

Design

Site Assessment and Proposed Use

Proffitts have been working alongside Tottington and Bury West Rotary Club and Bury Council officers for several years, looking at the proposals to upgrade and improve access and improve Whitehead Gardens to better benefit the local community.

The aim of the project is to open up areas within the site; introduce colour to the site with new planting and create a new larger stage area to better accommodate local events and activities, such as those which used to take place, now known as Tottington's Big Day Out. The site will once again become the focal point for community activity, whilst respecting the heritage of the Gardens.

Site Heritage

Whitehead Gardens was created by the Whitehead Family as a memorial to seven people who lost their lives on Christmas Eve 1944, in an enemy air raid. The stone plaque at the front of the existing 'stage' area records the names of the dead along with details of the raid.

The Gardens are not within a Conservation Area, nor are they listed but they are to the west of Listed Buildings on Chapel Street (St Anne's Church, Vicarage and Hall, all listed at Grade II).

The north of the Gardens is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

Current Conditions

The photographs below and overleaf show the gardens as they are in 2022. The heavy tree cover and drainage issues have led to the grassed areas being boggy and unusable; the site boundary to the west contains several self seeded trees and shrubs and there is little colour within the gardens.

The 'stage' area is relatively small and beginning to be overgrown with trees and shrubs on 3 sides.





Proposals

The proposals include the following works:

- to replace the existing 'stage' area with a new, slightly larger one, created in stone (to match existing), with a ramped access. The wall of this new space would incorporate the Memorial Stone in the centre of the wall, with ornamental planting each side of the stone.
- To tackle the drainage issue by repairing existing damaged drains around the site and divert water into the existing stream as would have been the case originally.
- To resurface and make good the existing path network around the entire site and install handrails where needed to existing steps for additional safety of users
- To create a stepped terraced feature by the stream by the bridge to give safer access to the stream in good weather.
- To install new seats and litter bins around the site. The paths already have recesses to accommodate additional seating
- To install interpretation and a nature trail around the site to encourage visitors to learn more about the history, flora and fauna of the site.
- To carry out significant tree works (felling, crown lifting and pruning) based on the arboricultural survey to open up the site and let more light in. There will be a programme of replacement planting with smaller, more appropriate tree and shrub species to give a year long season of interest. New ornamental planting and bulb planting with further enhance this.

The overall aim is to open up the site, to make it more appealing and to improve accessibility around the wider site; whilst increasing biodiversity by giving year round colour and pollinating plants.

The tree works proposed are significant. They are suggested at this scale at this time to reduce the risks to the public from the dead, diseased and dangerous trees as well as being manageable in scale in terms of the actual safety of the tree surgeons. Two giant redwoods were planted on site (not by site owner Bury Council) – these will grow to around a height of 50-85m which isn't sustainable in a site as small as Whitehead Gardens.

A comprehensive replanting scheme has been proposed which incorporates trees which are smaller in eventual growth, and have an element of interest all year round, such as autumn colour, bark colour and spring flowers.

See Proposals for 'Tree Works and Replacement Planting December 2022' for more details.

Accessibility

The earlier photos highlight some of the current access issues around the Gardens such as the uneven bitmac surfacing, which is often flooded in heavy rain. The steps at the entrance do not have handrails, nor do the steps to the stage area.

These proposals include the following:

1. to install a metal handrail to the existing stepped access into the Gardens from Chapel Street
2. To improve access around the park by upgrading and repairing existing bitmac paths
3. Installing seats to existing recesses along the paths to providing resting places.
4. To open up the paths by selective crown lifting of overhanging trees and shrubs,

For more information, please see the Statement of Community Involvement and the drawing 223/SK01v2.