

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	21 NOVEMBER 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	DRAFT PALMER PARK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	PARK
LEAD OFFICER:	GIORGIO FRAMALICCO	TEL:	0118 9373604
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES	E-MAIL:	giorgio.framalicco@reading.gov.uk

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the draft Palmer Park Development Framework for public consultation.
- 1.2 The framework refers to the land within the area of Palmer Park defined by the railway line, London Road, St Bartholomews Road, Wokingham Road and Palmer Park Avenue. It was decided that a draft framework should be produced to provide a blue print for the future enhancement of the park incorporating the Council's ambition to provide a new swimming pool as part of the formal leisure offer. The draft framework has been produced by the Council (with the assistance of an urban design consultancy). Subject to approval by Committee, the draft framework will be published and will be the subject of a formal consultation exercise.

2. Recommended Action

- 2.1 That the Draft Palmer Park Development Framework (Appendix 3) be approved for community involvement.

2.2 That the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Framework in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to the start of community involvement on the draft document.

Appendix 1 - Extent of Palmer Park Framework Area

Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 - Draft Palmer Park Development Framework

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Palmer Park is an important green space serving East Reading's neighbourhoods as amenity and recreational space. The athletics stadium and velodrome have, as sporting venues, more regional and county wide importance. The park also serves as a location for local events such as fun fairs, circus and charity fundraising events.
- 3.2 The park was initially 21 acres from land donated to the town by the renowned biscuit company, Huntley and Palmers, in 1889. In 1891 it was extended to cover 49 acres, and fully opened in November of that year. It was designed by the architect William Ravenscroft.
- 3.3 Whilst the park has a number of well used facilities (the Stadium, Bowling Club and sports pitches), there are a number of underused facilities and spaces, particularly in the central zone. These have the potential to become attractive, vibrant spaces and successful facilities.
- 3.4 Planning policy for the future development of the area is provided in the current Local Development Framework and the emerging Reading Local Plan (Submission Draft Local Plan - approved by Committee in November 2017).
- 3.5 The Council's current Local Development Framework includes policies related to the loss of open space (Core Strategy Policy CS28), as does the emerging draft Local Plan, which recently went through examination. Draft Local Plan Policy EN7Ed deals with Palmer Park:

ER1j - PALMER PARK STADIUM AREA

Additional leisure development for a new swimming pool.

Development should:

- Demonstrate that car parking to be lost can be replaced on or off-site, or is no longer required;*
- Ensure that there is no adverse impacts on the use of the park and its sport and leisure facilities;*

- *Ensure that there is no adverse impact on the listed monument and its setting;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance; and*
- *Retain public rights of way across the site.*

Site size: 3.08 ha Approximately 1,000 sq m pool

- 3.6 The emerging Local Plan for Reading refers to the aspiration to update and improve Reading's indoor sports provision with the potential to:
- re-provide the Arthur Hill Swimming Pool at Palmer Park Stadium;
 - re-provide the Central Swimming Pool within the town centre catchment;
 - refurbish/extend Meadway; and,
 - refurbish other indoor sports centres to provide activities reflecting modern needs and demands.

It is expected that these facilities would support increased activity and various health initiatives.

- 3.7 The emerging planning policy provides a very broad basis for considering the future development of a site within the park. However a detailed framework would provide an opportunity to consider the park as a whole, taking into account the historic and community interest in the park and providing a 'whole park' vision. In addition to Policy ER1j (above) the emerging plan has relevant policies related to the local green space and public open space (EN7) and other relevant development management policies such as those related to design, parking, etc.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 While any development in the park would be governed by existing and emerging local plan policies, these are very high level and offer limited advice on how the park should be comprehensively developed in the future.
- 4.2 There is a need to ensure that the development of a pool at the park is seen in the context of the wider character of its surroundings; officers sought to encourage the preparation of a development brief to ensure that effective community engagement can be taken on the vision and that, subject to member approval, a formal brief is adopted for the site to guide future developments.

(b) Proposed Option

- 4.3 A draft development framework for the area has been prepared, with the assistance of Urban Place Labs, an urban design consultancy, in consultation with various parts of the Council including Property, Parks, Highways etc.
- 4.4 While the primary purpose of the framework is to provide a public realm led master plan for the area, showing how a pool could be accommodated on the site, it also provides some context in relation to the history of the park and its value as an important part of local community infrastructure.
- 4.5 The starting point for the framework has been a thorough understanding of the park's context and role and an analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the current park.
- 4.6 The draft framework focuses on key design drivers:
- Retain the character of the northern part of the park
 - Reinstating the heart of the park
 - Strengthening the active centre
 - Confluent paths and re-discovering historic links
 - Consolidating car parking
- 4.7 The draft framework provides options for the development of the proposed pool. Option 1 seeks to attach a new pool to the existing stadium building; Option 2 focuses on the principle of re-using the existing building and attaching the new pool uses onto the front. Both options are considered valid for consultation purposes.
- 4.8 The framework proposes a range of enhancements to the park. Critical to the design is the concept of providing a 'heart' to the park, an improved setting for the George Palmer statue, the provision of reinstated linear pedestrian routes and the proposed new car park area.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Adoption of the development framework will guide future development of the site in a way that will contribute to achieving the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan through:
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe.
 - Promoting great education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading

- 5.2 This development framework and the subsequent realisation of the proposals set out in the final framework will contribute to a key strategic aim to modernise leisure and cultural facilities and offer facilities to support well-being and health improvements. The proposals also seek to maintain and improve the public realm within the town's parks and open spaces.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, adopted March 2014), is that the widest community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document.
- 6.2 A formal consultation led by the Council is expected to begin in mid-December and will last for a period of ten weeks (to allow for the Christmas holiday period) until late February. Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft framework for adoption. The consultation will largely be based around making the document available for comment, although it is also expected to feature an exhibition/drop-in event.

7. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Scoping Assessment included at Appendix 2 identifies that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is relevant to this framework. The EqIA (also at Appendix 2) identifies that there are positive impacts for the protected characteristic of disability, as defined in the Equality Act, because any development would look to improve, where required, access for people with disabilities. It also identifies positive impacts for the protected characteristic of age, as there are principles about appealing to a wide range of people, with particular provision for people with young children. Compliance with the duties under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 can involve treating some persons more favourably than others, but it is not considered that there will be a negative impact on other groups with relevant protected characteristics.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. The framework will be published as a Supplementary Planning Document under the Planning Acts. It will be subject to statutory consultation and a requirement to take account of representations. It will be adopted by the Council and will hold weight in the determination of planning applications for any development that occurs at Palmer Park and can be used to seek external funding should opportunities arise.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The framework has been prepared within the resources of the Planning Section.
- 9.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive and there are limited funds to undertake such exercises. The Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs. Other more intensive forms of consultation or community involvement will be investigated as part of this consultation but can only be undertaken where resources are available.
- 9.3 The proposals set out in the framework require significant funds to fully realise, including the significant investment required to deliver a new pool facility. The Framework is a planning document to guide development; while funding could come from a number of sources including the Council, it is anticipated that a clear, adopted masterplan for the park would be helpful in seeking external funding should sources become available in the future.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 9.3 The preparation of a framework will ensure that future development proposals are appropriately guided and that significant effects are mitigated and that harmful effects are minimised. Production of a Supplementary Planning Document for Palmer Park is in line with best practice and therefore represents good value for money.

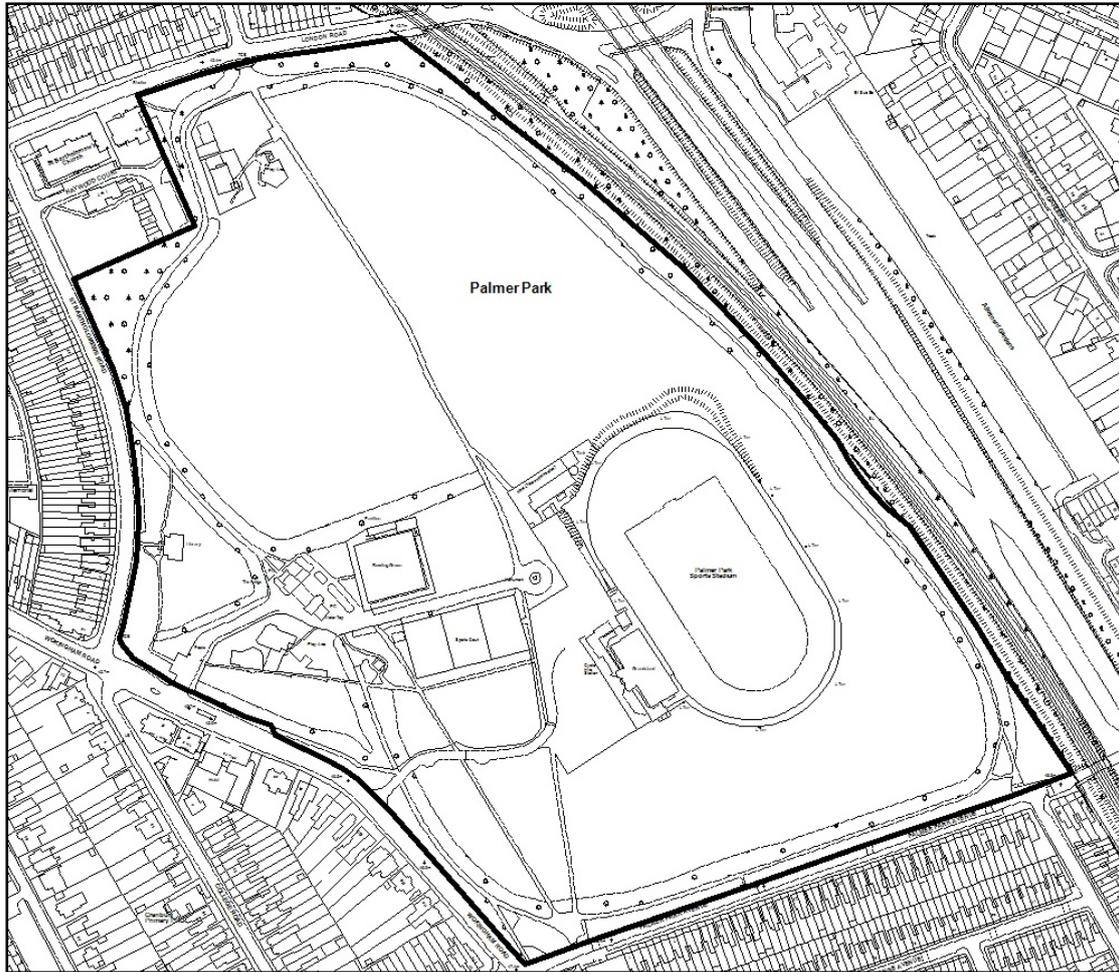
Risk Assessment

- 9.4 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- National Planning Policy Framework;
- Reading Borough Core Strategy;
- Draft Reading Borough Local Plan

APPENDIX 1:



Extent of Palmer Park Area

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APPENDIX 2: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

Draft Palmer Park Development Framework

Directorate: DENS - Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Planning, Development and Regulatory Services

Name: Giorgio Framalicco

Job Title: Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services

Date of assessment: November 18

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

To guide the development at and enhancement of Palmer Park

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The local community will benefit through the adoption of a framework which indicates how the park might develop subject to funding. The adoption of a clear vision may support bids for external funding. Ultimately the proposal seeks to improve the character of the park and the services and facilities available.

What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?

The outcome will be to secure a single vision for the park to support future enhancements and developments. Developments in line with the vision are intended to improve the park for the local community and other users.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

The local community, wider public and community groups, infrastructure providers. The public will want to ensure that any changes to the park are appropriate and improve the offer to the community.

Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, feedback.

Yes No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Consultation

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
The framework will be subject to public consultation	The consultation will largely be based around making the document available for comment, although it is also expected to feature an exhibition/drop-in event. Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft framework for adoption.	A formal consultation is expected to begin in mid-December and will last for a period of ten weeks until late February.

Collect and Assess your Data

Describe how could this proposal impact on Racial groups

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Disability

Any development at the park will need to ensure appropriate access for all.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Age

The improvements to the park seek to ensure that the park appeals to all ages including families with young children.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how could this proposal impact on Religious belief?

No impact.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Make a Decision

Tick which applies

1. **No negative impact identified** Go to sign off
2. **Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.
Reason
3. **Negative impact identified or uncertain**

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Outcomes of the proposed consultation will be reported to Committee when seeking to formally adopted the framework.

Signed (completing officer) Giorgio Framallicco Date: November 2018

Signed (Lead Officer) Giorgio Framallicco Date: November 2018