Placing residents at the heart of the design process:

Making improvements to pocket parks in Crewe

April 2022

HM Government

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CREWE

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Introduction

Cheshire East Council (CEC) are in the process of acquiring funding to improve 8 parks and accompanying public open space across Crewe.

We partnered with Cheshire East to listen to residents and place them at the very heart of the design process.

The objectives were to:

- Explore residents' **current views and attitudes** of the eight pocket parks in Crewe.

- Explore the **driving and restraining forces** to accessing the parks.

- **Co-create a vision for the future** about how the parks can be improved.

- Explore what residents can do to **support the sustainability** of the parks in future.

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What we did

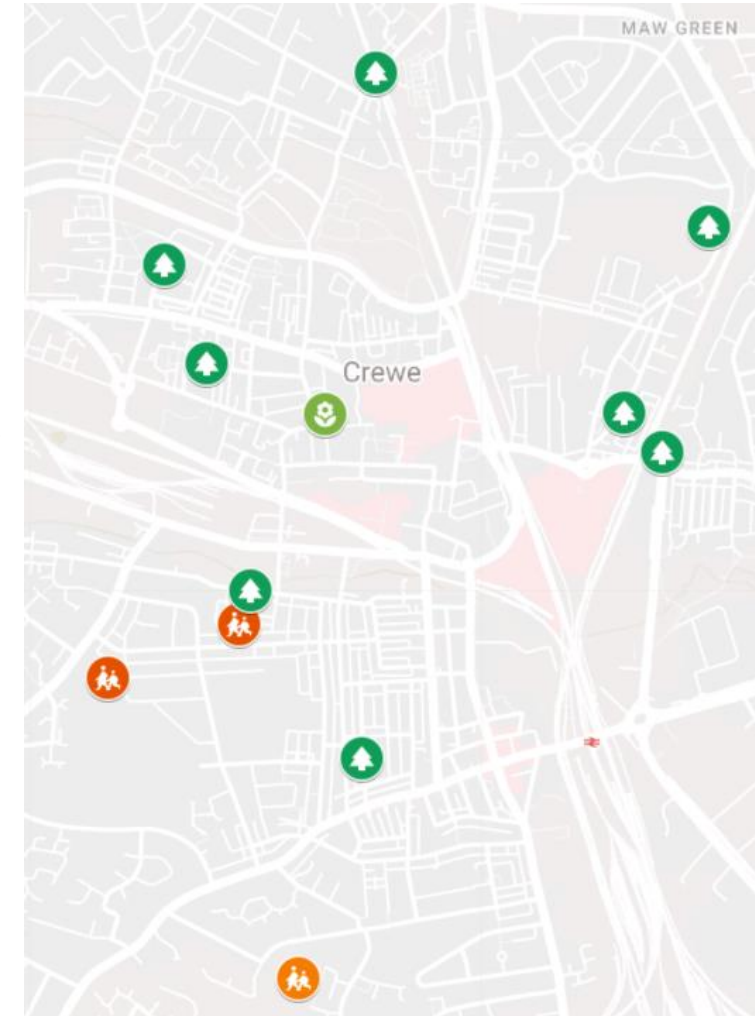1. **Virtual co-design focus groups**
   - A contact form was created for residents to express their interest in participating in a virtual co-design session.
   - Three virtual co-design sessions to gather in-depth understanding.

2. **'Vox pop' interviews in the community and parks**
   - We spent 2.5 days on-site in Crewe visiting each of the eight pocket parks, Jubilee Gardens and the surrounding areas.

3. **Co-design groups in schools**
   - Pebble Brook Primary School.
   - Edleston Primary School.
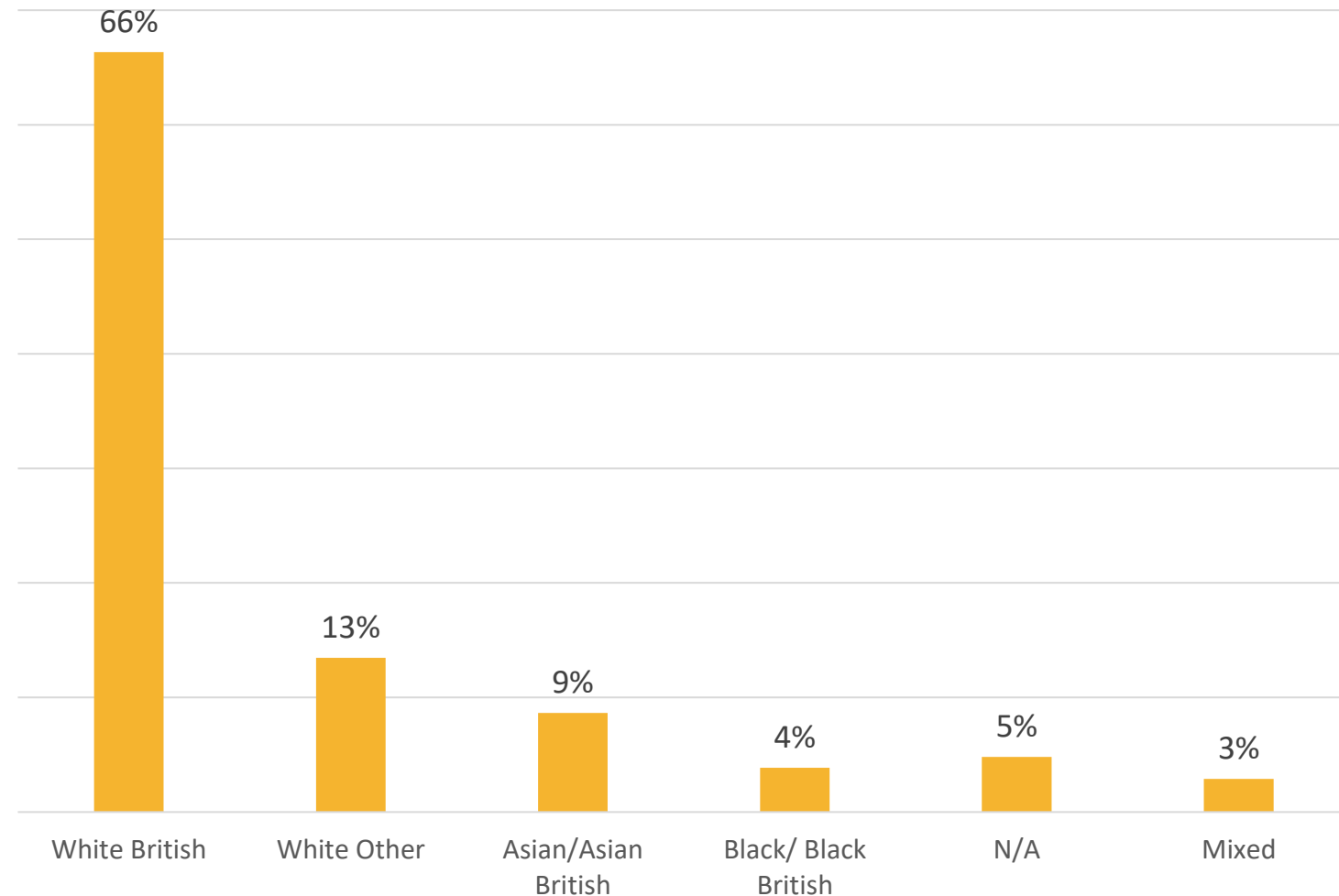   - The Oaks Academy (Secondary School).

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1. Virtual co-design focus groups

- A **total of 103 individuals** complete the contact form. From those, **34 expressed an interest in taking part** in one of the virtual groups and were consequently invited, with **12 participants** attending one of the three groups.

- The final sample included a representation of individuals across:
  - Age – **25–65+ years.**
  - Gender - **75% Females**.
  - Ethnicity – **White British (92%),** 8% 'Prefer not to say'.

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2. 'Vox pop' interviews

- A total of **104 Crewe residents** were interviewed.

- The final sample included a representation of individuals across:
  - Age - **12-86 years.**
  - Gender (**54% Females, 43% Males** and 3% N/A)
  - Ethnicity, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Ethnicity Breakdown of Sample (N=104)

	White British	White Other	Asian/Asian British	Black/ Black British	N/A	Mixed
%	66%	13%	9%	4%	5%	3%

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Co-design groups in schools – Sample characteristics

- Pebble Brooke Primary School and Edleston Primary School
  - We engaged with a **Year 5/6 class** of students in each of the schools.

- The Oaks Academy
  - We engaged with the Student Leadership Team which included **students from years 7-11.**

- All groups were supported by graphic scribing to help engage children in the discussion (see Appendix 1-3).

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1 Introduction of applied theory

2 What are the **driving forces** to using the pocket parks?

3 What are the **restraining forces** to using the pocket parks?

4 What **needs to happen** to encourage residents to use the parks?

5 Insight-led **recommendations**
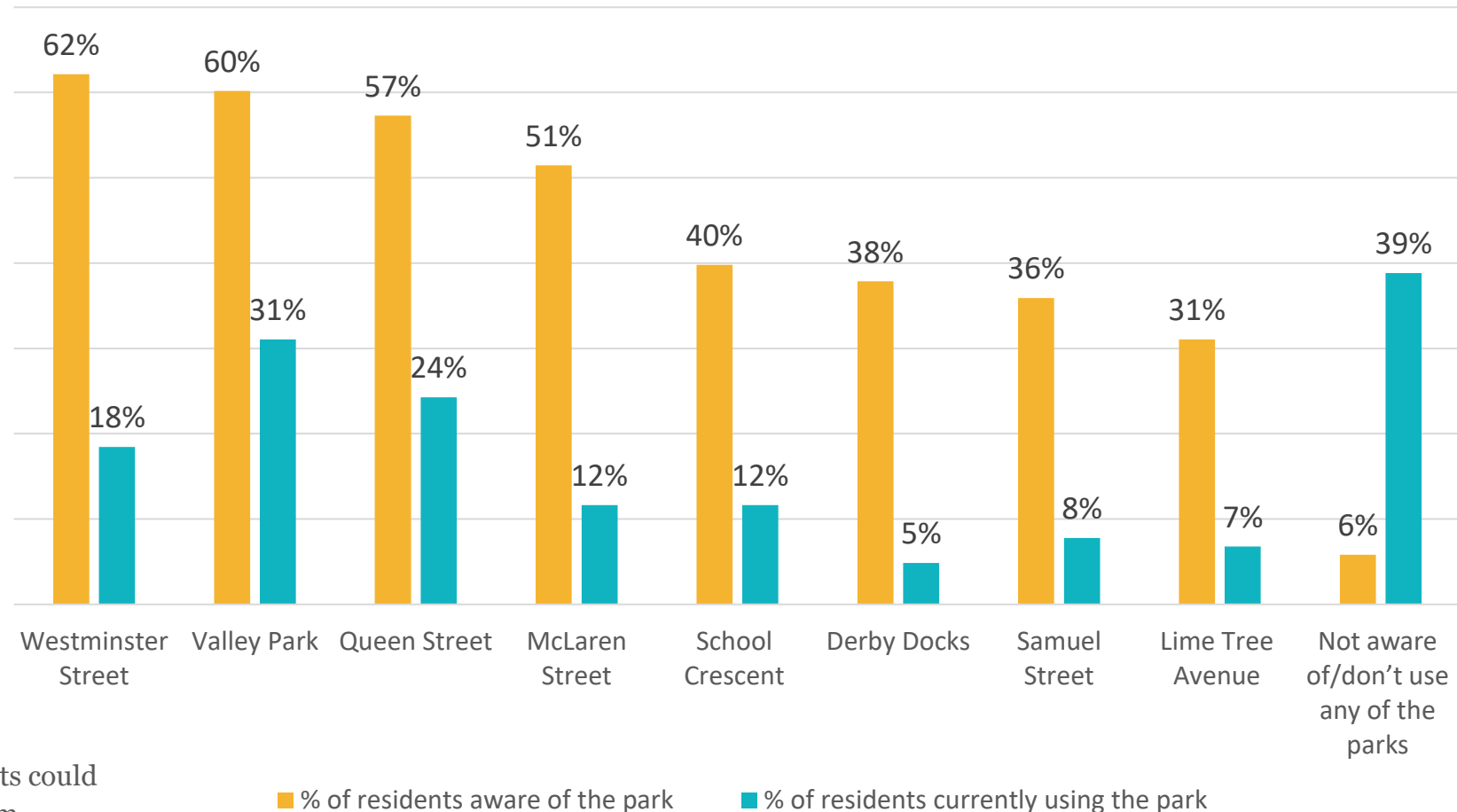
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What influences behaviour?

Behaviour is influenced by **driving forces** (the factors that motivate a person to do something, and **restraining forces** (the factors that prevent this from happening).

Attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, as well as social and environmental factors can all influence behaviour.

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Awareness vs Current use of pocket parks

Understanding driving/ restraining forces will help us to understand what needs to be done to encourage residents to visit their local parks.

Figure 2: Awareness vs current use of pocket parks (N=103)

	Westminster Street	Valley Park	Queen Street	McLaren Street	School Crescent	Derby Docks	Samuel Street	Lime Tree Avenue	Not aware of/don't use any of the parks
% aware	62%	60%	57%	51%	40%	38%	36%	31%	6%
% using	18%	31%	24%	12%	12%	5%	8%	7%	39%

■ % of residents aware of the park   ■ % of residents currently using the park

Please note, percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents could select multiple parks. Data was collected from the contact form.

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What are the driving forces to using the pocket parks?

What are the driving forces to using pocket parks?

Reasons residents use the pocket parks:

- Take children / grandchildren to play.
- To exercise and play sport.
- Dog walking.
- As a walk through because '*it's nicer than walking on the pavement*'.
- To get out and be in nature – green areas with trees, flowers and grass are '*nice*' and '*peaceful*'.
- To relax and read.
- To socialise and meet like minded people via organised events.
- To attend community events and celebrations.

Children use the pocket parks because:

- They are '*fun*', '*amazing*', '*cool*' and '*enjoyable*'.
- They '*bring you happiness*'.
- To play on all the equipment, play with friends and ride their bikes.

> '*Pocket of wilderness adventure*' – Valley Park resident

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What are the restraining forces to using the pocket parks?

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What are the restraining forces to using the pocket parks?

Reasons why residents don't visit the pocket parks:

Anti-social behaviour

- Teenagers and adults drinking, smoking and taking drugs in the parks.
- Whilst there they rip up the soft rubber floors in the play areas, damage equipment, leave broken glass, needles and rubbish around the park.
- This makes residents and children feel 'unsafe', 'uncomfortable' and 'unhappy' and like they 'don't want to be at the park' so they don't go.

Off-leash dogs

- Mainly reported by parents and other dog-walkers who did not want off-leash dogs running up to them.
- Parents were worried about their children as in some of the parks where the play areas were not fenced off, dogs were running up to their children and scaring them, this made them feel uncomfortable and scared at times.

'Nature is a sanctuary, if you feel like you can't relax and you or kids are unsafe it is not this sanctuary.' – Parent

'One time I went to the park, I fell off my bike and cut my lip on the broken glass on the floor' – Primary school child

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What are the restraining forces to using the pocket parks?

Reasons why residents don't visit the pocket parks:

Dirty

- There was also a lot of rubbish, furniture and shopping trollies scattered in some of the parks along with broken glass and dog mess.

- Created a sense the parks were unkept and not looked after. As this was not dealt with it created the perception behaviour like this is acceptable and allowed to continue, worsening the problem.

- Participants held negative perceptions of the parks and did not want to visit them because they were not safe nor appealing.
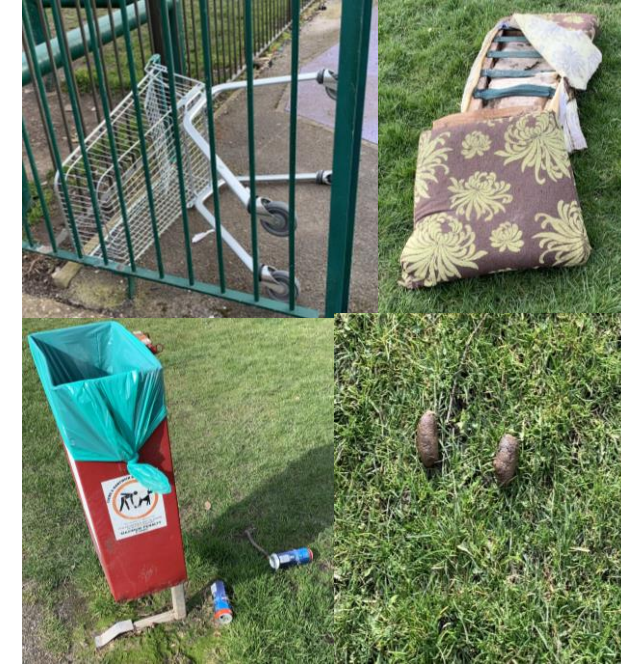
'Somewhere to dump your rubbish' – Resident (when asked to describe their local parks)

'I don't play football on the field anymore and don't let my kids either because there's so much uncleaned dog mess everywhere that I don't want them stepping into it' - Parent

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What are the restraining forces to using the pocket parks?

Reasons why residents don't visit the pocket parks:

Run down equipment

- Equipment was reported to be '*broken*', '*outdated*', '*rusty and squeaky*' and covered in offensive graffiti.

- This deterred both adults and children from visiting the parks, as it created a sense of unsafety among them. Some children reporting that the rusty and squeaky equipment made them feel worried when using it.

'I used to use the gym equipment but it's all broken now so I can't use it anymore' – Resident

'Roundabout is too heavy so my daughter can't push it anymore'– Parent

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What are the restraining forces to using the pocket parks?

Reasons why residents don't visit the pocket parks:

Non-inclusive equipment

- The parks were reported to lack inclusivity for children of different ages, abilities and with different conditions.

- The play areas within most parks had equipment for younger children only. This meant that older children found the parks 'boring' and didn't like going there because there was nothing for them to do.

- There was no equipment suitable for children with disabilities or special educational needs. This resulted in these families and children feeling unwelcomed and not visiting the parks.

'I have a few siblings with Autism and they get bored very easily so there needs to be a lot of fun and exciting equipment for them to play with otherwise they wonder off. At the moment, my mum doesn't take us to the parks because there is nothing for them.' – Secondary school child

'I rarely use the parks as my nieces have grown up. One of them is 11 but the parks don't have equipment for that age group' – Resident

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What needs to happen to encourage residents to use the parks?

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What needs to happen to encourage residents to use the parks?

- Residents provided a mix of responses which have been split into two categories:

  1. **Environmental changes** – this includes more practical suggestions regarding the equipment, landscape and facilities.

  2. **Social changes** – this includes more suggestions regarding increasing sense of community and overcoming anti-social behaviour.

- It is imperative we consider and take into account both the environmental and social factors together to **create a sustainable change for the future.**

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Inclusive equipment

- Across the research activities adults and children reported that equipment should be **more inclusive and cater for people of all ages, and abilities, including physical disabilities and SEN.**

- Children reported most of the equipment in the parks was for much younger children and they wanted to see more things such as:
  - Zip lines
  - Big round rubber swing
  - Climbing equipment such as climbing frames
  - Fitness equipment

- **Broken equipment needs to be fixed and painted in bright colours** to cover rust or offensive graffiti to make the parks look more appealing and fun for children to play in.

- **Soft but smooth floor with good grip** is needed. However, strips of concrete should remain for people who want to roller-skate or skateboard.
  - This will enable children to play and ride their bikes without worrying of falling over and hurting themselves.

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Sport facilities

- **MUGA** – children reported that they like using it and playing sport there such as football or basketball.
  - Primary school children said they want the fence of the MUGA to be brightly coloured.

- **Another sports area** – there was an appetite from children and adults alike for an area where they can play a range of other sports, such as badminton, tennis, hockey and table tennis where they bring their own bats.
  - This could be incorporated in the MUGA or it can be set up separately.

- **Separate BMX/Skateboarding area** which contains ramps and paths was reported as something children would like to see in parks, especially secondary schools ones.
  - They reported that by having that separate area, they would be able to ride their bikes without worrying that younger children may run across and they may crash into them and hurt them.

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Amenities

- **Toilets -** were a must reported by the majority of parents and children. If toilet facilities could not be put into the park, having an **agreement with a local business** could enable park users **to use their facilities** was suggested.

- **Café / catering van** – to provide residents with a place where they can **buy a drink or something to eat** which would increase the time they spend in parks. Additionally, the café/catering van would **act as a destination** and would drive people into the parks because they will have a **reason to visit them**, especially dog walkers and adults without children.

- **Seating area with/without shelter** – having more benches and seating area throughout the park rather than just in the play area was reported by residents.
  - Children additionally suggested having a sheltered area which they can use in the summer when it's very hot and sunny to rest from time to time and hide away from the sun.

- **Bike rack** – for children to lock their bikes when visiting the parks.

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Landscaping

- **More trees, plants and flowers** – to increase curb appeal and '*brighten up the parks*'.
  - Residents also mentioned that they hope the trees and plants attract more wildlife, birds and bees, and children would be able to interact with them, observe them and learn about them.

- **Garden** – for children to grow their own herbs, fruit and vegetables. Also used as a community space.

- **More natural materials used for equipment and flooring** – this was reported by adults and children. Some suggestions included:
  - Wood chippings instead of rubber floors in play areas.
  - Equipment made from wood instead of metal .

- **More bins and volunteers to visit the parks and maintain them.**
  - Only 2 bins in each park were noted and they were mainly within the play area, which is not enough. Additionally, signs or posters encouraging people to use the bins are necessary as some people were still not using the bins and throwing their rubbish next to them.

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Parks should be SAFE

To increase sense of safety within parks, **anti-social behaviour and vandalism had to be addressed**. Residents made several suggestions regarding how this can be done:

- **Park warden** or another individual to patrol the parks.

- **CCTV** to deter anti-social behaviour but also to be used to catch individuals if they do vandalise the parks and ensure there are consequences for them.

- **Better lighting** will make residents feel safer when walking through the parks at night and when combined with CCTV or park warden should further deter anti-social behaviour as individuals will be more visible at night.

- **Dog walking and dog free zones** to ensure that dogs which are off-leash are kept away from children in play areas and everyone is able to enjoy the park.

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Parks should be INCLUSIVE

Crewe is a diverse town with a significant proportion of people from across the world. Thus, residents stated that the parks need to be more inclusive of these individuals. Some suggestions included:

- Having **information points in different languages.**
  - With information about who to contact about reporting broken equipment and problems as well as information on how to access updates about whether the problem has been addressed.
- **User friendly website.**
  - With information about the parks including their location, areas and facilities. Currently only one of the eight pocket parks is listed on the Cheshire East website.

- **Simplification of booking form** for parks.
  - Some residents mentioned that the booking form was very long, which may put people off from booking the parks and using them for community events.

Changes not only need to be made to the **physical environment**, but **social changes** also need to be considered to prompt a sense of **civic pride** in the community

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Parks should be RESPECTED

Residents were asked what they can do to take pride in and look after their parks. Their responses included:

- Reiterating the message that **'parks are a community responsibility and not the council's.'**

- Encourage **involvement and advocacy from residents** to take care of their green space/parks.

- **School involvement** – as mentioned earlier, organising groups of students to visit the parks and do some maintenance and upkeep. This should increase ownership, responsibility and pride ensuring the children look after the parks.

- Increasing **awareness of existing volunteering groups**, so that more people can join them and also if people are more aware of the effort others are putting into keeping the parks clean they may look after them and respect them more.

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Parks should be a COMMUNITY SPACE

Increasing the sense of community among residents was an important finding from the research activities. Residents reported that they want to see parks being a space for the whole community to gather and connect. Suggestions included:

- Having a **community hub** within parks, which should increase sense of community and connection among residents.

- **Organising activities and events** within the parks.
  - Holiday clubs, events and activities for children during half-term or weekends.
  - Community events celebrating different cultures held at a different park each weekend.

- **Bolstering of positive news** around the parks is needed to overcome the 'bad press' and change people's perceptions.

'If you take a closer look at Crewe, there are a lot of things that you can enjoy, there's a lot of things you can take in like the scenery, the people, the parks. You can really experience a lot from such a small town, but when you get used to it, you don't appreciate it as much.' – Secondary School Child

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Insight-led recommendations

1. Public engagement to encourage community activities and increase sense of pride and ownership

- Launch a campaign to encourage **user generated content** to amplify benefits of the community/ parks. Sparking inspiration and collective pride.

- Empower the community to choose how to use THEIR public spaces – **take ownership** on how we shape your parks.

- Encourage **community groups with innovative ideas/ activities** to apply for designated funding to use the parks.

- Target voluntary, community groups to take up the opportunity first.

- **Share stories** of what community groups/ projects have done.

- Launch Council-led **'pop-up events'** in the parks – acting as a catalyst to raise awareness and showcase ideas.

- **Make it easy** to find out what's on and book public spaces (simplified online form).

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Left column documents:

Cheshire East Council

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

EVENTS

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE USE OF COUNCIL LAND OR PREMISES

Index

	Page No
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Booking an event	3
3.0 Planning an event	4
4.0 Organising an event	6
5.0 After an event	11
6.0 Risk assessment	11
7.0 Useful publications	12
Appendix 1 - Application Form	13
Appendix 2 - Event Safety	20
Appendix 3 - Event and Site Charges	21

April 2020 - March 2021

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1

1.0 Introduction

This guidance has been produced in order to assist both internal and external organisations who are looking to arrange events on Council owned land or premises. It is anticipated that the information provided will apply to events such as summer fetes, carnivals, parades, road races, concerts, bonfires, firework displays and fairs. Details are also provided on how to apply to run a street collection.

For any event to run successfully it is essential that there are strong lines of communication between the interested parties, these including the event organiser, the manager of the site (e.g. town centre, park, car park, leisure centre) the Outdoor Events Manager and the Council's Assets/Facilities teams.

Applications to hold an event should be made by completing an event application form (see 2.0 overleaf). Some events will also require that either a licence or permission is obtained from the Council's Assets/Facilities Section e.g. commercial activities, prolonged visits by fairs and circuses on Council owned land. The Assets/Facilities Section can be contacted via the Property East Helpdesk on property@cheshireeast.gov.uk or by telephoning the Helpdesk on 01270 686888.

Larger events will require specialist guidance and it is anticipated that the organisers of large events external to the Council will employ their own safety advisers who must contact the Outdoor Events Manager prior to the event taking place.

Middle column documents:

2.0 Booking an event

In order to arrange an event on Council owned land or premises it is necessary to complete an event application form. These can be obtained by contacting the Outdoor Events Manager at the address below and should be returned to the Outdoor Events Manager on completion.

Cheshire East Council,
Outdoor Events Manager,
Floor 2,
Municipal Buildings, Earl Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ.
Tel No: 01270 686785, Mobile No: 07834342979.

Alternatively the form can be completed on-line on the Council website and when completed should be forwarded to andrew.latham@cheshireeast.gov.uk. Forms for commercial events and those with an attendance more than 499 will be forwarded also to the Assets/Facilities Section. It is essential that the application to hold an event is received at least three months before the date of the event.

The Outdoor Events Manager will ensure that the form is completed correctly and will contact the event organiser for further information if this is required. The Outdoor Events Manager will also contact the manager of the land or premises to inform them of the proposal to hold the event, discuss any implications with them and send them a copy of the completed event application form.

Both the Outdoor Events Manager and the manager of the land or premises will be available to liaise with the event organiser in order to assist them with any procedural issues relating to use of the property. The Outdoor Events Manager will also act as a link with the Assets/Facilities Section in order to ensure that the proposed use of the property does not conflict with any legal constraints that may be upon it.

As long as there are no issues that need further clarification, the Outdoor Events Manager should be able to provisionally confirm with the event organiser that the land or premises can be used for the proposed event (provided that all other documentation required such as proof of appropriate insurance cover, licences, site plans, risk assessments and emergency evacuation plans is provided with the completed application form) within a period of 28 days from receipt of the form.

Any fees that may be charged for the use of the land or premises can be checked with the Outdoor Events Manager or the manager of the site. Examples of the types of fee that may be levied are given in on the website.

2.1 Street collections

If it is proposed to conduct a street collection **only**, with no stalls, attractions or other features present (in which case, this activity would be classed as a full public event) then an application should be made via the Cheshire East Licensing Department who can be contacted by telephone on: 0300123 5015 or via email on: licensing@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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1.0 Planning an event

Detailed and careful planning is essential to ensure that the event is successful. The following are a selection of the points that will need to be built into the plans for the event:

- Where the event is to be held. Consider:
  - Size of the event and crowd management (e.g. number of occupants in the area at any one time, movement from attraction to attraction etc);
  - Layout and space available for the audience;
  - Access and egress;
  - Temporary structures (and any certification required);
  - Camping areas;
  - Parking/Rendezvous points;
  - Ground conditions – avoid steep slopes and boggy areas;
  - Traffic and pedestrian routes and emergency access and exits;

Right column documents:

Appendix 1
Cheshire East Borough Council
Event Application Form

Name of Event: _____
Event Location: _____
Event Date: _____

Section One - Organiser Details

- Name of organisation: _____
- Event organiser/s: _____
- Contact address: _____

- Postcode: _____
- Tel No. – Home: _____
- Tel No. – Work: _____
- Mobile No: _____
- Fax No: _____
- e-mail address: _____
- Event public enquiries number: _____

Section Two - Event Details

- Description of event proposed: _____

- Is this a (please tick one box only):

  Charity event ☐   Fund raising ☐
  Non-commercial ☐   Community service event ☐
  Commercial ☐

13

- For Charity Event - Name of Charity: _____
- Charity Registration Number: _____
- Will all income raised go to the Charity concerned? (please tick) Yes ☐   No ☐
  If no, please give details: _____
- Date/time to enter site for preparation: _____
- Start time each day: _____
- Finish time each day: _____
- Date/time the site will be vacated after the event: _____
- Is the event free?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
  If no, what is the admission price? _____

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/leisure,-culture-and-tourism/event-organisers/event-application-booking-form-2020-2021.pdf

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2. *Utilise youth work services to help reduce anti-social behaviour*

Fund and **partner with local youth projects** to:

- Offer diversionary activities for young people.

- Youth worker-led workshops to build civic responsibility.

- Outreach work to create an 'authoritative' presence.

While this will *reduce*, it won't *eliminate* this issues due to adults exhibiting anti-social behaviour.

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3. Actions to sustain a positive environment

- Create **social cues** to promote the parks as clean, respectable places (e.g. bins, anti-litter nudges) and tackle the 'Broken Window Effect'.

- Consider **sustainable materials, planters and 'bug houses'** to enhance the sense of nature.

- Dedicated **zones** for different age groups, needs and purpose for using the park (e.g. fenced off play areas, equipment for children with learning disabilities). Key features should be targeted at key parks.

Broken windows theory has revolved around how social cues such as graffiti, litter and vagrancy can snowball into more serious and widespread crime. It argues that when people see rule-breaking in the environment they reason that misconduct is acceptable, making them more likely to break rules themselves.

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Closing remarks

Together, these recommendations which help increase a **sense of community pride** and promote the **Five Ways to Wellbeing....**

- **Connect –** by creating the parks to be a community space, residents can connect with one another.
- **Be active –** ensuring parks are clean and safe will promote the use of parks for sport and physical activities.
- **Take notice –** by enhancing the landscape through planting trees and plants, residents would be able to appreciate their surroundings better.
- **Keep learning –** by attracting wildlife through the plants and organising fun and education events, children can continue to learn about different animals or bugs, about nature and many more other things.
- **Give –** by residents volunteering and being part of groups which actively take care of the parks give back to their local community.
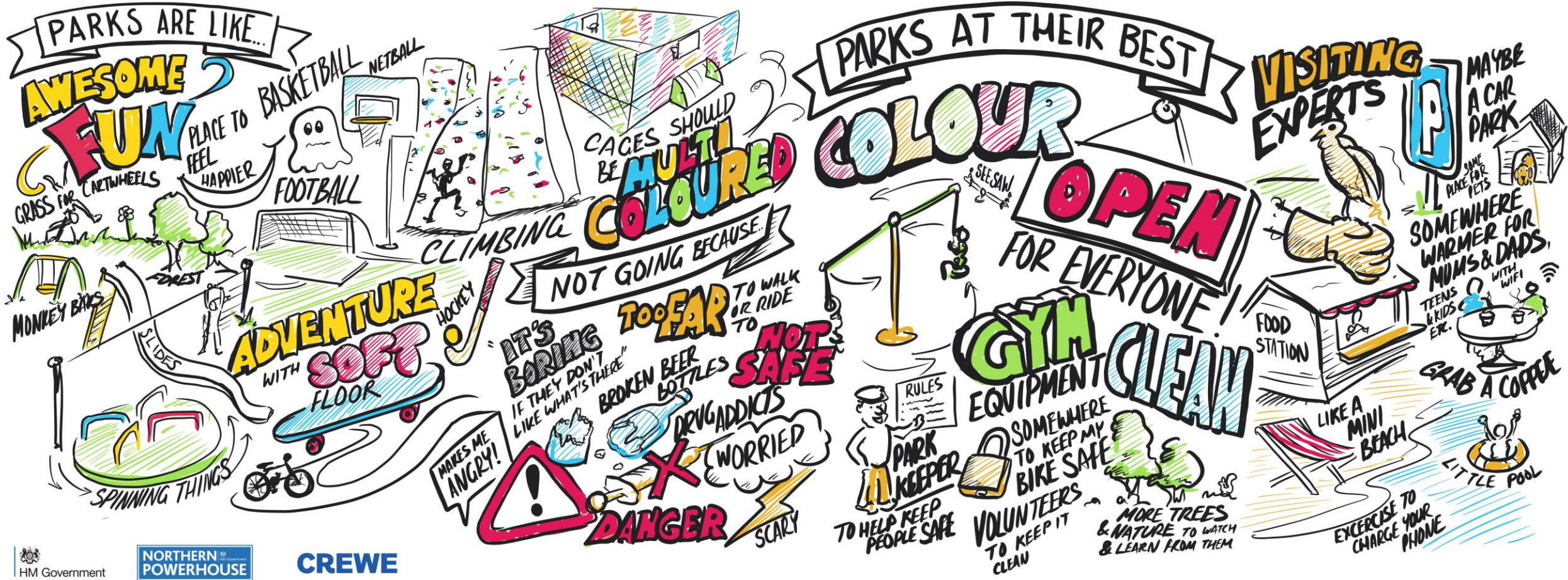
Thank you. Together we…

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Pebble Brook Primary School Graphic Scribe

Appendix 2 – Edleston Primary School Graphic Scribe

Appendix 3 – The Oaks Academy Graphic Scribe

Please use the hyperlinks to navigate to content in the Appendix.

Project

Pocket Parks Project, Crewe

Document Title

Design Development Workbook

Document No.

MS-0015-ID-001-01

MAKE SPACE

First Steps

- Review of all consultation & briefing material

- Assessment of each site following initial site visit

- Sketch designs drawn for each site

- CAD layout developed for each park for accuracy

Consultation Summary

Reasons to visit the parks;

1. To exercise, play sport and for childrens play

2. To walk the dog

3. To be in amongst nature

4. 'Nicer than walking on the pavement' - To get from A-B

5. To relax, socialise, meet friends & for events

Consultation Summary

1. To exercise, play sport and for childrens play

Suggested improvements from locals;

- Equipment for older children and for those with disabilities/special educational needs. e.g.. Zip lines, rubber swings, climbing features, fitness equipment, sensory equipment
- Zones for different age groups, needs & purposes
- Separate BMX/Skateboarding area with ramps & paths – enclosed so no risk to passers-by/children
- Bright colours – more inviting. MUGA fence painted too
- Surfacing – smooth with grip for bike riding & play, and smooth surfacing/concrete for skaters

81

Consultation Summary

2. To walk the dog

Suggested improvements from locals;

- More dog waste bins & increased signage to encourage their use

- Create dog free zones/dog off-lead areas, kept away from children & play areas

Consultation Summary

3. To be in amongst nature

Suggested improvements from locals;

- More trees & flowers to 'brighten up the parks' and to attract wildlife, birds & bees
- Create opportunities for children to interact, observe & learn about wildlife
- Space for children to grow herbs, fruit & veg – a community garden
- Use of natural materials to enhance sense of nature – e.g.. for surfacing/play equipment use bark chip instead of rubber, wood instead of metal for equipment

Consultation Summary

4. 'Nicer than walking on the pavement' - To get from A-B

Suggested improvements from locals;

- Improved footpath links
- Lots more bins & volunteers to maintain them. More signs, posters to encourage use
- Have a park warden & CCTV to patrol & reduce antisocial behaviour
- Improved lighting – safer environment

Consultation Summary

5. To relax, socialise, meet friends & for events

Suggested improvements from locals;

- Create a Community hub facility – somewhere to gather, increase sense of community & responsibility over parks
- Café/catering van – a destination, increase time spent there, socialise.
- More seating areas – some covered, some in sheltered areas from the sun
- Bike racks – for children to lock bikes to
- Information points in different languages – inclusive. Who to contact about issues
- Organising events – holiday clubs, activities for children, cultural weekend events. Make an online 'what's on' page. Have pop-up events
- Ownership – use volunteer groups, school group & youth work services to increase pride, responsibility & ownership of parks

What makes a successful park?

Key components;

- Meets needs of the local community

- Unique identity & sense of place

- Sustainable & resilient

- Green & biodiverse - providing a range of habitats

- Inclusive & welcoming

- A destination - providing a variety of uses for variety of users

- Beautiful

- Maintainable

86

What makes a successful park?

Key elements;

- Tree structure

- Landform & topography

- Footpath network

- Gateways & arrivals

- Vegetation diversity

- Facilities

- Seating

- Boundary treatments

- Water

Case Study - Martin Luther King Park, Paris

Case Study - Martin Luther King Park, Paris

Case Study - Martin Luther King Park, Paris

Case Study - Martin Luther King Park, Paris

Case Study - Martin Luther King Park, Paris