B&NES Street Foxhill Parks Public Consultation

BPT Response

19/12/2022

Our comments as follows consider the broader proposals to regenerate the Foxhill and Combe Down areas:

The proposals form part of Curo’s plans for the investment of selected parks within the Foxhill and Combe Down areas, as part of proposals for the creation of a new public open space and woodland walk within the Mulberry Park development. Landscape plans would form part of a phased programme of investment and works over a period of several years.

BPT is supportive of the ongoing phased approach of consultations to ensure that local residents and communities are included throughout the development process. The opportunity to feed back at this stage on the initial landscape design proposals allows for members of the public to be involved in any necessary revisions or amendments to better tailor schemes to the localised requirements of these key green spaces within the Foxhill and Combe Down character areas.

In light of the pandemic, our green spaces have become more important than ever as part of the health and wellbeing of local communities, as well as integral aspects of the public landscape and should be accessible and safe for everyone. Green spaces also have a greater role to play in addressing the effects of the Climate Emergency, in creating inner-city habitats and hotspots of biodiversity, as well as mitigating the effects of worsening weather conditions (eg. heavier rainfall, more frequent heatwaves).

* We recognise and welcome the positive opportunity to consider the parks improvements works as part of a broader masterplan in which each parks’ offer can be tailored to its specific attributes, existing infrastructure, and type of use.
* BPT strongly supports the opportunity for biodiversity improvements and enhancements, as well as offering additional benefits such as increased carbon sequestration and reduction of water run-off, to address the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis. We maintain that this should be a core aspect of proposals as part of B&NES Council’s commitment to Net Zero by 2030.
* Where possible, it may be worth considering opportunities for the creation of green corridors between parks (eg. street greening/planting) to allow for improved biodiverse connections between green spaces as well as enhancing the local experience of streets and roads. We wonder whether this could be referenced as a future measure that can tie in with B&NES Council’s existing commitment to tree planting.
* There are positive opportunities for heritage interpretation and engagement (see the historic quarrying infrastructure at Springfield Quarry) and we welcome provision of further interpretation details as part of the design process, as well further opportunity for community/public consultation.
* Where street furniture and associated infrastructure is proposed (eg. benches, bins), we maintain the importance of establishing a coherent, Bath-specific design to avoid the introduction of discordant designs within the townscape. New seating and planting should be considered as part of the long-term, established character of the area rather than a temporary or interim measure, which would also help to foster a greater sense of local distinctiveness and pride of place. Similar consideration should also be applied to works for new paths, surfacing, and areas of hard landscaping.
* We are supportive of opportunities for local engagement and inclusion such as food growing beds and a community orchard to better promote the social value of Bath’s green spaces. However, we maintain it would be helpful to understand the Council’s ongoing role regarding the strategy for these types of infrastructure including the potential for financial support and forward maintenance.
* The principle of improved connection points, such as a new point of access to Springfield Quarry from Hawthorn Grove and the site of the Foxhill Community Centre, is positive, although as this access appears to only be via a set of stairs there is a need for greater consideration as to how this access would be accessible for all park users? There may also need to be further illustration of any tree felling works, etc. as part of works, and how any potential impact would be outweighed by demonstrated public benefit and the securing of biodiversity net gain.