

Report Purpose:

The Town Council contributes towards the parks and play areas budget for CEC. This is an update of the projects.

Author

Town Clerk

West Park

Macclesfield Town Council has worked in partnership with Cheshire East Council to replace the existing climbing structure in West Park with a new, larger play feature following a resident consultation, in which two design options were put forward and one was selected by a clear majority. The project has been funded by £60,000 from Macclesfield Town Council, approx. 50% of the project costs.

The new installation, the “Giant XL”, is expected to become a prominent feature within the park, providing an enhanced space for children to play, explore and remain active.



Work is due to begin next week, with installation planned for completion in time for the start of the summer holidays. During the works, some areas of the play park will be temporarily closed to ensure safe delivery of the project.

South Park

Macclesfield Town Council approved investment of £75,000 in improvements to the play area equipment in South Park. The project was procured through a tender process, with ward councillors involved in the selection of the preferred supplier.

Following appointment, a site visit with the construction team identified significant ground conditions not fully anticipated at design stage, including excessive depths of existing wood chip surfacing and deterioration of the underlying sub-base. It also became apparent that elements of existing equipment were affected by ground settlement, raising concerns about the viability of the original design within the available budget and site conditions.

As a result, the scheme was paused and a revised approach was developed in consultation with the Park Manager and Parks Commercial Manager to ensure a more sustainable and value-for-money outcome.

The updated proposal reconfigures the upper play area to reduce extensive engineered surfacing requirements, introducing a more grass-based layout with targeted safety surfacing only where required, and providing equipment aimed at older children and young people. The lower play area near the tennis courts is to be improved for younger children, with new equipment installed to enhance accessibility and use.

The revised scheme, although representing an increased overall cost, is intended to be supported through matched funding from Cheshire East Council via allocated Section 106 contributions for South Park, delivering a more balanced and long-term play offer across the site. Ward Councillors are broadly in agreement with this change. Please see Appendix 1.

Macclesfield Linear Park (Yellow Brick Road)

Cheshire East Council has identified the Linear Park, locally known as the "Yellow Brick Road", as a site with potential for enhancement. The site is currently used primarily as a walking route, dog walking area and as a link between Moss Lane and Park Lane.

Cheshire East Council's initial proposal was to explore opportunities to enhance the site as a green and wildlife open space, creating an accessible natural area for the local community. The proposed improvements focused on increasing biodiversity, improving the appearance of the site and encouraging greater use.

Cheshire East Council's initial outline package identified a range of possible improvements which, if all delivered, would have an estimated total cost of approximately £91,000. Ward Councillors considered that the full package would be disproportionate for the site, given its primary role as a walking route, its proximity to residential properties and the need to avoid unnecessary future maintenance liabilities. The purpose of this report is therefore not to recommend the full £91,000 package, but to identify a more targeted and proportionate set of improvements.

Proposed Improvement	Estimated Cost
Masterplan including designer risk assessment	£5,000
Ecology survey	£5,000
No-mow areas with pathways	Included
Open mown grass area to concentrate dog walking	Included
Creation of scrapes (wet areas)	£3,000
New entrance feature at Moss Lane end	£10,000
Interpretation boards/signage	£5,000–£8,000
Wildflower meadow planting with mown pathways	£30,000
Willow art/archway/seating area	£10,000
Gym equipment/trim trail along the pathway	£20,000
Total	Approximately £91,000

Councillor Feedback and Considerations

At last Full Council, ward Councillors were asked to assess the proposal and Cllr Wilson and Hale completed site visits and have given the feedback for this report. They agree that the priority for the Linear Park should be to enhance it as a pleasant, safe and attractive walking route, rather than developing it as a destination where people are encouraged to congregate.

The site's proximity to residential properties is an important consideration. Any improvements should therefore avoid creating areas that could encourage noise, anti-social behaviour or disturbance to neighbouring residents.

The overall aspiration is to create a greener, more biodiverse and welcoming Linear Park that functions primarily as a safe and attractive walking and cycling corridor, while avoiding features that create unnecessary ongoing maintenance costs.

Supported Improvements

Wildflower Meadows and No-Mow Areas

Wildflower areas with mown pathways are supported and would significantly improve the appearance and biodiversity of the site.

The original estimated cost of approximately £30,000 was queried, as guidance from organisations such as Plantlife suggests that costs can vary significantly depending on specification and establishment methods. Opportunities may also exist to work with community organisations such as Macclesfield Wild Network.

Cheshire East Council has advised that the original estimate was based on a high-quality specification involving approximately 850m² of mixed perennial wildflower planting, designed to provide a long flowering season, greater biodiversity value and long-term visual impact. They advise that whilst costs could be reduced, this would

most effectively be achieved by reducing the overall area of planting rather than lowering the quality of the planting mix. Further discussion is therefore required to determine the appropriate balance between coverage, specification and available budget.

Indicative cost range from CEC : £15,000–£30,000

Woodland Management and Habitat Improvements

Enhanced management of existing woodland areas, including selective coppicing, is supported. This would improve the appearance of the site and address concerns raised by neighbouring residents regarding overgrown vegetation.

Opportunities should be explored to work with the Macclesfield Wild Network to introduce low-cost biodiversity measures without requiring significant infrastructure investment.

Cheshire East Council has advised that whilst limited works could be undertaken for around £5,000, a budget closer to £10,000 would allow more meaningful improvements. They also recommend that the precise scope of works should ultimately be informed by ecological and tree surveys.

Cost range: £5,000–£10,000

Natural Art Feature

A simple natural art feature is supported, particularly one that reflects the identity of the "Yellow Brick Road".

A willow feature, archway or similar installation could provide a positive focal point, provided it is designed to be robust, low maintenance and resistant to vandalism.

Cost Up to £10,000.

Moss Lane Entrance Feature

A new entrance feature is supported in principle; however, the design should be simple, robust and durable given that the existing entrance has previously suffered vandalism.

Cost Up to £10,000.

CEC suggested costs for improvements:

Improvement	Estimated Cost
Wildflower meadow areas	£15,000–£30,000
Natural art feature	Up to £10,000
Moss Lane entrance feature	Up to £10,000

Improvement	Estimated Cost
Biodiversity enhancements	£5,000–£10,000
Total	£40,000 - £60,000

Further Improvements Considered

Masterplan and Ecology Survey

The Town Council does not propose funding the masterplan or ecology survey. As landowner and strategic parks authority, Cheshire East Council should undertake these assessments to inform the future management and development of the site. Partnership input from organisations such as Macclesfield Wild Network and local community groups should also be considered.

Cheshire East Council has advised that these surveys provide important evidence to inform future design, biodiversity enhancements and long-term management. They have indicated that they will explore whether this work could be undertaken through existing internal resources.

Wildlife Scrapes

The proposed wildlife scrapes are not supported. The site already experiences wet conditions during winter months and the benefit of creating additional wet areas is considered limited.

Cheshire East Council has advised that appropriately designed scrapes can help manage water movement across the site by directing water towards suitable locations, potentially improving drainage elsewhere whilst also creating valuable wildlife habitat. This would need further discussion with Clerk and Ward Councillors.

Picnic Areas and Additional Seating

Additional seating and picnic areas are not supported due to the close proximity of residential properties and the potential for noise and anti-social behaviour. The site should remain primarily a walking route rather than a destination space. Cheshire East Council has accepted these concerns and has confirmed that seating and picnic areas will be removed from the current proposals.

Interpretation Boards and Extensive Signage

Interpretation boards are not considered a priority at this stage. Any signage should be limited to essential information, such as wayfinding, responsible dog ownership or habitat information where appropriate.

Cheshire East Council has agreed that signage should be kept to a minimum, with interpretation only introduced where considered necessary in future.

Gym Equipment / Trim Trail

The proposed gym equipment or trim trail is not supported. There is limited evidence that similar facilities are well used, and there is concern that such installations could create additional noise, attract inappropriate use and increase maintenance requirements.

Cheshire East Council has confirmed that these elements will be removed from the proposals.

Delivery and Phasing

Whilst some elements of the project may require waiting for the surveys and masterplan before they can proceed, other improvements could potentially be delivered more quickly. Cheshire East Council has advised that a masterplan and ecology survey would help inform the design of biodiversity enhancements. If these surveys are required before progressing certain elements, they may delay delivery by several months.

Council may consider a phased approach to the project. Subject to agreement with Cheshire East Council, simpler improvements that are less dependent on survey work—such as the entrance feature at Moss Road and a natural art feature reflecting the identity of the "Yellow Brick Road"—could potentially be progressed, with the other elements following later.

Recommendations:

- To approve the changes for South Park Play Areas as detailed
- To consider the proposed improvements to the Macclesfield Linear Park (Yellow Brick Road) and if so the level of funding. *It is noted that approximately £110,000 remains available within the relevant capital budget and has not yet been committed.*
- To deliver the project in phases starting with the art features.

South Park – Proposed scope of works

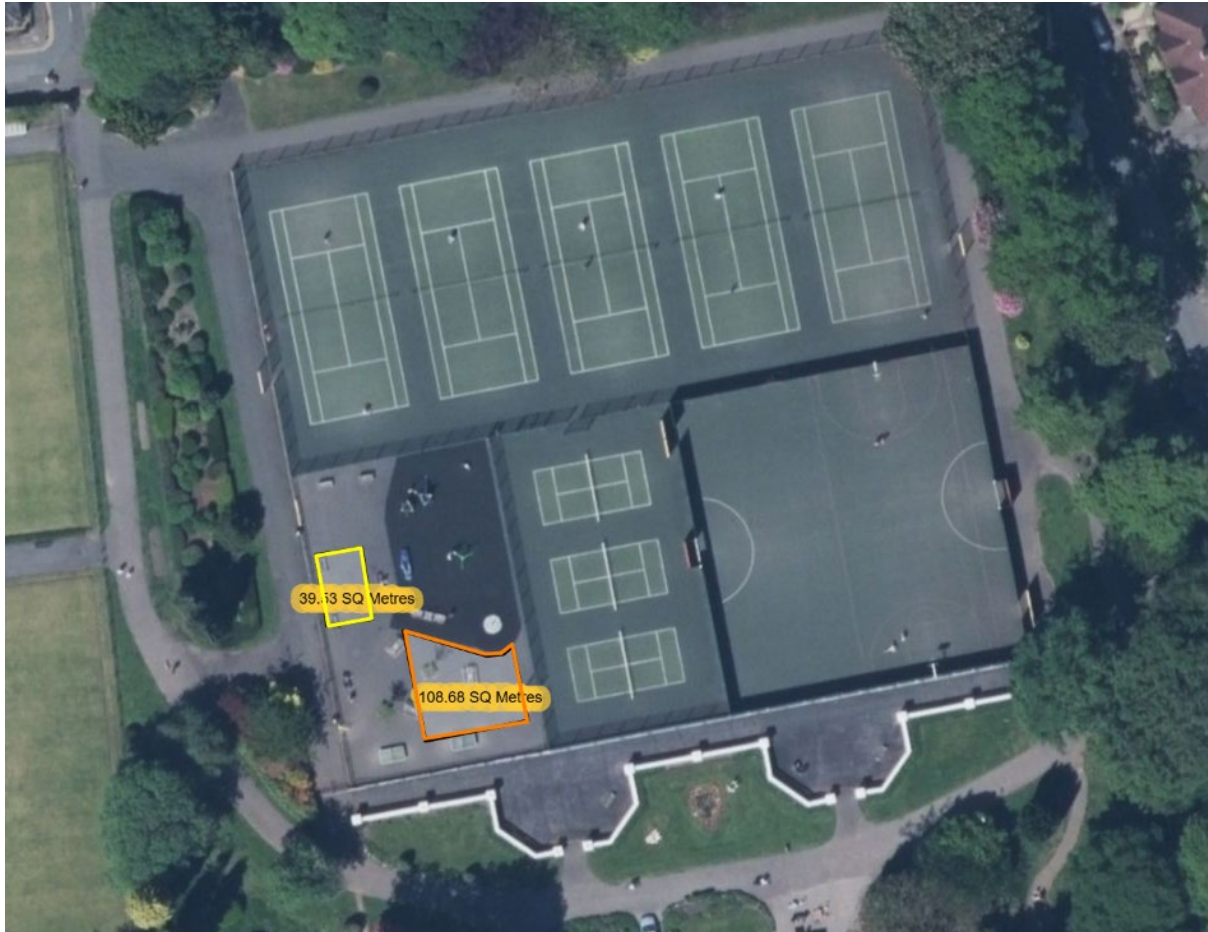
Wood chipped area (outlined in Blue) – older children

- Remove old grounds containers, realign fence to include this area in to the play area
- Remove 3rd end of life play safe gate (black area) and replace vehicle access gate with combi play safe pedestrian/vehicle gate.
- Remove old – multi unit, swings, climbing unit, seesaw, climbing pole & space trainer!
- Remove 2 x sycamore trees (Red circle)– Discussion with Elton (trees to be replaced in wider park)
- remove the top layer of woodchip, grade and level the site and soil & seed with Grass
- Install 2 x new eco mulch pads for - Twin Bay swing (2x flats/ 1x basket) (green area) & Pendulum seated Carousel (dark blue Circle).
- Install 2x new grass mat areas for – Loop nest swing (pink area) & Agility trail with stopwatch (purple area)
- Bulb / wildflower planting (yellow)
- Retaining wall out of sleepers (light blue)



Lower play area – younger children

- Relocate planters, benches & table tennis to new location (TBC)
- Create new safety surfacing area and install, single bay swing (2x toddler seats) (Yellow area)
- Create new safety surfacing pad and install, toddler multi tower (orange area)



Indicative new equipment

