

# Future of Hermitage Recreation Ground and former leisure centre site

Developing Hermitage Recreation Ground | Phase 1: An eco-park at Hermitage

**Stakeholder engagement: Monday 3 April – 15 May 2023**

Residents and stakeholders were asked to provide their feedback on the proposed plans to develop part of Hermitage Recreation Ground into an eco-park.

This summary details the feedback that we received from residents and key stakeholders such as Whitwick Parish Council through either written form or online survey responses:

Feedback opportunity	Date	Details	Responses
Comments in writing	3 Apr – 15 May	Residents and stakeholders were invited to submit their comments in writing to Community Focus or by email to <a href="mailto:community.focus@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">community.focus@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a> .	2
Online survey	3 Apr – 15 May	Live online	95 returned
Total surveys returned through these methods:			<b>97</b>

In addition, **Whitwick Parish Council** was provided with a summary document and supporting documents. Officers attended its meeting on 16 March and the parish council was asked to provide formal feedback by Sunday 15 May.

## Summary of feedback

### Written feedback

Written feedback provided by two residents were supportive of the eco park and included suggestions for the improvements:

- Improved play equipment on the existing park with more picnic benches in this area
- Improved car park access for residents as the on street parking is very tight. Maybe a fob to be able to use out of hours
- An outdoor tennis court and skate park for older children and teens

- Fishing club for children who want to fish but parents don't!
- Sensory / herb garden
- Make the paths more wheelchair friendly and include play equipment such as a wheelchair swing and / or wheelchair accessible roundabout.
- Small cafe
- Information signs about the wildlife in the area.

The Community Focus team also wrote directly to other stakeholders and other users of the site asking them if they would like to provide feedback on the plans. These include:

- Hermitage Trail Club
- Ashby Angling
- Whitwick Athletic
- Bardon Juniors
- Power Play
- Ingles Football Club
- Coalville Town Football Club
- Ibstock United
- Ellistown Football Club
- Heather Hawkettes
- Four private bookings that use the site.

No comments or feedback were received following this communication.

Engagement method	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans reflect their idea of an eco-park	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans will encourage people to visit the eco-park	Agreed / strongly agreed that the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	73%	73%	74%
<b>TOTAL (PEOPLE)</b>	70	70	71

Engagement method	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans reflect their idea of an eco-park	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans will encourage people to visit the eco-park	Disagreed / strongly disagreed that the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	17%	17%	18%
<b>TOTAL (PEOPLE)</b>	16	16	17

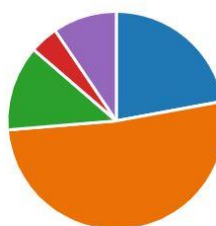
Engagement method	Had no preference that the plans	Had no preference that the plans will	Had no preference that the plans
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	reflect their idea of an eco-park	encourage people to visit the eco-park	support the health and wellbeing of residents
Online survey	9%	9%	7%
<b>TOTAL (PEOPLE)</b>	9	9	7

1. Do you think that the plans reflect your idea of an eco-park?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	21
Agree	49
Disagree	12
Strongly disagree	4
Neutral	9

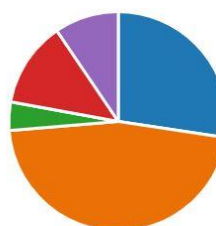


2. Do you think that the plans will encourage people and families to visit the eco-park?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly Agree	26
Agree	44
Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	12
Neutral	9

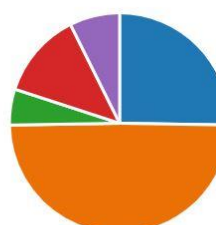


3. Do you think the plans support the health and wellbeing of residents within the area?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Strongly Agree	24
Agree	47
Strongly disagree	5
Disagree	12
Neutral	7



### Summary of online comments

Residents and stakeholders were also asked if they had any further comments to make. Overall, they were fairly neutral with people saying that they agreed with the plans but had some suggestions as to how they could be improved.

Negative comments focussed on funding, the works at Cropston Drive and plans to develop Hermitage Leisure Centre (HLC), and in particular housing. Apart from the funding, these are separate to the plans to develop part of Hermitage Recreation Ground into an eco-park.



### Positive

- They liked the designs
- Excited by the plans
- Will enhance the local area and benefit residents
- Looking forward to seeing plans develop
- Would really like the trim trail and things to get the kids outside
- Hermitage Recreation Ground is a perfect family location
- Will be good for the area

### Neutral

- General comments about the use of HLC
- A ban on dogs off leads
- Concerns about ASB
- Maintenance of equipment
- Would like to see a café / tea room
- No information on facilities e.g. toilets
- Would like to see more seating
- Would like to see a skate park
- Parking concerns
- Congestion concerns
- Redevelopment of play area
- Wildflower planting
- Walking / running track
- Lighting to make people feel safe in the dark

- Considerations for wheelchair users for paths and trim trail
- Sensory garden
- More trees
- More activity wise
- Need a more detailed plan

### Negative

- Comments about housing at HLC
- Comments about the works at Cropston Drive
- Funding could be better spent elsewhere
- Very little difference from what is there already
- Disappointing use / waste of the money
- Area should be kept as it is

## Communications summary

### Social media

Six posts were shared on Facebook to direct people to have their say on the online survey. This resulted in:

Total reach = 26,114

Total engagements (reactions, shares, comments) = 73

Comments include:

*“Flat cycle track?”*

*“Is this going where the old hermitage centre was?”*

*“Will they be wheelchair accessible?”*

*“Isn’t there already or was a trim trail which no one used? This doesn’t include the site of the old hermitage is there a café? Toilets in this plan?”*

*“Am I missing something? Is Coalville the only place in NWL?”*

*“Are you stopping the council from cutting down trees in and around cities and towns, because we need trees for oxygen and carbon reduction, (photosynthesis nature’s carbon scrubber) will you save our trees, lives could depend on it. Tree branches block 5G signals and it’s why their cutting trees down in favour of 5G instead of our health n life quality. Personally ban 5G until it’s proved safe.”*

### Media coverage

To spread the word about the online survey, we issued a news release to our local distribution list. In total, we had four pieces of coverage including:

- Nub News (online)
- Leicester Mercury (print)
- Leicestershire Live (online)
- Coalville Times (print)



By LEE GARRETT  
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COUNCIL bosses have confirmed land next to a demolished former leisure centre will become an eco-park.

The fate of the Hermitage Recreation Ground had been unclear for several months, but officials say the first phase of the green project will start soon.

The recreation ground, which stands next to the former Hermitage Leisure Centre in Whitwick, is currently vacant, but residents had feared it could be turned into housing alongside the new flattened Hermitage building.

However, bosses at North West Leicestershire District Council always denied this would be the case and put forward a number of proposals for the area.

Among these was transforming part of the land into an eco-park in a bid to boost nature in the area. Exact costs for the scheme are not clear, but the council has said it will receive more than £500,000 in funding from five contributors.

The eco-park was one of several ideas put forward to the public by the council last year, with officials confirming that 92 per cent of people backed the idea.

If fully approved, it would see one-third of the land between the former leisure centre and its replacement on Stephenson Way transformed into three distinct zones.

The eco-park would be one such area and would include more trees, the installation of footpaths and an outdoor adventure trail.

The public is now being asked about these specifics to take the eco-park plan forward.

Paul Sanders, head of community services at the council, said: "Based on feedback, we're now ready to progress with plans to develop an eco-park."

"We already know that people are supportive, we now just need to know what they think of our vision."

"Feedback is really important to us and would encourage residents to take a look at the plans and let us know what they think."

Consultations run until mid-May. From there, the plan will be presented to cabinet in July and, subject to approval, work could start later this year.

The other two zones of land are not ready for public consultation.

Previously, the council laid out plans to turn these into an active community zone with new play equipment and cafe.

The fate of the former Hermitage Leisure Centre site is also yet to be finalised, with housing seen by council bosses as the most "likely" option.

More information on the plans can be found on the council website.

The consultation closes on May 14.

**“**  
We already know that people are supportive, we now just need to know what they think of our vision  
**”**  
Paul Sanders



REPLACED: The old Hermitage Leisure Centre has been demolished and the fate of the site is still undecided - though housing looks to be the most likely outcome

## PLANS UNVEILED TO TRANSFORM HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND

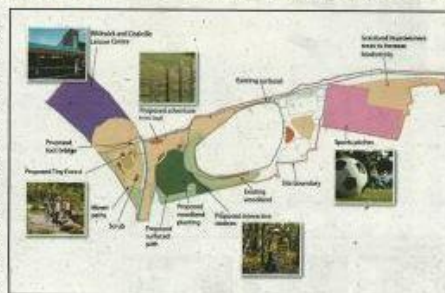
By ADAM REID

**NORTH West Leicestershire District Council have unveiled plans to transform a section of Whitwick's Hermitage Recreation Ground and are asking residents to give their opinion on the potential project.**

The proposal would see a segment of the grounds turned into an eco-park in the first phase of the council's plans to develop the whole site.

The eco-park could see more woodland, grassland, improved, a tiny forest, and an adventure trail.

The idea for the project stemmed from a survey conducted by North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) in July last year, when residents were asked how they



would like to see the recreation ground become. From the scheme listed, 92 per cent of respondents either supported or strongly supported the idea of an eco-park.

Now, local residents are being asked what they think the plans and have until Sunday, May 14, to share their feedback on the council's website.

Paul Sanders, head of community services at NWLDC, said:

"Based on previous feedback, we're now ready to progress with plans to develop an eco-park on part of the Hermitage Recreation Ground."

"We already know that people are supportive of the idea, so now just need to know what they think to our vision."

"Feedback from the community is really important to us and would encourage residents to take a look at

the plans and let us know what they think."

If plans go ahead, Leicestershire County Council, East Leicestershire Council, and the National Forest and Forestry Commission would work in partnership with NWLDC to make the eco-park a reality.

The project would also come at no extra cost to the council as taxpayers, and will receive over £500,000 in

funding from the National Forest Changing Landscapes Scheme, the Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescape Fund, Everyone Active, the Cragg, Derby and Waterworks Road housing development in Coalville, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The council has said that plans surrounding the second phase of the site's development - which will include an Active Community Zone and the future use of the former Hermitage Leisure Centre site - are still being made, although NWLDC have confirmed that the development of the eco-park will not be impacted by these plans.

Feedback from the online consultation will be presented to NWLDC's Cabinet in July, and subject to Cabinet approval, it's likely the project could get underway later this year, the council have said.

Members of the public can submit feedback until Sunday, May 14, via the website [www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage)

## Website

A dedicated web page was created to outline the plans and invite people to share their feedback at [www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage)

From 4 April until 15 May, the dedicated web page received 196 page views.

The press release was also shared on the news section of the website at [https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/news/2023/04/04/future\\_of\\_hermitage\\_recreation\\_ground\\_n\\_feedback\\_on\\_phase\\_one](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/news/2023/04/04/future_of_hermitage_recreation_ground_n_feedback_on_phase_one)

From 4 April until 15 May, the press release had 55 views.