

Adderley Park Saltley, Masterplan

Supporting and Background Information

Project background. Landscape Practice Group were commissioned by BCC planning department in Jan 2022 to investigate the above public open space and prepare a masterplan for comment and information. We commenced the work by looking briefly at the history and context of the space and investigated the various relevant aspects which may have an influence on future development and landscape design. These included arranging a topographical survey, looking at underground services and utilities associated with the park. Researching some local history archives and collecting detailed visual and graphic information on the open space and surrounding neighbourhood. We also looked at and discussed in some detail the existing trees present on the site with the BCC tree officer. Looking at what species were present and what their condition was.

Landscape Design work to date. Following research and investigation we drew up a detailed scale plan of the site and collated all the above information to enable future proposals. Once this was completed, we put together a plan drawing which started to look how the park worked and where the space had potential to change and what if anything was lacking in the overall landscape layout. This work was carried out with a view of enabling the space to be more functional to a wider range of park users. Also, we looked at how the existing limited environmental habitats might be extended to make the space more diverse, varied and interesting.

Existing Park layout. The space has a varied landform, generally green and open with a mature partial canopy of deciduous trees and is surrounded by both residential, educational and industrial properties. The park is a very valuable resource which is somewhat underused and in need of landscape development in all areas.

Park maintenance is limited to occasional mowing of the grass and periodic collection of litter. The park seems to be quite well used but mainly by a narrow section of the community in dog walking and limited informal sporting, play and exercise. The internal path network is uneven and in need of upgrading in some areas. The play and sporting facilities are basic and 'tired' and in need of renewal, restoration and enhancement.

The centrally situated multi use games area is well used but its central location compromises any future larger scale community events. Park furniture is limited and needs addition and extension to cater for more users. Signage and interpretation lacking and needs updating and more detail.

Environmental habitats. The existing trees are mainly reaching maturity and need further addition and variety. Future works should where possible avoid existing tree root zones. Lower canopies are lacking and shrub layers generally not present. This situation inhibits the use of the space by many wildlife communities. Ground plain vegetation though varied in topography is very limited in scope, species and variety.

The Outline Masterplan. It is understood that this information described on the associated plan drawing is not a detailed proposal, but more a series of ideas and suggestions to aid community involvement, participation and feedback. The ideas have been put together with best value in mind ie. earthworks envisaged will be formed with a balance of 'cut and fill' operations where excavated materials will stay on site. New installations have been placed where functionally best suited to them ie. sporting areas on level ground where existing tree roots are not compromised.

The centrally situated events space is aimed at being a space where many community occasions can take place, music, celebration etc, and will be formed to be porous but robust enough to carry and accept occasional heavy traffic. The surrounding circular 'ride' can also be used in many ways, sporting, exercise, promenade and recreation for all. Suggestions have also been made on the plan for uses (seasonal pop up café) that might start to generate funding that could be put towards upkeep and future enhancement of the open space.

Sporting functions have been arranged along the Adderley Road boundary where the space relatively level and is at present not compromised by existing tree roots. This area might also take advantage of the available light by containing future educational horticultural 'grow your own' plots which may be used by the school and or as community allotment gardens. There is also potential for this boundary to be planted with community orchard tree species to help contain this edge and screen the adjacent industry.

Though there are existing trees on site there is potential for a new tree planting program to enhance the species available and provide more interest to the park user. The existing ground plain could be far more diverse and interesting to include more varied habitats such as wildflower meadows, shrub thickets, reed beds and bulb underplanting. Some areas could contain wetter habitats such as 'swales' and ponds fed from the surrounding hard surfaces to enrich wildlife and to enable school use and investigation.

Community involvement. It is understood that there has been some extensive work carried out which looks into raising funds for use by the park through grant aid and some of the applications have been successful in getting finance for future landscape projects. The next stage is to circulate this masterplan information out to as many interested parties as possible and to feed back comments and ideas from the neighbourhood. This will be carried out through a variety of channels and might be organised and collated by engaging a community officer employed specifically to act as intermediary and facilitator for the open space.

This process with the aid of the park 'friends' group, ASFAP may hopefully support a series of fund-raising applications to facilitate actual work packages on site. It is also hoped that a possible park volunteer program can be established to help with the future enhancement and maintenance of the open space.

Once we have a clear consensus on a way forward, we can start to look at manageable packages of work that can be implemented by appropriate experienced contractors and actual physical works can be gradually installed to improve the facilities for all park users.

There is a great deal of potential for Birmingham's oldest park, please do get involved.

James O'Sullivan, Landscape Practice Group