avoid conflict with other users particularly dog walkers. Any path improvements should take account of wildlife impacts.

8. Provide more seating, picnic areas and information points. [M]

9. Provide picnic area. [L]

10. Provide information points. [M]

These are supported in principle, but the choice of areas as picnic sites must consider the value of the areas as meadows both in their current state and their potential given improved management. Some of the areas shown on the plan do not seem appropriate.

Any picnic tables etc placed in the flood zone would of course need to be able to withstand being submerged and also deal with the very strong flows of water that occur during floods.

11. Improve management of trees to improve views through the Woods to the river and beyond. [M]

The management of the trees should first and foremost be for the benefit of wildlife. If clearings or rides can be cut that will benefit wildlife while at the same time creating views then that would be supported.

12. Establish viewing platforms with seating at various locations. [M]

Again wildlife considerations should take priority. We would support clearance of scrub at the tump by the railway tunnel shaft and the creation of a view point there.

13. Provide a long term landscape and wildlife management plan to sustain a variety of habitats, educational and recreational benefits and enhance the site's status as a Local Nature Reserve. [M]

We consider this to be the most important proposal and it should be given the highest priority. No major works on site should be considered until this is in place.

14. Improve parking facilities adjacent to depot. [H]

We see Eastwood Farm as being primarily for local people, we do not believe that extensive car parking facilities are necessary. Opening up the car park out of hours would also require additional fencing to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to other parts of the site.

We would however support parking being provided by prior arrangement for specific events such as guided walks or school visits.

To provide limited parking for evenings and weekends, it may be possible to reposition the main gate part way down the track and use one side of the top section for parking.

15. Develop depot site to include public facilities such as changing rooms and toilets OR work with Beeses Tea Gardens to make facilities available on request. [VH]

We strongly support the option of working with Beeses. It is unfortunate that the land between the water meadows and Beeses is now owned by a third party. Bristol City Council should consider purchasing this land if it ever becomes available to recreate a level route between Beeses and the LNR.

The depot could however be developed as an education centre.

We do not see any requirement for changing rooms.

We note that your plans do not show the fact that the Farm House itself is privately owned, this should be made clear in any future plans that are made publicly available.

16. Create an earth sculpture to act as focal point with seating. [H]

While we wouldn't object to this we see it as being of the lowest priority.

17. Convert existing grazing area to allotments. [M]

There were no strong views either way on this option. The presence of grazing animals does highlight the site's history as a farm, but if demand for allotments was demonstrated we would not object.

As noted in the response to 14, thought would need to be given to provision of vehicular access to the allotments and the consequent additional fencing to prevent access to the LNR.

18. Restore and manage the drainage scheme associated with the landfill area. [H]

From the monitoring results reported to us this does not seem to be required for its original purpose, however restoration of the reed beds etc would be supported if it could be shown to be a potential benefit to wildlife.

Friends of Eastwood Farm Committee:

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