

Consultation on Proposed Improvements to Histon Road Recreation Ground - Supplementary Information

Introduction

This is a Cambridge City Council EIP (Environmental Improvement Programme) funded project for biodiversity and amenity improvements to Histon Road Recreation Ground. Bounded by Histon Road, Canterbury Street and Richmond Road. This is an established green space for play, sport, socialising, and nature in Castle Ward, and has an area of approximately 1.8 hectares.

The improvements aim to enhance the value of Histon Road Recreation Ground for people and biodiversity; to provide interest and learning opportunities and wider amenity for users; and to protect and enhance habitat for wildlife.

The purpose of consultation is to encourage local communities to get involved - through feeding back your views and asking questions about the proposed improvements. Your voices will help the City Council to gauge local interest and respond to your feedback to shape the proposal further. We welcome your opinions and suggestions: they will help us to understand the level of local support and identify desirable alterations to the proposal.

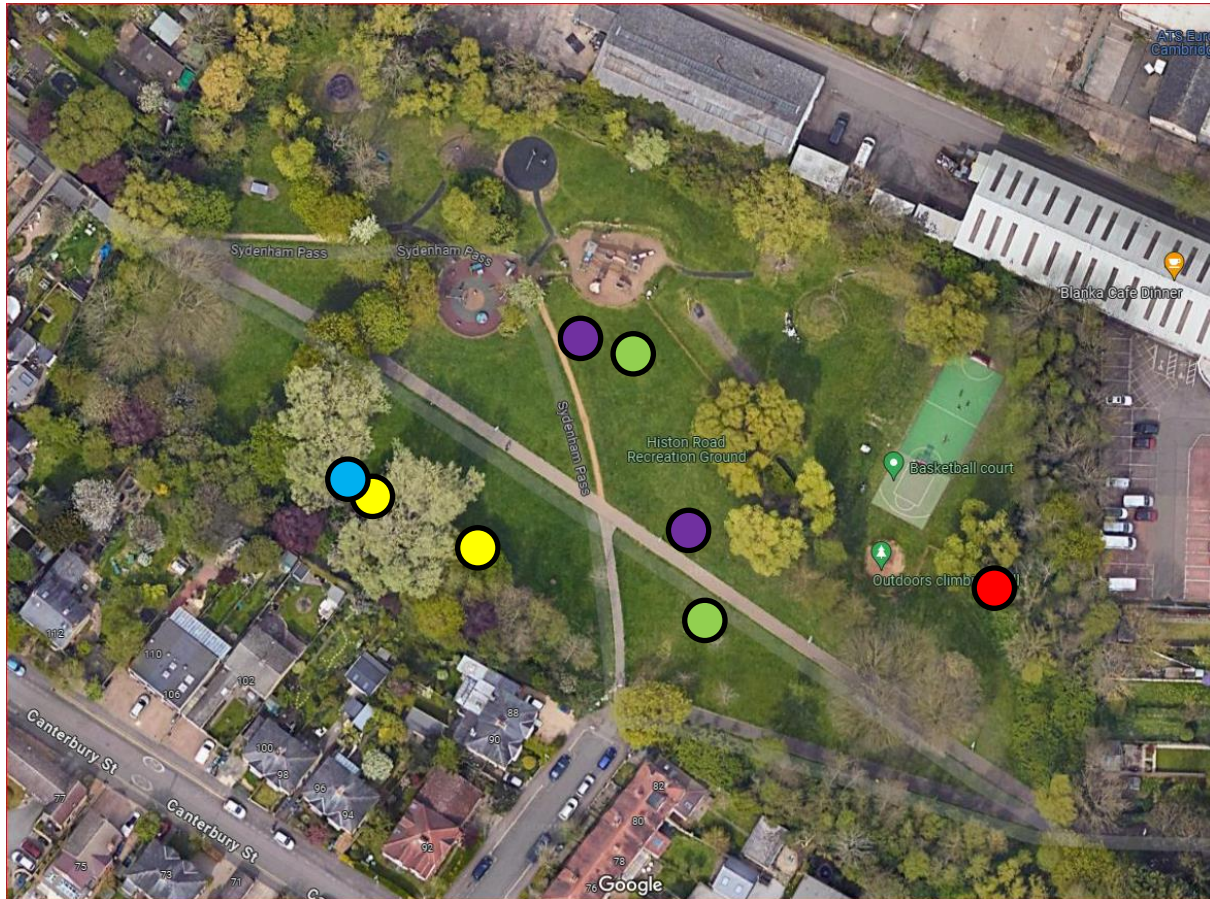
The biodiversity improvements have been considered in the context of the whole recreation ground (the rec) and the existing amenity it offers to residents and visitors. So, at present they focus mainly on the fringes, outside the mown area, to avoid encroaching valuable amenity space and opportunity for play.

As the proposed planting and other habitat features settle into their environment, they are expected to provide a rich and diverse habitat improvement for local wildlife, encouraging a variety of species and so raising the value of the rec and surrounding area for people and biodiversity.

The proposed amenity enhancements are expected to offer visitors better access and more opportunities to utilise and enjoy the space.

The Proposal

The image below illustrates the proposed locations for a bee bank (red dot), a fern garden (yellow dot), a log pile (blue dot), picnic-table benches (green dot), and cycle parking (purple dot), as described below.



Biodiversity improvements

Various interventions will be made, and the results will help inform future management

Bee bank

We propose to install a bee bank sown with wildflower seeds on the eastern side of the Rec. This area is open to sunlight and suited to this type of habitat. The works would include cutting back the existing cow parsley and installing a log frame. We would source local logs where possible. A bund made from a sandy soil mix would encourage solitary bees and other invertebrates to nest.



A good location for a bee bank.

With low nutrient value in a sunny spot the bund would be ideal for establishing a mixed native wildflower meadow. Wildflowers are an important habitat for pollinators and other invertebrates. They provide cover, shelter, and a valuable food source for birds, bees, and butterflies. Wildflowers would bring a vibrant display of colour and fragrance adding seasonal interest for visitors.

To be clear, the proposal for a wildflower meadow here is in addition to the recent wildflower meadow established near Richmond Road end.

Fern garden

On the southern side of the rec, we propose to see if we can establish a thriving fern garden within a shady, cool, and damp area beneath the tree canopies near the Canterbury Street entrance. This location has little ground cover for wildlife and provides a promising site for ferns because they do well in places with low light levels and moist ground conditions.

There is currently little opportunity for other planting to succeed in such sites. Ferns provide microhabitats for small animals, offering shelter, shade, and a valuable food source for aphids, whiteflies, grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars, snails and slugs, for example.



A good spot for a fern garden.

Log pile

Also on the southern side, very near the Fern Garden, we propose to use locally felled timber to create a log pile around an existing section of tree trunk which is decaying and beginning to form an important micro-habitat for wildlife. As the timber continues to decay and rot away, it will provide food and nurseries for insects, allow fungi to flourish, and recycle nutrients back into the soil.

We also propose a second fern garden to be planted near the log pile.



An ideal location to establish a more substantial deadwood habitat.

Planting

We propose to plant a meandering line of geraniums straddling the margins of the mown area, in front of the trees on the southern side of the rec, between the Canterbury Street and Richmond Road entrances

A mix of hardy geraniums and seasonal bulbs would do well here. They would provide cover, shelter, and an important food source for birds, bees, and butterflies; and a vibrant display of colour, fragrance, and seasonal interest for visitors.

We would welcome your suggestions for other suitable planting options, including suitable spring flowering plant varieties, and - deeper behind the grass cutting line - lavender, and wild berry producing shrubs that provide food for wildlife in winter.



Site for planting geraniums and other species along and beyond the grass cutting line in front of the trees.

Nest boxes

We propose to install a range of bat roost boxes and bird nest boxes in mature trees. These would replace existing boxes in some cases.

Information Boards

We propose to erect two signs near to the improved areas: one near the proposed bee bank, the other near the fern garden and log pile. These would provide educational opportunities for visitors of all ages and would be visible by people approaching from either side.

The boards will include information about the planned habitat improvements, and notes on species of plants and animals to be seen locally. According to the size and detail included on the boards, local school groups will be encouraged to use them as gathering points for learning and drawing, for example.

Amenity Improvements

We propose three timber picnic table-benches, two near the children's play area, and one close to the central path through the rec. At present there are a few standard benches, but table-benches will provide better opportunities for sitting, relaxing, and enjoying the green space over a picnic, and will facilitate more social interaction.

We also propose two cycle parking areas each comprising up to four stainless or galvanized steel Sheffield style cycle stands on concrete foundations: one near the children's play area, and one close to the central path. Both will be on or very near paths so that they can be ridden up to, and they will include crossbars so that both adult and child bikes can be parked and locked securely.