

Banbury Town Council have the following comments and observations on this application:

1. The Town Council fear that the proposals may look good on paper as an initial capital project but the long term annual maintenance of the site is a serious cause for concern.
  - a. Access to many of the areas is restricted or non-existent and therefore the ongoing maintenance by plant and machinery cannot be undertaken without manual labour, which is expensive.
  - b. Experience of aspects of the landscaping have been used on other sites around Banbury with little success (i.e. Cattle Market site/s, Hanwell Fields Park)
  - c. This proposal is for a country park therefore should be made up of planting that is affordable and low maintenance the proposed scheme is neither of these.
2. The primary path does not indicate what lighting is being installed after the initial request was made some months ago for comments on the lighting of the area comments were passed back to CDC on this?
3. Some of what is being shown as landscaping is open to query as there does not seem to be an explanation in the key for the drawing/s i.e. red contoured area in the middle of the site, areas enclosed by blue lines (north of the school site), circular amenity landscape grass areas etc.
4. Island planting is not appropriate for ongoing maintenance and will become litter traps and facilitate antisocial behaviour, it would be far more beneficial for the island areas to be incorporated into the broader planting belts.
  - a. The mixes identified for the island beds does not clearly identify what preparation/ maintenance provisions are proposed, which will impact on long term maintenance. The mixes being identified for these areas is also of concern and should be made up of native species suitable for the landscape proposals and not include ornamental species like Potentilla, Choisya, Calluna (heather), Vaccinium (bilberry) etc.
5. The planting plans need to be supported by information regarding the implementation of the scheme. There are references on the drawing citing BS codes for planting, however these do not cover the preparation for and implementation of the extensive wildflower areas, reed beds, bund formation and hedge planting. Operations required in the establishment and maintenance period need to be outlined to ensure the scheme is successful.
  - a. Replacement periods for plant/tree/grass material need to be set out for any death, disease or vandalised. Information would also be required regarding any fertilisers, compost to be added to shrub beds prior or during planting.
  - b. The tree stakes mentioned (double staked with cross bar) are suitable for the specimen trees in grass but we need to know how the woodland trees and shrubs are to be staked and protected. Keeping the re around the base of the trees clear for 2 years plus will aid their establishment this needs to be outlined in the specification. Woodland tree planting density is not specified and yet must have

been calculated to get the number of the composition. Sizes and density of trees in the upper and lower canopy should be specified in order to judge the impact.

- c. There are concerns over the establishment of such large areas of wildflower. Banbury TC (and predecessor authorities) has been trying since 1984 to create a wild flower meadow on Spiceball Park that was previously agricultural land without success despite having introduced wild flower plus, seed mixes etc. These areas require ground with very low fertility that is not the case on agricultural land which has been regularly fertilized either by grazing or applications of fertiliser, without proper site preparation this could fail on a very large scale. With so many trees in Wildflower areas tree protection is paramount so as not to have excessive losses due to strimmer damage.
  - d. Castanea Sativa (Sweet Chestnut) seem to be proposed both in woodland and in grass at close centres when they have the potential to become large. Also given that Sweet Chestnut blight is rather rampant at the moment this may not be the best choice.
  - e. Tilia Cordata do not make a good avenue tree and should be located away from paths as these trees tend to drop limbs when mature and their excessive epicormics growth is again a problem along footpaths. Perhaps another type of lime is more suitable.
  - f. More amenity grass would be welcomed in strips along the footpaths to prevent encroachment.
6. There are insufficient dog bins around the area however if these could be combined with the litter bins it would be better and these need to be roofed bins with side (letter box style) flaps and be of sufficient size to cope with the local need.
  7. The idea of orchards on the site is applauded but does it have to be so regimented and more space is required between the rows to allow for maintenance, the maintenance of this park will be low maintenance so species requiring minimal management/maintenance should be chosen not garden species. Formative pruning of the fruit trees in the orchard and then the annual pruning needs to be outlined. The orchards seem to be dominated by apple. It would be good to include a small percentage of Pear, Plum, Greengage and Cobnuts. The centre between trees should be are 8 to 9 metres if this is to emulate 'Old Orchards' and to be grown on vigorous rootstock so that the trees have the potential to be large specimens.
  8. Short term and long term SUDS maintenance operation need to be outlined. There is a general lack of information on gradients of banks, ditches, SUDS and so it is difficult to comment on gradients suitable for mown grass. However, looking at the bunds they look too steep in sections for grass and these sections would be best planted if the gradient can't be reduced. The balancing ponds do not show inlet and outlet points or sizes of these which could be problematic in the future and access for maintenance equipment is not provided for. The bunding around the SUDS prevents easy access for maintenance, and along with the woodland belt which passes to the south of the bunding, creates a secluded area where

there are no view in. Being close to a school and housing this has the potential to be an area attracting anti-social behaviour. Perhaps the bunding could go to the north of the SUD.

9. More consideration is needed about the end use of the park and movement around the area both formal and informal pedestrian as well as mechanical. Dog walkers for instance like circular routes and grass cutting machinery require open spaces with width to get between obstacles and to areas of maintenance. Wild flower areas also require maintenance so they should be accessible to machinery.
10. We are unable to identify whether there could be potential problems with trees in relation to neighbouring residential property and effects on such planting with regard to subsidence/ property damage. Where standard or bigger trees are identified no sizes were provided. Specimen trees dotted throughout the amenity grass prevent long vistas, are a mowing problem and prevent informal games. These would be better incorporated into groups as in traditional parkland and placed carefully to reveal different areas of the parkland as you move around or just placed in the woodland mixed as large stock sizes.
11. Around the play area and MUGA the design and planting is totally inappropriate for the location in an informal local authority maintained site as this has been tried on the Cattle Market site and has not in my opinion been successful. If the area was in a formal setting such as a historic formal garden like Blenheim Palace it would be more appropriate.
  - a. The play area plans don't say if there is a railing as well as the hedge. This would be required as a minimum during the establishment of the hedge and for sections where there is no hedge.
  - b. The 'Large Shrub Mix' on either side of the MUGA has a mix of sizes of plants. Some of these species such as the Cornus and the Viburnum can get very large and are not suitable next to a footpath and could cause visibility into the MUGA to be impeded. A small shrub mix around the perimeter of the beds would prevent plants encroaching onto the hard standing. A large shrub mix is best used in selective locations where the width of the bed provides adequate space and where it doesn't impede natural surveillance.
12. W12 Fagus Sylvatica woodland is not a good choice for Banbury, it is more typical of free draining calcareous soils normally found on chalk escarpments. The heather understory is more suited to moorland habitats, the Bilberry in this mix again likes light loamy well drained soils. W16 Quercus and Betula woodland has little tree understory. Potentilla is in the mix twice making a total of 20% of the understory.
  - a. Drawing number 5205/CP-ASP 2.5 rev D – The proposed topography (not in the KEY) is shown to have formal amenity grass on what appears to be a steep bank. This would not be maintainable and the formal grass area should be located on more of a ground level.
  - b. 5205/ASP/CP.PP4.4 - a Carpinus Betulus next to the zip line has the potential to get large and may be best located in the hedge or relocated.

13. There is a large amount of grasses around the play area even the herbaceous are grasses.  
Bin types, benches, gates with self-closing hinges all need specification, along with details of the equipment and the safety surfacing would be welcome.

The proposals provided would be expensive/ difficult to maintain and could cause problems for the safety of potential users, diminishing the amenity and aesthetic value of the site. Banbury Town Council are supportive of the application in principal but feel there is many issues with this application and requires revisiting.