

Meeting:	Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel
Date:	15 November 2005
Subject:	Byron Park Regeneration consultation event 27 th – 28 th September 2005
Responsible Officer:	Graham Jones
Contact Officer:	Alison Pegg
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Keith Burchell – Planning, Development and Housing
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

The panel is asked to note the report.

Reason for report

To inform the Panel of the outcomes of the public consultation regarding proposals to regenerate Byron Park.

Benefits

The proposed regeneration of Byron Park will improve sports and leisure facilities in Wealdstone and Harrow as well as meeting wider corporate objectives to create sustainable communities.

Cost of Proposals

Not applicable at this stage.

Risks

None at this stage.

Implications if recommendations rejected

This is an information item only.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

A public consultation on ideas for the regeneration of Byron Park was held on the 28th and 29th September at the Leisure Centre. Over the 2 day event approximately 170 people attended the consultation. Of these, 5 were representatives from various groups active in Wealdstone/Byron Park - Solid Surf Skate Park Association, Wealdstone Traders Association, Herga bowls, Harrow School of Gymnastics, Swimming Club.

The remaining attendees were members of the public living near to the park or in Wealdstone as well as other users of the Leisure Centre living further away and Leisure Centre staff.

The plans shown at this consultation event have been on display in the Wealdstone Centre since the event finished. 12 feedback forms have been received.

General Feedback

Concerns have been expressed about the extent to which local people were notified, for example not all the houses surrounding the park received the invitation leaflet; that the advertising material did not indicate the consultation was being run by Harrow Council; there was no information available for people whose first language is not English.

Also, local people are concerned that a proposal is going to be rushed through on the basis of a limited consultation exercise and their concerns are not going to be addressed.

In order to address these concerns it is proposed that a newsletter be prepared and distributed widely to the community giving details of the responses made and setting out the process by which the project will be taken forward. This will need to emphasize that the Council is still at the planning stage and it is intended to fully involve the community in taking any proposals forward.

2.3 Consultation

Analysis of comments

2 options were shown during the consultation exercise, each with 2 sub options. The 2 sub options showed each of the 2 main options with underground rather than surface parking proposals. The differences between the 2 main options were the location of the various existing activities on Byron Park such as the Skate Park and other new proposed facilities in the park. All options had the same proposed sites for housing and the Neighbourhood Resource Centre. The main comments are as follows:

Improved leisure facility options

The majority of people were in agreement that the park's facilities should be opened up and improved, in particular to meet the needs of a wide range of young people and as a modern sports activity centre for Harrow. Suggestions were made about the types of improved young children's play facilities that could be installed as well as multi-use games areas for older children, e.g. 5 a-side football, tennis courts.

People supported proposals to enhance and expand the existing facilities and clubs such as the Gymnastics School to enable more people to participate.

Users of the Skate Park were keen to see this facility improved to modern standards and made safe, for example the installation of turnstiles to prevent bikes being stolen. The provision of cycle paths throughout the park was welcomed.

Users of the park generally liked the idea of better lighting to make the park safer and more usable but residents immediately adjacent to the park are concerned this should not cause light pollution.

People liked the proposal to provide a café in the park and space to hold events.

People felt that if improvements were made then this would need to be properly managed on completion, for example having a park warden. This would also help make the park feel safer.

The parks improved facilities would need to coordinate with the Leisure Centre for example to extend the range of evening activities.

Parking

Very few people liked the idea of underground parking. The vast majority of people thought that underground parking would be unsafe and therefore not used.

People were also concerned about the amount of parking commenting that the existing car park is not big enough to cope with peak demand when Byron Hall is being used for a big event.

Proposed Housing

Concerns were expressed that the proposed housing was at the expense of recreation and leisure facilities (although the proposed housing sites are not currently used for recreation and leisure). It was also felt that an increase in housing here would exacerbate existing traffic and parking problems in Wealdstone.

A majority of respondents were against the housing proposals and a number of comments were made that no more social housing should be built. However other people wanted to see socially mixed housing for the community including housing to meet the needs of young people who want to buy.

Those who did not object to the housing wanted to ensure it would be in keeping with the low density nature of the surrounding streets.

2.4 Financial Implications

None

2.5 Legal Implications

None

2.6 Equalities Impact

Future consultation events will need to ensure that information is better targeted to ensure that all members of Wealdstone's diverse community are able to participate.

2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

None

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Background Documents: Comments received at the consultation and returned feedback forms held on file