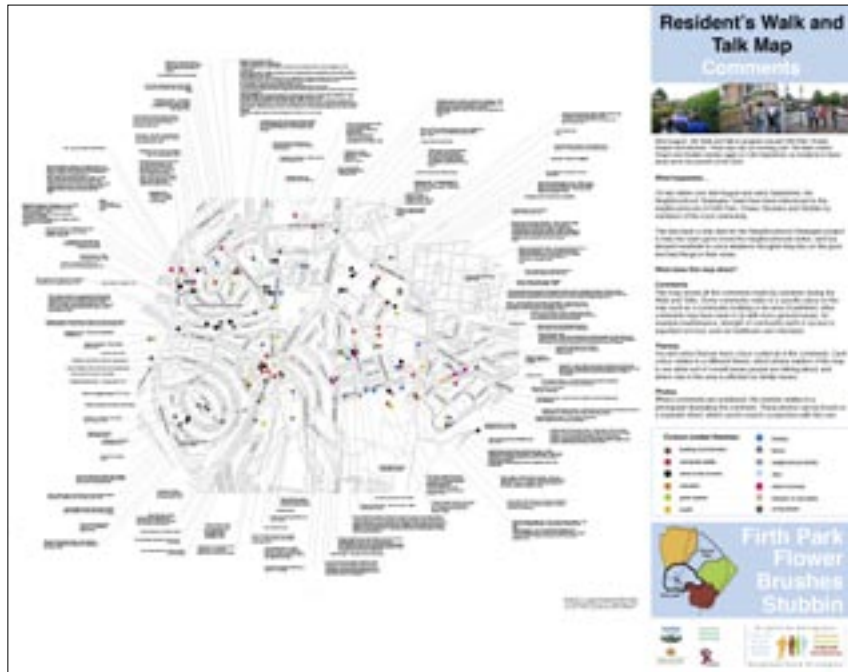




Firth Park Neighbourhood Development Framework Neighbourhood Report December 2007





The Firth Park Resident's Walk and Talk documented local concerns and aspirations during the Visioning stage in 2005



The Firth Park Neighbourhood Strategy report front cover, published March 2006

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Introduction

In July 2007, Fluid was commissioned by Sheffield City Council to help work up the previously developed “Vision” for Brightside Shiregreen into a more detailed set of plans and designs. This work will help enable the Council and its partners to identify funding for each of the physical improvement projects proposed. The next stage will be to begin detailed design and building of some of the projects whilst at the same time continuing the development of other projects that are larger and more complex.

This stage of work is particularly important as, once approved, it will become a ‘material consideration’ in the land use planning process, i.e. it will lay down rules and guidelines that will help ensure future developments will have a positive impact on Firth Park. These reports and plans will together be called the “Neighbourhood Development Framework” (NDF) and will sit alongside the Sheffield Development Framework, which is currently being prepared by the Council to guide future development across the city.

The Firth Park Neighbourhood forms one quarter of the Brightside Shiregreen Area, and this report discusses in more detail the physical improvement projects that lie in this neighbourhood. The ideas have been developed and agreed with the Neighbourhood Forum.

An overarching Brightside Shiregreen report describes the work that has been undertaken across the whole of the Brightside Shiregreen area, and should be read in conjunction with this report.



The Event in the Tent II, December 2007, where the final proposals were displayed for the public to view and discuss.



Concord Park Fun Day, August 2007



Event in the Tent II, December 2007

Chapter 1 - Overview of the process

Project history

The initial vision for Firth Park was produced by local residents, the Council and Fluid in March 2006, resulting in the Firth Park Neighbourhood Strategy report. We would like to encourage readers to refer back to this report, and the area wide Brightside Shiregreen Neighbourhood Strategies Report, whilst reading this current document*.

Between then and now consultants Levitt Bernstein were appointed to give an independent view of whether the plans and ideas produced were realistic and of good quality. They worked with council officers to investigate issues such as whether projects were likely to get planning permission. This work was completed in May 2007 and the outcomes have helped guide the current work.

Local involvement

Local residents from Firth Park have continued to be involved in the process. A representative from the neighbourhood has attended the area-wide Steering Group, which has met on two occasions. This Steering Group has helped select Fluid to carry out this latest piece of work, and continues to comment on proposals and to give guidance on how they are communicated to the wider public. The original Neighbourhood Strategies Area Report includes an overview of how the Steering Group and Neighbourhood Forums are arranged. Please refer to this document for a more detailed understanding of how local involvement is organised.

Neighbourhood Forums have taken place on three occasions following each of the Steering Groups and for the final handover of the reports. They also took place prior to the current appointment of Fluid following the first vision stage of work. Positive discussions have taken place at each forum, during which the latest developments have been presented by the Council's North Sheffield Regeneration Team, and then debated and discussed by residents.

* The reports can be downloaded at www.sheffield.gov.uk/northregen

Alternatively you can contact Julie Southwell at the North Sheffield Regeneration Team, Sheffield City Council, on 0114 203 9677

The following is a list of the meetings that have taken place since the initial Neighbourhood Strategies Vision meetings in Firth Park in 2006/2007.

- 18/4/06 New Library
- 13/6/06 New Library
- 20/09/06 New Library
- 1/11/06 New Library
- 19/03/07 New Library
- 14/05/07 Old Library
- 26/09/07 Old Library
- 15/11/07 Old Library
- 19/12/07 Old Library

Project structure

As in the earlier vision work, residents continue to understand and value the fact that it is necessary to look at Brightside Shiregreen as a whole as well as a series of individual neighbourhoods. This will help ensure that projects remain viable and avoid competing with each other both for funding and for people to use them. It will also help area wide issues such as housing and greenspace be addressed in a joined-up way.

Project methodology

The project has been broken down into four stages:

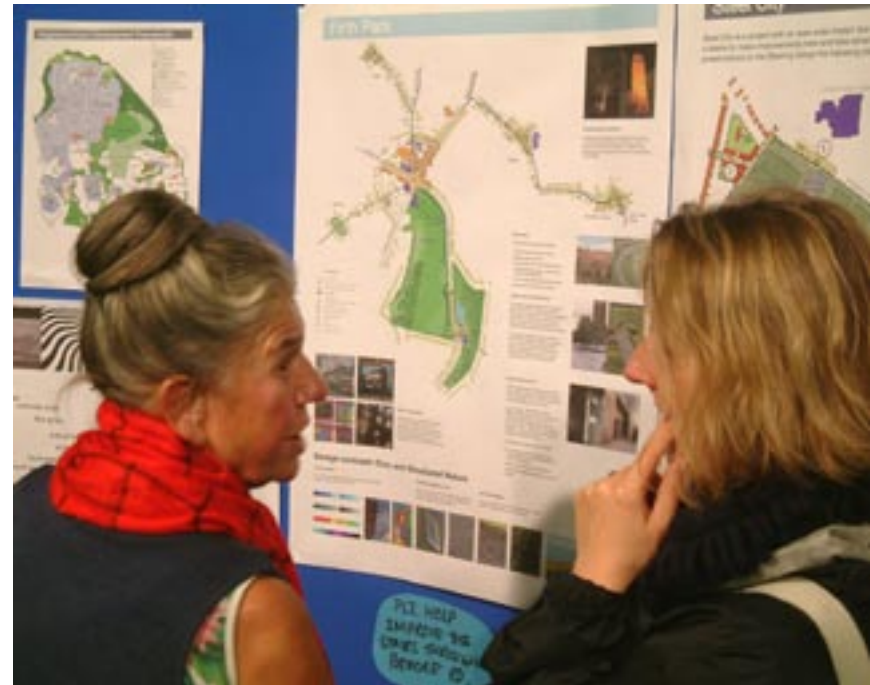
Stage 1. A reassessment of “where we are at” by reviewing all of the work produced to date and clarifying the briefs for each improvement project. A review of the feasibility studies produced by Levitt Bernstein and a detailed project briefing by the North Sheffield Regeneration Team provided the information Fluid required to proceed to stage two.

Stage 2. Development of an area-wide Brightside Shiregreen identity and separate neighbourhood identities that will help ensure that all building and landscape projects have a distinctive local character that enhance and complement the assets of the area.

Stage 3. Design development work on all of the projects within each neighbourhood

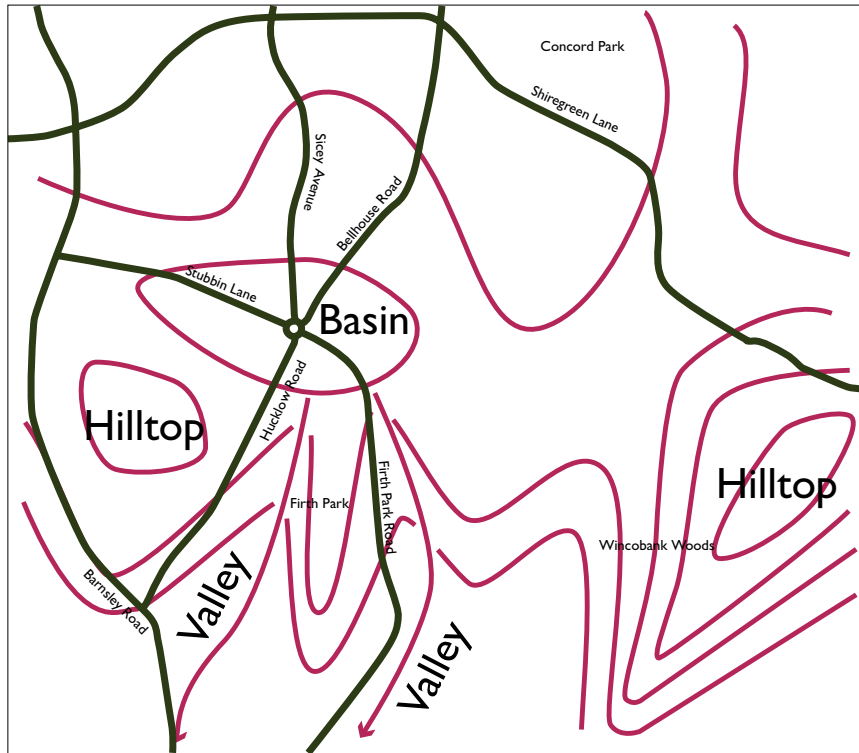
Stage 4. Further development and final checking of the projects.

Consultation with local councillors, the Steering Group and Neighbourhood Forums took place near the end of stages two and three. The first Steering Group meeting took place at Firth Park Library on the 13th September. The second Steering Group meeting took place on the 1st November at the same location.



Event in the Tent II, December 2007

A large-scale area-wide public consultation was carried out in at the beginning of December at Firth Park at the “Event in the Tent II” (the original “Event in the Tent” was held during the initial visioning stage of work in December 2005).



The Firth Park 'basin' can clearly be seen from St. Hildas Church on the edge of the Flower Estate.



Looking back across Firth Park from Pismire Hill

Chapter 2 – Understanding the Neighbourhood

Introduction

During the visioning stage, Fluid spent time in Firth Park to get a feel for the physical characteristics of the neighbourhood. In the vision stage neighbourhood report, you can read our descriptions of the area and view diagrams that help describe its characteristics. These diagrams help shape the strategy for improvements in the neighbourhood.

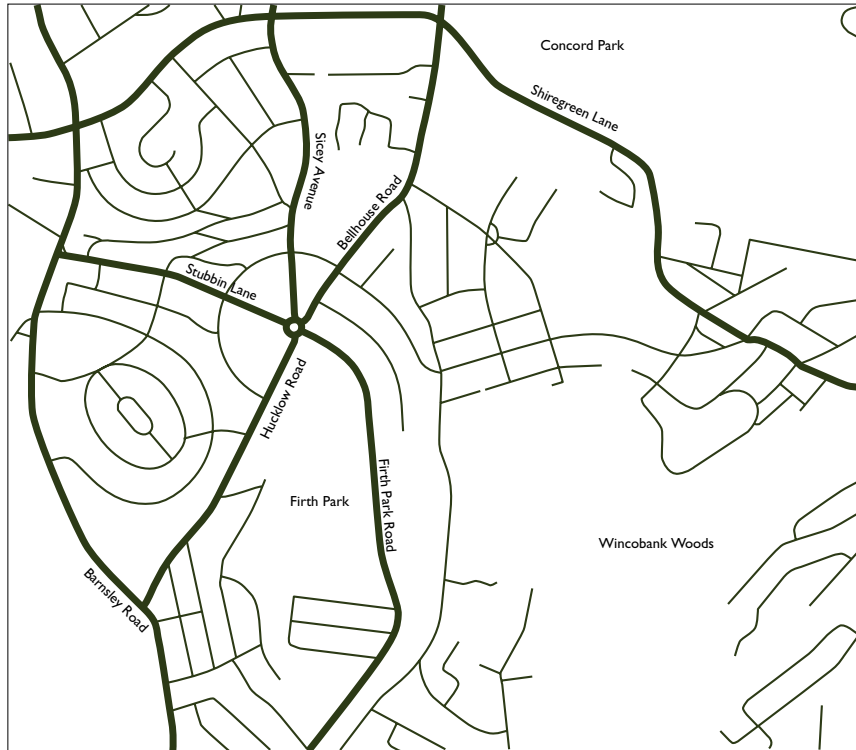
This time round, we have added further analysis to back up the previous work, and to support the proposals in this document that develop the improvement strategy

Topography

The topography of Brightside Shiregreen plays an important role in the identity of the area and helps to give each neighbourhood a very different character from the others.

Although maybe not immediately apparent, Firth Park has a strong topography revolving around the roundabout that sits at the bottom of a basin landform. The hills of Wincobank Woods, Brushes and Shiregreen surround it, closing off views to the west, north and east. Two valleys drop away from the centre of Firth Park and help define the park, allowing long views towards the city centre.

The neighbourhoods of Flower, Brushes and Stubbin surround the district centre, and are all higher up and from each neighbourhood it is possible to look back and down into the centre.



Movement network

There is a natural flow of pedestrian and vehicular routes from the neighbourhoods down into the district centre, and the urban walks that are proposed tend to align with these routes.

The collection at the Firth Park roundabout of five roads ensures that the district centre remains active and busy, however it does provide traffic and parking problems. The proposed streetscene improvements in Firth Park should help alleviate some of the issues, indeed some have already been carried out.

Brushes, Stubbin and Flower all have easily navigable, pleasant and intimate streets to walk around, all within a fairly short walking distance of the shops and facilities at Firth Park.



Scale and Urban Grain

The Firth Park neighbourhood grew as a series of developments or estates over 150 years. As such there are a wide variety of built forms including Victorian terraces, semi-detached houses, and modern housing blocks. The area is predominantly residential and this is clearly identified by the smaller size of buildings in the neighbourhood.



Land Use

The Firth Park neighbourhood is mainly residential with a District Centre as its hub. There are a number of open spaces throughout the neighbourhood, notably Firth Park itself. The other significant land use adjacent to the Firth Park neighbourhood is the hospital area of the Northern General.

Chapter 3 – A Neighbourhood Identity

In the area wide report, we have described how we have developed an “area identity” that can help shape projects and ensure that designs are special and recognisably part of the local character of Brightside Shiregreen. This is a good way of ensuring new buildings do not appear out of place and unsympathetic to the existing look and feel of the place.

As well as defining an area identity, we have defined neighbourhood identities too. Each neighbourhood in Brightside Shiregreen has distinctive characteristics that can influence the design of new buildings and landscapes within each neighbourhood.

How we have illustrated the identity

The stand-out features of each neighbourhood have been studied and artwork has been identified that we feel reflect these features. Key words have been used to describe the nature of each neighbourhood, and these words can be used in the design briefs for the projects when they are worked up in more detail. Design features such as the shape, appearance and materiality of new buildings should use these words and the associated images as inspiration.

We have then chosen two words or phrases that we hope capture the essence of the identity, creating a design concept for the neighbourhood.

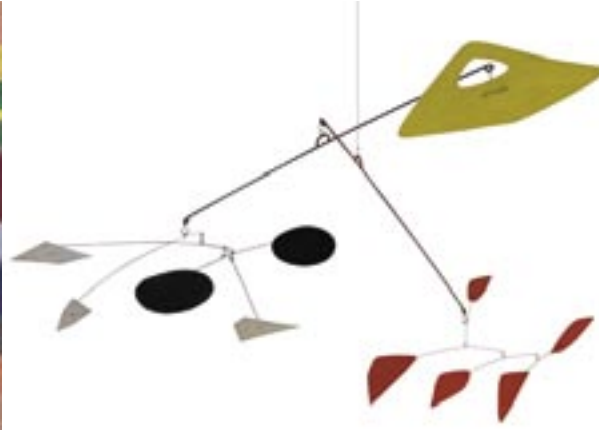
All of these words and images will be included in the individual design briefs for projects within the neighbourhood.



The Firth Park identity picks up on the civic and well-kept nature of the district centre. This is in contrast to the wilder and less tamed landscape that forms some areas of greenspace in other neighbourhood greenspaces such as Brightside Grimesthorpe or Wincobank



Artwork from le□ and Flower) around the central neighbourhood focus (Firth Park District Centre).



ferent types of neighbourhood (Brushes, Stubbin

well-kept
 formal presentational
 more built up radiating
 on-show basin structured
 planned/organic pioneering
 civic
 smooth rich
 busy
 generous layered
 layered

Key descriptive words can be used in the design briefs for new □
Firth Park

The identity

The artwork reflects the role and physical pattern of Firth Park, a very strong centre (i.e. district centre/roundabout) surrounded by different types of estates, eg. Brushes is radial but Flower is more rectilinear.

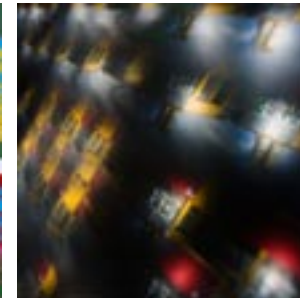
- The main defining element is the landform, Firth Park is a **basin** with the roundabout right in the middle.
- Its pattern is **radiating** and **formal**
- Its scale is largely **fine grain**
- Its history is **layered**
- It is **presentational, well-kept, formal** and **on-show**, These words are appropriate given that the district centre represents and serves the other neighbourhoods too.
- It is **busy** and **rich** in activity and visual interest.
- There is a sense of **generosity** (the park was given to the people by Mark Firth, a local landowner and Mayor of Sheffield in 1874)
- An appropriate material texture would be **smooth**, which might represent the formal and civic nature of the centre.



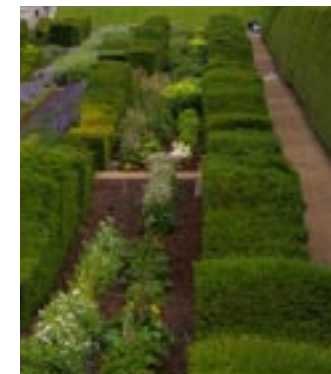
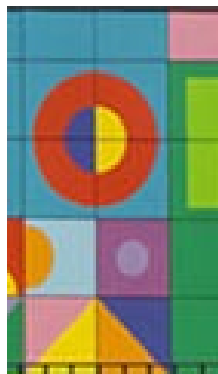
Roads and pathways spiral out from the Firth Park roundabout, which sits at the bottom of the basin landform. The formality of this arrangement is reflected in the words used to describe the Firth Park identity.



Colour palette - A contrast between austere bluey greys and bright, vibrant reds, yellow and greens.



A new public art / participation project to create a central focus for Firth Park District Centre could help implement the neighbourhood identity. Some potential themes the project might explore are: arrival and destination, trams and transportation, and Firth Park city links.



Building materials & scale

Design concept: Civic and Structured Nature

The Design Concept

After considering the artwork and key words, and talking through the development of the identity with the Steering Group and Neighbourhood Forum, we have chosen the words: “Civic” and “Structured Nature” to summarise the Firth Park identity.

The images on the left illustrate the colour palette and types of materials that designers should be influenced by when drawing up detailed designs and concepts for each of the development projects in the neighbourhood

The Colour Palette and Material Examples

The colour palette aims to provide a base set of colours in the bluey greys to represent the formal and civic nature of the public spaces. This reflects some of the colours found in the city centre, upon which streetscape improvements in this neighbourhood are based.

Landscaping in Firth Park is formal and well kept, and the planting and flowers tend to be well manicured. For new soft landscaping, this theme should be continued, with strong, vibrant and almost unnatural colours.

Slick, smooth and strong materials with fine junctions will give a civic scale, materials similar in appearance to those in Sheffield City Centre would be appropriate for Firth Park and would contrast well with other less formal materials in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Firth Park Masterplan



Chapter 4 – Firth Park Projects

The strategy for improvements in Firth Park was established during the visioning stage, and based on the Five Big Ideas. We have included the strategy diagram to the right to remind readers of the intention, which primarily is to establish a strong and successful central community focus to the neighbourhood and improve pedestrian access to it.

This strategy centres around the strengthening of the District Centre as a busy and successful focal point for commercial and community activity in the Firth Park neighbourhood and the wider Brightside Shiregreen area. This supports the approach taken by the Sheffield Development Framework which states that *“Firth Park District Centre will be maintained and supported at around its present size with environmental and area management measures”*.

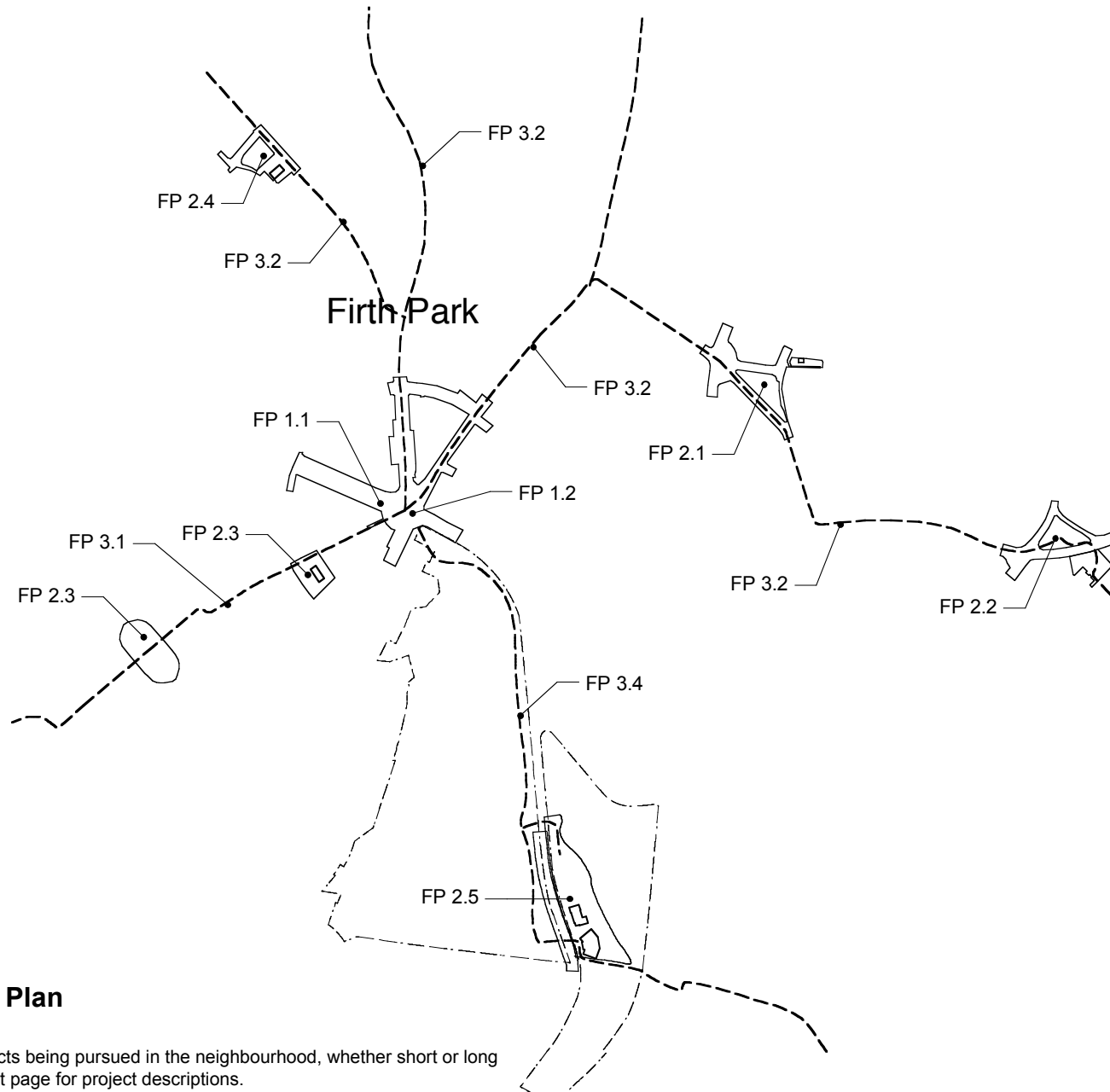
During the vision stage a set of options were developed showing a number of different ways in which the District Centre could be strengthened (please refer to the vision reports). Following further more detailed studies and consultation, the option that concentrates mainly on environmental improvements around the District Centre has been chosen to be taken forward.

Greenspace improvements are proposed in Firth Park, concentrating on the area around the Clock Tower, although other improvements around the park are also currently planned and taking place. Smaller greenspaces in each of Flower, Brushes and Stubbin have also been ear-marked for improvement, as have the key community centres in each of these neighbourhoods.

Streetscape improvements along each of the ‘Urban Walks’ that link the District Centre with the community centres will assist in providing safe, attractive and well-used pedestrian links between key facilities.



The strategy for improvements outlined in the 2006 Firth Park Neighbourhood Strategies Report



Firth Park Project Plan

The plan lists all of the projects being pursued in the neighbourhood, whether short or long term. Please refer to the next page for project descriptions.

1 Firth Park District Centre and Park

FP 1.1 Firth Park public realm and streetscape

- High quality public realm works using materials similar in appearance to those in Sheffield City Centre
- Retention of the existing highway structure and layout with the signalisation of the roundabout junction
- New street furniture, raised flower beds with formal planting, bollards, bins, and new tree planting in surface flush grilles

FP 1.2 Firth Park public art focal point

- New public art / participation project to create a central focus. Potential themes the project might explore are arrival and destination, trams and transportation, and Firth Park city links

2 Community centres & focal points

FP 2.1 Flower

- Landscape works to green space in front of Hinde House Primary
- Streetscape works to highways and footpaths including raised table crossing to Primrose Avenue
- Public art or local landmark
- Flower Estate Community Centre refurbishment including internal and external improvements, and new surrounding landscape

FP 2.2 Centenary Green

- Landscape works including new planting and seating areas
- Play landscape with safety surface and play equipment
- Streetscape works to highways and footpaths including a raised table crossing at south side
- Public art or local landmark

FP 2.3 Brushes

- Brushes Community Centre refurbishment including internal and external improvements, and new surrounding landscape
- Streetscape works to highways and footpaths
- Merlin Way landscape works
- Public art or local landmark (at Merlin Way or Brushes Community Centre)

FP 2.4 Stubbin

- Landscape improvements to green space
- Streetscape works to highways and footpaths including a raised table crossing between the green space and community centre
- Stubbin Community Centre refurbishment including internal and external improvements, and new surrounding landscape

FP 2.5 Old Library

- Landmark lighting to the Clock Tower and Old Library
- New crossing point with raised table
- Designated on-street parking bays
- Designated cycle parking
- Streetscape works to highways and pathways
- Relocate existing kerb line to accommodate new planting and parking spaces
- Community gardens including a wet land in the former boating lake, and a new event space featuring seating cut into existing grass banking
- New seating around the wetland area and improved landscaping
- Improvements to Hinde Common Wood including improved footpaths and signage

3 Urban Walks

FP 3.1 Firth Park District Centre to Merlin Way green space

FP 3.2 Firth Park District Centre to Stubbin Community Centre

FP 3.3 Firth Park District Centre to Centenary Green

FP 3.4 Firth Park District Centre to Hinde Wood estate



Landscaping works at Centenary Green will help create links to the new Five Roads housing development



Civic materials and formal but colourful planting is appropriate for the District Centre improvements



Wetlands and a natural amphitheatre next to the Clock Tower will revitalise use of this space

Project detail - Firth Park public realm and streetscape

The public realm adjacent to the shops and businesses at Firth Park will be improved using materials similar in appearance to those in Sheffield City Centre. These improvements will help to support local businesses and dramatically change the local environment.

Proposals include new civic surfaces, new street furniture, a public art project and new flower beds. All proposals will be influenced by the phrase Civic & Structured Nature, which has been identified as the Firth Park identity.

Proposals for the park itself include:

- Clocktower landmark works
- New crossing points
- Designated on-street parking bays
- Community gardens - wet lands & natural amphitheatre
- Community training & event spaces
- Refurbished formal play areas



The improvement of facades and entrances to existing community facilities will improve the most public buildings in Flower, Brushes, Stubbin and Firth Park



Lighting local landmarks will celebrate and highlight the neighbourhood's history and assets

Project detail - Firth Park public realm and streetscape

The resources and facilities around Firth Park district centre, in particular the First Start building and new Library, constitute a major existing community hub.

Four 'spokes', identified as Urban Walks, radiate from this hub to existing community facilities, one in each of the four smaller neighbourhoods that form Firth Park. These are the Brushes, Stubbin, and Flower Estate Community Centres, and the Old Library.

Proposals for these community facilities include:

- A new facade with a contemporary reinterpretation of a traditional entrance and/or decoration
- New surrounding civic streetscene
- New surrounding landscape of a formal nature

Existing local landmarks including the clock tower, community centre and the roundabout, will be enhanced through new lighting. In addition, new lighting will be introduced to the green spaces along Urban Walks.

Chapter 5 – Next Steps

Following two years of project development and consultation, it is now time to begin to move forward with the delivery of projects in Firth Park and in the other neighbourhoods that comprise the Brightside Shiregreen area. Projects will be phased, i.e. some will happen before others. This is due to the more complex nature of some projects, and the fact that funding will become available for different projects at different times.

Sheffield City Council will take a strategic lead in the co-ordination of project delivery. The governance arrangements will play an important role in delivering the regeneration in the area and structures will be put in place to assist effective implementation and ensure stakeholder engagement and involvement.

Individual projects will be delivered through the procurement of partner agencies or commercial enterprise and where residential sites have been identified for development they will be disposed of through an individually tailored process.

Project Groups will be formed to oversee the delivery of each project and the membership of these groups will represent the interests of all relevant stakeholders. There will then be a project manager and a project team that will oversee the day-to-day delivery of projects.

A number of other structures (either currently established or yet to be established) will be used to assist in the development and delivery of these projects. These structures involve the general public, council officers and other stakeholders, including: -

- Brightside Shiregreen Neighbourhood Development Framework Steering Group – a review of this group will determine what role it should have as the framework moves into the delivery phase.
- Neighbourhood Forums – Forums will be involved as one way of engaging with local community representatives.
- Area Panels - Local community involvement / wider community information update
- Brightside Shiregreen Officer Support Team – regular meetings with officers from the City Council and other organisations will take place to ensure a holistic approach to work in the area.
- Website – Key source of information.
- Events – Engagement events will take place to consult, inform and involve stakeholders in projects as appropriate.

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