

**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: BATTENHALL PARK – PUMP TRACK PROPOSAL**

## **1. Recommendation**

**That Committee:**

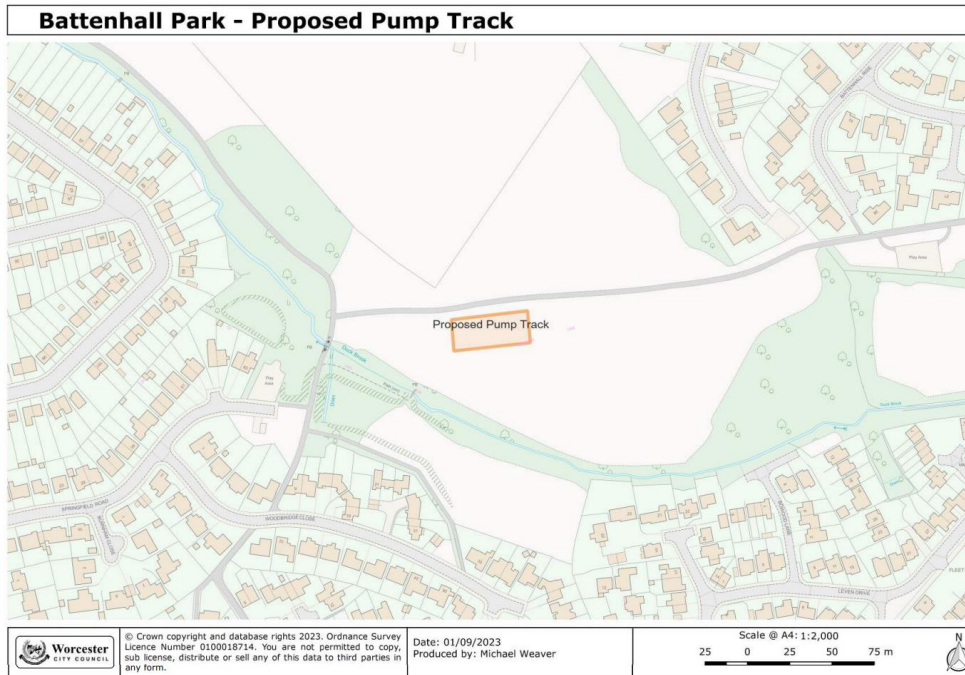
- 1.1 Notes the contents of the report and in particular the results from the public consultation exercise included at Appendix 2;**
- 1.2 Approves a deferment of any decision relating to a pump track at Battenhall Park, and instructs officers to undertake work to investigate further locations across the city, including within the St Peters Ward;**
- 1.3 Notes that a further report will be presented to this Committee in June 2024, that will provide the outcomes of investigation work in respect of additional locations that could be considered for delivering pump track facilities.**

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Council in setting its budget for 2021/2022 approved in principle a project to develop a pump track within the St Peters Ward with an indicative cost of £60,000. The project was initially proposed and approved at Place & Economic Development Committee in January 2022 and was subsequently approved by both Policy & Resources Committee and Council during February 2022.
- 2.2 Based on the above approvals financial provision was made within the capital programme, but the release of this capital funding is subject to a full business case requiring approval by Place & Economic Development Committee.
- 2.3 Initial consultation with St Peters, and Battenhall Ward Councillors identified a location within Battenhall Park for further investigation. This investigation work has now been carried out and is the subject of this report.
- 2.4 In July 2023, this Committee approved the Worcester Play Plan and further approved the progression of further work on several first phase priority projects (including public consultation), one of these being the Pump Track at Battenhall Park. Approval to progress was subject to further reports and final approval being sought as referred to in para 2.2.

- 2.5 Since July 2023 officers have undertaken further work in respect of this project including a public consultation exercise, a procurement exercise for the installation of a track, the commissioning of an environmental survey and further engagement with planning colleagues.
- 2.6 This report intends to update Members on the work undertaken and presents the business case developed to date for the installation of a pump track at Battenhall Park.

### Proposed Location, Design & Costings



- 2.7 This project primarily focuses on the following two elements;
- The installation of a pump track with an approximate footprint of 50m x 20m and 2m in width at a cost of £60k.
  - Additional s106 funding of £9,825 was approved at the s106 Programme Board meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to provide extra trackside facilities including 2 benches, a noticeboard for safety information, surfacing, and grass seeding.
- 2.8 The pump track would be available for participants of all ages and skill levels using an adaptive bike or wheelchair, bike, scooter, skateboard, or roller blades and will develop cycle and life skills and rider confidence, in a safe controlled environment.
- 2.9 As no part of the proposed track is above 4m in height no planning application is required, as the installation is allowed under permitted development rights.
- 2.10 Further information on the proposal by way of the public consultation information leaflet can be found at **Appendix 1**.

## **The Worcester Play Plan**

- 2.11 The proposal for the installation of a pump track in Battenhall Park pre-dates the outcome of the Worcester Play Plan. The play plan does identify a shortfall in provision in both Battenhall and St Peters wards and reflects the difference between the requirements of doorstep, neighbourhood and destination play sites.
- 2.12 In respect of play provision for young people the play plan states that the train line, and surrounding cul-de-sacs results in a small area of the Battenhall ward being short. This gap impacts a small number of residential properties on Battenhall Drive.
- 2.13 There are 3 existing play sites within close proximity of Battenhall Park but their target audience are young children. These include Battenhall Rise Play Site, Springfield Road Play Site and Field Walk Play Site. The nearest play site more appropriate for youths would be the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at the rear of St Peters Village Hall.
- 2.14 It is also worth noting residential development such as Ketch Field (Broomhall Way) which will deliver 92 units of accommodation, and additional land to the south of the A4440 (within Malvern Hills District Council) designated for housing within the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which will be very well linked to St Peters and Battenhall by the Broomhall Way Footbridge.
- 2.15 If Battenhall Park was approved as a location for Worcester City's first pump track it is highly likely that users would travel a reasonable distance and therefore the location could become a destination site, rather than only attracting doorstep or neighbourhood interest. If a second facility was brought online within the City in a location that had better parking and welfare provision, it is likely that Battenhall Park would become a neighbourhood facility.
- 2.16 Feedback received from the Play Plan consultation was the need to ensure that play locations were both inclusive and accessible. In terms of inclusivity the proposed track at Battenhall Park would be regarded as entry level so it would lend itself to novices through to experienced users, removing as many barriers to use as possible, particularly those who have physical disabilities.

## **Environmental Impact**

- 2.17 On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 a preliminary ecology appraisal was undertaken by representatives from Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy, to assess the presence and or impact of the proposed project on badgers, bats, birds, dormice, great crested newts, reptiles, otters, water vole and white clawed crayfish or any other protected species.
- 2.18 There were no concerns raised that required further surveys to be undertaken, although the report has highlighted some minor recommendations for consideration should the installation of the Pump Track proceed. The findings of the report are valid for 12 months.
- 2.19 Should a pump track at Battenhall Park be recommended at a future point in time, then the ecological appraisal will be shared with Members as part of any decision report.

## **Planning**

- 2.20 Initial advice received from planning colleagues confirmed that as no part of the proposed track was intended to be above 4m in height no planning application would be required, and the installation would be allowed under permitted development rights.
- 2.21 More recent advice has focussed on the historical use of the site. The council's Historic Environment Record Officer has advised that there are archaeological monuments recorded within the area of Battenhall Park, and a wider understanding of the landscape and archaeological potential will be needed to inform any submitted proposals/ plans. This land also falls within the nationally designated battlefield, so there would also need to be consultation with Historic England.
- 2.22 Given this most recent advice, if this particular site was to proceed as the preferred location, it would be subject to the costs and outcomes of an archaeological consultation.

## **Parking, Access and Welfare Facilities**

- 2.23 From a vehicular perspective, access to the site is restricted with no allocated parking provision available. Any users travelling to the site would therefore likely to have to park in one of four areas: Battenhall Road, Battenhall Rise, Springfield Road, or Woodbridge Close, all of which are cul-de-sacs.
- 2.24 Pedestrian and cycle access is good. Battenhall Park has 9 pedestrian access points located around its boundary. The public footpath that runs through the park and adjacent to the proposed pump track location is also classed as a city or local cycle route that links to the National Cycle Route 45 at 2 points (Bath Road and Deer Avenue).
- 2.25 Springfield Road would be the nearest point of entry to the pump track and residents have cited existing issues with people parking in the street to walk their dog in the park or to drop off or collect their children from the nearby school.
- 2.26 The nearest point of access for emergency services vehicles would also be Springfield Road, with equipment having to be manually transported for the final section of the journey.
- 2.27 Battenhall Park does not benefit from public toilet facilities and neither does it have a café. The nearest such provision would be on the Bath Road or St Peters Shopping Precinct.

## **Public Consultation**

- 2.28 Public consultation via an on-line survey went live on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October and closed on the 26<sup>th</sup> November. Door-to-door consultation was undertaken by the Community Engagement Team on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Full details of the consultation responses can be found at **Appendix 2**. Headline results from the consultation are set out below.
- **Who are you?** – The highest response rate was from local residents at 65.1% (608 respondents)

- **How old are you?** – 48.6% (454 respondents) were categorised as being between the ages of 25-44
  - **Where do you live?** – 46.9% (438 respondents) live within the immediate vicinity of Battenhall Park (5-minute walk/ride/drive)
  - **If a pump track is built in Battenhall Park how often would you use it?** – 59.5% (555 respondents) said they would use the facility at various frequencies (most days/1-2 days per week/weekends/a few times per month) whilst 40.5% (378 respondents) said they would never use it.
  - **Do you think the proposed location is in the right place?** – 65.1% (580 respondents) answered yes, they felt that it was in the right place.
- 2.29 Although most respondents are supportive of a pump track at this location, and furthermore indicate they or their children/grandchildren would regularly use it, it was clear from the narrative questions that the facility is strongly opposed by some residents who stated that they lived in closest proximity to the site. A range of reasons have been included to support objections including noise and anti-social behaviour, litter, damage to existing green space and wildlife/biodiversity, and the impact it would have on those who currently enjoy that space for other uses such as dog walking, family walks, nature etc.
- 2.30 The Council has received some feedback which suggests that the survey has been completed by the same consultees via multiple devices. This is being investigated. It does suggest that a degree of caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from the level of response rate recorded. The Council's practice in any event, when designing local projects, is not to rely solely on online survey tools, but to take information from a range of sources.

### **Procurement Exercise**

- 2.31 Two bids were received in response to the running of a procurement exercise during Autumn 2023, based on a 60/40 quality/price scoring matrix with the following results;
- Contractor A – Scored 92%
  - Contractor B – Scored 88.83%
- 2.32 Both bids received were within the £60,000 capital funding envelope for which provision has been made within the capital programme.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 As set out within the report, a combination of practical challenges that exist with the Battenhall Park site and the stated level of local opposition that has been communicated through the public consultation, leads officers to recommend that a decision on this location is deferred. This does not mean that the site has been discounted as unsuitable.
- 3.2 Instead, a deferment will allow investigation work to be undertaken on additional sites, with a view to a further report being presented to this Committee with an option appraisal of sites. This will also enable officers to consider the option of more

than one pump track or similar facility that would include a destination type facility, followed by that of a neighbourhood type facility. The deficit in facilities for children and young people to use their wheels in safe, traffic-free spaces, is felt across the city and multiple sites would ultimately be of benefit.

#### **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 The option of proceeding with Battenhall Park as a location to develop a pump track without any further scoping or preparatory work, is not recommended for the reasons explained above.

4.3 Four alternative locations have started to be investigated for development of pump track facilities. These include –

- Perdiswell (Claines)
- Cripplegate Park (St Johns)
- Power Park (St Peters)
- Diglis Playing Fields (Cathedral)

4.4 Each of these locations will be investigated not just from the point of view of whether they provide sufficient space, but also parking provision, accessibility, welfare facilities and how they link into the Worcester Play Plan.

4.5 Officers will liaise with Ward Councillors on the sites above and if there are further locations that Members wish to propose for investigation then officers would welcome further discussion of these.

#### **5. Implications**

##### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with this report, given the recommendation is to defer a decision on the Battenhall Park location with no approval sought for the release of capital funding.

##### **5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

There are no Legal or Governance implications in respect of this report.

##### **5.3 Risk Implications**

There are no risk implications in respect of this report.

##### **5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications**

Such a facility would meet the needs of both the Worcester Play Plan and the Council's City Plan 2022-2027 (Stronger and Connected Communities and a Healthy and Active City).

## 5.5 Equality Implications

The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy has supported the design and public consultation activities. The facility would allow children with different levels of ability to participate alongside one another and help to build their skills and confidence. Section 106 monies have been approved for the provision of benches and bins which would contribute to making the site more accessible.

## 5.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no HR implications in respect of this report.

## 5.7 Health and Safety Implications

Due to the proposed location having restricted access for heavy plant and machinery, the delivery and transportation of materials and equipment would need to be managed appropriately via the contractors RAMS documentation, particularly in the area adjacent to the children's play area.

## 5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

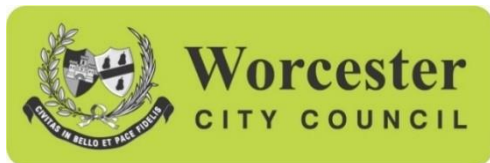
The provision of play sites generally delivers increased social value by providing children and young people the opportunity to play and be active, to develop friendships and social skills through interaction with their peers, and it also allows parents/grandparents and guardians with an opportunity to socialise and meet with friends.

Although further work would need to be undertaken in respect of historical monuments should the project progress, work to date has not identified any environmental implications although some narrative within the consultation results raised concerns around noise, littering, antisocial behaviour and damage to green spaces etc.

There are no economic implications associated with this report.

<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>Battenhall and St Peters</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Alan New – Lead Commissioner for Leisure, Play, and Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>
<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>alan.new@worcester.gov.uk</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>N/A</b>

## Appendix 1 – Public Consultation Information Leaflet



October 2023

### **PROPOSAL FOR A PUMP TRACK IN BATTENHALL PARK**

Worcester City Council is proposing to install a new pump track facility in Battenhall Park, St Peter's Ward, Worcester and we would like to know what you think about our plans.

#### **What is a pump track?**

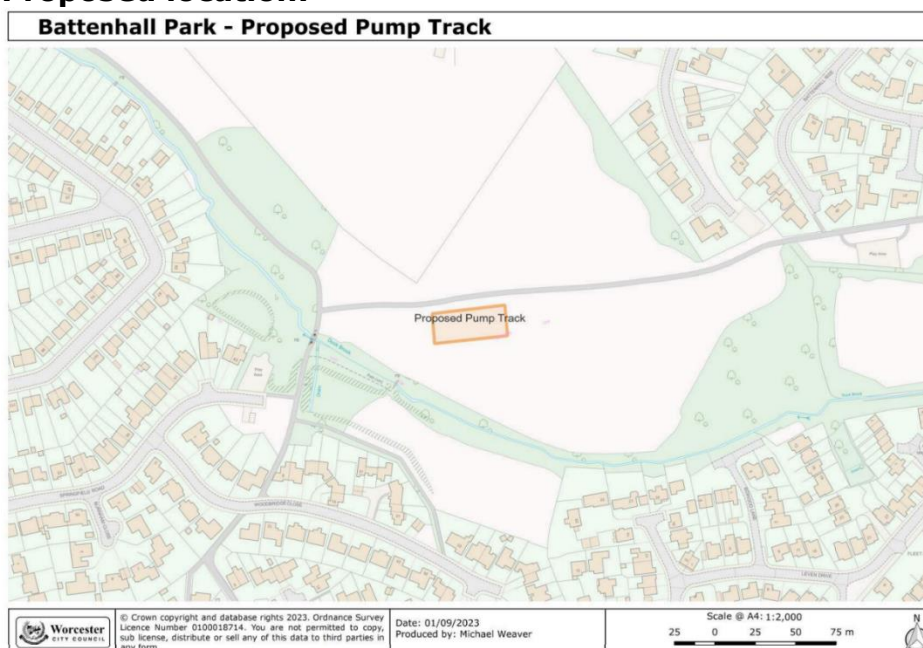
A pump track is an undulating looped tarmac track that you can ride continuously around using body movements (pumping) for propulsion. The track has bumps, small jumps and corners. They are designed for people of all ages and skill levels using an adaptive bike or wheelchair, bike, scooter, skateboard, roller blades or wheelchair.

#### **What are the benefits of a pump track?**

Some of the benefits of a pump track are:

- Encouraging physical activity and improving health and wellbeing for users of all ages.
- A safe place to learn new skills away from the public highway.
- Helps to reduce anti-social behaviour by providing an interesting activity.
- A great place to make friends and have fun!

#### **Proposed location:**





The proposed location is towards the middle of Battenhall Park just south of the main pedestrian /cycle route through the park. Access to the track can be from various directions.

### **Example track design:**



The proposed footprint of the track is approximately 50m long x 20m wide. The track riding surface will be 2m wide and approx. 100m in total length. Riders must follow the track arrows and it can be used in sections or as a continuous loop. The track design can incorporate straights, a variety of left and right-hand bends and feature obstacles such as double and triple jumps.

The track will be constructed to blend in with the landscape. The boundary slopes will be turfed in order to minimise the visual impact.

### **Pump track at St George's Park, Kidderminster**



## **Appendix 2 – Public Consultation Results**