

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Environment Committee 17 November 2022
SUBJECT:	Bersted Country Park Project
LEAD OFFICER:	Philippa Dart, Director of Environment and Communities / Joe Russell-Wells, Group Head of Environment and Climate Change
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr David Edwards
WARDS:	Bersted Ward
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The Bersted Country Park project will implement the council's vision that aims to provide infrastructure that supports wellbeing, through easily accessible and safe greenspace, and encourage our community to embrace healthy and active lifestyles. It will also deliver the environment theme of the vision which aims to protect and enhance our natural environment, while considering climate change and biodiversity.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: The Bersted Country Park project sits within the Environment and Communities Directorate plan.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: A sum of £320k has been included in the capital programme to create a country park in Bersted. The allocation was agreed by the Environment Committee on 20 January 2022 and approved by Full Council on 23 February 2022. Project costs will include professional fees to prepare plans for the scheme and capital works to implement the proposals.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report provides detail of the scope of the Bersted Country Park project and seeks approval for the project proposal.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to:

1. Approve the scope of the Bersted Country Park project set out in Appendix 1.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 This report provides detail on the project to be undertaken in Bersted to create a Country Park and seeks approval for the scope of the project. The council is procuring the services of a landscape consultant to advise on and produce a masterplan for public consultation.

4. DETAIL

4.1 Budget Approval

A report presented to the Environment Committee on 20 January 2022 proposed that a sum of £320K budget be included in the planned Capital Programme to create a Country Park in Bersted. Committee agreed the proposed funding which was ratified by Full Council on 23 February 2022.

4.2 Background

It is proposed to create a Country Park in North Bersted. This will comprise a total area of approximately 47 hectares of public open space land, in the ownership and management of Arun District Council.

The Country Park will incorporate the existing Bersted Brooks Local Nature Reserve (LNR – designated June 2010) located to the north of Aldingbourne Rife, and areas of public open space to the north and south of Rowan Way (A259) which was adopted from new development, formerly known as Site 6 Bersted. A plan of the area is included in Appendix 1.

4.3 Proposed Scope

The Project Proposal in Appendix 1 sets out the proposed scope for the project. The key design principle is to create a masterplan for Bersted Country Park and provide a natural area designated for local people to visit and enjoy recreation in a countryside environment, whilst enhancing biodiversity. The masterplan proposals will create an identity for the Country Park as well as enabling access to improve the experience for visitors.

It is proposed that the Country Park masterplan will enable the following:

- Footpaths and off-road cycleways to improve accessibility and connectivity
- Opportunities for habitat improvements (trees and shrubs, grassland, aquatic)
- Site furniture (e.g. seating, bins, signage)
- Management of water bodies
- Natural play provision

4.4 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement will be carried out to obtain initial views and feed into the design proposals. Following this a public consultation will be carried out on the concept design masterplan.

There are various key stakeholders who will have an interest in the proposed Country Park and will be invited to give their views on the emerging designs.

4.5 External Resources /Procurement

The Council is procuring the services of a landscape consultant to support the council to deliver the project. The consultant services will include:

- Review survey and site information, identify gaps in survey information and produce a plan for stakeholder engagement.
- Conduct engagement with stakeholders and obtain initial views for input into the proposed design and prepare a draft concept masterplan for public consultation.
- Produce a final concept plan following public consultation, with management and maintenance requirements.

As well as local stakeholders the consultant will need to work with appropriate environmental and technical bodies including the Environment Agency and Natural England where relevant interests overlap with the Country Park.

4.6 Programme

The following table sets out the expected work programme:

Consultant appointment, stakeholder engagement	Autumn - Winter 2022
Masterplan design, public consultation	Winter - Spring 2023
Final masterplan, tender process	Spring - Summer 2023
Delivery	Summer 2023 onwards

A further report will be presented to the Environment Committee to present the concept design masterplan.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to seek input to the masterplan design, followed by public consultation on the concept design masterplan.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

1. To approve the recommendations as set out in the report.
2. To not approve the recommendations and delay the commencement of the project, therefore risking allocated funding.

7. COMMENTS BY THE INTERIM GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.2 The Financial Summary states a sum of £320k is included in the approved capital programme for 2022/23. Paragraph 4.6 states that project delivery will be during summer 2023. The capital programme will therefore be revised to show the £320k in 2023/24.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The risk log (see Appendix 1) sets out potential risks which may impact the project.
- 8.2 A risk assessment and method statement will be produced by the Principal Designer and the project will be delivered in accordance with the Construction, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations 2015.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 Additional revenue funding approved by Full Council on 23 February 2022 will contribute to the future management of the Country Park.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 The project will be delivered in accordance with the Construction, Design and Management (CDM) regulations 2015. Risks will be considered by the project team and consultants during design phase, and health and safety will be managed by the Principal Designer during the construction works.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 The Council will retain responsibility for the completed Country Park. The project will result in improvements to council assets as well as additional maintenance obligations.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

- 13.1 The provision of the Bersted Country Park will help to improve the social and environmental well-being of the district, and tackle health inequality by providing a good quality greenspace that is accessible free of charge for the whole community.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

- 14.1 Environmental Sustainability will be addressed at design stage to ensure that the Council reduces its carbon footprint, its impact on the environment and the use of natural resources. Contractors will be required to provide evidence of their environmental sustainability policies, including any carbon impact footprints, and demonstrate how these will be applied/reduced on the project.
- 14.2 The scheme will provide a natural area designated for local people to visit and enjoy recreation in a countryside environment and improve their mental health and well-being. In addition, the scheme will enhance biodiversity and make improvements to flora and fauna. Additional visitors from the local area and further afield will help to improve the economic status of the area. The proposed open space improvements offer the opportunity to build a stronger community so that local people have more confidence in their local services.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 15.1 Improvements to the open space for leisure and recreation will help to discourage crime associated with anti-social behaviour (ASB). Encouraging greater use of a well-maintained open space will allow the community to take ownership from the minority who may misuse the site. The presence of local custodians with a greater sense of responsibility will act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour.
- 15.2 Improvements to site design and layout will create open views and clear sight lines and are a reassurance to users that the site is safe. Regular scheduled maintenance of trees, hedgerows, bushes and brambles should assist with this and not create areas that are hidden from view, which could encourage ASB to develop.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

- 16.1 The proposed scheme fulfils the freedoms and rights within the Human Rights Act 1998. There are no negative implications in terms of human rights impacts.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

- 17.1 There are no specific Freedom of Information or Data Protection issues arising from the proposals in the report.
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CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Rachel Alderson

Job Title: Principal Landscape & Project Officer

Contact Number: 01903 737946

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[Environment Committee - 20 January 2022, Item 579](#)

[Full Council Meeting - 23 February 2022, Item 681](#)