

LANDSCAPING PLANS AND IDEAS FOR THE COMMUNITY HUB



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LANDSCAPING PLANS AND IDEAS FOR THE COMMUNITY HUB

AIMS AND VISION

The aim is to create attractive landscaping that will be enjoyed and used by all ages.

KEY IDEAS

These are very much our preliminary thoughts from discussions with various local residents around Saffron Walden, including skate park users, parents of very young children, landscape experts and allotment holders.

1. A Chill Out Zone

A place to sit under trees on meadow grass with mown pathways to benches. 10 minutes in a green space creates mental well-being (see our Business Plan for more detail).

This area is ideal for all ages and there would be the possibility of having one hard pathway suitable for wheel-chair access. This zone would give different groups “discreet” areas to use. The police advise a raised tree canopy to allow visibility. Lots of benches and bins will be provided and it would make sense to have some picnic space here as many parents and carers spend a lot of time at the park with their children as it is free and open-air.

2. Allotment Area

One of the very popular items in our survey 2012. We had a good response from the survey re. potential allotment gardeners and those who responded were very passionate about their future involvement. Several already volunteer at Bridge End Gardens and others help parents on allotments. We already have links with the Dig-It Community Allotment organiser.

The allotment ties in with cookery courses – approx. half the respondents to our 2012 survey indicated an interest in taking part in cookery classes. There is a fuller explanation of our Food Vision in our Business Plan, breaking the connection of fast food with sport. Flowers for the café tables are part of making the Hub welcoming and attractive.

Participants will be able to get involved in the whole process of sowing seeds, looking after the plants, harvesting, cleaning and cooking and eating with friends. We would

like to involve local primary schools in this too. We envisage using raised beds so that this area is fully accessible to all.

3. Community Plots

We hope to have some plots that are taken up by different community groups. Gardening can help those suffering mental ill-health, bereavement, physical disabilities and people who enjoy working alongside vulnerable, socially isolated adults and aiding these people who want to get into work but are not able to achieve this at present. This part of the landscaping needs more research and we are beginning to link up with community groups in the town. We have already approached Support 4 Sight with the idea of a sensory garden plot. A similar project in Faversham, namely Abbey Physic Community Gardens, enables people from all sectors of the community to come together to enjoy the tranquil, health-giving environment.

4. SUDS - we all like messy play!

We think it is important to have areas for messy play and safe areas of water created to drain the site would provide a lot of fun.

Nowadays that sort of play is difficult to access as most families are restricted to small neat gardens or manicured parks. There are huge environmental benefits created by using SUDS – see our Business Plan for more information.

5. Younger Participants

Having a free access area for the younger children is part of our plan. We envisage a scooter-only area, which the younger scooter riders can call their own; this will make things a lot safer for everyone as scooters in the main park can be dangerous and the under 10s will not be tempted to use the main skate park area illegally. Again, this area would have outdoor seating for parents.

In recent research we have discovered a gap between the ages of one-ish and four where small children are “into everything” but too small to access conventional play equipment. We are working on developing some ideas for this age group where they can enjoy being challenged but in a safe environment, equipment that could be used inside the Hub if wet and transported outside as well.

6. Using the landscape to facilitate the Arts

With our partners from The Saffron Walden Arts Trust and Hyperfusion Theatre Company, we envisage the arts and performance spilling out into the landscape, which will be very creative and exciting.

7. Wildlife

An important aspect in our Business Plan and we are keen to create a wildlife corridor through the front of the site. We have talked to Friends of the Earth about bees and butterflies and we will devise a planting schedule with these in mind. We will also discuss this further with the Wildlife Trust to access their expertise.

8. BBQ and Picnic Areas

Already many people bring portable BBQs to the park and it would be great to have a specific, controlled area for this with lots of tables and benches and a philosophy of sharing food.

RESEARCH

As is obvious from the above, we are in the very early stages of developing ideas and researching how other similar venues operate. The Hub Management Committee is very lucky to have two trustees who have relevant experience. One has worked with a Community Foundation in Kent, supporting both a community hub in its early stages, and a community garden. Another trustee is a gardener on a nearby large estate. Our management committee includes a garden designer, a landscape worker and a skater studying architecture, including landscape design.

The Group has already shown the initial drawings to police for advice and we will have on-going talks throughout the scheme with Peter Caulfield, Uttlesford Crime Reduction Advisor and Architectural Liaison Officer for Essex, as the plans develop. The Fire Service have identified a potential parking site for emergency vehicle access.

PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE

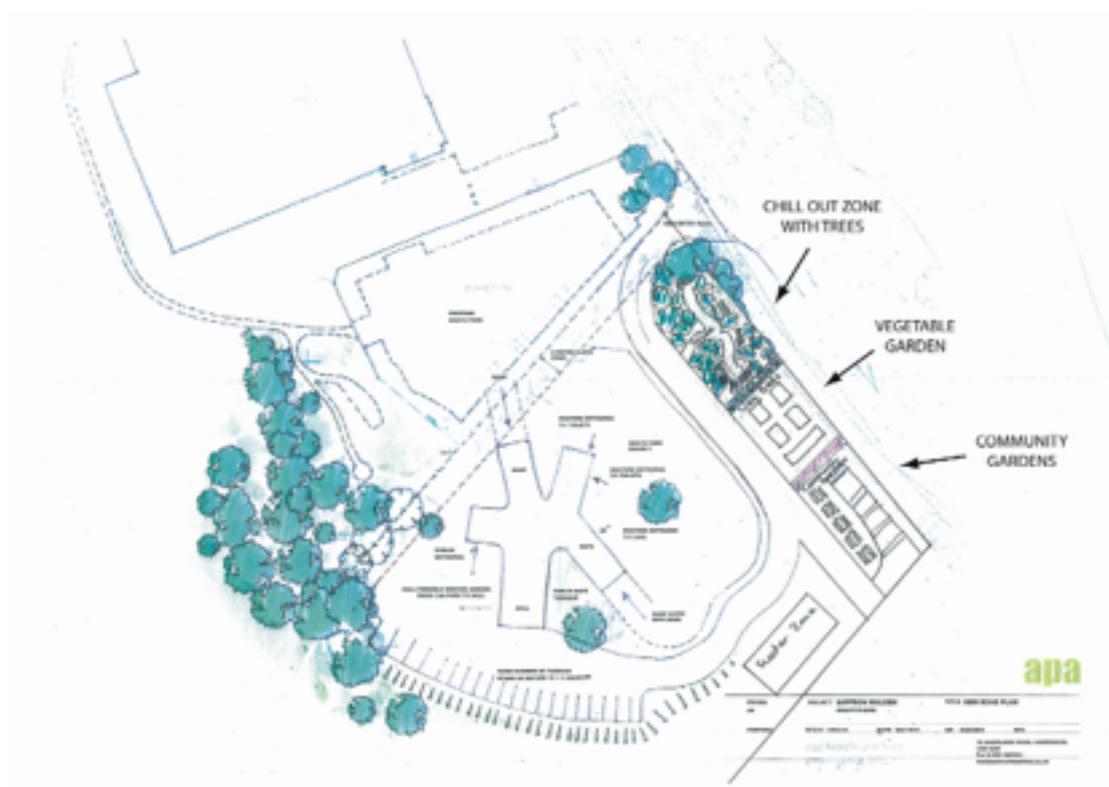
There is some cost to providing the landscaping but we are really keen to make this an inclusive community project by everyone getting involved from the beginning in a very “hands on” way and by making everyone responsible for the maintenance. We know that this approach will give everyone a stake in keeping the site free from vandalism in the same way that we manage the existing skatepark. Putting the young people in particular at the heart of the on-going plans is key.

We are fortunate to have some middle-aged shredders (older skaters) who are willing to supervise the landscaping and work with the young people and the community. The Hub Management Committee are looking into relevant funding streams for community landscaping projects.

THE WAY FORWARD

1. More research and visits to similar venues.
2. Invite more groups from the town to get involved.
3. Further research into how different age groups will want to use the space.
3. Put our ideas into a brochure with more plans and photos.
4. Identify more funding streams to finance the plans.

See illustrative plan below:



The Plan above is an illustration of how the various areas could be accommodated on the site.