

Friends of Friendly Gardens & St Johns Greening 27 Nov 2023

Present: Alex, Christine, Jo, Frances, Jeff, Mandy, Paul, Joseph

Apologies: Nick

Minutes

- 1) Discussed the results of the Park competition – with first place to Chloe Hamblen.
 - Katie Delaney, Chloe and Alex are speaking on Friday
 - Will approach Thames Water or see if we can get another funder
 - The max for the brief was £100k
 - Called Chloe in via Teams: she talked us through the Master Plan for Friendly Gardens. Her key points:

There were a few things that needed addressing in the brief:

- A lot of disparate play equipment, there's a need for better flow around the park
- Some areas that feel safe, inaccessible, attract anti-social behaviour, want to make a way through the park
- Want to find a way to unify the park & keep it safe
- Want to keep it authentic and sustainable, so that it can continue to be cared for and developed
- North corner: have That Place in the Park. Wasn't part of the brief, but incredibly important that it's part of the design. It's been there for decades, the women do brilliant work, the park is bordered by schools. To foster engagement and care of the space, it needs to be connected. Add an entrance next to it on Thornville st.
- Children's play area as a cordoned off area of a park – easier for parents, makes sense of it, consolidates it. With some new parasol trees to provide shade – stop for a coffee/relax.
- Move some of the existing play equipment, the old wood, with some bark paths and willow tunnels
- Add some sand into the pirate's lair. Naturally fenced off – to create a dead hedge, softens it all, makes it natural.
- Woodland, shade tolerant planting
- Westerly corner: include another entrance. Currently it's a dead end, it's a bit sketchy. Where there's a broken down wall and ping pong table. We can reuse the bricks, plant some shade tolerant plants, make & paint some bird houses – so it feels less unloved
- Include some apple/nut trees as a nod to an orchard, so there's something productive there
- SE corner – where Thames water is – where the main entrance is. Lots of planting around here. The signage is unwelcoming (No Dogs Allowed) (which is ignored) – we can create (like John Little (Clapton Estate)) signage to be more welcoming and colourful, get some habitat signage in. Added lots of bins everywhere.

- Proposed sand– or could use gravel. Suggesting it's an adult/teen exercise space – to be integrated, multi-generational. Skate ramp included, a snake swing, girls feel they can get involved in this. And move the ping pong table over to this area. No water fountain at the moment – hope it will be included.
- Wildlife pond in the easterly area – the biggest slope in the park. The former paddling pool feels intimidating and stark. Add timber seating around the pond, a platform for a performance space – and Lewisham has such a vibrant history, with sound system culture, music so key – a space for that is quite important.
- Regenerate the post space with seating.
- Greenhouse in the plan – community garden – in the sunny bit by Thornville. Having a community gardener there once a week. Having someone paid, and there consistently, means there is a hub for the volunteers, to enable engagement, can do workshops with the kids, they can look at propagation, potentially work with Glendale – would like to have a creative maintenance plan.
- A lot of planting will help soften it – soft landscaping is lower budget than hard landscaping.
- Would make events etc. much easier if some money got invested in the building
- Parasol trees create shade over seating
- Colour scheme is inspired by the Pink House in Lewisham – pinks, oranges, yellows.
- Inspired from the grey to green planting – flood & drought tolerant
- With some structure from grasses and evergreens, a mixture of shapes, buddleia, spikes, fluffy things.

2) Reactions from committee members:

- This could be a phased approach – the plan could be done gradually
- Lewisham don't generally have parks designed by professionals – how do we bridge between the professional design and the council?
- Greenhouse and veg patch are a long way away – you need a charity involved, with paid staff etc
- It's a big idea – need to drill down and make it more practical
- There are some small wins that could make it 'safer by design' like bringing down the wall
- What are our priorities (each person gives their view):
 - a. The paddling pool: wooden seating with a performance area and nice planting behind
 - b. Zoning it, moving the gates around: integrating people
 - c. A path from the Tesco entrance across to the play area (inaccessible at the moment to buggies and wheelchairs)
 - d. The natural fencing (e.g. willow hedging) around the play area & investing in planting – there are too many toilet bushes which aren't particularly attractive or wildlife friendly
 - e. Planting trees

- 2) Procurement & costs from the council will be very high – and council will insist that it's all maintainable. Jeff's suggestion is to agree about the basic things that we want to go in, and what the institutional infrastructure required to deliver this will be.
 - a. Could we be a sub-group of SJS greening?
 - b. Or part of a broader Friends group in the area? May be problematic to dissolve the FOFG group as the council needs a friends group to engage with. Other green areas in SJS: rain garden, church garden
 - c. Should we create a green network in the area? Potentially access to larger grants, greater efficiencies. Could create at least lines of communication with the other parks.
 - d. Memorial garden doesn't have a friends group – there's a suggestion for how to make the planting more perennial
 - e. Could you do a little map of the local green spaces – Broadway Fields, etc.

As an aside: In 2000 Friendly Gardens had a millennium project to make a 'skate park' – it was done 'quick and dirty' (Channel 4).

- 3) Traffic tubes – are being installed in all entrances to St J. They want to keep heavy loads to the A roads. Hopefully by the end of November.
- 4) Next steps:
 - a. After meeting with Katy – Alex to feed back
 - b. Scan for funding opportunities again – and think about where to focus resources
 - c. Take the proposals to Thames Water
 - d. Show our own proposal that we could do with our own steam with our own money – something visible that people can actually see e.g. trees or a path.
 - e. All agreed to focus on the Amphitheatre area
- 5) Jo to write about the broken fence – from FOFG (raised at a meeting as a concern)