

Neighbourhood Action Home (Zone) & Garden ExtraÉExtraÉExtra

Looks like the press have beaten us in telling the community what's going on!! (see Yorkshire Evening Post Friday 29th January 1999). Still they have bigger and faster printing presses than we do, at least what you read here is what really happened. Below and on pages 2 and 3 we detail the plans presented at the meeting and the issues raised by residents of the Methleys. On Page 4 the latest news regarding Home Zones and the possibility of the Methleys becoming a national pilot scheme.

Millennium Garden Meeting

Background

On Saturday 16th January a meeting was held in Chapel Allerton Primary School to discuss the possible siting of a Millennium Community Garden at the top of Methley Terrace. As most of you know the garden has been in the planning stage for some time now. Events during the past three years have been either directly or in some way connected with developing plans for the garden. The Countryside Commission, under their Millennium Greens Programme, were particularly interested in plans for a garden in such an urban area.

Up until a short time before the meeting on the 16th no detailed plans of the garden existed. The 'Garden Ideas' exercise at the Neighbourly Nosh in the summer was the start of the community deciding how the plans should be drawn. However, the Countryside Commission deadline for funding was drawing near and an application decision needed to be made. Over the past couple of months there had been a lot of informal discussion about the garden and its pros and cons. The idea of this meeting was to sit down and talk through all the different issues raised.

The meeting was facilitated by a resident outside of the Methleys. Some basic rules were laid down as to how the meeting should be conducted, this included an agreed set of notes of what people said. The meeting started with presentations from the three architects who have been working closely on the project. In addition a model of a possible garden plan was on display which had incorporated changes in response to some concerns raised. The presentations gave us a chance to see and hear:

- i) how the idea of a garden had taken shape
- ii) how the wildlife/environment would be changed as a result of a garden
- iii) how the whole community would benefit from a garden
- iii) what a possible garden would look like and how it would

allay some of the concerns expressed by residents.

After the presentations the meeting was open for discussion. We have set out overleaf the notes as they were written down

Plans for a Garden

So what are the plans for the garden and how will it affect the surrounding building and roads?

The garden will lie between Methley Terrace and Harrogate Lodge Nursing Home and between School Lane and Chapel Allerton Primary School. The land is being donated by Leeds City Council and the owners of Harrogate Lodge and the garden will be run by a Trust set up specifically for that purpose and including representatives of the community, school and nursing home.

From our initial consultation (See December newsletter) there were two issues that were important to people and that we felt we could deal with in the design. Firstly the implications for traffic and secondly the future of the wall separating the grounds of Harrogate Lodge from the roadway. The proposed garden design will not only keep almost all of the wall but money is being allocated to renovate the wall to improve its current perilous state. At the same time the top half of Methley Terrace (above Methley Drive) will become one way (up) and reduce to single file traffic as it turns the corner into Zermatt Mount. This will improve the current chaos when parents are picking up or dropping off their children at school and we are discussing with the Highways Department how we can add further design elements on Methley Terrace and at the junction of Methley Terrace and Methley Drive to improve facilities and priority for the majority of children and parents who walk to school (see section on Home Zones).

A meeting of the MNA group was held following the public meeting to look at all the points (see responses overleaf). It was agreed that MNA would lead with an application to the Countryside Commission for funding for the garden.

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This will give the community money to develop further plans for the garden and to start building preparations for further work.

What the garden will be like

Architects Eddy Walker and Mike Middleton and Landscape Architect Chris Mckenzie Davey have been working on the Garden Designs. We asked Eddy for a run-down of what the different elements of the garden were to try and give an overview of how it would feel.

Four different Areas will make up the Garden :

1. The Woodland Green in the bottom of the current Nursing Home garden will become a more natural woodland (similar to a wild bluebell wood) with the existing trees maintained and enhanced by extra planting. The existing walls will be repaired.

2. Zermatt Mount. The road between the tops of Methley Place and Methley Terrace will be made one-way around from the Terrace and then

- Zermatt Mount will be narrowed, with the pavement along the existing wall widened.
- The gable end of Methley Terrace/Place, where Thalia currently lives, will have artwork/sculpture by local people and climbing plants on trellis.

3. The Top of Methley Terrace, by the School, will have :

- A parents' and children's waiting area outside the school gates.
- A curved wall/trellis to shield the remaining garden from the road.
- A pool crossed by a footbridge leading to the retained footpath to Harrogate Road.
- A canopy each side of the existing brick/stone wall.

- A water sculpture giving the sound of flowing/trickling water.

- Scented flowering plants around seats.

4. The Water Garden on part of the existing car park area (moving 4 spaces) and extending into the school's existing Nursery area will feature :

- The existing large trees retained.
- The existing footpath to Harrogate Road maintained but surrounded by scented flowering plants on a pergola, and better lit at night.
- A pond full of wild plants and animals (typical pond life), with access deck and beach, for schoolchildren to study and maintain.
- A small stepped area where teachers can talk to small groups.
- Various seating areas.

Safety and Security

The various areas may be closed off at night by gates if this is necessary. The pond/pool will be surrounded by barriers to prevent easy access by toddlers on their own.

The Green will :

- NOT be a dedicated children's playground although they will use it.
- NOT involve demolishing the existing brick/stone wall at the bottom of the Nursing Home garden. But it will be repaired and only a short length, at the school end, will

Garden plan?

Issues raised at the Open Meeting ...

Cons

1. Some people don't want any change
2. Nursing home residents enjoy quiet environment with wildlife at present
3. Worry of more litter etc. from passers-by.
4. Vandalism
5. Congregating of gangs
6. Increased publicity for the area has changed the 'outside view' of the neighbourhood bringing increased rents and a change in the type of people who can afford to rent
7. People in cars may ignore the traffic markings.
8. Concerns about children free to roam the streets using the garden without supervision.

Pros

1. The garden will provide opportunities for the children of the community to learn about wildlife/environment.
2. Very useful facility for children at the school who would use the garden with adult supervision on a regular basis during term time
3. The current plan for the garden seems to have addressed a number of the concerns raised by the residents who don't want to see change
4. It may be possible to lock the garden at night.
5. A garden is an investment for the future when the current trend is toward urban degeneration.

Some question raised during the meeting

1. Can we find ways to overcome the concerns raised?
2. Can we look at another location for the garden ?
3. Is it possible to place such a garden within the school grounds?
4. Has any other location been considered for the garden ?

MNA Response

MNA was set up specifically with the intention of improving the public spaces and facilities in the neighbourhood. We believe that the garden would be an excellent way of improving the physical environment and the bio-diversity in the area at the same time as creating an ideal learning tool for children in the school. The site for the garden includes some road space, car park and underused green space currently owned by the school and the Nursing Home. There are issues right now about litter in these areas. We believe that by creating a garden ourselves we are investing in the fabric of the neighbourhood and encouraging all residents, children and adults, to take responsibility; to maintain the garden and to keep it free of litter.

The area in front of the nursing home is planned as a quiet 'wildlife' area with limited gated access. The plan includes development of the natural variety of planting at ground level under the trees and to create a direct wheelchair-accessible route for residents of Harrogate Lodge. We are currently talking about detailed ideas with the Home Manager, staff and residents.

Inspector Kevin Spencer from Chapelton Police attended the meeting and was asked about the issue of vandalism and gangs. He felt that it was an issue that should be taken seriously but that it should not put us off from creating a garden because there are ways of dealing with the issues. He said he could point to lots of examples of successful gardens. MNA will be talking closely with Inspector Spencer as the designs for the garden are developed.

The Highways Department at the Council support the idea of making the top half of Methley Terrace one-way with a single line traffic on the corner of Methley Terrace and Zermatt Mount. Both the School and the Council are convinced that this will ease the chaos outside the school gates and ofcourse this will be legally enforceable (the current zigzag lines are only advisory).

With regard to the location of the garden, it should be pointed out that much of the garden is within the school grounds and that they are offering access to people in the community. The garden design should also be seen in the context of the Home Zone plans that MNA has been developing which also looks at the creation of Methley Square at the junction of Methley Terrace and Methley Drive. Residents are also currently discussing possible alternative uses for the land at the bottom of Methley Place and there are other small environmental improvements that have been suggested in other parts of the neighbourhood. The Government have just announced that they will be supporting pilot Home Zones and are asking local authorities to nominate



Home Zone Update

One of the questions asked at the Garden Meeting was "why not look at other sites in the Methleys?". Well one of the answers to that one is ... we are! - under the Home Zone plans.

For those of you who are not aware, a Home Zone is a neighbourhood with a very low speed limit and pedestrian priority (like making the whole neighbourhood into a giant zebra crossing - but without the black and white stripes!).

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions define a Home Zone as "residential streets in which road space is shared between motor vehicles and other road users, with the needs of pedestrians, including children and cyclists coming first". Sounds too good to be true - well they work well all over the rest of Europe and it looks like they are coming this way! The DETR has asked local authorities to submit proposals to them to run pilot Home Zones. They want to evaluate the effectiveness of about six schemes nationally and there is no doubt that the Methleys could be one of them.

So what does this mean for the Methleys.

Plans on gable ends

Greening ...

In the meantime if you do want to talk through any ideas or worries that you have then do not hesitate to contact any of the following people:

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| Eddy Walker (architect) | 0113 249 3491 |