

## Friends of Marple Memorial Park response to Community Hub Consultation

**What do you think of the spaces included in the hub, is there anything else you'd like to see or something you think shouldn't be there?**

The Police Station should be removed from the site whether the Police choose to be integrated within the new Community Hub facility or not. The Police Station is not open to the public and there is no real benefit for it being in this location and occupying space that would be better used to enhance the new community facility, even if it is just improved parking. The Police have formally closed the station in the past and we have seen no noticeable benefit from it being reopened again - it hasn't improved policing of the park for example. The building is also old, unsightly and occupies prime space.

The Scout Hut should also be removed / replaced and the Scouts suitably compensated with equivalent or better accommodation, see more comments later.

We note that there seem to be a lot of comments from swimmers and swimming pool users that the pool provision is too small. The extent of these comments is a concern.

**What do you think about the site location?**

The location is probably the best available within Memorial Park, although it is a surprise that the field running parallel with Station Road was not one of the sites considered.

Why is this? Is it worth considering it before committing to an option?

Was the Recreation Ground considered and what was the outcome of that?

**Woodland wildlife area behind the library:** In our previous comments we were keen that the existing woodland wildlife area behind the library should be retained and not built on. We note that this has not been achieved with any of the options and the loss of the woodland behind the library is the biggest downside of this location.

This will destroy the Reading Circle created by our BBC Breathing Spaces Project begun in 2007. Friends of the Park have invested significantly in this area since the project was launched with a £6,460 Big Lottery Grant, including a recent investment of £985 in 2019 for refurbishment of the circle and pathway. A huge number of volunteer hours have been invested in this area to maintain and plant it too. We were considering the addition of Bee Hives and proposing to reinstall the wooden sculpture recently removed.

We feel that a new woodland wildlife area of at least the same size as will be lost should be created within the park. If possible this should be on part of the existing built area, such as around the site of the Clinic, to result in no nett loss of green space.

This could be coupled with the extension of existing wildlife areas to create better wildlife corridors. Bee Hives should be incorporated too if possible. Transfer of as many trees, plants, shrubs and bulbs as possible should also be included in the new scheme.

Friends of the Park would be pleased to work with the council and their representatives toward these aims and work out how best to compensate for the loss of green space.

**The Diamond Jubilee Flowerbed and Metal Art Sculpture:** in front of Marple Library was created by Friends of Marple Memorial Park and funded by the local community. We were forced to obtain full planning permission to build it in this location too.

In the event of a new Community Hub being built on the site of the existing library and rear portion of Hollins House, the location of the flowerbed and sculpture will be built over. If proposals were to go ahead, we would wish for the flowerbed, sculpture and lectern display to be relocated to a new site within the park.

In view of the fact that we were forced to submit a planning application to the council to create this feature, we would like the Community Hub Project to include the relocation to a new site within their own full planning application please.

We would also request that as the project was funded by the community, then any costs of undertaking the relocation be included in the Community Hub Project.

We would be pleased to meet with the council and their representatives to discuss the details of the relocation at an appropriate stage prior to a planning submission.

**Access to Tool Store and Mess Room:** Currently we share use of the former Bowling Pavilion with the council as a tool store and mess room. We also have shared access to the canopy area and our own storage room at the far end of the Bowlers Hut.

We are currently able to access the area (next to the Toilet Block) by vehicle to drop-off and pick-up plants, gardening materials and equipment from the store. The TLC workforce also use this area extensively for storage, access and parking of vehicles.

We are concerned that with the new Community Hub being built across the existing access to this area (via the car park between the library and Hollins House), our vehicular access to the store, and that of TLC operatives, will be severely restricted.

Can the council and representatives identify how this will be overcome please?

### **What do you think about the three options and do you have a preference?**

We do not like how Option 1 neglects to use Hollins House. We hope it will not be the case but if only the Core Brief was to be undertaken we would like to see Hollins House still used in a similar way to Options 2 and 3 and the size of the new building reduced accordingly. This should enable less of the woodland to be built upon.

We think this is an amazing opportunity to create a wonderful new all purpose Leisure and Community Hub facility for Marple. We would like to see the most made of this, even if it takes longer to achieve. If all of the existing old buildings in the park are not replaced by the new facilities then we think this will have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity missed. We therefore strongly prefer development of Option 3 with all the old community buildings, including the Police Station and Scout Hut, also removed.

We believe the Scout Hut should not remain as it breaks up the available space created by the removal of the other old community buildings. It would be better to offer the Scouts a new building elsewhere - perhaps on the site of the Senior Citizens Hall, or to offer them a refurbished Senior Citizens Hall building. This would maximise available space for the new scheme. If the offer to the Scouts was an improvement over what they have now and an investment for their future why would they refuse?

We are interested in the idea of moving the vehicular entrance to Parkfield Avenue and pedestrianising Memorial Park Drive in principle but have concerns about traffic issues being caused at the junction with Station Road. This needs careful consideration. We believe that Option 3 will still be possible using the existing park entrance. We wonder if an additional access via the car park on Hollins Lane could help and also possibly making

a one-way system with entrance to the park via Station Road and Hollins Lane with exit only onto Stockport Road via Memorial Park Drive.

### **Any further comments or ideas?**

We are very pleased to see that all 3 options include an improved Outdoor Playpark as we urged in our comments on the first round of consultations. This is a long-term aspiration of Friends of the Park and we would like to be involved in the design of this.

**The existing public toilets building:** is not shown on any of the Option plans. In early 2019 we worked with the council to develop a £28k costed plan to refurbish the existing Ladies and Gents Toilet Block and upgrade them to full disabled access. We had anticipated starting to seek funding for this in mid-2019 but while designs were being developed we learned of the potential project to create a Community Hub on the existing built area of the park. So the toilet refurbishment project was placed on hold after the design was agreed pending the outcome of the proposals for a Community Hub, as we would expect any new facilities to provide much better public toilets.

As part of the Community Hub we would wish to see public toilets fully and freely accessible to all park users. If viable we would prefer for the existing Toilet Block to be re-purposed for the benefit of the park, rather than demolished, and would be pleased to discuss opportunities for this. If a good use for the building could be agreed we would hope that this could be developed and funded alongside the Community Hub.

**Relocation of Samuel Oldknow's Memorial Plaque:** This project has been on our back-burner for many years. Samuel Oldknow was a major benefactor of Marple, being instrumental in the development of roads, canals, waterways, his mill at Mellor, housing and employment for his workers, local farming, the Lime Kilns and other canal buildings.

Samuel's marble memorial stone was originally erected with pride of place inside the old All Saints' Georgian chapel that he was the driving force in building. When the main body of the chapel was demolished in the late 1960s, Samuel's memorial was re-sited with several others inside the old church tower, which was retained to house the church bells. The tower is not accessible to the public and even with special permission to go inside, his plaque cannot be seen properly as it is sited under the stairs. It cannot be viewed head-on and furniture is usually stored in front of it. A very unsatisfactory situation.

In 2003 we approached the Parochial Church Council and obtained permission (subject to approval by the Chester Diocese) to relocate the plaque to the park entrance or other suitable prominent location in the town. However, after looking into the details we discovered that the plaque is made from a non-frost proof material that is not suitable for being situated outdoors. It was not possible to find a suitable indoor location at that time, so the project has been on long-term hold ever since.

We believe that the building of a new Community Hub in the park would present the perfect opportunity to resurrect this project and that Samuel's memorial plaque (and possibly some of the others) could be relocated to Hollins House, putting it on public display, where it deserves to be, for the first time in over 50 years.

We would be delighted to talk to the council and its representatives to examine the feasibility of doing this and to assist in the process should it prove to be viable.

**Drinking water fountain and bottle-filling station:** In mid-2019 we picked-up on new countrywide initiatives to reduce the consumption of plastic drinking bottles by seeking to provide a water fountain and bottle-filling station in the park. We developed plans

with the council's parks team and obtained prices of £800 to £1,000 for installation of a fountain and filling station on the external wall of the existing Toilet Block.

Although the parks team and local councillors were supportive of the idea we met with resistance from the Property Services Group. We discovered that Stockport Council were not up-to-speed with latest developments and have no existing drinking water facilities in any of their parks at this time. With new projects springing up throughout Greater Manchester, and with the support of local councillors, we intended to begin breaking down these barriers. However, after placing the Toilet Block refurbishment on hold due to the proposals for a possible Community Hub, we concluded that it would be wise to do the same with this project until more is known.

We hope that free access to drinking water and bottle-filling for park users can be provided by a new Community Hub facility.

**CCTV:** We are aware that there are two existing independent CCTV systems within the current park buildings: one covering the library internally and the other covering the exterior of Hollins House. The Friends group were instrumental in having an additional camera installed to the Hollins House system in 2015 to combat antisocial behaviour at the Bowling Green buildings. More recently we have successfully campaigned for the relocation of that camera to the front of the building to combat ASB at the skatepark.

We would be eager that CCTV design for the new building is fully developed during the conceptual and detailed proposals for the new Community Hub and we would like to see increased coverage of the car park, buildings and the wider features of the park as much as possible to increase the deterrent to antisocial behaviour within the whole park.

We would like to be consulted on the CCTV scheme specifically, as our volunteer work in the park gives us a significant insight into some of the anti-social behaviour ongoing.

**Front of Hollins House:** It would be very important to us that the WWI Timeline display on the railings at the front of Hollins House is retained and untouched. It has become a key permanent display in the park loved by the wider community.

**An area for Friends of the Park:** We will need access to a meeting room for our monthly meetings, which are currently held at the library. Maybe there could be an area for Friends of the Park? Or maybe a noticeboard for our use to engage with hub visitors?

**Outdoor Adult Exercise Equipment:** This is an addition to the park that we have been asked about many times by park users. We have submitted two grant applications in the past that have been unsuccessful and during more recent years we have put this idea on the back-burner due to our commitment and focus on the Skatepark Development Project. We would be eager to pursue future opportunities to add outdoor fitness equipment that can be used by all and wonder if this can be part of the new Hub too.

**Artefacts in Marple Library:** The Marple Website has loaned a number of heritage artefacts that are currently on display in the library. These include: Marple Hall Shutters; framed pictures of Marple Hall Glass; a large framed print of Marple Hall on the stairs; a watercolour of Oldknow's Warehouse and a framed photo of Harold Carver Barlow. If the library is to be demolished to make way for a new Community Hub, these items should be safely returned to Mark Whittaker of the Marple Website to arrange display elsewhere, or their relocation to the new hub agreed. It maybe more appropriate that they are displayed in the Wharf Marple building if that project is successful.