

## Whitestown Stream Local Park Up-grade, Tallaght, Dublin 24



### PART 8 PLANNING REPORT

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## 1. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Main Purpose

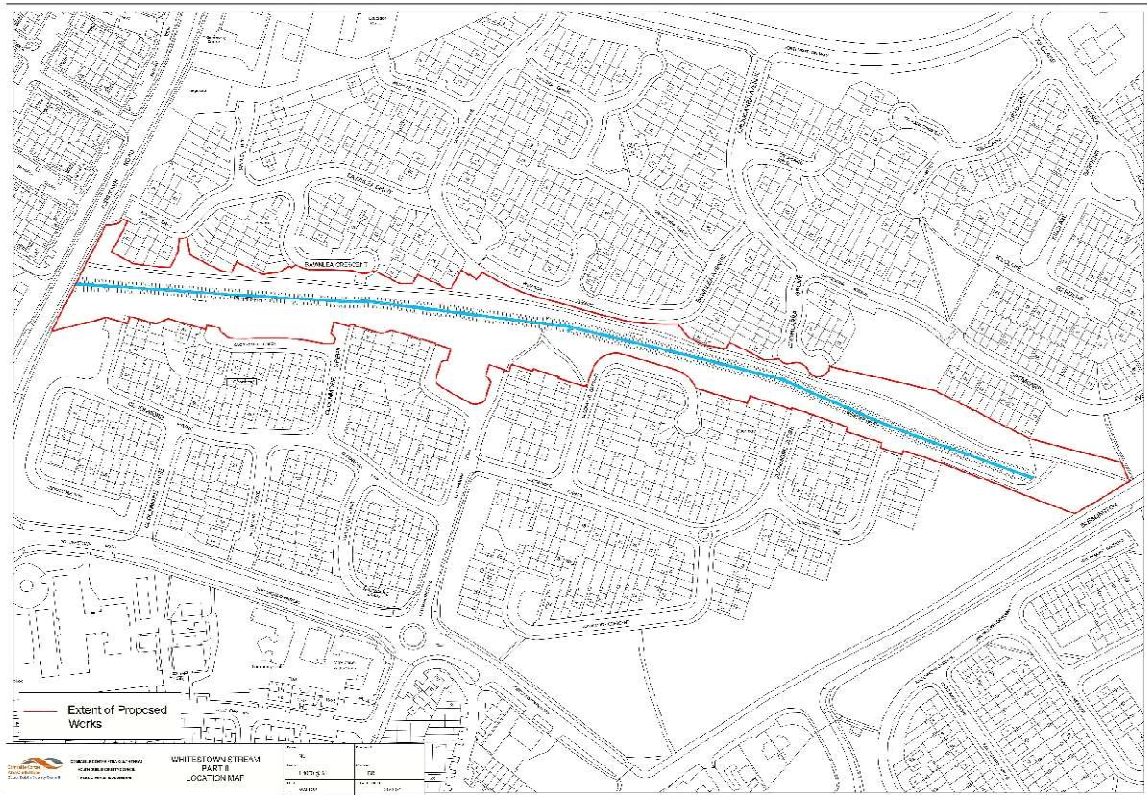
The purpose of this report, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), is to describe the nature and extent of the proposed development and principal features therein. South Dublin County Council (SDCC) appointed Nicholas de Jong Associates|Urban Design to lead and manage a multi-disciplinary team for the redesign and upgrade of Whitestown Stream, Tallaght Dublin 24.

SDCC wishes to re-invigorate the open space, with a renewed focus on meeting the needs of the communities that live and surround it. The vision is to create a safe, clean environment free from anti-social behaviour for people of all ages to meet, exercise and enjoy nature. The park should be a source of pride for the local community and a place they feel ownership of.

The Masterplan proposals should also aim to connect the park to the wider green infrastructure/greenways and to other high-quality open space and parks within the wider West Tallaght Area.

The project comprises the following works:

- Upgrade of existing boundaries and access points.
- Provision of new footpath at Cloonmore to complete a continuous loop.
- Surface overlay of existing footpaths where required.
- Refurbishment of existing footbridge linking Bawnlea Avenue and Cloonmore Road.
- Provision of 2 new footbridges at each end of the stream.
- Removal of graffiti from boundary walls and other locations as required.
- Enhancement of existing pedestrian access and service gates.
- Removal of low-level wall on the south-east boundary of the park and incorporation of landscape features into the recently completed N81 cycle scheme.
- Construction of new boundary with access point at Cloonmore Ave and Gort lar.
- Re-positioning of boundaries (hidden corners) with possible future land ownership transfer from SDCC to 3rd parties (any land ownership transfer will be subject to a separate decision by the Council).
- Up-grade of existing public lighting, supplemented as required with new lighting columns.
- Planting of trees and hedgerows.
- Establishment of wildflower grassland through changed management regimes and with native bulb planting.
- Introduction of an Activity Trail, with play/exercise equipment at 100m intervals.
- Installation of natural play area adjacent to Cloonmore Road.
- All associated landscape design including street furniture, surfacing and signage.
- All ancillary works.



*Site Location Plan*

## 2. PLANNING CONTEXT

### 2.1 National Policy

The Masterplan proposals have been developed in the context of:

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
- The Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031, and
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020
- National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

### 2.2 Regional Policy

#### 2.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031, including the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)

To achieve the vision the MASP identifies a number of Guiding Principles for the sustainable development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, which include:

- Metropolitan Scale Amenities – To enhance provision of regional parks and strategic Green Infrastructure, to develop an integrated network of metropolitan scale amenities, and to develop greenways/blueways along the canals, rivers and coast, as part of the implementation of the National Transport Authority's Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area.

#### 2.2.2 Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment, Inland Fisheries Ireland, 2020

The recent Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Guidelines requires that sufficient space is set aside (>10m) to protect stream side riparian zones and recommends that the middle zone beyond the streamside zone is suitable for human usage such as walking or cycle lanes.

The Part 8 proposal maintains a streamside riparian zone that is in excess of 10 metres from the course of the Whitestown Stream, with the exception of a small section of new footpath adjoining Cloonmore Gardens to the south of the corridor and at the two new footbridges at each end of the stream. The existing and proposed footpath network is otherwise beyond the riparian zone and, following assessment by the multi-disciplinary team, it has been determined that there will be no significant impacts on existing ecological habitats including from associated lighting.

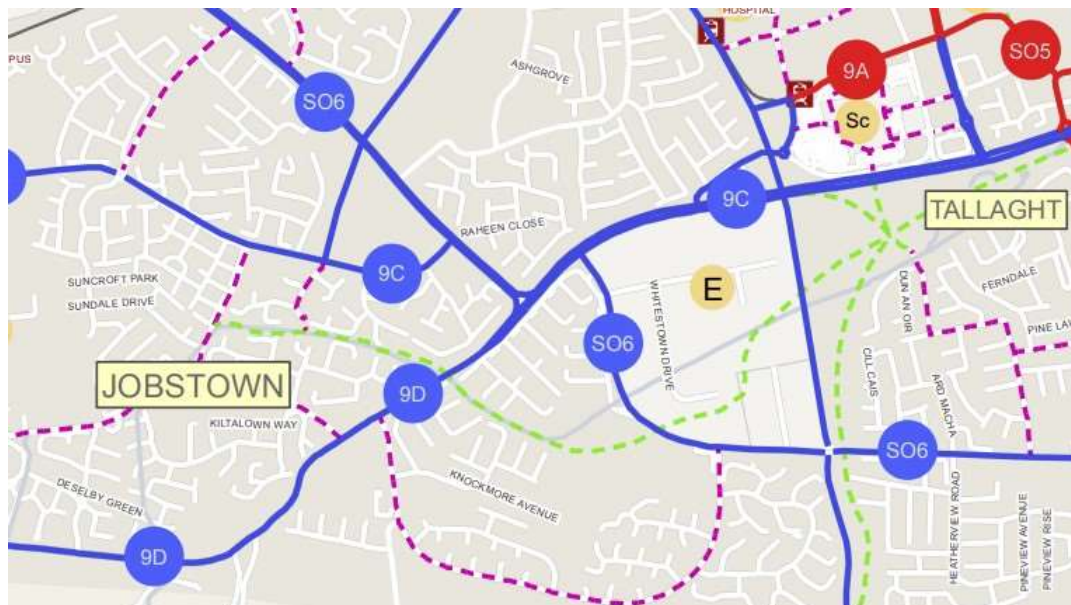
#### 2.2.3 National Transport Authority (NTA), Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, 2013

This document sets out existing and proposed cycle network plans for the urban network, inter-urban network and green route network for each of the seven Local Authority areas which includes SDCC.

The Cycle Network Plan is to be developed in accordance with the National Cycle Manual and best industry practice.



The GDA Cycle Network identifies the Whitestown Stream corridor as a Minor Greenway, extending from Jobstown/the N81 in the west through Killinarden Park to Sean Walsh Park/Whitestown Way in the east. The current Part 8 proposal for Whitestown Stream facilitates the future provision of this route.



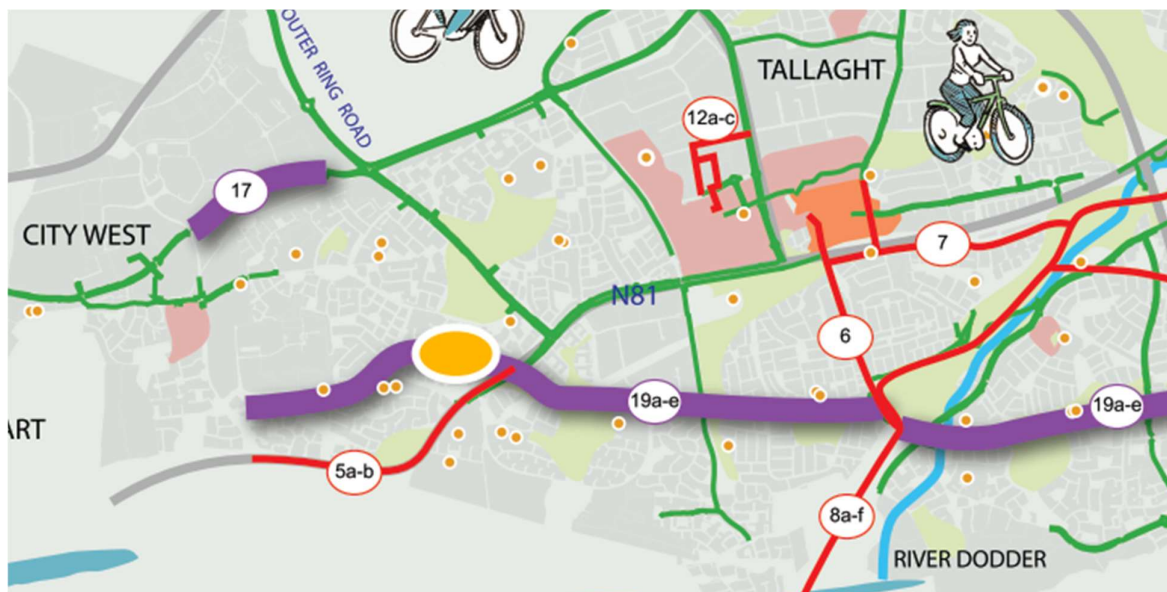
*Dublin South West Cycle Network Extract (Sheet N6)*

#### 2.2.4 South Dublin County Council, Draft Cycle South Dublin 2020

SDCC published the Cycle South Dublin document for public consultation in November 2020, and following completion of this process an updated version will be issued.

The Cycle South Dublin document sets out the wider vision for South Dublin to become one of Ireland's most cycle friendly counties. This includes the identification of several plans and proposed cycle routes, complementing the NTA GDA Cycle Network document. The cycle priorities are categorised into three: Now (next 4 years), Soon (4 to 8 years) and Later (8+ years).

One of the Soon Schemes identified in the Cycle South Dublin Plan includes a cycle route through Killinarden Park and Whitestown Stream Park, linking with other existing and future cycle routes on the N81 and Whitestown Way and forming part of a wider scheme between Citywest and Rathfarnham (Route 19a-e). The current Part 8 proposal for Whitestown Stream facilitates the future provision of this route following more detailed design studies and securing of funding.



Cycle South Dublin Soon Proposed Cycle Routes (with Whitestown Stream Park highlighted in yellow)

## 2.3 Local Policy

### 2.3.1 South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028

The new South Dublin County Development Plan (the Plan) sets out the framework to guide future development where a focus is placed on the places we live, the places we work, and how we interact and move between these places while protecting our environment. The aim is to progress to a more sustainable development pattern for South Dublin in the immediate and long-term future up to 2040 and beyond.

Chapter 8.7 'Parks and Public Open Space' deals with the function, hierarchy, quality and quantity of parks and public open space in the County. As set out in the Plan, the overarching aim of the Council in the provision of parks and open space is to encourage the development of a well-connected and integrated public open space network that contributes towards achieving a broad range of policy objectives, including:

- *Improving community, health and wellbeing – Parks and open spaces provide a valuable role as a sanctuary for the community; the benefits of engaging with the natural world are now widely understood to be particularly beneficial to mental and physical health.*
- *Enhancing visual amenity – Parks and open spaces form an attractive green and open setting which enhances the character of urban neighbourhoods in particular.*
- *Promoting sustainable development – Parks and open spaces contribute to sustainable development objectives where they are appropriately located and accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.*
- *Promoting climate change adaption and mitigation – Parks and open spaces provide opportunities for sustainable drainage while trees and plants perform a vital role by capturing and storing carbon.*

- *Reinforcing Green Infrastructure – Parks and open spaces are core elements in the County’s green infrastructure network (see Chapter 4: Green Infrastructure).*
- *Promotion of biodiversity – Parks and open spaces offer opportunities to conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystems. They are often focused on natural environments such as river valleys which support valuable wildlife habitats; parks also offer opportunities to increase pollinator-friendly planting.*
- *Supporting culture and heritage – Parks and open spaces often contain heritage elements and play host to many outdoor community, arts and cultural events.*
- *Supporting the local economy, including tourism – Many parks and open spaces contain facilities such as cafes, heritage features and other attractions that are valuable visitor amenities.*

It is the policy of the Plan that a hierarchical network of high-quality open space is available to those who live, work and visit the County, providing for both passive and active recreation, and that the resource offered by public open spaces, parks and playing fields is maximised through effective management.

The hierarchy of open space is a key element of the green infrastructure network, which connects and forms green corridor linkages across the County.

Objective 1 of the Green Infrastructure strategy (GI6) of the Plan is:

*To support a hierarchy of accessible open spaces and recreational facilities, appropriate for neighbourhood size and catchment area, which are adaptable and capable of accommodating multiple uses.*

The Public Open Space Hierarchy outlined in Table 8.1 sets out the rationale for the existing and planned parks and open space network for the County, identifying the range of functions at each level in the hierarchy. Whitestown Stream falls within the hierarchical category of ‘Local Park’, which is defined in the Plan (Table 8.1: Public Open Space Hierarchy) as:

*‘Local parks range in size from between 2 to 20ha. They provide mostly for amenity and passive recreation, although some may have playing pitches and play equipment; they are located in close proximity to homes and thereby easily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists.*

*Examples of local parks in South Dublin County are Vessey and Hermitage Parks in Lucan, Ballycragh Park, Firhouse Community Centre Park and Quarryvale Park.*

*Local Parks serve a local population within a 400m catchment.*

*These parks primarily consist of improved grassland but offer considerable opportunities for contributing to the local level GI network through enhancement schemes that include native trees, small woodlands, hedgerows, meadows and other planting’.*



The Plan stresses that the provision of high quality public open space that is appropriately designed, located and maintained is a key element of placemaking. Public open space should have active and passive recreational value and should enhance the identity and amenity of an area. The key principles of particular relevance to Whitestown Stream Local Park are:

***COS5 Objective 8:*** *To ensure the design of parks and public open space areas is of high quality; to provide a pleasant setting, accommodate use by people of all ages and abilities, to support life-long activity and good health and well-being by the provision of a balanced mix of active and passive recreation and access to, or view of, nature, ensuring that the design considers:*

- *provision of an appropriate mix of hard and soft surfaced areas;*
- *enhancement of biodiversity and existing trees and hedgerows;*
- *incorporation of water courses, other natural features and existing built heritage into the design of parks and open spaces as appropriate;*
- *provision of new planting, landscape features and appropriate site furniture including a variety of accessible, well located and designed seating.*

***COS5 Objective 9:*** *To ensure that parks and public open space are appropriately located within the County and within development sites, to facilitate and support its multifunctional role.*

***COS5 Objective 10:*** *To support and facilitate the key role of parks and open spaces in relation to green infrastructure including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), flood management, biodiversity and carbon absorption and to promote connections between public open spaces and the wider GI network.*

***COS5 Objective 11:*** *To promote the role of parks and open spaces in conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems in accordance with the objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017-2021) and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025, the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2026 or any superseding plans. In the development of individual management plans for parks the requirements of the aforementioned biodiversity and pollinator plans will be taken into consideration and will form a part of the management requirements for the park. The development of individual management plans for parks will include consultation with local stakeholders.*

***COS5 Objective 12:*** *To ensure that proposed SuDS measures are only accepted as an element of public open space where they are natural in form and integrate well into the open space landscape supporting a wider amenity and biodiversity value.*

***COS5 Objective 13:*** *To ensure that parks and open spaces provide for a wide range of recreational and amenity activities that are easily accessible to all in the community, irrespective of age or ability.*

***Objective 14:*** *To ensure that public open space and associated recreational facilities are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, as appropriate to their position within the open space hierarchy set out in Table 8.1.*

***COS5 Objective 15:*** *To support the development of passive recreation within open spaces, such as walking trails, seating provision and areas which provide for passive amenity/hobbies, and visual interest.*

***COS5 Objective 16:*** *To ensure that parks and public open spaces are carefully designed as safe spaces, by implementing the following measures:*

- *Providing active frontages and maximising passive surveillance from adjacent housing and/or public thoroughfares;*
- *Eliminating buildings which back-on or gable-front public open spaces;*
- *Designing corner units with active frontage;*
- *Encouraging increased use through improved access and quality of facilities'; and*
- *Careful location, design and choice of surface materials and site furniture.*

***COS5 Objective 17:*** *To ensure that incidental areas of open space which do not function as useable open space and/or are not clearly visible from the public realm, are designed out of a proposed scheme.*

In addition:

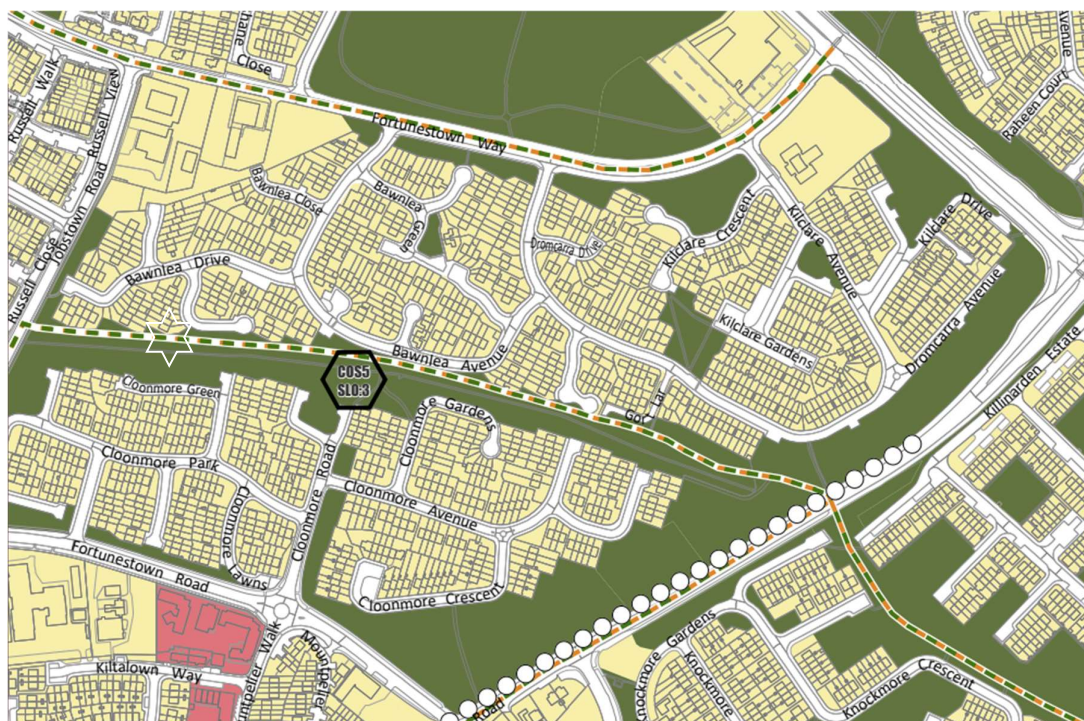
***COS5 SLO 3:*** *That the area on both sides of Whitestown Stream/Jobstown Stream inclusive of the Stream itself between Cloonmore Estate on one side and Bawnlea and Dromcarra Estates on the other and from the Jobstown Rd to the N81 be designated a Local Park/Open Space and prioritising over the life-time of the plan upgrading the greening of the area and the protection of the watercourse running through it, including the inclusion of intergenerational uses of the space such as outdoor exercise equipment. The greening of the area to be in accordance with the implementation of South Dublin County Parks and Open Space Strategy.*

### 3. NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 The Existing Situation

### 3.1.1 Land Use Zoning

The Whitestown Stream corridor is zoned in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 as Objective OS, **'To preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities'**.



South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028, Use Zoning Objectives Sheet 9 extract

### 3.1.2 Existing Conditions

Whitestown Stream Local Park is located in the South Dublin County Council area, around 2.0km south-west from Tallaght Town Centre. The linear open space is approximately 2.95ha (7.3 acres) in size, extending between Jobstown Road to the west and the N81 Blessington Road to the east. It is bounded by the established residential areas of Clonmore to the south and Bawnlea and Dromcarra to the north.

The area was laid out in the late 1970's/ early 1980's as part of extensive housing development in South Dublin and the park was originally planned to accommodate the passive recreation needs of the surrounding communities. However, in recent years with changing demographics its' success as a public amenity and recreation space has continued to diminish. The population of the surrounding area has also continued to increase significantly and it is generally recognised that there has been a lag between the provision of housing and the

development of essential recreational amenities to better serve the needs of the growing community.

The boundaries to the park are in variable condition and the entry points uninviting. Unauthorised access by stolen vehicles and scramble bikes has been a recurrent problem. Building frontages are not continuous and there are several locations in the park that lack overlooking from residential properties or public roads, and hence passive surveillance is absent in certain places. Boundaries with no active frontage, or where poorly defined by building gables or blank walls, are consequently susceptible to anti-social behaviour such as illegal dumping and burning of waste, and otherwise contribute to a perceived lack of safety.



*Hidden corner resulting in anti-social activities*

### **3.1.3 Landscape**

The key existing characteristics of the park are:

- The site is dominated by low biodiversity amenity grassland with few amenities.
- The Whitestown Stream flows in an easterly direction through the central part of the park, and discharges to the River Dodder (about 4km downstream) and has poor biodiversity interest.
- Topography is generally flat, sloping gradually towards the Whitestown Stream.
- The banks of the stream are gently graded. The watercourse is contained within a constructed concrete channel which is subject to regular littering and dumping.
- Small unmaintained strips of grassland alongside the stream are of low local ecological importance but provide some shelter and foraging opportunities for local wildlife.
- Elsewhere in the park planting is very limited, apart from occasional ornamental species to adjoining residential boundaries, and small linear strips of scrub habitat along sections of the site boundary.





*Improved amenity grassland dominates most of the site*

#### **3.1.4 Access and movement**

- The Park is well-connected to the surrounding residential areas by segregated pedestrian routes.
- There are no dedicated cycle facilities, but the N81 accommodates segregated cycleways close to the eastern boundary of the park.
- A continuous footpath runs along the northern side of the open space, between Jobstown Road and the N81. The footpath to the southside is discontinuous. A footbridge links the housing areas of Bawnlea and Cloonmore to the north and south respectively.
- There are several accessible bus stops in the vicinity of the site, at N81/Blessington Road, Fortunestown Way and Jobstown Road
- The Tallaght LUAS stop lies around 1.5km north-east of the site, which is the first point on the LUAS Red Line offering a frequent connection to stops between Tallaght, Central Dublin and North Dock.

#### **3.1.5 Recreation**

- The open space is of poor and deteriorating amenity value and lacks recreational facilities.

#### **3.1.6 Street Lighting & CCTV**

- It is proposed to reuse the approx. 16 columns along the existing Whitestown footpath, and supplementing these as required with new columns at approx. 30m centres. On the Cloonmore side, the new footpath will be provided with new columns and lanterns also at 30m centres. All lanterns will be 11W ASD LED and will provide a P4 class of light which is an average of 5 lux and a minimum of 1lux, with a uniformity of 20 %. There will be a total of 34 new columns and 50 new LED lanterns.



- There are two existing CCTV poles close to Dromcarra Grove and Cloonmore Gardens (north and south sides of the stream respectively).

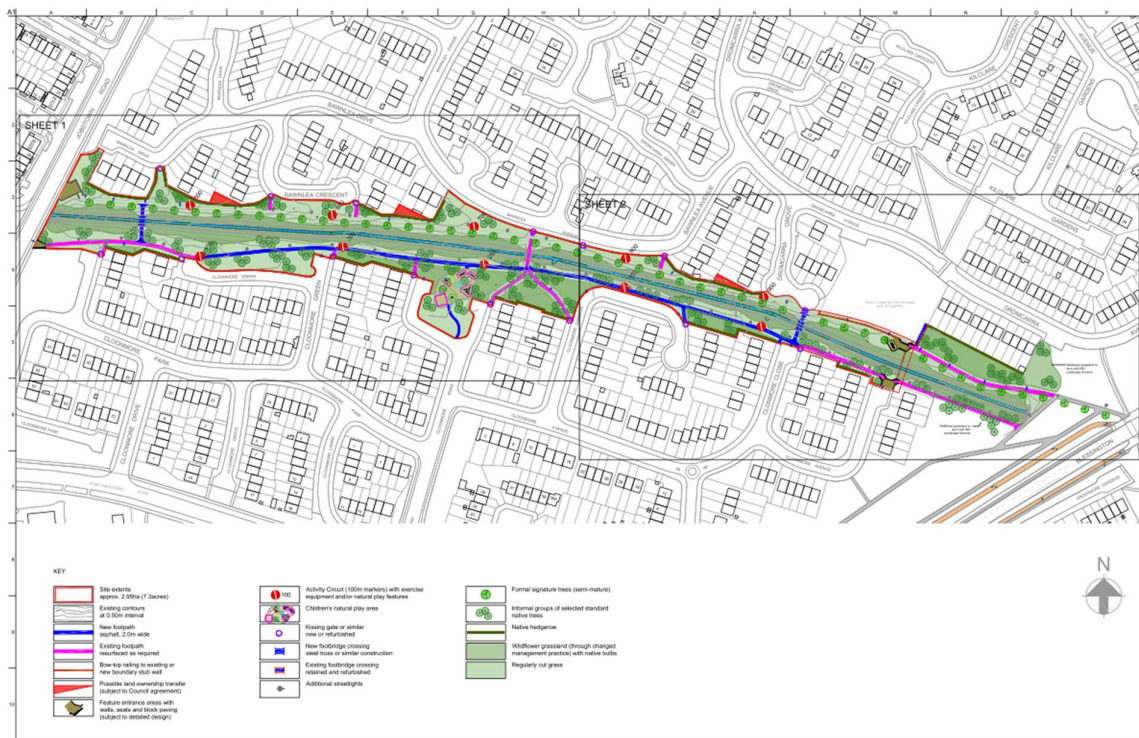
## 3.2 Masterplan Development

### 3.2.1 Masterplan Proposals

The Masterplan Proposals are defined on the following plans:

|           |                               |
|-----------|-------------------------------|
| WSP-L-001 | Context Map                   |
| WSP-L-002 | Location Map                  |
| WSP-L-003 | Overall Layout Plan           |
| WSP-L-004 | Detailed Layout Plan Sheets 1 |
| WSP-L-005 | Detailed Layout Plan Sheet 2  |
| WSP-L-006 | Typical Components Plan       |
| WSP-L-007 | Photomontages                 |

The proposals have been developed in response to the site appraisals and the feedback from the community consultation exercise (refer Section 4).



WSP-L-003: Overall Layout Plan

In summary the works comprise -

- Upgrade of existing boundaries and access points.
- Provision of new footpath at Cloonmore to complete a footpath loop.
- Surface overlay of existing footpaths where required.
- Refurbishment of existing footbridge linking Bawnlea Avenue and Cloonmore Road.
- Provision of 2 new footbridges at each end of the stream.
- Removal of graffiti from boundary walls and other locations as required.
- Enhancement of existing pedestrian access and service gates.
- Removal of low-level wall on the south-east boundary of the park and incorporation of landscape features into the recently completed N81 cycle scheme.
- Construction of new boundary with access point at Cloonmore Ave and Gort lar.
- Re-positioning of boundaries (hidden corners) with possible future land ownership transfer from SDCC to 3rd parties (any land ownership transfer will be subject to a separate decision by the Council).
- Up-grade of existing public lighting, supplemented as required with new lighting columns.
- Planting of native trees and hedgerows.
- Establishment of wildflower grassland through changed management regimes and with native bulb planting.
- Introduction of an Activity Trail, with play/exercise equipment at 100m intervals.
- Installation of a natural play area adjacent to Cloonmore Road.
- All associated landscape design including street furniture, surfacing and signage.
- All ancillary works.

**In consideration of the overall up-grade potential of Whitestown Stream Local Park, and the aspirations of the local community for developing a meaningful open space for all age groups and abilities, further consideration may need to be given to prioritising the masterplan proposals and to possible implementation in phases according to available resources and funding opportunities. The delivery of the up-grade proposals will continue to be reviewed by the Council through ongoing engagement with all interested parties.**

### 3.3 Anticipated Benefits

The up-grade proposals for Whitestown Stream Local Park will bring this currently under-utilised open space back to life, providing a renewed focus for the communities that surround it, as well as linking and integrating the park into a wider network of high-quality open spaces and routes/greenways.

Other associated benefits of the proposed scheme include:

- **Improved Access and Movement**
  - Up-grading of existing footpaths and completion of a continuous looped Activity Trail with two new footbridge connections will greatly encourage increased use of the park for general exercise and amenity purposes.

- Refurbishment of the existing footbridge will help address the current neglected appearance, with resultant anti-social activities, and enhance pedestrian linkage between each side of the park.
  - The extended footpath network is directly connected to the N81 cycle scheme and, via a recently installed controlled crossing, to the strategic walking/cycle routes of neighbouring Killinarden Park, providing easy access to Whitestown Stream Park for pedestrians and cyclists from the surrounding areas, and linking eastwards via Sean Walsh Park to Rathfarnham and westwards to City West.
  - The Local Park upgrade will facilitate the future provision of a strategic walking/cycle route along the entire length of Whitestown Stream, as envisaged by the Cycle South Dublin Strategy, subject to detailed design studies and funding opportunities.
  - The strategic route is linked to the Tallagh LAP Cycle Network, providing increased opportunities for convenient cycle access between residential areas, the Town Centre, other parks and open spaces, schools and employment areas.
  - There could be positive impacts to air quality and climate due to the improved pedestrian and cycling facilities which may encourage some transport modal shift in the surrounding areas.
- **Improved Sense of Security**
    - The up-graded access gates and boundary treatments of railings to existing stub walls will enhance the security of the park by restricting unauthorised access by stolen vehicles and scramble bikes.
    - The introduction of a variety of recreation facilities will promote increased use of the park by different age groups and abilities.
    - Enhanced entrances and elimination of unsightly features and hidden corners will offer a safer, clean environment free from anti-social behaviour for people of all ages to meet, exercise and enjoy the out-of-doors.
    - Continuous street lighting and installation of CCTV along both sides of the stream will optimise the safer use of the park at different times.
    - Providing adequate lighting levels will add to safety and security, encourage use into the evenings, and help to discourage anti-social gatherings and behaviour, while at the same time minimising spill light to the habitats of the Whitestown Stream.
    - The enhanced main entrances will reinforce the identity of the park and provide orientation/gathering spaces, while restricting unauthorised motorised access.
    - The overall up-grade of the park should become a source of pride for the local community and a place they feel ownership of.
- **Enhanced range of Recreation Facilities**
    - The enhanced and extended footpath network will provide a looped Activity Trail (1km in length), with exercise/play facilities at regular 100m intervals, for use by individuals of all ages/abilities as well as local community and sports groups.
    - The fully-equipped children's play area at the heart of the park, overlooked by housing on Cloonmore Road and linked across the stream to Bawnlea via an enhanced footbridge, will provide natural play opportunities for a wide range of age groups and act as a focal point for guardians to meet and socialise.
    - The up-grade and new facilities will provide an attractive, safe, enjoyable, healthy and inclusive park.

- **Enhanced Landscape and Biodiversity**
  - The formal signature tree planting of semi-mature species will reinforce the identity of the main northern footpath through the park, contrasting with the more informal treatment of the southern footpath route.
  - Groups of informal tree planting, with clear stems that allow views beneath the canopies, will reinforce the amenity of the area and improve the definition of edges and functional spaces.
  - Hedgerow planting to boundaries with no over-looking will help deter anti-social activities, such as dumping, while increasing the biodiversity interest with a mix of low-maintenance native species.
  - The management of wildflower grassland in informal swathes along the stream, and linking with the recently completed N81 landscape works, will provide amenity interest and enhanced bio-diversity throughout the open space.
  - The planting proposals will offer amenity, interconnected green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.
  - 
  - The introduction of more diverse habitat types support the objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017-2021), the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2026.
- **Minimal Environmental Impact**
  - The characteristics of the proposed development are not considered likely to result in a significant impact on the environment by virtue of its size, nature, or operational activities.
  - Once operational, the proposed development is expected to be low in environmental impact, with largely positive impacts.
  - The development will provide an important recreational resource for the local community, and will bring positive impacts on amenity value and biodiversity, in line with the Parks and Public Open Space policies and objectives of the County Development Plan.

### 3.4 Overview of Environmental Impacts

The proposal has undergone Appropriate Assessment Screening under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and screening for Environmental Impact Assessment. The Planning Authority has made a preliminary examination of the nature, size and location of the proposed development, and concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, and a determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

#### 3.4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment Report Screening (EIARS)<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this report was to identify whether there is a need under The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for an EIAR for the proposed development along Whitestown Stream between Jobstown Road and Blessington Road, South County Dublin.

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<sup>1</sup> Whitestown Stream Public Realm Enhancement EIAR Screening Report, JBA (May 2022)

It was determined that the proposed development does not fall under Schedule 5 (Parts 1 and 2) of the Act. As such, an EIAR has not been automatically triggered. To determine whether the development may fall under the category of Sub-threshold development, with the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects, a screening exercise was undertaken.

During construction, typical impacts such as noise, dust, traffic disruption, and the generation of small amounts of waste are to be expected. These are typical construction phase impacts, and will be mitigated against by environmental operating plans devised by the on-site contractor, following best practice guidance. During construction, there is potential for impacts to the water quality of the Whitestown Stream. This will be mitigated against by water quality protection measures, including the preparation of a surface water management plan, the installation of geotextile sandbag stream dams and silt fences, supervision of works by an Ecological Clerk of Works, and adherence to concrete management procedures. Provided these protection measures are put in place and strictly adhered to, significant adverse impacts to water quality are not anticipated.

Once operational, the proposed development is expected to be low in environmental impact. The scale of the development is in keeping with the surrounding area, and will enhance the public realm in the area, providing tree planting and improved access in the area.

It has been concluded that the proposed development does not fall under the category of subthreshold development, and thus an EIAR is not required. The overall conclusion is based on the details of the scheme available at the time of preparation of this report. If the extent of the scheme or the construction methods for the scheme are changed then the EIAR Screening assessment should be reviewed.

### **3.4.2 Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)<sup>2</sup>**

The EclA assesses the ecological features present within the site and its surrounding area (the Zone of Influence (Zol)) in relation to the proposed works. This allows for identification of the potential impacts of the proposed works upon the ecological features of the site at an early stage, whilst identifying the potential ecological constraints upon the proposed works. The assessment is based on a desk-based assessment, which determines the baseline conditions at the site of the proposed works, and site surveys, which provided information on habitats and species present on the site and its surroundings.

The EclA outlines the findings of the desk-based assessment and the surveys and identifies any potential impacts of the proposed works on ecological features within the Zol of the site; and proposes mitigation measures to avoid or reduce impacts where necessary.

The Assessment concludes that:

The proposed enhancement project has been shown to potentially impact a number of different habitats with county (eroding / upland river - Whitestown Stream) and local importance (dry meadows and grassy verges; and scrub) and faunal groups (Otter; Hedgehog; Common Pipistrelle; Soprano Pipistrelle; Leisler's Bat; Myotis spp.; Mallard; Grey Wagtail; Starling; other local birds; Common Frog; European Eel; and Large Red-tailed Bumblebee), who's ecological importance ranges from low local to county level in the context of this site.

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<sup>2</sup> Whitestown Stream Enhancement Project, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, Ecological Impact Assessment, JBA (May 2022)



Based upon the information supplied, regarding the site layout and landscape plan; and provided that the development is constructed in accordance with the mitigation measures outlined above, there will be no significant impacts alone or in-combination with other projects and plans, as result of the development and associated works on the ecology and local species of the area and on any designated conservation sites.

### **3.4.3 Appropriate Assessment (AA)<sup>3</sup>**

#### **Stage 1 - Screening for AA**

This initial, screening stage of the Appropriate Assessment is to determine:

- Whether the proposed plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European designated site for nature conservation.
- If it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the European designated site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

For those sites where, potential adverse impacts are identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, further assessment is necessary to determine if the proposals will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European designated site, in view of the site's conservation objectives (i.e. the process proceeds to Stage 2).

In carrying out the AA screening, the Concluding Statement indicates that mitigation measures have not been taken into account. Standard best practice construction measures which could have the effect of mitigating any effects on any European Sites have similarly not been taken into account. On the basis of the screening exercise carried out, it can be concluded that the possibility of any significant adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 sites within the ZoI, whether arising from the project itself or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded beyond a reasonable scientific doubt on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available.

### **3.4.4 Traffic**

Whitestown Stream Local Park is considered to be highly accessible by foot, by cycle and by public transport. Road congestion is minor surrounding the site and there is little evidence to suggest there are road safety issues on the local network. There are several good quality cycle and pedestrian links in the locality, providing excellent opportunities to link the site to the wider area by sustainable travel modes.

### **3.4.5 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology**

There are no Protected Structures or Recorded Monuments located within or adjoining the open space.

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<sup>3</sup> Whitestown Stream Enhancement Project, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, Screening for Appropriate Assessment, JBA (May 2022)

#### **3.4.6 Flood Risk**

The OPW's Eastern CFRAM Mapping and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2016-2022 (January 2016) and Flood Risk Mapping information from JBA Consulting and the OPW PFRA will be used for specific Flood Risk Assessment at detailed design stage.

#### **3.4.7 Footbridges**

A Section 50 engineering report will be prepared at detailed design stage setting out the required information for refurbishment of the existing footbridge and the installation of the two new footbridges. The Ecological Impact Assessment report will be updated following the future confirmation of the construction methodology.

#### **3.4.8 Waste**

During construction, the proposed development will generate a small amount of typical construction waste. This will be disposed of following best practice guidance implemented by operating plans to be devised by the appointed contractor. Once operational, the proposed development will not produce waste.

## 4. CONSULTATION

### 4.1 Engagement Process

4.1.1 A focussed community engagement process was undertaken by 3rd party engagement specialist Neil Harran (Social Research Consultants) during the second half of June and early part of July 2022, designed to:

- Inform community stakeholders of the proposed investment in and upgrade of Whitestown Stream Park;
- Share proposals for the development of the park area; and
- Seek feedback in respect of those proposals.

It followed on from an initial engagement with County Councillors of the Tallaght Area Committee (13th June) in which Councillors welcomed and fully supported the proposed investment in the Whitestown Stream.

Several community leaders were identified in the Jobstown area with a view to linking in with their respective networks and facilitating engagement with a wide range of community interests. As a result, the following activities were organised:

- A meeting was conducted with members of the Dodder Action Group on site at the Whitestown Stream;
- Information and consultation sessions were held with students of 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes in St. Thomas' Senior National School in Jobstown, involving up to 200 children in total;
- Information on the proposed development was shared with youth workers of Tallaght Youth Service (TYS) for discussion with young people involved in two TYS summer projects in Jobstown;
- With the assistance of Jobstown Community Centre, two community consultation meetings were held, at which a total of 11 individuals participated, all of whom were either residents in the estates adjoining Whitestown Stream or were users of the Whitestown Stream area; and
- A short questionnaire on the proposed park development was shared with residents in Cloonmore, Bawnlea, Dromcarra and Kiltalown, with a total of 23 responses returned for analysis.

### 4.2 Key Findings

#### 4.2.1 Welcome for the Park Upgrade

- There was overwhelming support among those consulted for the proposed upgrade of Whitestown Stream Park. Words used to describe the area in its current condition included "dump", "appalling", "disgusting", "a disgrace", "filthy", "desolate", "eyesore" and people of all ages welcomed the opportunity for a nicer, more community-oriented space.

- All 23 respondents to the questionnaire noted that the park upgrade was a welcome development for the community.
- A number of people referred positively to the wildflowers growing along the N81, and expressed a desire that something similar might be achieved in the context of the Whitestown Stream.
- Personnel in the local primary school and youth workers from Tallaght Youth Service expressed their interest in supporting the development project in whatever way possible and committed to “anything that would build pride in the community.”

#### **4.2.2 Use and Acceptance of the Park**

- Whitestown Stream area is used to varying degrees by the community in its current state. Apart from antisocial activities, particularly dumping, feedback suggested that people of all ages used the neighbourhood park for different purposes. Children and youth referred to “hanging out with friends” along the stream with many of the younger children referring to playing in the area. Several referred to using the park as a shortcut connecting communities and, for people living in the Bawnlea/Dromcarra communities, as a shortcut to shops and other retail outlets in Jobstown. It was also mentioned that adults, including older adults and parents with small children, frequently walked the path in the park.
- The ongoing presence of scramblers and quads was mentioned throughout the varying community engagements. Reference was also made to the driving and burning of stolen cars though all suggested that fewer cars were being driven on the green than previously. In most cases, dumping was considered to be a bigger issue and a bigger stain on the local landscape.
- Bulky waste items tend to congregate around the central bridge in the park. Members of the Dodder Action Group referred to removing, on average, 30-40 100litre bags of rubbish during the group’s monthly clean-up of the area.
- Just under one-in-four of those adults completing the community survey referred to the Whitestown Stream as unsafe and referred to not walking there as a result.

#### **4.2.3 Key Issues to be Addressed**

The following four primary issues were identified across all community engagements:

- For a concerted effort to address dumping;
- To address what one stakeholder referred to as the desolation of the area;
- To attract people to use the park area more positively; and
- To remove scramblers from the area.

#### **4.2.4 Responses to Proposed Upgrade**

The proposed elements of the Whitestown Stream upgrade were explored in conversation with all community participants. The proposals being put forward for the park - both individually and as a package - were mainly viewed positively by all consultation participants.

##### ***Reinforcement of boundary and access points as a deterrent to scramblers and cars***

- Securing both the boundary and access points was welcomed by all except some local teenagers – retaining ease of access provided by Whitestown Stream between communities was considered important.

- All adults participating in the community survey noted that they strongly agreed with the proposal to put railings on the stub wall around the site to prevent access to scramblers and cars.
- One group of individuals requested that fencing proposed for the perimeter would not be palisade, given that such fencing would be likely to have an adverse effect on the movement of local wildlife.
- Reference was made to the importance of kissing gates being of adequate scale for parents with buggies, push bikes and wheelchairs. All survey respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining entrance gates from the community to the park.

***Provision of a new footpath to complete a loop around the open space***

- Welcomed across all age groups.
- One group of adults suggested that local running groups could be invited to use the space for community-based activities.
- Nearly all survey respondents strongly agreed with the proposal to repair/up-grade the footpath on the Bawnlea/Dromcarra side.
- A number of participants commented on the need for paths to take into account the needs of people with mobility challenges and sight disabilities.

***Removal of existing bridge and replacement with 2 new bridges***

- The suggestion of installing two bridges at either end of the park, so as to create a footpath loop, was endorsed by all.
- The possibility of removing the existing bridge from the centre of the park was challenged by many participants, as this acted as a central access point for pedestrians between the Bawnlea and Cloonmore estates.
- The overarching request of participants was that the bridge be retained and repaired, giving the park three primary crossing points into the future.

***Removal of graffiti from boundary walls and other locations***

- Welcomed by all, but there was a likelihood that it would return.
- At the public meeting in Jobstown Community Centre, the possibility of inviting students from school to create art on boundary walls where graffiti is currently an issue was suggested.
- A nature wall was also mooted as a possible option. Others argued against any form of art installation, suggesting it would be immediately destroyed.

***Improved lighting and CCTV***

- Welcomed by youth and adults alike, mainly in the context of preventing and addressing dumping of waste.
- It was suggested that dumping would continue unabated unless legislation on littering and dumping was enforced.
- Similarly it was considered that CCTV cameras would only be valuable if they were regularly monitored and if there was a genuine commitment to prosecuting those caught on camera in the act of dumping.

***Hidden Corners***

- Representatives of the Dodder Action Group highlighted the negative influence of hidden corners on the upkeep of the park and reacted positively to suggestions that these corners might be removed in the park upgrade.
- No other participants commented on the corners in public discussions.



- All survey respondents highlighted that removing hidden open spaces and corners in the park where dumping currently takes place would have a positive impact.

***Introduction of suitable tree, hedgerow and wildflower/bulb planting***

- All age groups welcomed proposals to increase plant life in the park area.
- Members of the Dodder Action Group recommended that long grass be allowed to grow in parts of the park, highlighting that long grass and wild flowers reduced the desolation of the area and also limited single item littering.
- Reference was made to planting mature trees. It was suggested that planting saplings would only result in them being damaged.
- School children and youth were also in favour of tree, hedgerow and wildflower planting. They suggested that planting should, in some way, be dedicated or offered meaning - trees planted for example in memory of a local person/people were less likely to be vandalised.
- Many of those participating in the consultation spoke of the value of involving local people, particularly children and young people, in planting exercises. This was considered important in giving local young people a sense of ownership of the park and building their sense of pride in the area.

***Natural landscape play features***

- The inclusion of play features was welcomed by all participants, but there was mixed reaction to the type of play features that might be included. A number of participants, youth and adult, suggested that the inclusion of natural landscape play features risked vandalism.
- Primary school children referred to the importance of a range of play features relevant to a range of ages.

***Provision for Cyclists***

- It was suggested that separate space for cyclists and those on scooters would be important, particularly in the context of older people out walking or parents walking with small children.
- Many respondents (75%) were in favour of specific provision for cyclists, while the remainder were less concerned.

## 4.3 Overall Engagement Conclusions

There was overwhelming support among those consulted for the proposed upgrade of Whitestown Stream Park and people of all ages welcomed the opportunity for a nicer, more community-oriented space. Many expressed their interest in supporting the development project in whatever way possible and committed to “anything that would build pride in the community.”