

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

LONGRIDGE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE ENHANCEMENTS

Report Reference ET-25-07
Meeting Date 9th June 2025
Agenda Item 12
Prepared by Town Clerk



1.0 BACKGROUND

There are three large open spaces on Longridge. St Helena's Field is located at the junction of Longridge and Higher Downs and is a large open space with a scheduled ancient monument site, wildflower meadow and trim trail. To the south is a large green adjacent to Booths Mere; the green previously included a football pitch. Near the Mobberley Road end is the Longridge recreation ground which comprises a MUGA, football goals and play area.

This report outlines proposals for each site. The southern sites are proposed for ecological enhancements which would both provide an improve natural environment and are designed to enhance the general recreation value of the sites without prejudicing their informal use. This is complemented by proposals for the northern site to develop a municipal recreation ground with public sporting facilities.

Indicative site plans are appended to the report.

2.0 PROPOSALS

2.1 ST HELENA'S FIELD

2.1.1 OVERVIEW

The proposals for this space are a number of enhancements which would both improve the ecology of the site and create a strong sense of place whilst retaining the utility of the site as an open space. These improvements could be delivered quickly.

2.1.2 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposals for this site are:

- 1) Planting of several standard trees in a mix of avenues and groups
- 2) Creation of a community orchard
- 3) Delivery of the planned native mixed-species hedge around the site
- 4) Maintaining an open mown section in the centre of the green space, but reducing mowing frequencies around trees and edges
- 5) Potential installation of benches
- 6) Future creation of laid paths on the two main routes through the site, and mown paths on other locations
- 7) Restoration of a pond

2.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION

The proposal has been submitted to Cheshire East Council for their views on the proposal. Whilst the land is owned by the borough council, their permission would be required. It is not anticipated that the proposals for this site would be controversial, except the creation of the pond which may require some additional consideration, both from a safety perspective and to understand any impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument (and consents thereunder).

Subject to permissions:

- a) Grants would be sought for the planting of trees in the winter 2025 planting season. This would include seeking a grant from the Tree Council and looking to work with the Mersey Forest which may provide large standard trees. This may span a number of years depending on availability of grants and the number of trees planned for the site.
- b) The council would work with Cheshire East Council on a revised mowing regime for the site
- c) The council would plant a hedge around the site in the winter 2025 planting season (permission for this has already been secured); the whips for this would be sought from the Conservation Volunteers and/or Woodland Trust.
- d) A bench previously located on the Longridge community garden (and removed due to complaints) could be relocated to this site.

Proposals for other measures would be developed and brought to the committee in due course.

2.2 OPEN SPACE ADJACENT TO BOOTHSMERE

2.1.1 OVERVIEW

The proposals for this space are a number of ecological enhancements.

2.1.2 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposals for this site are:

- 1) Managed re-wilding of the site adjacent to where the new road for the Longridge development would be located; potentially utilising young trees due to be removed from the adjacent development site.
- 2) The creation of a Miyawaki “tiny forest”
- 3) Pond creation to support natural drainage
- 4) Planting of feature standard trees
- 5) Planting a mixed-species native hedge around the site
- 6) Reduced mowing regimes with mowed paths

2.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION

Any works to the northern half of this site would be deferred until such time as the access road to the development and any associated highways works are completed.

Works to the southern section of the site could be brought forward sooner and would be programmed in future planting schemes.

2.3 LONGRIDGE RECREATION GROUND

2.3.1 OVERVIEW

The proposal is to develop this site for outdoor sports and recreation to create a free municipal recreation ground.

2.3.2 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The proposals for this site are:

- Upgrading of existing football pitch
- Creation of tennis courts
- Installation of an outdoor gym
- Creation of a skate park
- Installation of table tennis tables
- Installation of a second MUGA
- Upgrading of the play area
- Creation of a picnic area
- Creation of paths across the site and linking to Mobberley Road
- Creation of a toilet/kiosk to service the area and provision of CCTV for safety
- Creation of a pond to support site drainage
- Tree planting

2.3.3 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of proposals at this site is much more involved and would be planned to be delivered in phases over a number of years. The first stage would be to understand the feasibility of works, noting the site is a former landfill site.

The implementation would also be more costly, however there are substantial funds available. A total of £211k is held by Cheshire East Council for sport and recreation in this area and 70k for play provision which could deliver initial phases alongside future CIL receipts and grant funding.

A detailed implementation plan would be developed and with delivery based on funding and opportunity.

3.0 ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGY

3.1 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposals strongly contribute to the delivery of the council's strategic aim of having a diverse network of green spaces and biodiverse natural environment. The ecological enhancements contribute to objective E3 (biodiversity). Proposals for sporting facilities support the objectives of the green space strategy (to be developed).

Collectively, the proposals support objective C1 (enhancing services in St John's Wood ward) and C2 (bridging the disconnect between Longridge and the rest of Knutsford by enhancing facilities in the area). The recreation site would contribute to objective S3 by increasing facilities for young people

and align with S2, supporting preventative health measures.

3.2 NATURE ACTION PLAN

The proposals support the delivery of the Nature Action Plan which aims to identify locations for tree planting and ecological improvements.

3.3 KNUTSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan identifies the desirability of improving the wildlife corridor between St John's Wood and Booths Mere. The ecological works to the southern green spaces would directly deliver this.

3.4 SPORTS VISION ACTION PLAN

The Knutsford Sports Vision Action plan identifies deficiencies in the provision of outdoor football, cricket and rugby. The enhanced facilities at the northern site would slightly contribute to the objectives of this plan; whilst not providing additional football pitch space, it would provide improved space.

The plan identifies the need for a Skatepark which would be delivered by these proposals.

4.0 NEXT STAGES

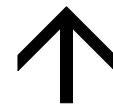
Recognising that the proposals are a reasonably major change to the existing open spaces, and to support any grant funding efforts and lobbying with Cheshire East Council, it is proposed that a consultation be held on the outline proposals in this report. The consultation would take place in late June/July with the objective of the output of the consultation being considered at the next committee meeting to inform decisions on progression of projects.

In tandem, engagement would take place with Cheshire East Council to understand any considerations they may have. If possible, a better understanding of the feasibility of the sporting proposals would also be sought.

5.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider:

- a) Endorsing the outline proposals for the three sites
- b) Approving a consultation to be undertaken on the proposals




NOTES

This sketch plan shows ideas for discussion, with the overall aims of:

- a) increasing the value of the public open space for people and for wildlife,
- b) helping to reduce the effects of climate change through tree and shrub planting,
- c) maintaining the setting of the scheduled monument, and
- d) compensating to a small extent for the potential losses of habitat and parkland to housing development on nearby sites.

Paths shown are based on possible desire lines between existing and new access points, and potential circular routes. These or other routes could be achieved through mowing or increased use.

See plans 1 & 2 for background

Site Longridge POS, Knutsford		
Title Suggestions for layout and planting		
Date 05.05.25		
Drawing Number 25-26/ND/3	Drawn By RB	Scale 1:1750

Knutsford Town Council

Council Offices, Toft Road, Knutsford, WA16 6TA
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Longridge Recreation Ground Preliminary Outline Proposals

SCALE :
1 : 1250 @ A3

DATE :
04/06/2025

N



MAP FILENAME :
Longridge Sports Rec

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