

Lache Public Meeting Notes – 28 June 2023

Jane Makin welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for attending.

Cllr Tate was introduced as the newly elected ward member for Lache ward.

Cllr Pardoe was also welcomed as the new Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Regeneration and Digital Transformation.

Cllr Beacham is now the Deputy Chair of the Council and Leaders Champion for Chester and will still be involved in helping to deliver the agreed community priorities for Lache.

1. Sycamore Field Park update

Slide deck of the presentation available on

http://chester.westcheshiregrowth.co.uk/projects/lache-masterplan/?et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off

The draft designs presented are based on comprehensive engagement and consultation that has already taken place with the community. Approximately £250k (from various sources) is in place to deliver the regeneration of this space.

Priorities for improvement identified from consultation

- Under 12s' play area should be focus
- Improve the connectivity within and through the park, through better designed paths and routes.
- Learn to cycle loop
- Disabled parking close to the park, as well as accessible play equipment within it.
- Provide safe spaces for children to socialise and meet safely. Including 'making space for girls' and social seating
- Retain the existing Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)
- Retain informal area for ball games
- Consider improved lighting
- Wildflower planting to complement the Council's existing wildflower strategy

Question:

Has there been consideration of any provision for CCTV to cover the park?

Answer:

CCTV can be part of a response to high levels of reported anti-social behaviour, but it is not normally used in areas of high residential density to protect residents' privacy.

In the designers' experience, when you invest and improve facilities within parks and open spaces, more usage of these areas takes place, which creates a natural surveillance, reducing ASB and the area becomes self-policing without the need for CCTV.

The team will check if the CCTV Team have previously investigated use of a CCTV in this location and consider options for use of mobile CCTV if there have been high levels of anti-social reported incidents.

The main play equipment requests from respondents to the consultation were listed, this list is available in the presentation slide deck published on the Lache Vision webpage. They include climbing, swings, slides, roundabout, playhouse, play panels, parents' seating, trampoline, zip wire. Strong commentary on children wanting equipment which can be inclusive and which they can play on together.

The working design presented today is version 4 of the possible designs. The designers now have the task of balancing desired park elements with the available budget, to produce a design that meets everyone's aspirations and will be subject to tender and it is possible further changes may be required as part of this process.

Question: Is there an opportunity to deliver a workshop looking at co-design with young people?

Answer: The current working design is a result of an extensive consultation with the whole community including children, families and young people, which included looking at design and layout. Design workshops were also undertaken in the schools with children. It was also agreed to work with Sian Hughes from Cheshire West Communities Together to discuss the proposed designs with children and families in Lache.

Question: Why does the gate to the existing fence that encloses the existing 12s' play area open outwards? It is possible to young children to push the gate to exit the play area quite easily

Answer: The gate opens outwards to prevent dogs from being able to push it open and enter the play area. The fence/gate is not a measure to contain children in the space but to restrict dogs. We can look to include a latched gate.

Question: I have recently moved to Lache and think ASB in the area is an issue. I have been told there were dedicated Wardens and Rangers for Lache to help address ASB.

Answer: Lache previously had dedicated warden/rangers using short term external funding. Their role included addressing/responding to ASB. When the programmes ended so did the funding for the dedicated resource.

Community Safety Wardens and PCSO's still work in this area.

It is important to report all ASB through the police non-emergency number 101 or via the [Council's anti-social behaviour web page](#). As resources will only go to those areas where there are high levels of reported incidents.

Call 999 when an immediate response is required.

Sanctuary Housing Officers can also be consulted on issues too.

It was proposed to include ASB as an agenda item for a future Lache Public Meeting.

2. Feedback from last Public Meeting on 16 March

Grass cutting on Sycamore Field - information on the frequency of grass cutting undertaken by the Council, along with how to report long grass, can be found on the Council website:

[Grass and grounds maintenance | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

The Sidings biodiversity net gain matrix assessment is being organised by the Council's Senior Environmental Officer – Laura Hughes.

Question: Is the biodiversity net gain matrix assessment for 'The sidings' being undertaken internally by the Council or by an external organisation? If external, what is the cost? What will the study cover?

Answer: The Council does employ a registered ecologist, but some works are also externally contracted due to capacity. The assessments for both the Backies and the Sidings are both being undertaken by Cheshire Wildlife Trust. This work was subject has been procured in line with council policies and procedures, and combined fall into the £1,000-£5,000 price bracket. The exact price is not subject to disclosure as it is considered to be commercially sensitive as it may affect our ability to contract similar services with other contractors in the future.

Further details on a biodiversity net gain matrix assessment can be found

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-metric-calculate-the-biodiversity-net-gain-of-a-project-or-development>

Question: Why is the Sidings biodiversity net gain matrix assessment needed if there are no plans to develop it?

Answer: Part of the land at the Sidings were purchased so that it could be used for the delivery of a Western Relief Road (bypass) for Chester. As this is no longer an active proposal, the Council will need to consider what they will do with site. In order to inform future thinking on possible options – the study is being undertaken – as this, together with historic information, will help us understand the range of options which can be considered, and if any can be ruled out from the onset. The Council has no predetermined view on the Sidings.

Question: Is there still a housing building quota for the Council?

Answer: The Adopted Local Plan, which goes through a public enquiry as part of its adoption, sets out the identified housing need and identifies sites for potential development. All proposals for development are subject to the Council's robust planning process. The net requirement for new housing across the borough between 2010 and 2030 is 22,000 (1,100 per annum average) of which 17,848 have been completed by end of 2022.

Question: Residents feel like there is already enough housing and we have 'done our bit' – and we don't want any more.

Answer: While we hear many local residents' view that there has been too much development, there is still an identified need for new housing with a waiting list for social and affordable housing.

The Council has a legal obligation to provide a 5-year supply of sites suitable for development to deliver the Local Plan. Failure to have this pipeline can result in the Planning Committee not being able to refuse permission on greenfield sites.

Cllr Pardoe also noted that he hears residents' frustration on the under-investment in services, like doctors or ambulances. It is important to understand that a lot of the issues have arisen from austerity policies affecting these services.

3. Community priority - Lache Community Centre

[Lache Community Centre online survey](#) was launched on 26 June and will be open until 20 September. Opinions are being sought on how Lache Community Centre is used.

4. Feedback from Lache Ward Steering Group - Leon Renilson, member of Friends of Backies

- The Backies/LAPA Field — biodiversity led amenity to improve this area for wildlife and residents to enjoy. This will not include building new housing on the site.
Update – Biodiversity uplift Matrix assessment has been commissioned on the Backies. Initial site meeting held.
- Community Centre – refurbishment of the existing building to improve facilities (not new build with upper floor apartments).
Update - the results of the survey will influence the redevelopment of Lache Community Centre.
- Sycamore Drive Park – focus on new children’s play equipment.
Update - as presented in the first part of this public meeting.
When the scheme has been fully configured, the proposed design will be presented to residents.
- Traffic/road improvements on Hawthorn Road and Poplar Place – understanding options to better manage traffic, making it safer to walk or cycle, and improving the way the area looks and feels.
Update - traffic survey completed earlier this year. Results and next steps to be discussed at future steering group.

The date of the next Lache Public Meeting is to be confirmed. Consideration will be given to extending the duration of the meetings.