

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council **DATE:** 22nd July 2014

CONTACT OFFICER: Nick Pontone, Democratic Services Officer
(For all enquiries) 01753 875120

WARD(S): Chalvey

PART I **FOR DECISION**

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET FROM ITS MEETING HELD ON 14TH JULY 2014

C. SALT HILL PARK PATH IMPROVEMENTS

1 Purpose of Report

To consider a proposal to improve sections of footpath in Salt Hill Park through widening, resurfacing and the introduction of street lighting columns. The path will form a key link in the East / West walking and cycling route in Slough, and it is the intention that cycling through Salt Hill Park will be permitted in the future. The Cabinet considered the report at its meeting on 14th July 2014 and agreed to recommend the proposals to Council.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Council is requested to Resolve:

- (a) That the principles of the proposals to update the existing path through Salt Hill Park to a 3 metre wide path with lighting, provide a new section of 3 metre wide path along a previously unpaved route, and improve access through Salt Hill Way are approved.
- (b) That council officers proceed with the detailed design of the scheme within the general principles presented in this report, subject to planning permission on the preliminary design being granted.
- (c) That, following detailed design, construction of the scheme is implemented within the current financial year 2014/15.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- Health

Aims relating to this report:

- Enhancing positive health and wellbeing throughout life;
- Ensuring better community engagement to improve the wellbeing of our residents; and
- Increase residents' level of physical activity and encourage healthier eating.

Provision of the new path and lighting within the park will improve the attractiveness of the park which will encourage more people, including children, to walk in this area, positively benefitting health and wellbeing, and increasing residents' levels of physical activity. It is also the intention to allow cycling through the park in the future and the new path will form a vital link in the strategically important East / West walking and cycling route. This will encourage greater use of cycling in the area, which, along with walking, has positive health benefits as well as increasing residents' level of physical activity.

In developing the proposals there has been public engagement in the form of a public consultation leaflet and letter drop, which invited local residents and park users to comment on the scheme. This has encouraged residents to be involved in their community, ensuring better community engagement.

In relation to Health, the SJWS states that residents can "*Make use of the town's parks, open spaces, leisure facilities and events.*" Providing an improved path through Salt Hill Park will further encourage residents to use Salt Hill Park as a destination, and encourage further use of Baylis Park through the connection made by the Cinder Track.

- Economy and Skills

Aims relating to this report:

- *Improve transport and communications infrastructure.*

Improving the path through the Salt Hill Park will provide better infrastructure for pedestrians, and potentially future cyclists, in the area. There will be better connectivity between Slough Trading Estate and Slough town centre / train station. There is also an intention to allow cycling through the park in the future and the new path will facilitate this.

- Regeneration and Environment

Aims relating to this report:

- Maintain and improve access to recreational and leisure facilities, including parks and open spaces, using these in such a way as to ensure local people gain most benefit;
- Improve public transport, cycling and walking facilities to increase use of sustainable forms of transport; and
- Reduce energy consumption, water usage and the amount of carbon emissions generated.

The proposals will improve access to Salt Hill Park, a key recreation and leisure facility in the town. The proposals improve access for pedestrians, and allow for future cycle use, which are modes of travel best suited for local people. The requested approval therefore ensures that local people are gaining most benefit from the proposals.

The path will encourage use of the park by pedestrians, and allow for future cycle use, which is therefore an improvement to walking and cycling facilities. This has the potential to increase the use of sustainable forms of transport in the area which would, in turn, reduce the amount of carbon emissions generated by helping reduce the number of car based trips.

- Safer Slough

Aims relating to this report:

- A place where people feel safe to live, visit, work and play;
- A year on year and sustained reduction in crime and ASB; and
- Reduced crime, the fear and perception of crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse.

The new path and associated lighting and landscaping will enhance the perception of Salt Hill Park as a place where people can safely travel through and visit for recreational purposes. The proposed lighting will encourage pedestrian usage outside of daylight hours and help with natural surveillance of the park and the subway. This will help reduce the fear of crime, and discourage ASB in the park.

Cross-Cutting themes

This report informs the theme of *Civic Responsibility* by highlighting the role that residents have played in informing the development of the proposals. It also highlights how an increase in use of the path will naturally improve surveillance of the park, and demonstrates how residents can have a role in improving the perception of the park for the benefit of everyone within Slough.

This report informs the theme of *Improving the image of the town* by highlighting how the proposals enhance a key recreational area within the town which will encourage use of the park by residents and visitors. It will improve the image of the town as a place to live and work, by providing a more attractive park area for people to use for recreation, as well as forming a key link in an important commuter route for pedestrians and future cyclists.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

Chapter 2 of the JSNA is titled *Social and Place Wellbeing*, and Section 2.1 relates to *Community Wellbeing*; it states that Chalvey Ward remains the most income deprived ward in Slough for Children. Income deprivation can be a factor in local crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. The proposed scheme seeks to provide local residents in Chalvey, including young people, with an enhanced public space which will help reduce crime and ASB.

Section 2.3 of the JSNA relates to *Environment*, and states that Local emissions from road transport are higher than regional or national averages in certain areas. It highlights that vehicle emissions are one of the main causes of poor air quality. There are four Air Quality Management Areas in Slough, one of which is the A4, which runs along the southern border of Salt Hill Park. The proposed scheme will form an important link in the East / West walking and cycling route, which seeks to remove traffic from the A4 corridor by encouraging more walking and cycling between east and west Slough.

Chapter 3 of the JSNA provides information on *Lifestyles and health improvement*, and Section 3.1 relates to *Physical activity*. It highlights that integrating walking and cycling into daily life is one of the easiest and most effective ways to encourage people to be more active. The proposed scheme enhances the facilities for walking and future cycling through the park, and therefore encourages people to undertake more physical activity.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

The costs of delivering the scheme will be funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). The LSTF was launched by the Department for Transport in 2010 to provide an opportunity for local authorities outside of London to build on their plans for taking forward sustainable travel measures.

The existing secured budget for the scheme is £175,000.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	A parcel of public amenity land which the path crosses is unregistered. Under Schedule 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2010, a public notice has been placed in the local newspaper with a view to determining whether there is an unknown land owner. Further legal considerations are outlined in section (a).	Slough Borough Council could acquire the land should no owner come forward in the statutory 21 day period, providing an opportunity for better maintenance of the public amenity land.
Property	None	
Human Rights	None	
Health and Safety	Publication of proposals, and adherence to the Council's Health and Safety Policy.	The improved park will reduce risk of injury due to poor surfacing within the park.
Employment Issues	None	
Equalities Issues	An Equalities Impact Assessment is considered in Section (d).	Providing improved facilities and lighting in the park will reduce fear of crime and social exclusion in the area.
Community Support	A public consultation exercise has been completed, as well as presentations to the Local Access Forum, Slough Cycle Forum and Salt Hill Friends and Stakeholders.	Further engagement key stakeholders during detailed design would further increase community support for the scheme.
Communications	None	
Community Safety	None	There is an opportunity to increase community safety by increase use of the path through the park. The

		provision of lighting within the park will encourage greater usage outside of daylight hours, increase natural surveillance within the park.
Financial	None	
Timetable for delivery	Regular monitoring of contractor works to ensure delivery of the proposals.	
Project Capacity	None	
Other	None	

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications.

The proposals are made with reference and regard to the following Acts and the Salt Hill Playing Fields Trust deed.

Salt Hill Playing Fields Trust

Salt Hill Park was gifted to the Council in 1907 by James Elliman in trust to maintain it as a public recreation ground and it is held by the council under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1875 and Section 139 of the Local Government Act 1972. Approval of the Council in its capacity as a charitable trust is needed for the implementation of the path in the park.

Public Path Diversion Order

A public path diversion order will need to be made under either S257 TCPA or S119 HA 1980 to divert the path onto an agreed line through the park. It is likely to be S257 TCPA 1990 as the diversion is necessary for the development to be carried out.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

No foreseeable negative impacts have been identified and the proposals are intended to benefit all park users. The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix A.

5 **Supporting Information**

5.1 Purpose of the scheme

The purpose of the scheme is to:

- To improve existing connectivity between Salt Hill Way and Stoke Poges Lane;
- To improve the attractiveness of the route through Salt Hill park;
- To improve natural surveillance in the park to encourage people to use the path;
- and
- To enhance the entrance to Salt Hill Park from Salt Hill Way.

The existing path along the northern edge of Salt Hill Park is narrow and partly unsurfaced and the dense tree cover leading to the subway creates an intimidating

environment. The new path will provide a high quality 3 metre wide shared use footpath with new surfacing, street lighting and improved visibility of the subway area to and from Salt Hill Way. Figure 1 below shows the location of the improved sections of path.



Figure 1 – Map showing the outline of Salt Hill Park (in red) and the proposed new route (in yellow).

It is the intention that cycling in Salt Hill Park will be permitted in the future. The enhancements to the path will facilitate this and will form an important link in the East West Walking and Cycling Route which is being delivered by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) Project. The route will run from Slough train station to Burnham train station, via Salt Hill Park and the Trading Estate.

Completion of this link through the park and along Salt Hill Way will connect other sections of the main East / West Cycle Route to deliver a coherent and continuous cycle route through Slough in the future.

The design of the scheme has been developed in close collaboration between the Transport and Parks teams.

5.2 Existing users of Salt Hill Park

A 24 hour CCTV survey was undertaken to determine the number of users entering and exiting the park at Salt Hill Way and the railway subway. The survey recorded the number of pedestrian/cycle movements on 22nd – 23rd July 2013 and a summary of the results are presented in the Table 1 and Figure 2. It is interesting to note that there are already prominent 'east to north' and 'west to north' movements occurring, but limited east to west movements, which is something the new paths seek to encourage.

User	From	North			South			West			East		
	To	South	West	East	North	West	East	North	South	East	North	South	West
Pedestrian		572	126	113	440	17	15	116	7	16	151	4	10
Cyclist		206	51	13	208	6	8	60	6	1	17	3	2

Table 1 – Pedestrian survey results

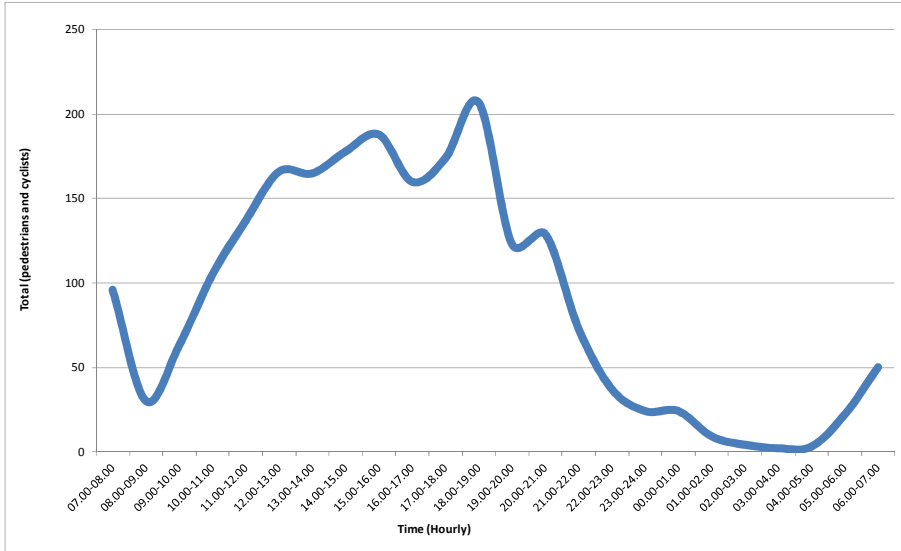


Figure 2 – Graph to show peak pedestrian flows within Salt Hill Park.

5.3 Consultation with stakeholders

In developing the proposals, presentations have been given to:

- Local Access Forum in October 2012
- Slough Cycle Forum in October 2012
- Salt Hill Friends and Stakeholders on 16th July 2013.

Each of the groups consulted were broadly supportive of the proposals.

A public consultation exercise was undertaken in June 2014 in which local residents on Salt Hill Way and park users were notified of the scheme and invited to comment on the proposals. Information leaflets were placed in key areas such as the Slough bowling alley and Salt Hill Park café. The responses received were generally positive, and comments received have been taken on board in developing the scheme.

5.4 Proposed appearance of the scheme

The surface of the proposed path will be bound gravel similar to the surface of the Cinder Track. It is intended that the path will be used by pedestrians and in the future by cyclists.

The path will be lit using lighting columns for the full width of the park along the northern perimeter. It is proposed to light the path so that users of the path are more confident to use the park throughout the day and when it is dark. Evidence from the CCTV surveys shows that the park is already being used 24 hours a day. The scheme designers are working closely with SBC Parks Projects Team to agree the

design of the lamp columns to ensure that they are appropriate for the park environment.

The public amenity land to the west of the park and located at the eastern end of Salt Hill Way is being improved by removing the existing unattractive concrete bollards and replacing them with low level timber knee rail fencing. The existing wooden fence along the boundary of the park will be replaced with a traditional estate rail black fence, which has been agreed with SBC Parks Projects Team.

During construction of the proposed path, it is also intended to replace 8 elderly Lombardy poplar trees along the perimeter of the Park to the east of the subway.

An Arboricultural Assessment has been undertaken which determined that the trees are close to the end of their natural lifespan. The proposed felling of the trees is not as a result of the proposed path, but it is necessary work irrespective of the new path. These trees would have to be removed within the next couple of years anyway on safety grounds due to their proximity to the railway and busy pedestrian areas within the park. By removing the trees as part of the path improvement works, this is an efficient use of funds and should cause minimum disruption to park users.

Throughout the project the scheme designers have closely liaised with the Council's Tree Officer. Suitable replacement trees will be provided as part of the landscape design.

5.5 Relationship to other routes

In terms of the relationship to other routes the proposed path will improve connectivity between Stoke Poges Lane and Salt Hill Way. It will also improve access to the Cinder Track, by enhancing links to the subway from east and west of the park. It is the intention to include the new path in the East to West Walking and Cycling Route which provides a key route between Slough train station and Burnham train station, via the trading estate.

The new route will provide a high quality alternative to using the existing footway along the heavily trafficked A4 Bath Road route using quiet roads and the park.

5.6 Inclusive access considerations

The proposed path will connect to the existing access off Stoke Poges Lane, providing a convenient link to the new Zebra pedestrian crossing installed close to Lansdowne Avenue which was also funded from the LSTF. The existing access to the park from Salt Hill Way will be enhanced to provide general access improvements to Salt Hill Park.

The proposed path is of sufficient width to enable all users to benefit from its implementation. The surfacing will improve ground condition and drainage for all users, and provide general access benefits for all park users.

5.7 Policy context

The proposed scheme is consistent with the aims and objectives of the Slough LDF Core Policy 2006-2026, the Slough Local Plan, Salt Hill Management Plan and the Slough Borough Council Parks and Management Framework 2012-2017.

Slough Core Strategy 2006-2026

Core Policy 2 covers Green Belt and Open Spaces and Para. 7.22 states that: "Parks and open spaces have an important role in shaping the form of the individual urban areas within the town and these make a huge contribution to the quality of life. They also help to promote healthy living by providing opportunities for sport and other activities. The Open Space Study showed that existing open spaces were well used and valued by local residents, but there was a need to improve the quality of many of them."

Slough Local Plan (March 2004) Saved Policies and Policies still in use at December 2010 Para. 6.22 states that:

"In a heavily built up area as Slough, opportunities for the extension of or improvement of existing parks and areas of open space need to be maximised" as per Policy OSC6 (Improvements to Public Open Spaces) - The improvement and extension of existing parks and public open spaces will be sought".

Policy OSC1 (Protection of Public Open Space) states that:

Development upon any land identified as public open space on the Proposals Map will not be permitted unless:

- a) the development is ancillary to the use of the site as open space and the scale of the development and intensity of use is appropriate to the location;
- b) the use of the open space can be retained and enhanced by the development on a small part of the open space as long as the quality or quantity of pitch provision and the ability to make use of the pitches are not prejudiced; or
- c) the open space is replaced by new provision which is at least comparable in terms of size, facilities, and amenity and is conveniently located for current users of the open space.

From Policy OSC1, points a and b are particularly pertinent to the proposed scheme. The path will enhance the use of the existing open space, and meet the demand for a new path, as evidenced by the survey data.

Salt Hill Park Management Plan

The key objectives of the Salt Hill Management Plan are set out below:

- Meet the objectives set out in the Salt Hill Park Trust.
- Conserve the site as a public park providing the people of Slough with access to high quality formal and informal recreation facilities.
- Improve the range and quality of facilities available so the park can provide for as wide a range of Slough's residents as possible and to enable the park to play as complete a role as possible in the delivery of social, economic and environmental benefits for Slough.
- Protect and conserve the park, its heritage, and its overall environment, having particular regard to quality of design and the conservation of original and early features of the park.
- Protect, conserve and improve the park's landscape quality and its ecology.
- Develop its role as part of Slough's green infrastructure.

SBC Parks and Management Framework (2012-2017)

This document sets out Slough Borough Council's vision for its future management of the parks and open spaces under its ownership in the Borough. The Strategy is primarily concerned with Council owned parks and open spaces that are the most significant in terms of their ability to provide for informal recreation, play, sporting activities, cultural activities such as community events, and sites that are of landscape or biodiversity significance. However, the principles established in it can and should be applied to Council open space as a matter of good management practice.

Paragraph 1.6 of the Framework recognises that improving the infrastructure and facilities in parks, primarily to reflect the needs and aspirations of local people, is a challenge that requires:

- Shared ownership across a range of internal stakeholders, external partners and users;
- Commitment to securing necessary revenue and capital funding from a range of sources to enable appropriate facilities to be provided and maintained to appropriately high standards;
- A willingness to adopt innovative approaches and solutions that make parks and open spaces as beneficial to the community as they can be; and
- Recognition of need to plan sustainability into all projects.

The Framework makes the following recommendations that are relevant to this report:

- That the council continues to provide residents of the Borough with the best possible parks and open spaces in the context of the funding available to the Council;
- That the following parks be agreed as the highest priority for the Council: Baylis and Godolphin Parks, Herschel Park, Kennedy Park, Pippins Park, Salt Hill Park, Upton Court Park; and
- That Salt Hill Park be managed to retain Green Flag status.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

The Cabinet considered this report at its meeting on 14th July 2014 and agreed to recommend the proposed course of action to the Council.

7 **Conclusion**

It is recommended that the proposal to update the existing path through Salt Hill Park to a 3 metre wide path with lighting, provide a new section of 3 metre wide path through Salt Hill Park, and improve access through Salt Hill Way are approved by the Council.

Officers would like to progress with the detailed design of the scheme, subject to planning permission being granted, so that construction of the scheme can be completed during the current financial year 2014/15.

8 **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Equalities Impact Assessment