



people spaces places

Sandwell Green Space Strategy

Friends Forum/Community Drop-In Session

Issue number: 1

Status: DRAFT

Date: 06 March 2019

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1 Introduction

As part of the development of the Green Space Strategy for Sandwell. A number of workshops and consultation processes were delivered to identify key issues and to inform the development of proposals.

A drop in session was held at West Bromwich Town Hall on Thursday 28 February between 3.30 pm and 7.30 pm. Invitations were sent out to a mailing list comprising of friends groups, sports user groups, residents associations and other community based organisations with an interest in Sandwell's green spaces. The event was also promoted on social media.

A total of 28 representatives from the following organisations were in attendance:

- 10 Acre Wood
- For Britain
- Friends of 10 Acre Wood
- Friends of Black Patch Park
- Friends of Haden
- Friends of Red House Park
- Friends of Sheepwash
- Friends of Sots Hole
- Friends of Tividale Park
- Friends of Victoria Park
- HCBL
- Hill Estate
- Libraries Friends
- Sandwell Councillors
- Sandwell Police IAU
- Sandwell Skidder
- Sandwell T INS
- Save Lion Farm Fields

- SMBC Urban Design
- SUPS
- Sutton Football League
- Warley District Sunday LGE
- WDSL

Participants were invited to visit a number of tables or 'stations' around the main hall. At each station there was a task or question that participants were invited to complete.

This report is a record of the consultation event and the discussion and comments made by participants. As such the comments will inform the future strategy, but they do not necessarily reflect Sandwell Council's current and future position.

2 Comments and Findings

2.1 Station 1 – The Value of Green Space

Participants were invited to record on sticky notes why their green space was important to them or their group. The comments are recorded below:

| Site/Organisation | Comments |
|--------------------------|--|
| 10 acre wood, Wednesbury | The small wood is a haven for wildlife, which then visit our gardens |
| Black Patch Park | Tourism, Football, Sport, Forest School, Ecology, (Fresh Housing?) |
| General | Plan routes that link green spaces for pleasant walk |
| General | Sandwell health indices for health and wellbeing are some of the worst in the country. Asthma/COPD and other issues have contributed to an increase in deaths. |
| General | Air pollution in Sandwell is not given proactive methods to reduce Need more free planting |
| General | We are losing too much of our spaces to development. This does not bode well for the future |
| General | Our green space is important ultimately because it is "our" green space |

| Site/Organisation | Comments |
|-------------------|---|
| General | We have brown field sites a plenty and these should be used not green spaces. Green spaces/trees give us all hope for our future generations. |
| General | More designation of sites for wildlife such as former 'Duport's Tip' adjacent to Rattlechain -Oldbury |
| General | Greenspaces are the lungs of urban environment. We all need space to breathe freely. |
| General | Family time, mental health, safety, wellbeing |
| General | A lot of money has been spent on exercise equipment in our parks which is not being maintained, wear tear, safety |
| General | Groups of grass moderate the local environment and look nice |
| General | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mental health 2) Physical health 3) Intergenerational meeting (informal) 4) Help build community 5) Wildlife |
| General | Green space is important as it helps reduce pollution which is a major issue in Sandwell. I have concern in Great Barr levels of pollution and Oldbury |
| General | I have concerns with obesity levels in Sandwell which in adults + children are among the highest in country. Green space assists with exercise to reduce this |
| General | Mental health is far less in children who are brought up in the countryside. We therefore need to retain as much greenspace as possible to reduce levels of mental illness. |
| General | Sandwell suffers from high levels of air pollution, some of the worst in the west midlands, green spaces are vital to help combat this! |
| General | Green space is very important to the people of Cradley Heath. Without it there would be nowhere to walk and for children to play |
| General | People in Sandwell suffer high levels of poverty. It is important that green space is within walking distance of people's homes as finance does not permit long journeys |
| General | Trees are important in Sandwell due to high pollution levels we need more trees to combat pollution |
| General | Clear links to good mental health; clean spaces/free for all to use; Sandwell has a low % per head of green open spaces. |
| General | Green space is important so that young children have a place to play. Most homes in Sandwell lack spacious |

| Site/Organisation | Comments |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | gardens for children so we need to retain and increase green space |
| General | Children need to have access to green spaces to express themselves and grow We lose our green spaces now they will not come back. |
| General | Green space is pleasing, calming and aesthetic Greenspaces contribute to good health and wellbeing Years of history has been invested in our trees. |
| Lion Farm Park | Needs to be preserved |
| Lion Farm Playing Fields | Sandwell has some of the highest levels of child obesity in the UK; looking 19 hectares of playing fields (at Lion Farm) can only make this worse |
| Lion Farm Playing Fields | Oldbury currently has just over the minimum (2.59) unrestricted greenspace hectares per 1000 people, if it loses Lion Farm Playing Fields it will have well below – about 2.16. Simply Unacceptable. |
| Lion Farm Playing Fields | Tividale/Oldbury does not have much green space we have to protect what we have. It's invaluable to the younger generation. Removal will have a negative impact. |
| Lion Farm Playing Fields - Oldbury | 1) Its free to use 2) Good for physical and mental health to have green space 3) 3 deprived area – needs children's free activity (Skate park, MUGA) |
| Red House Park | Important because it is surrounded by motorways and this green space is vital for good air quality for the local people. Our lungs! |
| Red House Park | Accessible to all and is sometimes the earliest contract some of our children have with fresh air, nature and a place to enjoy their childhood |
| Red House Park | Keeping the park for sports, football is important to us not only for organised games but for informal playing. |
| Red House Park | A gem of a park that I love and have done for the last 65 years since I first went there as a child. Oh the freedom to play! |
| Red House Park | Red House park lies between Sandwell, B'ham and Walsall and tends to be a bit forgotten but how can anyone forget or ignore this lovely open space. It has so much to offer. |
| Sheepwash nature reserve | Wildlife and biodiversity, peace and quiet, exercise in a natural setting |
| Sots Hole | Important to my group as it is a small woodland in the middle of housing and wildlife need somewhere to live as well as human |

| Site/Organisation | Comments |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Titford Pools | 1) Wildlife 2) Cycling/Dog walking 3) Fishing |
| Tividale Park | More funding is needed from local council to help improve Tividale Park |
| Victoria Park – West Smethwick | Not safe – dangerous dogs not on lead or muzzles. Too many incidents of families and children |
| Victoria Park Smethwick | Green space is important to people of Smethwick. Victoria Park without our Park we will not have events like Sandwell/Birmingham mega fireworks event. Families to bring their children to play. |
| Warley District Sunday League | Green space is vital to a healthy pastime with over 700 on Sundays |

2.2 Station 2 – Wishing Tree

Participants were invited to write up to 3 wishes for the next 10 years on colour coded luggage tags, these tags were then displayed on a tree so that they could be viewed by other participants:

- Red – For my group
- Yellow – for my green space
- Green – more general wishes

The following comments were recorded:

| Red - Your Group |
|--|
| Friends of Haden Hill Estate – Keep getting the green flag |
| At least continuation of the green spaces we have today |
| Friends of 10 acre woods Encouragement of wildlife in this area of Wednesbury. Provision of quiet place for relaxation and contemplation of nature |
| WDSL – Football is still an option in Sandwell |
| I hope my group will be able to not only save Lion Farm Playing fields from the concrete mixer, but fight to make the fields even more useful to the 'local community' |
| Equal opportunities for funding. Large amounts of funding are given to some parks whilst others are struggling to cash to improve their green spaces Regular tree maintenance and information about the trees in our green space so we can see how the area of the park is evolving. Continued improvement to our wood areas to encourage young and old to get out and enjoy a walk with nature! |
| Councillors should not be part of the organisation, they should support not coerce or influence |
| I would like to see more effective engagement with the public, friends groups and partners I would like to see green space used to generate income in the Borough e.g. more events. |
| Friends of Tividale Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A community hub - Facilities for families and schools - A football field with changing facilities for local under 16's team |
| Friends of Sheepwash nature reserve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More members - Better funding opportunities |

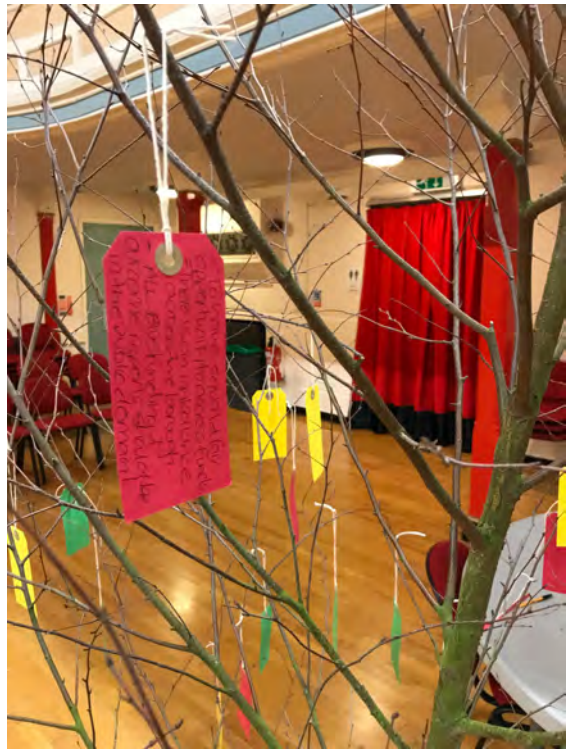
| |
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| To have equal and fair opportunities for access to funding There is an imbalance across the borough All bids/funding and outcome reports should be in the public domain |
| To maintain interest and encourage more group participation |
| Green spaces well utilised by local communities following free and inclusive engagement |
| To be free of political influence and bias Labour clearly control and influence too many groups |
| Essex avenue TRA |
| Hatley Cross Big Local |
| Black Patch Park |

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| Yellow – Your Green Space |
| The population is growing in Sandwell. I would like to see an increase in green space to accommodate the growing population. I would like to see developments only concentrated on brownfield sites. I would like to see all our green spaces have green flags as this is a mark of quality. |
| Haden Park – Dogs on leads, less dog fouling |
| Parks – open spaces and grass verges should be preserved |
| Integration of all school of local green spaces community allotments |
| True community ownership – not governed by idealistic cabinet members |
| “Fields in trust” to be held to account when fields are given to developers |
| Green spaces, woods, SINC, SLINC etc to be maintained preserved and improved where possible Study wildlife, trees and create promotional material to make more aware of the precious space, trees and nature areas we have. |
| More regular maintenance of our parkland, flowerbeds and trees. We’re aiming for green flag status so need more council commitment in aiding us to achieve this. Public toilet is much needed and requested. Boundary fencing for when the park is closed at night to prevent anti-social behaviour Dog fouling offenders to be accountable and dog controls to be enforced. |
| Reformat golf to make economic and so help maintain their beautiful facilities Could have cycle track etc within boundaries and paths Driving rangers seem to make money? |
| Friends of 10 Acre Wood – maintain the space as buffer zone in the urban area |
| 1 – Somerset green 2 – Kesteven green 3 – ‘Milky’ millpool 4 – Marsh Lane 5 – Denbigh Drive |

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| Green space to be fully protected and not a temporary "protection" put on it that can be removed should developers want the land Re: "Fields in Trust" |
| Lion Farm, currently under threat of being redeveloped. The hope is for the space to remain untouched and lots of green space meetings take place. |
| I hope Lion Farm Playing Fields will still be used by Warley & District Football League in 10 years' time, and turned into a green space for the whole community |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Somerset green 2) Kesteven Green |
| <p>Titford Pools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 – Visitor Centre 2 – Trim Trail 3 – Flat field (no bogs) 4 – bar facilities |
| That maintenance will be increased so as unsociable behaviour doesn't move back. |
| <p>Community of people</p> <p>Community of interest (sports, ecology)</p> <p>Black Patch park</p> |
| <p>Friends of Sheepwash Nature Reserve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection from development - Protection of nature/wildlife corridors - Visitors centre - Better management/bye-laws and protection |
| <p>Lion Farm playing fields</p> <p>Skate Park</p> <p>MUGA</p> <p>Cinema</p> <p>Homeless Shelter</p> |
| Clear advice training and guidance for the voluntary sector – no cost |

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| Green - General |
| Everyone should be able to walk to and between green spaces without having to travel by car |
| Your political advancement is not the most important thing to us |
| WDSL – where will Lion Farm be in 2 years??? |
| Use green space to reduce pollution increase health reduce obesity. If grants for green space are obtained, other factors to be look at e.g. anti-social behaviour. Its no use just 'doing np' assets if they are then vandalised. |
| The council if they decide to put green space in trust via Fields in Trust it needs to stay in trust. |
| Your political advancement is not the most important thing to us (not a repeat of |

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| above) |
| There is far too much politics in community matters. Communities, orgs and groups should be heard and listened to! |
| That sots hole will continue to be available for residents and visitors to always use |
| Regular council involvement with the green spaces they own. Regular maintenance. Don't run green spaces as 'business' – use common language that we can all identify with. Together we can make our green spaces great spaces. |
| Green space is invaluable it has major impact on individual well-being next 10 years the focus needs to be on preservation not redevelopment. |
| I hope SMBC will stop selling off vital greenspaces to developers. |
| The health and wellbeing of everyone living and working here depends on it |
| Black Patch park – to maintain the biodiversity that currently thrives and be the hub of regular football activity |
| Free use of parks and continued facilities we have today |
| Londonderry playing fields new swimming pools needs to be promoted in the community to be fused for healthy options offers for family use. |
| Listen – you are not in charge |
| Listen – you are not in charge (not a repeat of above) |
| More money to be given to Victoria Park to promote family events |
| If consultation events are put on, invites should go out to ALL, not the cliques and groups that agree to the political group in council |
| We hope we can get more people involved, have more gardeners, dogs on leads. |



2.3 Station 3 – Additional Funding Options

Participants were invited to rate / score a number of statements about possible additional funding sources for green spaces. The statements were taken from the State of UK Parks Research carried out in 2016. The findings of the national research are included below for comparison.

| Source of Funding | Sum of Ratings (max 100) | Average Rating (1=not supportive, 5=very supportive) |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| Greater external funding from sources such as National Lottery | 90 | 4.5 |
| More sponsorship of green spaces by businesses e.g. planting areas and facilities | 75 | 3.75 |
| More funding from planning and local development e.g. contributions from new housing | 77 | 3.85 |
| Greater fundraising by local communities and green spaces user groups | 63 | 3.15 |
| More commercial use of green spaces e.g. ticketed events, fairs and shows | 57 | 2.85 |
| Increased charges for green space facilities e.g. tennis courts and car parks | 35 | 1.75 |

Other comments provided are recorded below:

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| More sponsorship of green spaces by businesses e.g. planting areas and facilities |
| As long as they don't take control |
| Good funding opportunity |
| More funding from planning and local development e.g. contributions from new housing |
| As long as housing does not encroach on green spaces and is distributed fairly |
| Localised ring-fenced |
| Ring fenced to area |
| Yes as they would use the park more |
| Funds going to the green spaces local to the development |
| Greater fundraising by local communities and green spaces user groups |
| Free of political coercion |
| With appropriate support |
| Depends on how much help the groups can get |

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| More commercial use of green spaces e.g. ticketed events, fairs and shows |
| As long as area is not 'protected' and full cleans is sorted |
| At larger showgrounds |
| As long as it does not have an adverse effect on the park |
| Sometimes this can damage the environment of green spaces it's trying to help |
| Increased charges for green space facilities e.g. tennis courts and car parks |
| Sandwell has mainly low-income families would exclude them from their local activities |
| Could exclude some families because of cost |

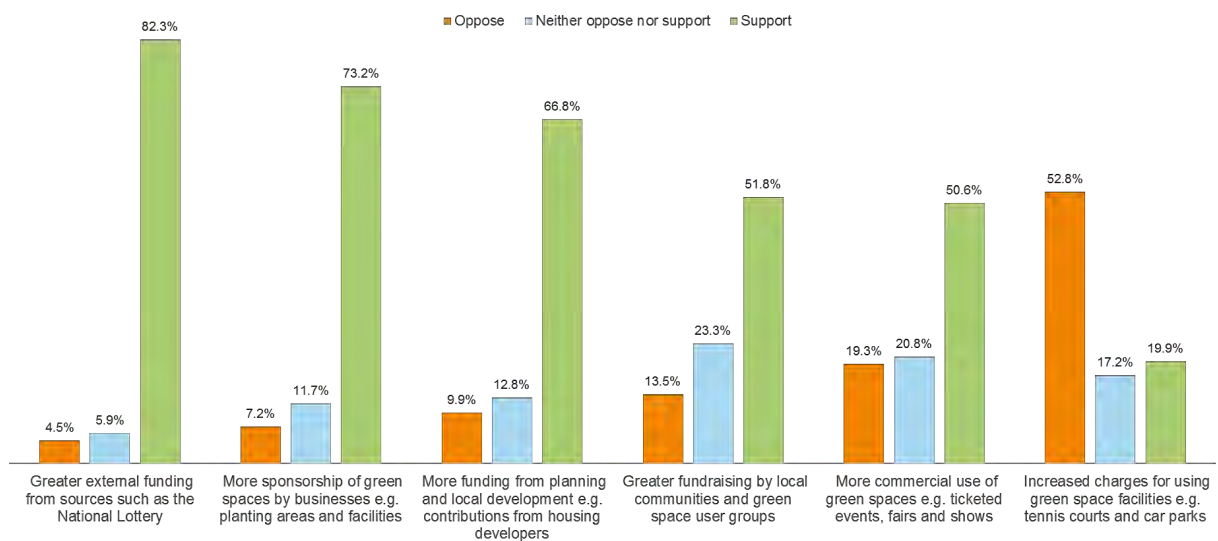


Figure 1 – Results from the State of UK Parks Research 2016

2.4 Station 4 – Priorities for Management, Maintenance & Development

Participants were invited to score the priorities for Management, Maintenance & Development in order to gain an insight into future priorities that the strategy may need to consider. The results are recorded below:

| Management | Sum of Ratings | Average Rating (1=not important, 5=very important) |
|---|----------------|--|
| Managing Health, Safety and Site security | 78 | 4.59 |
| Monitoring maintenance standards | 75 | 4.41 |
| Financial Management | 77 | 4.28 |
| Managing facilities and events | 70 | 3.89 |
| Writing management plans | 61 | 3.59 |
| Setting fees and charges | 54 | 3 |

| Maintenance | Sum of Ratings | Average Rating (1=not important, 5=very important) |
|---|----------------|--|
| Removal of graffiti, litter and fly tipping | 80 | 4.44 |
| Maintenance of paths and hard surfaces | 78 | 4.33 |
| Maintaining play, youth and sports structures | 77 | 4.28 |
| Maintenance of flowers, plants and trees, | 75 | 4.17 |
| Grass Cutting | 72 | 4 |
| Maintenance of buildings and structures | 72 | 4 |

| Development | Sum of Ratings | Average Rating (1=not important, 5=very important) |
|---|----------------|--|
| Making improvements to support and encourage wildlife | 84 | 4.67 |
| Developing community and partner led initiatives | 78 | 4.33 |
| Developing volunteering | 75 | 4.17 |
| Educational programmes | 73 | 4.06 |
| Developing activities and events | 71 | 3.94 |
| Marketing and promotion | 66 | 3.67 |

2.5 Station 5 – Your Views

Participants were invited to record any other comments:

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|--|
| Green space is a must for our health in Sandwell and events and parks need to be promoted more e.g. walking groups |
| There is little point in having a strategy for green spaces, if you continue to ignore it, and simply sell off any that can make a good profit for the council. (Lion Farm Playing Fields) |
| Help out wildlife – dog attacks are not natural. If caught the dog owners should be prosecuted |
| The pools need to be cleaned and maintained more often |
| Last strategy based on 2001 census. We have had a major increase in population in most wards. Please be aware of this. |
| Green space needs to be integrated into our streets and buildings to combat pollution |
| More wardens on patrol more often in the park to keep an eye on dog fouling. |
| 1 - Charging for fishing 2 - Protection of wildlife 3 - No culling of wildlife 4 - Bye-laws for all nature reserves |
| More designation of nature reserve sites LNRS etc |
| As a tree is removed – replace it with similar |
| We need green spaces. Its free. 1 - Physical and mental health benefits 2 - Retain wildlife 3 – Residents to be sent notification – not advertise on a board that not everyone sees |
| To be told about things before they happen, not after |
| Golf course use is declining across the UK. Warley Woods golf course is ineconomic and always will be – it should be scrapped and the land returned to the general public. |
| Please at a minimum provide 4-24 hectares of green space per 1000 population. 5 of 6 towns are probably below this marker now |
| The last strategy did not include allotments. I feel these need to be included |
| We were promised that 14 green spaces would have green flag by 2020. My records indicate 8 at most. If you have a strategy it needs to be kept to otherwise it becomes worthwhile |
| What about consideration of sites for Romani and travelling communities? |
| Since the gates have been left open, Barnford Hill Park has become a 'hot bed' of drug use, particularly in Spring/Summer. Drug dealers threaten people and someone will get |

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| <p>badly hurt soon if this is allowed to continue.</p> <p>The previous park keeper left his job due to regular threats of violence from drug pushers, who in their words 'are taking over the park now'</p> |
| <p>Ensure byelaws that are in place for some nature areas are applied to all green spaces, parks and nature reserves.</p> |
| <p>What is the future of Warley Woods? Will the council take it on?</p> |
| <p>Maintain and use our historical features which are part of our green spaces. Be proud of what we have.</p> |
| <p>Public liability insurance ought to be a blanket cover for all community groups or council give third party cover for group</p> |
| <p>There is no clear tree replacement policy. This needs to be done.</p> |
| <p>Population has risen. Housing Needs will rise. We therefore need to ensure green space is sufficient for population.</p> <p>National Planning Guidance has changed but the old planning guidance PGG IY gave sound planning guidance</p> |
| <p>Woodland walking is good for mental health and wellbeing</p> |
| <p>Make available details of all monies and funding opportunities available to all.</p> |
| <p>Make available for download without cost to the community, maps and information pertinent to green space</p> |
| <p>The population aged 60+ in Sandwell is expected to increase by 30.9% I understand. Please take account of this when working at the strategy.</p> |
| <p>Lock park gates at night to help prevent anti-social behaviour: This behaviour deters our park visitors from spending time in the park</p> |
| <p>More activities which involve community engagement. Clear communication regarding redevelopment being allowed to participate in consultation</p> |
| <p>Tree planting is important and we need a management plan for this</p> |
| <p>Please enforce bye-laws e.g. dog control, pollution of waterways from external sources.</p> |
| <p>Full community involvement and engagement. Full proper and proportional consultation</p> |
| <p>Litter bins emptied regularly – they are sometimes missed – littering encourages littering – and vermin!</p> |