

<b>Committee(s)</b> Epping Forest and Commons	<b>Dated</b> 17/01/2022
<b>Subject:</b> Wanstead Park Natural Play Area (SEF 03/22)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>2/3/4/11/12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>y</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£32,077</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>Local fundraising</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>no</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director Environment,	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Geoff Sinclair, Head of Operations	

### Summary

This report outlines the development of further proposals for a built natural play area at Wanstead Park. An original proposal to your Committee to negotiate a licence agreement with the London Borough of Redbridge to build, maintain and inspect a play area has not proved possible. A working group consisting of Epping Forest officers, Aldersbrook Families Association (AFA) and Aldersbrook Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was subsequently established to fundraise around an alternative solution. The working group has developed costed proposals for a revised play area design using materials available directly from Epping Forest and which could be constructed by and maintained by a mix of volunteers and Epping Forest staff. Three well-suited and time-limited opportunities to fully raise the funds to finance essential elements of the proposed play area, such as signage, fencing and seating have been identified by the working group.

The opportunity presented by these funds has meant that the preliminary proposals for the play area have been developed for approval by your Committee as per the Charity's Play Policy. This report is necessary to update your Committee on the current status and seek approval for joint AFA and Epping Forest Charity funding arrangements to progress the work on the natural play area.

### Recommendation(s)

Epping Forest and Commons Committee Members are asked to:

- Approve the provision of a joint Epping Forest Charity and community managed natural play area at Wanstead Park.
- Approve the joint AFA and EFCT funding applications and fundraising arrangements to fund the construction of a natural play area at Wanstead Park.

## Main Report

### Background

1. At your meeting of 9 July 2018, the Epping Forest Play Policy was approved which sets out the position that the Conservators will adopt in relation to requests for play areas on land managed by the Epping Forest Charitable Trust (EFCT).
2. At the same meeting on 9 July 2018 the Conservators agreed that there was an exceptional case to construct a natural play area on Forest Land at Wanstead Park to meet community need in an area of play deprivation. The report proposed that the natural play area would be funded and maintained by the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) under a negotiated licence agreement.
3. An area close to The Temple folly in Wanstead Park, which had been used as a wood waste storage area, was identified for the play area and cleared by your staff. Subsequent negotiations with the LBR could not secure the basis to progress a licence arrangement and development work was suspended.
4. In February 2021, the Aldersbrook Families Association (AFA), who have promoted the establishment of a play area in the Aldersbrook area for over 20 years, approached the Epping Forest Charity to consider whether there were alternative ways forward to achieve a natural play area. The APA also offered £10,000 of its own funds to support the establishment of a play area and were keen to support efforts to fund raise for the remaining finance.
5. The Wanstead Park Parkland Plan approved by the EF&CC on 18 November 2019 identified a play area as a priority project. To finance the implementation of the Parkland Plan the Charity has been working with stakeholders to identify external sources of funds to help progress the plan incrementally, pending the opportunity to identify match funding to enable the application for larger funding streams.
6. It was reported to your Committee on 10 May 2021 a working group of the Epping Forest Charity, AFA and Aldersbrook Parent Teacher Association (PTA) had been established to develop a viable project, including costed proposals designs for a community funded and managed natural play area. It was anticipated that additional fund-raising would be required to deliver this project.
7. A revised natural play area design was developed (Appendix One) based on using materials available directly from Epping Forest and which could be constructed by volunteers and Charity staff. This was a considerably simplified design compared to the original proposals envisaged which were solely based on procured play structures. A competent archaeologist has volunteered to monitor the works as they progress to ensure we meet best archaeological practice.
8. A pre-planning application meeting was held with LBR on 14 September 2021 to assess the need or otherwise for planning permission for the proposed play area and it was confirmed on 16 September 2021 that the play area could be constructed under the General Permitted Development Order. LBR, however, recommended that a Lawful Development Certificate should be sought to protect the project from any subsequent challenge. A local architect volunteered his time to support the submission of an application for a lawful development certificate which was received on 29 October 2021.

9. The revised play area proposal is estimated to cost in the region of £32,000. This will cover the cost of essential requirements such as the replacement and extension of the boundary fence, seating, 70m surfaced path to ensure accessibility and signage, including safety signage. The surfaced path will be necessary to ensure basic accessibility but will be in keeping with the existing surroundings
10. To augment the natural play features of logs and rocks the purchase of three rustic play structures, balance ropes, monkey bars and wobble beam will cost £2,520.
11. Ongoing management of the play area would be an additional requirement for the Epping Forest Charity. This would include weekly monitoring of the rustic log structures and an annual independent external assessment by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The revised play area design has been developed to be within the competence and capacity of existing Epping Forest staff to monitor and maintain.
12. Three compatible, but time—limited, opportunities to fully raise the funds to finance the construction of the play area have been identified and are currently being progressed:
  - a. Community crowdfunding with Spacehive: Redbridge Council is working in partnership with Spacehive to launch the #CommunityCrowdfunding programme. The Wanstead Park Natural Play area working group were encouraged to apply and it is hoped an application through this process can be submitted in February/March 2022. This has the potential generate £20,000 and would be led by the AFA
  - b. City of London Corporation Enjoying Green Spaces and the Natural environment Central Grants fund. This fund awards up to £15,000 and applications were due for the 14<sup>th</sup> of October and the AFA submitted an application based on the Working group's proposal and focussing on essential items such as safety signage, boundary fencing and seating.
  - c. London Borough of Redbridge Sustainable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) funding. At the time of writing the LBR have identified a possible opportunity to draw in developer contribution funding for Wanstead Park as part of proposals to develop SANGS within Redbridge. Given the clear play deprivation case funding towards the play area was considered appropriate as part of wider access improvement package which will be brought to your Committee.
13. The applications for grants A and B will be managed by AFA. Should the funds be achieved the Epping Forest Charity would carry out the necessary works and the AFA will fund this work from the grants accrued.
14. The opportunity presented by these short deadline funds has required that preliminary proposals for the play area have been developed, for approval by your Committee in line with the Play Policy.
15. This report is to update on the current status and request that your Committee approves the joint AFA and Charity funding arrangements to progress the work on the natural play area.

## Proposals

16. To approve the joint AFA and Epping Forest charity funding applications to Spacehive Crowdfunding and the City of London Central grants scheme and the Charity's responsibility for play area inspection and maintenance. This would enable the opportunity to access finance to progress a locally managed natural play area and a priority project identified in the Wanstead Park Parkland Plan. **Recommended**
17. To not support the progression of a joint AFA and EFCT funding applications to Spacehive Crowdfunding and the COL Central grants scheme. This would require alternative fund-raising approaches to be identified with potential delays in progressing a priority project for the Wanstead Park Parkland Plan. **Not recommended**

## Resource Implications

18. Capital costs estimated at £32,077 for the play area will be met through grant aid raised from the three funds if successful. Work on items will only progress if the funding for the items has been raised.
19. There is no commitment on the Charity to replace play equipment at the end of its life, however, it is hoped that community support will be maintained, and fundraising can be continued to cover the ongoing future capital costs.
20. The management of the play area is an additional commitment. The structures are, however, all within our current operational competence to maintain and manage and we have an established process for managing 'maintainable' structures that they would be combined into. The COL insurance team confirm there is no impact on the liability insurance premium.

## Legal Implications

21. The Local Planning Authority has confirmed that Planning Consent for the Play area is not required and a Lawful Development Certificate has been provided.
22. The works are within an archaeological protection area and while the works are considered lawful development the proposals will be confirmed with Historic England prior to progressing.
23. The play area is within the Grade II\* Wanstead Park Registered Park and Garden. The proposal forms part of the Parkland Plan which has been developed in consultation with Historic England who are aware of the play area location and its status as lawful development.

## **Equalities Implications**

24. The works will encourage wider use of the Park by families with young children and will include play opportunities for 2-10-year-old children of varying abilities. The Aldersbrook area has been identified as an area with a significant play deficit and the nearest public play area is 30-minute walk away for most residents.
25. In 2018/19, the level of excess weight among 10–11-year-olds in Redbridge was worse (40%) than the average for England (34.3%) and London (37.9%) taken from London Borough of Redbridge Annual Health Report 2020. Around a third of children leave Aldersbrook Primary school either overweight or obese. Having a playground nearby that children can easily visit will make a huge difference to their physical health and fitness. This is particularly important for lower income families to have access to physical activities that are cost free.
26. It is considered that there are considerable positive impacts for local children and protected equality groups.

## **Charity Implications**

27. Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity. The proposal will enhance enjoyment of the Forest in a manner which is complimentary to the Forest's character and natural aspect and meets an agreed aim of the Wanstead Park Parkland Plan

## **Climate Implications**

28. None

## **Conclusion**

29. A natural play area at Wanstead Park is considered an appropriate development.
30. It has not been possible to progress a local authority managed play area at this location and a revised lower key facility based on materials from Epping Forest and implemented by Epping Forest staff and volunteers is proposed.
31. In an excellent example of community-facility provision, the Epping Forest Charity would work in close association with the AFA to secure access to the necessary funding to enable the project.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

- Wanstead Park: Conceptual Options Plan (SEF 38/19). Epping Forest and Commons Committee Report. 18th November 2019
- Epping Forest Play Policy (SEF 31/18) Epping Forest and Commons Committee Report 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018
- Proposal for a play area at Wanstead Park (SEF 30/18) Epping Forest and Commons Committee Report 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018
- Epping Forest Work Programme 2021/2022 (SEF 20/21) 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **Report author**

Geoff Sinclair

Head of Operations Environment Department, Epping Forest

E: [geoff.sinclair@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.sinclair@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

T: 020 8532 1010