

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES WORKING PARTY  
HELD VIA ZOOM  
MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7.00 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 8.26 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Sarah Codling (Chairman), Gillian Carpenter, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Peter Fox, Pete McAleer, Helen Thornton and Roz Willis.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk Public Services), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer), Zoe Scott (Grounds Coordinator), Ali Waller (Youth Services) and Reece Evans (Community Response Officer).

**72 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions**

There were no apologies for absence received.

Councillor Ella Sayce was absent from the meeting.

**73 To receive Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**74** At this point in the meeting, the Chairman brought forward item 5 (Grounds Management Report) for discussion in order to accommodate an update from Reece Evans, the council's Community Response Officer who was in attendance.

**Grounds Management Report**

The Assistant Town Clerk – Public Services verbally reported that the grounds team were not at full capacity and were doing the best they could with grass growing and staff shortages. Recruitment for Community Rangers had commenced with one post filled, phased in and already in place.

There had been a shortage of strimmers due to demand and a lawn mower breaking down.

It had been reported that strimmers had also been stolen from allotment sites.

There was an issue with the coin dispenser at Uphill toilets and one out of the three cubicles at Grove Park toilets was open.

There was continuing, very concerning anti-social behaviour taking place at the Cemetery which was actively being tackled via a multi-agency approach including the Police.

Reece reported that the anti-social behaviour (ASB) at the Cemetery was a growing and concerning problem. ASB problems previously experienced at Alexandra Parade had unfortunately been relocated to the Cemetery. PSPO's were being enforced to try and target the problem.

The Assistant Town Clerk reported the effectiveness of having this communication link with

Reece and the wider community response team and explained that the grounds team would really struggle without it. There needed to be a consistent presence in the cemetery to try and deter the ASB.

Members commented on the recruitment issues and explained that this was a national problem as a result of Brexit.

The Assistant Town Clerk informed that the redeployment of staff from other departments was being considered to help with staff shortages.

A member informed of ASB problems reported to her by a resident still being experienced at Worle church yard.

Reece urged members to encourage residents to report through 111 so that resources could be allocated effectively.

A member suggested contacting agencies like Addaction/Here for you now to help tackle ASB and urged staff not to approach anybody displaying ASB and put their selves at risk. The Assistant Town Clerk clarified that staff had been instructed not to approach anyone and informed that the toilets in the Cemetery had been closed after a police incident and were only opened for funeral services.

Reece reported that there would be some enforcement action taken with known individuals causing the ASB.

A member suggested the use of the mobile CCTV units the council had funded to try and tackle the problems. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that this could be an option, however a case for the use of the camera would need to be established and electricity and internet connection ability needed to be considered. The grounds team were in communication with the occupier of the bottom lodge of the Cemetery to install CCTV cameras on the bottom gates.

Reece reported that he and his team had close links with the CCTV department and would work with them to obtain the consents required and incurred costs.

The Assistant Town Clerk advised that the steering group included multi agencies like Here for you now/Addaction and so they would be aware of the anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Members were concerned to hear of the ASB problems and therefore it was

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Fox

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Gill Carpenter

A vote was taken and accordingly it was **carried**.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. That the new Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to the next Town Council Meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> September to hear the of the extreme problems with anti-social behaviour being experienced in the Cemetery.
2. That the report of the Assistant Town Clerk – Public Services be noted.

	<i>Reece left the meeting at 7.28 pm.</i>
<b>75</b>	<p><b>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Community Service Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021</b></p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>In response to a member, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that grant applications would be considered at the next meeting scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> September.</p> <p>It was noted that the minutes had some errors and highlighted sections which seemed to be a draft copy. The final version was available to members and would be uploaded to the council's website as approved.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Sarah Codling  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Peter Fox</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDED:</b> That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.</p>
<b>76</b>	<p><b>References from other Committees</b></p> <p><b>.1 Greenery in the Town Centre</b></p> <p>The minute extract of the Heritage Arts and Culture Committee (HAC) had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Chairman of the HAC Committee agreed the perusal of more planting but noted that there would be costs implications.</p> <p>It was noted that NSC had withdrawn funding for planting over the years and that the Town Council should work with them to achieve.</p> <p>The Grounds Coordinator reported that £2,000 funding had been secured from NSC for WIB/Love the Outdoors to plant up the town centre and other areas of the town. The WIB volunteer base was expanding and bedding plants for Autumn and winter had been ordered.</p> <p>The Town Council through Weston-in-Bloom (WIB) were great contributors to the towns planting and their plans had been effected over the past year due to Covid 19. As a result of the expansion in volunteer base and restrictions lifting, WIB could begin to plan for the future.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> The update was duly noted by the committee.</p>
<b>77</b>	<p><b>Appointment of a Consultant to review the Public Toilets</b></p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk and feasibility study had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk had interviewed a consultant who had extensive knowledge of Weston super Mare and experience in producing reports of varying types</p>

for town and parish councils, as he was contracted to the Local Council Consultancy with the SLCC.

A proposal for works was attached for members' acknowledgement. The consultant would be coming down to work with the Deputy Town Clerk and relevant staff in order to understand the history of Grove Park toilets and collect data available to enable his research to commence. In addition, time was suggested to be spent with the Assistant Town Clerk and partnering organisations (PCSO, Community Response Officers) and to attend if possible a future toilet working group to coincide with his visit to allow members input.

The feasibility study would aim to provide all potential options for the council to consider, but it should be noted that some of the suggestions brought back may need approval and involvement from other parties (i.e. NSC if a suggestion for an alternative location was suggested as example).

The initial meeting of the toilet working group took place on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

A member welcomed the inclusion of a multi-agency approach and stressed the importance of considering the impacts on the local community, especially the elderly, vulnerable and tourism. A meeting with the toilet working group was necessary.

The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to take the points raised on board and explained that it had not been any easy task to appoint a consultant for the project. All findings would be reported back through the Community Services Committee and a date for the consultants next visit would be reported to members.

A member who wished to attend the toilet working group but was not aware of the date, stressed the need for the council to provide a reliable functioning toilet facility or not at all as this did not service the needs of the town's elderly and vulnerable residents.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the report would be an independent feasibility study and that it was important to note that the council only had jurisdiction over the footprint of the toilet block. The council was handing over all its information in order for the consultant to come back with various options of which would come back through Town Council, it would also include options that may require other parties involvement i.e. NSC.

A member highlighted that Weston would be in competition with other seaside towns.

A vote was taken and accordingly it was **carried**.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

1. To note the appointment of Stephen Butt, Consultant, to undertake a Feasibility Study on Grove Park Toilets and details of proposal provided.
2. That the report findings/options be reported to the next Town Council meeting for consideration.

#### **78 Service Area Reports:**

##### **.1 Youth Services**

The report of the Operations Manager – YMCA had been previously circulated.

Ali reported that the Blakehay had loaned some of its furniture which was looking great and very much appreciated. The YMCA was ready to open up with a coffee morning on 23<sup>rd</sup>

July. There had been a problem with the drains which needed to be signed off before opening.

In response to a member, Ali advised the Youth Services team would be keen in helping with the ASB problems within the Cemetery as some of the young people would be known to them.

Ali reported that there was still no designated place for youth services in Uphill to meet and that once restrictions were lifted, the team would actively pursue.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the report of the Operations Manager - YMCA be noted.

The Chairman thanked Ali for her report and attendance at the meeting.

*Ali left the meeting at 8.02 pm.*

### **.2 Community Events**

The Grounds Coordinator was not able to be present at the meeting due to technical problems and would provide all member with an update via email.

### **.3 Weston in Bloom – Love the Outdoors**

The Grounds Coordinator was not able to be present at the meeting due to technical problems and would provide all member with an update via email.

## **79 Request for Street Name, Planning Applications: 13/P/1909/F and 20/P/0201/MMA Land to the Rear of 44-46 Upper Bristol Road, Weston-super-Mare**

Correspondence from NSC Street Naming department, suggesting proposed street names had been previously circulated.

The Developer had suggested the following street names:

Barton Close, Barton Grove, Barley End or Barley Grove

A vote was taken and accordingly it was **carried**.

**RECOMMENDED:** That Barton Close be approved for Planning Applications: 13/P/1909/F and 20/P/0201/MMA Land to the Rear of 44-46 Upper Bristol Road, Weston-super-Mare.

## **80 Community Resilience Update**

The Deputy Town Clerk verbally reported that the Community Resilience team were going from strength to strength. The Music Declares Emergency event which had just taken place was a really positive event. The Community Fridge Project was to get back on track now that restrictions were being lifted and now that confirmation of a unit had been received. Food Clubs set up and community engagement works were operating well with a presence in both Weston South Ward and Worle with a meeting scheduled for 2 weeks' time. Grants for community groups were being actively sought and finally, the Anti-

Racism Group were meeting on the last Tuesday of every month and had had some very positive meetings. It was agreed that each meeting would have a theme and the next meeting would feature a speaker from the NHS.

A member reported that she had attended the Music Declares Emergency event and felt it was a great success and thanked all who were involved.

**RECOMMENDED:** Members noted the verbal update.

#### **.1 Music Declares Emergency event happening in Grove Park**

The briefing report of the Communications Officer had been previously circulated.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the report be noted.

#### **81 Street Art Festival 2021 Update:**

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced Tom Newman from Culture Weston to verbally update the meeting.

Tom reported that the first live event had taken place at the Quarry the previous weekend which was very successful and well attended. There were also more regular events scheduled where tables and tickets could be booked in advance.

Unfortunately, an impromptu news article about the Street Art Festival had been released and details of the event were too premature to be advertised.

Culture Weston and Upfest were currently working to finalise locations for the street art trail.

Current locations include: Premier Inn – TBC, Regents Jewellers – confirmed, Sultan's, Kebab House – confirmed, Loves Cafe – confirmed, Brunello Lounge – confirmed, WsM station - as digitally printed panels and Apple Taxis – TBC.

Given the scale and cost involved of the Premier Inn should it be secured the number of murals overall may have to be reduced from 10 to 7/8. There were a number of backup locations also being worked on should the location not be secured.

A list of shortlist of artists had been agreed by the decision panel and could be circulated to members. It was noted that the list wasn't yet confirmed as it would be dependent on artist availability, and matching of artists to the various locations and therefore still subject to change.

Thanks to the commitment of £20k by Weston Town Council towards the mural trail, Culture Weston had been able to work with local artists Shruti Ashish and Lin Toulcher to secure a further £15k from Arts Council England towards community engagement activities around the new trail, including workshops in schools and a Sprayjam event for local artists to take place on the same weekend in Weston as Whirligig Festival, to create a critical mass of activity to drive local attendance but also promote Weston as a high quality cultural destination to audiences in the West of England and beyond.

Members that had attended the recent event at the Quarry were impressed with the use of the marquee and Tom advised that there was various equipment at the site which were assets intended for community use.

The timescale for the starting of the trail was estimated at approximately 6-8 weeks' time as it was to be tagged onto an event running in Bedminster '75 days', which had been delayed.

Tom confirmed that he would work closely with the Council's communications officer on the publicising of the event.

**RESOLVED:** That the verbal report be noted.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.26 pm.

Signed: .....

Dated: .....

**Chairman of the Community Services Committee**

## **7.1 Weston-Super-Mare YMCA and Town Council Partnership**

Report for Community Services - written by Alli Waller, Senior Lead Youth Worker at YMCA Dulverton Group

---

### **1. Purpose of report**

This report covers services and work delivered and supported by YMCA in the Weston-super-Mare areas, from the beginning of July 2021 to the end of August 2021. This includes the development and progress of programmes and services for young people and the community at YMCA Weston-super-Mare, 2 Bristol Road Lower and Weston Youth and Community Centre, Coleridge Road.

### **2. Work with Young People – Youth & Community Café**

#### **a) Open Access:**

The Youth & Community cafe provides a youth focused, free, well-appointed space for young people after school and on Saturdays with additional opening during school holidays.

Through this service we aim to ensure that every young person should:

- Feel safe and welcome.
- Have someone they can talk to and access to support.
- Have the opportunity to make friends, socialise and be active.
- Feel more connected with their community.
- Have the chance to achieve and challenge themselves to reach their full potential.
- Have fun.

The Youth & Community Café is about to have its final touch of branding in the next few weeks, ready for a grand re-opening on 17<sup>th</sup> September. The Café has been at the centre of all our delivery throughout the pandemic, from storing food parcels, housing the homeless team, providing a safe space for one to one sessions and putting together activity packs for young people across the Town. As we begin to welcome groups back, we look forward to continuing to support the community by supporting not only the young people but also their families to feel connected.

#### **b) Targeted Work:**

We recognise that for some individuals or groups what we consistently offer may not be easily accessible to them. So, we look at targeted work to support people to access our facilities and services who might not otherwise be able to. This work is predominantly carried out in partnership, and we currently work with:

- Young Carers – Junior & Senior sessions, Every first Tuesday of the month.
- Home Education Network - youth project, Every Friday.
- Young people with disabilities – Still on hold
- Ups & Downs Southwest Youth Project- Every second Tuesday of the month
- Mental health support group for young men – every Monday.
- 1625 Independent people - Every Thursday

### **3. Work with Young People – Satellites and Outreach**

All our satellite services have reopened, however because of the lockdowns, the youth team identified that young people were struggling with socialising again. This led to a drop in membership at some sessions. However, by continuing to offer our online services through our social media platforms we beginning to encouraging those members to return to face to face sessions once again.



### South Ward

The Youth team have settled into their main office at the Youth centre. This has proved to be a great opportunity to support more young people that we work with. As the team are on sight, we have had an increase in one-one sessions with young people who needed support with-

- Mental health, anxiety & depression
- Family conflicts and being able to feel safe in the home environments
- Further Educational decisions around course choices.

We are looking at widening our offer of support by including agencies such as the sexual health clinic, drug advisory service and OTR North Somerset to have professional drop in services regularly on offer to young people at the youth centre.

As the youth club at Weston Youth Centre has been shut for over 18 months, the team will be doing some detached sessions informing young people of the youth clubs reopening on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> of October.

### Worle

Our partnership with the Big Worle Hub continues. Becket school has provided the space for the youth club to meet since April and the young people have enjoyed sports activities, along with team building and forest school activities.

The team attended Big Worle's mini festival offering activities to the young people. It was a great opportunity to meet new young people who were keen to join the youth club.

Through the summer the youth team held two engagement sessions within the blue zone catchment area. The first was a bus trip to the beach to play games. Before heading home the young people enjoyed a chip supper. The second was a BBQ at Castlebatch park where the team offered sports and games. This session gave parents an opportunity to find out more about the club and new members to get a taste of what the youth club offers.

### Home Education

The Youth Team continues to support the Home Education community. The group has grown since our reopening in April and young people have enjoyed activities such as cooking, sports and the end of term BBQ on the beach. By offering the home education social media page families feel more connected and this has contributed to the rise in new members joining the group.

### Social Media

Our social media platforms have played a big part of our delivery throughout all three lockdowns. They have given us a direct way of keeping contact with the young people that access our services. The Youth team are aware that young people are finding the return to some kind of normality a struggle and have been attending training so they can offer more information and guidance around mental health support that is on offer to young people through these platforms.

Instagram.

Reporting Period	Total Account Reach	Total Interactions	Total Followers
01/07/2021 to 31/08/2021	107	117	283

The data shows an 5.9% increase in followers subsequently followed by an increase in account reach and user interaction. This can be attributed to the increased volume and consistent content created by the YMCA youth team, tailored to reach the target groups.

Facebook.

Reporting Period	Total of New Likes	Total Reach	Total Engagement
01/07/2021 to 31/08/2021	16	559	107

The data shows an increase of 4 followers for the YMCA DG Youth Clubs Facebook page. Total reach and engagement are positive following an increase of creative content from the youth team.

#### Community Partnership work

The youth team have worked tirelessly since April's re-opening of services to continue to provide support to many young people that were struggling and be a welcoming presence within the communities that we work in.

One of the positives that arose from the pandemic was the opportunity to work within the wider community. The team have built positive relationships with families as a whole and been able to increase the amount that we support, using our network to signpost to other services.

We have built new relationships with schools and provided 120 summer provisions to those vulnerable families that cannot always access holiday provisions.

We have continued our great partnership with Southwest Activity Network and supported a week of summer lunch clubs by providing activities and lunches for 515 young people. The team also helped to facilitated 6-day trips to place like Crealy, Dawlish Warren and Blaise castle, where 170 families got the opportunities to leave the south ward estates (some for the first time) in their lives.

#### Youth Council

Weston-super-Mare Youth Council took a break over the summer holidays. Many of the members found the past year a challenge with juggling home schooling and studying for exams.

On their return we will be back to face to face meetings again in the community cafe. This will give the youth council their first opportunity to meet each other in person for the first time in over 18 months and begin to put their projects in motion.

#### Links to Town Council Strategy

The work being undertaken always strives to meet the presented needs of the community, whilst building the quality of provision for young people, and developing the scope of the work that the Town Council supports with young people. We are always keen to look at addressing the needs of young people across the area and are happy to look at establishing any new work, or work in new areas, that there is an identifiable need for.

# Feasibility assessment of Grove Park toilets for Weston-super-Mare Town Council

Stephen Butt  
on behalf of Local Council Consultancy  
August 2021

---



LOCAL  
COUNCIL  
CONSULTANCY



A SLCC ENTERPRISE

IMPROVING  
INFORMING  
INVESTING

# Contents

1.	Summary .....	3
2.	Introduction.....	4
2.1	Brief .....	4
2.2	Scope .....	4
2.3	Methodology .....	4
3.	Background.....	4
4.	Contexts .....	6
4.1	Geographical context.....	6
4.2	Historical Context .....	7
4.3	Architectural Context.....	8
4.4	Legal Context.....	9
5.	Public opinion & perspectives .....	10
5.1	General observations .....	10
5.2	The views of park users.....	13
5.3	A snapshot of the park .....	13
5.4	The national perspective.....	14
5.5	Community toilet schemes .....	15
5.6	Inter-council working.....	17
6.	Proposals.....	17
6.1	Introduction .....	17
6.2	Remove the toilets .....	17
6.3	Renovate or redesign the present building .....	18
6.4	Relocate the present facility .....	20
7.	Conclusions .....	23
8.	References and acknowledgements.....	24

---

# 1. Summary

---

The Grove Park toilet block has been a target for vandalism and misuse for several years. It has been necessary for Weston-super-Mare Town Council to close the facility on many occasions to repair damage and, most recently, because the pumping systems have been found to be inadequate.

There is a strong lobby nationally for towns to continue to provide public toilets with high standards of cleanliness, safety and accessibility. The condition of public toilets is seen as an indicator of a town's economic and social wellbeing, a view reflected by local opinion. Covid-19 has heightened the public's awareness of hygiene and cleanliness in public places. There are calls for all councils to develop a public toilet strategy.

Local councils have no legal duty to provide public toilets but are subject to Part 3 of the Equality Act, 2010, which prohibits 'discrimination, harassment and victimisation by providers of a service to the public or a section of the public, whether for payment or not'. Government funding is available to enable councils to provide equality of access by installing Changing Places facilities.

The options for the future of the Grove Park facility range from modifying and upgrading the existing facility to improve security and accessibility, to more radical actions including its removal or relocation.

There are further options in the wider context of the revival of the High Street and the regeneration of the town as a resort. These initiatives could attract funding and grants from commerce, charitable organisations and possibly through the Government's Welcome Back Fund.

---

---

## 2. Introduction

---

### 2.1 Brief

In June 2021, Weston-super-Mare Town Council commissioned Local Council Consultancy to propose options for, and to assess the feasibility of, the future of the toilet facility located in the car park at the main entrance to Grove Park.

This report sets out the findings and recommendations arising from the research carried out on behalf of Local Council Consultancy during July and August 2021 by freelance consultant Stephen Butt.

### 2.2 Scope

At the commission stage, council officers indicated that consideration of a wide range of options would be appropriate because this would reflect the breadth of views expressed by councillors and stakeholders. Consequently no option has been excluded solely on the basis of cost or timescale.

The broader social issues contributing to the vandalism and misuse of the facility are beyond the scope of this report, but the safety and wellbeing of the public, being of paramount importance, is an important factor which has been considered in assessing the available options.

### 2.3 Methodology

The research for this report has consisted of these elements:

- Review of background information provided by Weston-super-Mare Town Council.
- Review of relevant legislation, recent Government reports and research.
- Interviews conducted on site with park users and stakeholders.
- Remote discussions with stakeholders, councillors and local government officers.

---

## 3. Background

---

In 2013, Weston-super-Mare Town Council adopted six public toilets which would otherwise have closed because of budget cuts by North Somerset Council. The Town Council received a grant of £97,000 from North Somerset Council towards the cost of operating the toilets in Grove Park, Clarence Park, Ashcombe Park, Locking Road Car Park, The Maltings in Worle and Links Road in Uphill.

Since adopting these facilities, Weston-super-Mare Town Council has spent over £400,000 on maintenance and repairs, and the Locking Road car park facility has been closed. The Town Council receives the income from these toilets. North Somerset Council continues to operate the toilet facilities along the promenade.



The toilet block and entrance to Grove Park from Grove Road and High Street. The building is partially hidden by trees and hedging. There have been calls for the removal of the telephone kiosk which, it is reported, has been used by drug dealers for communication.

For many years a toilet facility was provided within Grove Park, originally sited north of the War Memorial and later where the Royal British Legion Poppy Memorial has more recently been installed. The earlier building is still standing but is boarded up and roofless.

The present Grove Park toilet block is outside the main park gates at the northern end of the High Street in a Pay & Display car park managed by North Somerset Council. The car park has 80 parking bays including five for disabled drivers.

Previously, the building was supervised by attendants who were well-known to regular park users and whose diligence and commitment to their work gained positive coverage in local news media. The building is now maintained and cleaned by Healthmatic Ltd under contract. It consists of individual cubicles with coin-operated access and automatic overnight security and cleaning routines. There is an area of redundant space inside the building where the original facilities were located.

The toilet block has a long history of vandalism and misuse which has led to its closure on several occasions for major repairs. Most recently, at the time of the 2021 Spring Bank Holiday, the toilets and sinks were deliberately blocked. The building is used frequently as a shelter by homeless people and by drug users who leave materials including needles. The results of this misuse are manifest in incidents requiring the attendance of police officers and first aiders.

In the first week of August 2021, a peak time for visitors to the town, Weston-super-Mare Town Council was again forced to close the toilets. It appears that the pumps within the cleansing systems, were not capable of flushing the cubicles adequately, resulting in blockages.

At times when the facility is closed, the surrounding shrub area has been used as an alternative toilet. To prevent this, a border was cleared and replanted with holly saplings. However, this consultant found an 'unofficial' access to the park across this border where a number of the fence uprights had been removed and planting trampled.



Gap in boundary railings hidden by the toilet block, created for unauthorised entry to the park.

Clearly, the present situation is not acceptable nor sustainable. Vandalism, anti-social behaviour and misuse of the facilities are likely to continue if there is no change. Maintenance and repair costs will increase, and, in all likelihood, it will be necessary to close the facility either on a very regular basis or permanently. Relative to the extent of the Council's activities, facilities and delivery of services, over the past eight years this particular issue has occupied a disproportionate amount of officer and councillor time. A widely held view is that these toilets are becoming a blight on the relationship between the local authorities, park users and stakeholders.

The Town Council has considered various options to reduce the vandalism and misuse and to provide a well-maintained and safe toilet facility. These have included launching a Community Toilet Scheme and reintroducing toilet attendants. Councillors from the Town Council and North Somerset Council have discussed joint initiatives to maintain or upgrade all ten public toilets owned by the two authorities in the town.

---

## 4. Contexts

---

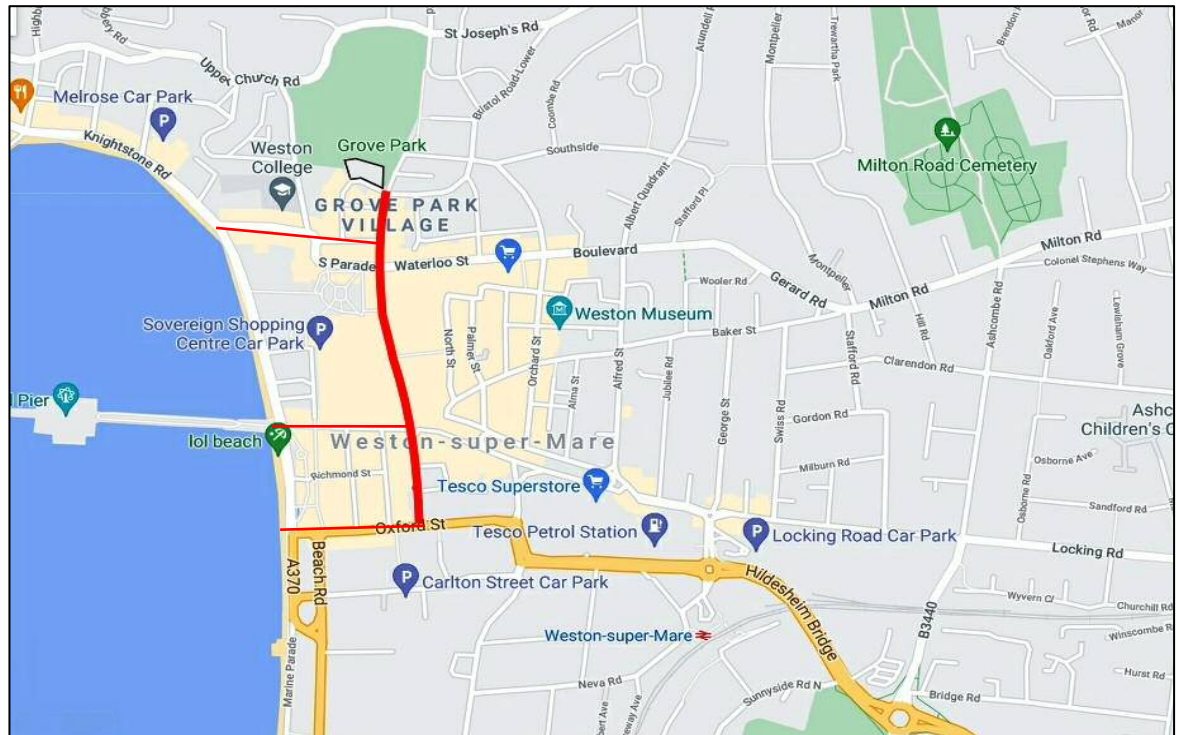
### 4.1 Geographical context

The network of streets and lanes between Grove Park and the Waterloo Street-South Parade junction is identified as 'Grove Village' to point up its distinctive character. This is defined by the narrow streets, independent and artisan shops, cafes and bars, the two theatres, Weston College and the park.



The High Street forms a north-south spine leading south from Grove Park to the town centre. The southern section is of later construction and was originally called Union Street after the relatively large Co-op department store built in the 1960s.

South Parade (with the Town Square and Winter Gardens), Regent Street and Oxford Street provide connectivity with the seafront. Regent Street marks the southern boundary of the early town and is the modern focus for holidaymakers.



The location of High Street, Grove Park and Grove Village. East-west roads (Oxford Street, Regent Street and South Parade) connect to the sea front and promenade.

The Town Centre is the gateway to Weston for most visitors who now approach from junction 21 of the M5 junction along the A370 (Somerset Avenue and Herluin Way) crossing the railway line near the railway station over the Hildesheim Bridge. The Locking Road car park area, formerly occupied by the Locking Road Excursion railway station and goods yards, is designated for significant residential development.

## 4.2 Historical Context

The history of the town of Weston-super-Mare begins at Grove Park. In 1804 a house known as The Grove was the home of the Rev Wadham Piggott, curate of Weston, whose family had owned the manor of Weston since 1696. He developed the Grove as a seaside retreat, creating a small park with lawns, shrubbery, and a sweeping drive.

The estate was inherited through marriage by Cecil Hugh Smyth-Piggott who was forced to offer the house and park for sale for development because of a decline in his financial status. It was acquired for the town, and a Local Government Board loan of £2000 in 1890 enabled its conversion into a public park. This work was directed by the Town Surveyor, Arthur Elliston Collins who extended the terracing and landscaping and added paths, the bandstand, rockeries, ponds, a refreshment room in the former manor house, extensive floral borders, and shelters. It opened to the public on 20 June 1891.



A posed photograph c.1891 illustrating Arthur Elliston Collins' original landscaping of Grove Park using the natural contours of the hillside and a disused quarry to provide ponds, waterfalls and rockeries.

### 4.3 Architectural Context

There was considerable bomb damage in this area during the Second World War including the former Lance & Lance store on the corner of High Street and Waterloo Street and the Congregational Church at the junction of Waterloo Street and the Boulevard. The large glass-roofed concert pavilion, constructed in 1923 at the southern end of the park where the car park and toilets now stand, was also destroyed by incendiary bombs in 1941.

The congregational church (now United Reformed) was rebuilt largely using original material and is therefore relatively sympathetic with its surroundings, especially the important Weston Mercury building opposite. A Fine Fare supermarket replaced the Lance & Lance store in the 1960s to a design in keeping with the company's corporate style. When constructed, it was one of the first 'modern-builds' in the High Street and influential because of its key location. The building became an Argos store in 1988 after the demise of the supermarket chain. It closed in 2020 and is now (August 2021) empty.

Grove Park is in the Hillside area of the Great Weston Conservation Area which was adopted in December 2018. Despite considerable and sometimes unsympathetic redevelopment, the architecture of local architect Hans Price (1835-1912) still influences this area, as does the use of the distinctive local Weston limestone (quarried locally) and Bath stone dressings.

There are four listed buildings within Grove Park and a further eighteen in the vicinity of the toilet block. The nearest are the shop premises at 132-138 High Street, constructed in 1889, which are probably the work of Hans Price. Price also designed the nearby Blakehay Theatre (as the Wadham Street Baptist Church) and the School of Science & Art, now part of Leicester College



Plan of Grove Park and its geographical context. The present toilet block is shown at the eastern end of the car park accessed from Grove Road.

## 4.4 Legal Context

### Town & County Planning Act, 1990

Planning Authorities may use s106 (Planning Obligations) to require a new supermarket or similar building to include public toilets in their design.

Under Part 12 (Development by local authorities), 'the erection or construction and the maintenance, improvement or other alteration by a local authority [...] of any small ancillary building, works or equipment on land belonging to or maintained by them required for the purposes of any function exercised by them on that land otherwise than as statutory undertakers', is prescribed as permitted development and therefore does not require full planning permission. The specific small buildings include lamp standards, information kiosks, passenger shelters, public shelters and seats. Any building must not exceed four metres in height or 200 cubic metres in capacity.

### Public Health Act, 1936

Under s87, local councils do not have a statutory duty to provide public toilets but have the power to do so. The Act addressed the health issues of the time when many people lived in dwellings where the only toilet was in the back yard and shared with several neighbours. Clearly the intention of the Act was to improve the health and wellbeing of the nation, and this remains a relevant priority today.

### Equality Act, 2010

Local councils are subject to Part 3 of the Equality Act which prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation by providers of a service to the public or a section of the public, whether for payment or not. The 'provision of a service' includes the provision of a service in the exercise of a public function, and the exercise of a public function that is not the provision of a service. By definition, this includes the provision of public toilets. The following applies:

- It unlawful to discriminate against or harass a person because of a protected characteristic or victimise someone when providing services. A person is protected both when requesting a service and during the course of being provided with a service, and when the service is terminated.
- Section 29 of the 2010 Act confirms that refusing to provide or not providing a service includes providing a person with a service of different quality, or in a different way or on less favourable terms than the service would normally be provided is unlawful.
- There is no protection for harassment related to religion or belief or sexual orientation in either the provision of services or in the exercise of public functions. Conduct that would otherwise have fallen within the definition of harassment may still amount to direct discrimination.

#### **Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Bill.**

This bill gained royal assent on Thursday 29 April 2021 enabling 100% business tax relief on public toilets, backdated to 2020. The relief applies to stand-alone facilities and not to those within larger buildings such as libraries, museums or community centres.

---

## 5. Public opinion & perspectives

---

### 5.1 General observations

#### Usage and need

The toilets are integral with the amenities provided by Grove Park. Many people enjoy being in Grove Park, and for different reasons. Children from the nearby flats and apartments come to play in the park. Other children and young people take part in organised games and sporting activities. Staff from care homes bring their residents to the park to stimulate their minds and to be able to socialise in a quiet, safe and undemanding environment. Those who work in nearby shops and businesses take their packed lunches to the park. Others exercise their dogs, practise yoga, or just 'chill out'. Grove Park is for families, visitors and individuals of all ages. By extension, the amenities within the park (and its curtilage) should be accessible to all park users.

#### Alternative facilities

Alternative public toilets are available in the Sovereign Centre. Although within walking distance, for a parent to take a toddler from the park to the Sovereign Centre, or for a carer to move someone using a wheelchair the distance would cut short their visit to the park. Some may decide not to return to the park because of the time taken, especially if they travelled to the park by car and have purchased a car park ticket for a fixed number of hours. Some interviewees have said that at times the Sovereign Centre toilets are not coping with the demand and are not always as clean as the public expects such facilities to be.

#### Location

Research elsewhere has shown that people who need to use a public toilet will consider their location and accessibility when planning their day. They are more likely to go to a shopping centre

or recreation area where they know there are toilets they can use. Most toilet and washroom facilities provided by commercial organisations are located within buildings. Many facilities provided by local authorities, such as the Grove Park toilets are stand-alone buildings. Close and continuous supervision and monitoring is therefore not feasible.

### The challenge for local authorities

Local authorities face the challenge of providing toilet and washroom facilities comparable in quality, cleanliness and security to those in the private sector such as motorway service stations, theme parks and national public buildings. Council tax payers judge the work of council(s) by the facilities they see and use. Modern, clean and welcoming facilities raise the profile of an area and of a community. Cleanliness and hygiene in public facilities has become consideration of greater importance to most people as an outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The creation of unitary authorities has led to the devolving of a significant amount of services to lower-tier authorities, the assumption or expectation being that town and parish councils are able to deliver the same services for less. In many cases, this assumption has proved to be correct. However, a commitment which, in the case of the toilets transferred from North Somerset Council to Weston-super-Mare Town Council, was calculated to save the higher authority in the region of £400,000, is a major financial challenge, even for a large lower-tier council.

### Design factors

An analysis of the causes of vandalism is outside the brief of this study. However, the design of public buildings can, to some extent, make them less vulnerable to attack, but the main factor is the building's location. Vandalism occurs largely when and where it cannot be observed. Managing and controlling access is the only certain means of addressing vandalism and misuse.

### Tourism

As with many towns and resorts, Weston-super-Mare has experienced an economic downturn in recent years. Several projects are in progress to encourage regeneration, and one strategy for the future is to make the town a good place in which to live and work, with tourist provision as an important but secondary provision. Clearly, tourism boosts the local economy, but the local economy should not be dependent solely on tourism. Tourists are influenced by online reviews which comment on the facilities in a town or seaside resort. Those considering a daytrip or a longer stay in Weston-super-Mare will compare the facilities described in reviews with those they find at motorway service stations, shopping malls, theme parks and airports which generally achieve a high quality of cleanliness and management.

### Equality of access

There is a view that if a toilet is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair, then it is 'accessible'. In reality, wheelchair users display the same wide range of dexterity as people who do not use wheelchairs. Some can play basketball to Olympic standards, whilst others may struggle to steer a wheelchair through a doorway. Many wheelchair users are new to the experience following recent surgery and some may only use a wheelchair on certain days when their health dictates.

The three key factors are access, space and time. Local wheelchair users report difficulties in accessing any of the facilities along the seafront because of the steepness of ramps and the width of entrances. If doors are designed to open outwards, then there needs to be adequate space for a wheelchair user to move back. Space is needed to be able to turn and move a wheelchair with ease, and without the psychological pressure of feeling that they are taking more time than other users. Both factors can be addressed by providing independent access to separate cubicle and facilities for people who use wheelchairs and others with severe disabilities.

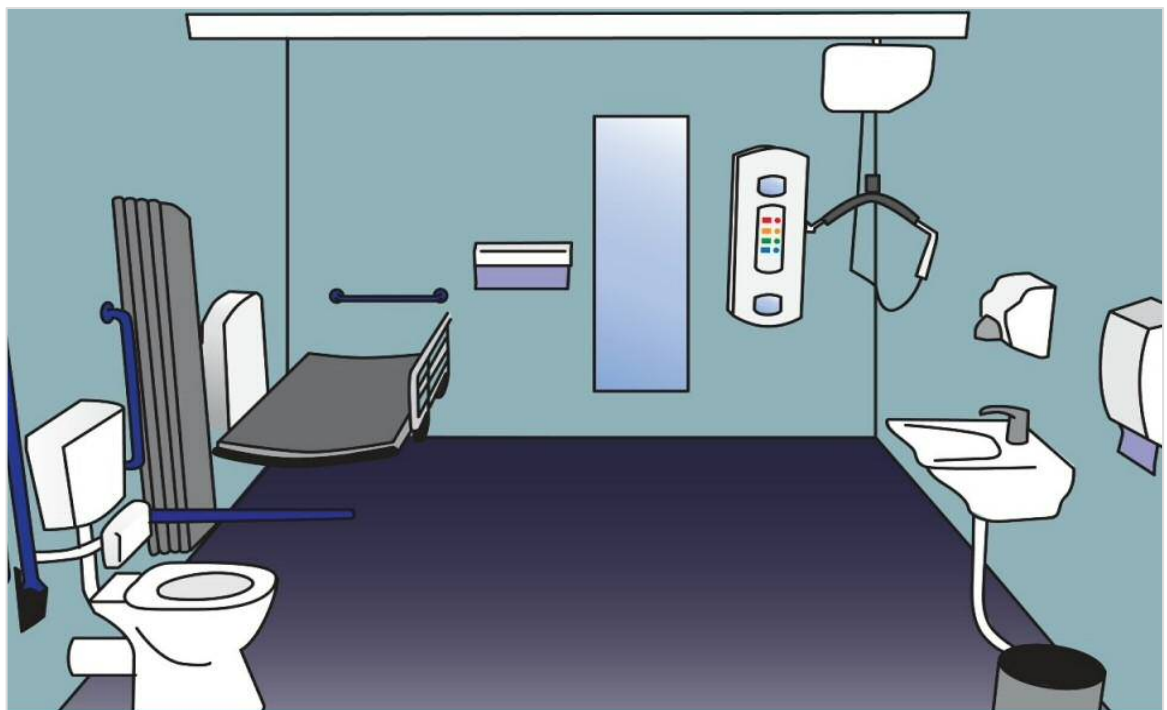
## The Weston Placemaking Strategy

The Weston Placemaking Strategy aims to 'transform' the town through regeneration projects and programmes supported by partnerships with public and private sector investors. The focus in relation to this study includes the High Street, the Sovereign Centre and Grove Park.

Subject to funding (which is not available at this time), plans include a refurbishment of the park and the redesigning of the car park area and park entrance from Grove Road to link the park more closely with the commerce of Grove Village and the High Street. The removal of the existing toilet block would be compatible with these aims. The car park is regarded as a physical and psychological barrier between the park and Grove Village. The scheme would involve the loss of some car parking spaces and a modification to the green landscaping which could involve the felling of some trees.

An earlier plan to seek Heritage Lottery funding for a major refurbishment of the park - with an estimated budget of £5 million - was not followed through. Any similar bid in the future would be more focused and limited to a specific aspect of the park's amenities.

Under the umbrella of 'SuperWeston', the Placemaking Strategy draws together many organisations and businesses with a specific stake in the future prosperity of the Grove Park area including Weston College, the Stable, and the Weston Chamber of Commerce.



A recommended Changing Places facility layout

## The Changing Places Consortium

The Changing Places Consortium estimates that over ¼ million people in the UK with a disability need extra equipment and space to allow them to use toilets safely and comfortably. A standard Changing Places facility measures 4 metres by 3 metres.

The Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the prospectus for the £30 million Changing Places toilets programme. Unitary authorities can access this fund to accelerate the provision in existing buildings. Local authorities are encouraged to work with parish and town

councils to identify the potential to install new Changing Places toilets in their area. Expressions of interest must be received by 26 September 2021.

It is noted that Weston-super-Mare Town Council is working with North Somerset Council to submit an expression of interest for a Changing Places facility in the town, but not necessarily in Grove Park.

There is a growing trend towards returning to the provision of separate facilities for men and women. A government consultation on this issue closed in February 2021.

## 5.2 The views of park users

This is not a controlled survey, but merely a 'snapshot' of views and opinions canvassed during one morning in Grove Park in July 2021. The respondents were visitors to the park, local residents, tourists and stakeholders willing to voice their opinions.

Although cleaners make three visits to the facility every day, the general view is that it is 'unpleasant', 'run-down', 'too dirty to use', and lacking facilities for people with disabilities or those needing baby-changing areas. One respondent asked why there was no cubicle for RADAR key holders. Several interviewees said they would hesitate to use the toilets because of safety concerns.

There was a unanimous assertion that a toilet facility should continue to be provided. The reasons given were:

- The regular users of the park include many who live in bed-sits or are staying in bed & breakfast accommodation and who have no access to toilet or washroom facilities during the day.
- The public has an historic expectation that councils will provide such facilities, particularly in larger towns and seaside resorts.
- Single parents with young children and people with disabilities (and their carers) may need to access a toilet on a frequent basis. It would be discriminatory not to provide a facility because, in practical terms, it would render the park 'out of bounds' to them.
- No permanent facility would mean the temporary provision of toilets during public events such as those that occasionally take place around the bandstand. This would increase the cost of staging such events.
- No access to a facility in or near the park would increase the use of the bushes and woodland as an alternative toilet, with the obvious implications for public health.

## 5.3 A snapshot of the park

The author of this report visited the park on Thursday 8 July 2021 and stayed for several hours talking to users and stakeholders in all areas.

The verges, borders, flower beds and rockery areas looked tidy and well-maintained. The low-maintenance areas included well-established wild flowers. The high-maintenance flower beds looked colourful. Recent weather conditions (rain and warm temperatures) had encouraged the growth of weeds, but two members of the Friends of Grove Park were working on them. The lawns had been mowed fairly recently. A contractor was trimming the flowering shrubs and described his work as 'helping out the Friends'.

There was a noticeable lack of litter in all areas except on the bandstand and in one corner of Gill's Garden. Here, a quantity of litter, possibly drug paraphernalia, has been dumped over the wall from outside.

The café opened at 10.00am with the operator setting out benches and sun canopies. By 11.00am, several people were seated and taking refreshments. By this time, the park was busy but not bustling. Most of the benches were occupied (social distancing being evident) and there was a wide range of apparent age groups. A young woman was practising yoga beneath one of the large trees near the pond, using the fountain as a focus. No-one seemed to pay any attention to her.

Walking along the main path, several different languages could be heard, mainly eastern-European. At the top of the park above the rockery, five men were gathered, but not close together. Two of the men acknowledged me and one said, 'good morning'. Further on, a man was standing on his own at a vantage point, staring across the park. He seemed not to notice my presence and made no movement as I passed. I had the sense that these individuals were not seeking to engage but were looking for space. I did not see any evidence of drug use or alcohol consumption. Although I felt no anxiety, I can understand some park visitors being unnerved or frightened by their presence. I assume that most park users stay in the central areas.

Two Community Response Officers came into the park and walked around the perimeter. They engaged with several members of the public with a pleasant demeanour. Clearly, they were welcomed and were known to a number of the park users. They did not walk round the rockery area but kept to the main paths. Overall, there was a sense of tranquillity and of people enjoying the surroundings. Although this consultant was not constantly monitoring the toilets, he saw no-one approaching them or attempting to use them.



The entrance to the park from Grove Road and the location of the toilet block as it was in c.1910

## 5.4 The national perspective

The problems of vandalism, misuse and the rising cost of maintenance have led nationally to a reduction in the number of available public toilets. There are many organisations that are campaigning for better provision.



The British Resorts and Destinations Association (BRADA) highlights the importance of good-quality public toilets for tourists and other visitors who make a crucial contribution to local economies. The National Organisation of Residents' Association (NORA) points out the negative impact on residents where lack of good provision results in street fouling, an increasing problem because of extended licensing laws. Help the Aged and other groups stress the importance of public toilets to give older people the confidence to leave their homes and to avoid problems arising from isolation and dependency.

There is a strong lobby fighting for equal rights for disabled people, including the Changing Places Consortium, which has developed and introduced public toilets that are accessible to severely disabled people. Other campaigners work to redress the inequality of provision for women, arguing that, for a variety of reasons, there should be a 2:1 ratio in favour of women's toilets, whereas current provision is 1:1 or significantly worse. The British Toilet Association is a campaigning group with nearly two hundred organisations represented including more than sixty local authorities. It promotes the 'Loo of the Year' awards to recognise and reward excellence in public toilets.

In 2008, the Government's White Paper 'Communities in Control' supported community empowerment, giving local groups and organisations greater power to influence decisions that affect their local area. Together with the Government's Strategic Guide on the provision of public toilets, these organisations have a strong corporate voice.

The over-riding recommendation of the Communities and Local Government Report into the provision of public toilets (Twelfth Report of Session 2007-08) was that the Government should impose a duty on local authorities to develop a public toilet strategy, and this should involve consultation with the local community.

## 5.5 Community toilet schemes

Weston-super-Mare Town Council has previously considered a scheme to make available to the public, facilities within commercial business and organisations through partnerships between local authorities and business and commerce. There are many schemes in operation, some of which have been running for as long as twenty years. The nearest scheme to Weston-super-Mare is operated by Bristol City Council.

The standard arrangement is for the council to pay a business to make its toilet facilities available to the public. Toilet facilities must be maintained to a high standard of hygiene and cleanliness and must be available to all members of the public without exception or discrimination, but the owners would have the right to refuse entry if appropriate. Public Liability insurance would be essential. Participating businesses are asked to remain within the scheme for several years unless unexpected circumstances force an earlier withdrawal.

The viability of the scheme in the Grove Village area would depend on the number of businesses with suitable premises, and the willingness of their owners and/or management to take part in the scheme. Licensed premises would need to agree that their toilet facilities would be accessible to children. The potential benefits of joining such a scheme are described as:

- Increased footfall leading to increased custom and income.
- Free positive publicity online and through printed maps and posters.
- A regular payment by the local authority to cover cleaning and maintenance.
- The opportunity for an organisation or business to be seen to be community conscious.
- Potentially, more toilets are open to the public at less cost to the local authority.
- Incidents of anti-social behaviour in toilets that are part of the scheme are significantly lower than stand-alone council facilities.

Community Toilet Schemes have a number of limitations:

- The buy-in from local businesses cannot be guaranteed or even estimated in advance, and one isolated unfortunate incident could precipitate a mass withdrawal from the scheme, leaving the area with fewer or no facilities.
- It requires ongoing administration by a dedicated member of council staff but allows only limited control by the Council.
- Facilities are only open when the businesses providing them are open.
- Disabled access to some toilets may be difficult, and at an unreasonable distance from the park, particularly wheelchair users, and small children.
- Some users may be hesitant to enter a public house or bar. Evidence shows that older people do not always feel comfortable going into bars and restaurants, particularly as the day progresses and it gets towards evening. They would rather be anonymous and not be seen to be there having to go to the toilet.
- Constant monitoring of participating locations by visiting is necessary to ensure hygiene standards are being maintained.
- Signage needs to be extremely clear and visible at all times.

In the context of the Grove Park toilets, a community toilet scheme could be a supplementary facility, but not a replacement.



Two members of the Friends of Grove Park (photographed with permission)

## 5.6 Inter-council working

In general, council tax payers have little interest in or knowledge of which tier of local government is responsible for a particular service. The fact that of the ten public toilets in Weston-super-Mare, 50% are managed by Weston-super-Mare Town Council and 50% by North Somerset Council is irrelevant. Visitors and tourists have even less of an interest in such matters. They are likely to leave Weston-super-Mare with a favourable or unfavourable impression to pass on to their families and friends.

Although the Grove Park toilet facility is the responsibility of the Town Council, North Somerset Council has major interest because of its ownership of Grove Park and the car park. Also, any substantial change to the structure or appearance of the toilet block will require planning approval (within a Conservation Area) by North Somerset Council.

Currently, Healthmatic Ltd leases the five toilet facilities owned by North Somerset Council and pay rental for them. Their contract has been renewed recently. Healthmatic has a further contract with Weston-super-Mare Town Council to clean, maintain and manage the toilets they own. By having staff, vehicles and equipment in the locality, Healthmatic is able to offer a very reasonable deal.

Clearly, where two local authorities are able to work together whilst maintaining their independence in terms of contracting, council tax payers benefit. It is therefore recommended that the two tiers of local government serving Weston-super-Mare look at ways in which they can work more closely together regarding the future of the Grove Park area.

---

## 6. Proposals

### 6.1 Introduction

There are four broad options to consider:

- Remove and not replace.
- Renovate or redesign.
- Remove by relocating.

The options within these strategies must be tested against the following criteria:

- Effective, as in significantly improving the situation for a significant length of time.
- Financially realistic.
- Justifiable in terms of need.
- Achievable within a reasonable timeframe.

### 6.2 Remove the toilets

The removal of the toilets would deprive the majority of people of a facility they need because of the misbehaviour of a minority. Solutions to vandalism and misuse are found for other local government facilities such as play areas, outdoor gym equipment and MUGAs. Very rarely are such facilities simply closed.

There are many reasons offered for why a toilet facility in or near Grove Park is beneficial and necessary, as set out above. In summary:

- Grove Park is a very popular open space. Its high usage, at normal times and when special events take place, means that public toilets are needed.
- Numerous social research indicators point up the importance of parks and open spaces in urban areas as important for public health, improving air quality, and encouraging a sense of community. Closing the toilets would effectively reduce the amenity provision of the park.
- A significant number of park users do not have access to toilet facilities during the day because they live in bedsits or are visitors who are using Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- The use of the park by people with disabilities and their families depends heavily on access to toilet facilities. Disabled people rely on such facilities being available.
- There is a strong lobby nationally for towns and resorts to increase their toilet provision.
- The toilets generate revenue. Although more than offset by the cost of vandalism, the facility generates more income than any of other toilets operated by the Town Council.

### 6.3 Renovate or redesign the present building

A general principle is that managing and monitoring the flow of people reduces the levels of misuse and vandalism. The visible presence of people, whether they are *bona fide* users, staff or security personnel, is also an effective deterrent. Vandalism and misuse occurs most when and where it is less likely to be witnessed. Hence there are a number of steps that can be taken to make a facility and its environment less vulnerable to vandalism and misuse.

However, the following options presuppose that the existing toilets are fit for purpose and serviceable. This appears not to be the case because recent blockages which have led to the closure of the facility have been caused by the inadequacies of the present mechanical systems. Retaining the toilets in the present location will therefore require an extensive refit in the short term. The decision that will need to be taken is whether such expenditure, which on its own will not significantly improve the facility, and which will still be susceptible to vandalism and misuse, can be justified. The following options assume the facility remains in its present location:

#### 6.3.1 Lock the car park overnight

##### Rationale

Locking the car park would secure the toilet block and reduce the likelihood of drug dealers and users accessing the park during the hours of darkness.

##### Assessment

Patrons of the theatres, bars and restaurants in the Grove Village area need late night parking. At present, parking is permitted overnight between 1800 hours and 0600 hours for a single charge of £1.50. There would be a substantial loss of income from parking fees and the possibility of increased on-street illegal parking if this facility were not available. This is not a feasible option.

#### 6.3.2 Adopt card only/contactless entry

##### Rationale

Although there are strict rules regarding the harvesting of personal data from bank and credit cards, the use of cards could add a level of security. In certain situations, such as when investigating a

crime, the police are able to make use of card details. Those who intend to misuse the facilities may hesitate if they believe their anonymity is threatened, leading to their subsequent identification. Additionally, contactless payment ,means no cash is stored in the mechanisms that provide entry to the cubicles

#### Assessment

The positive aspects of this option are that the use of contactless card readers has become more normalised during the Covid pandemic and is in accord with a general trend away from using cash for payments, and that storing cash on site increases the risk of criminal damage.

However, there remains the possibility that people without cards, possibly because of their financial status, would be excluded from using the toilets. Those intent on misusing the facilities for purposes such as dealing in drugs, could find ways to protect their identities such as top-up cards, or even stolen cards, and cards can be used as a means of trading. On balance, this option is not recommended as an effective solution to the ongoing misuse.

### 6.3.3 Increase security visits and patrols

#### Rationale

Community Response Officers pass by the toilets on their routine visits to the park and could do so more often, as well as beat officers at night.

#### Assessment

One of the important roles of Community Response Officers is to engage with the community. Their duties are wider than acting as security guards for a public toilet and it would be unreasonable and impractical to expect such a level of presence. A private security firm could be hired to make random visits at night, but it is probable that the limited effectiveness of such visits would not justify the ongoing cost. During the day, the presence of uniformed security personnel may not be seen by the public as appropriate.

### 6.3.4 Add additional CCTV coverage

#### Rationale

CCTV is regarded an effective and relatively inexpensive means of improving security because the presence of cameras is seen as a deterrent. It is an accepted aspect of modern public environments.

#### Assessment

CCTV is a deterrent in certain circumstances, but specific locations cannot be continually monitored, and experience has shown that those committing crimes or anti-social behaviour can easily disguise their identity by wearing hoods or similar clothing. CCTV can also create a false sense of security. CCTV is not recommended as a solution to the issues facing this location.

### 6.3.5 Convert to an attendant-managed facility

#### Rationale

A permanently manned facility would deter vandalism and misuse.

## Assessment

This proposal harks back to when the facility was supervised by attendants, one of whom became a local celebrity and was featured in the local news media because of her personality and commitment to her role. The current problems date back to when the toilets became unmanned.

The building would need to be extensively rebuilt if it was to revert to the previous arrangement. There are major social issues to be considered in employing people as cleaners and *de facto* security personnel, not the least being their health and safety. Providing staffing would be a high revenue cost for the Town Council.

### 6.3.6 Utilise the redundant space in the toilet block for a sales kiosk

#### Rationale

Using the redundant space at the rear of the building for an additional amenity or service would deter vandalism and misuse.

#### Assessment

To be effective, the kiosk would need to be open and trading for the same hours as the toilets (0900-1700 hrs, seven days a week). Although the concession could be offered at a peppercorn rent, or as an extension to the Grove Park café concession, it is doubtful whether it would pay its way. Keeping stock in the building overnight could increase the security risks.

## 6.4 Relocate the present facility

There are three options in this proposal which involve the present toilet block and the Grove Park café:

- Move the toilets to a stand-alone site in the park.
- Exchange the Grove Park café and the toilet block using the present locations.
- Merge the Grove Park café and the toilets into a new facility in the park.

### 6.4.1 Move the toilets into the park

#### Rationale

A modern accessible toilet facility in the park would enhance the park's facilities and would improve equality of access. Being located in the park, would reduce the risk of vandalism and misuse at night.

#### Assessment

The main issue is the location. For reasons already noted, the toilets need to be in an open area where they are visible. Many areas of the park are secluded by tall trees or hedges which are valuable elements of the park's historic landscaping and its present-day charm.

There have been incidents of vandalism within the park. In June 2021, pieces were chipped off the RBL Poppy Memorial, and rubbish including broken glass was dumped beside it.

### 6.4.2 Exchange the locations of the toilets and the Grove Park café

#### Rationale

Locating the toilet facility inside the park would enable closer monitoring and better security when

the park is closed overnight. The park location has utilities (water, electricity) already installed and there is space available to extend the present building's footprint. The café would add to the 'café culture' atmosphere of the Grove Village streets. A café situated within the car park at the entrance to the park would be more attractive to potential customers than a utilitarian toilet block.

#### Assessment

This is an option previously proposed by the holder of the café concession. However, comparing the attractiveness of the two sites, the car park would not seem to be an appropriate location for a café for several reasons;

- The limited space in the car park area for café furniture.
- The noise and pollution created by vehicles in the car park and passing along Grove Road and High Street.
- The dangers to small children who would need close supervision to ensure they did not leave the immediate area of the café.

Not only is the present café in an attractive and therefore more relaxed setting but it is also a safer environment.

### 6.4.3 Merge the toilets with the existing café

#### Rationale

The café is in a prominent position with easy access from all main paths. This visibility and the level of activity from passers-by and patrons would limit the potential for vandalism and misuse. The building would not be accessible when the park is closed, improving overnight security.

#### Assessment

This is the recommended option, and therefore a more detailed assessment is offered:

#### The café – background

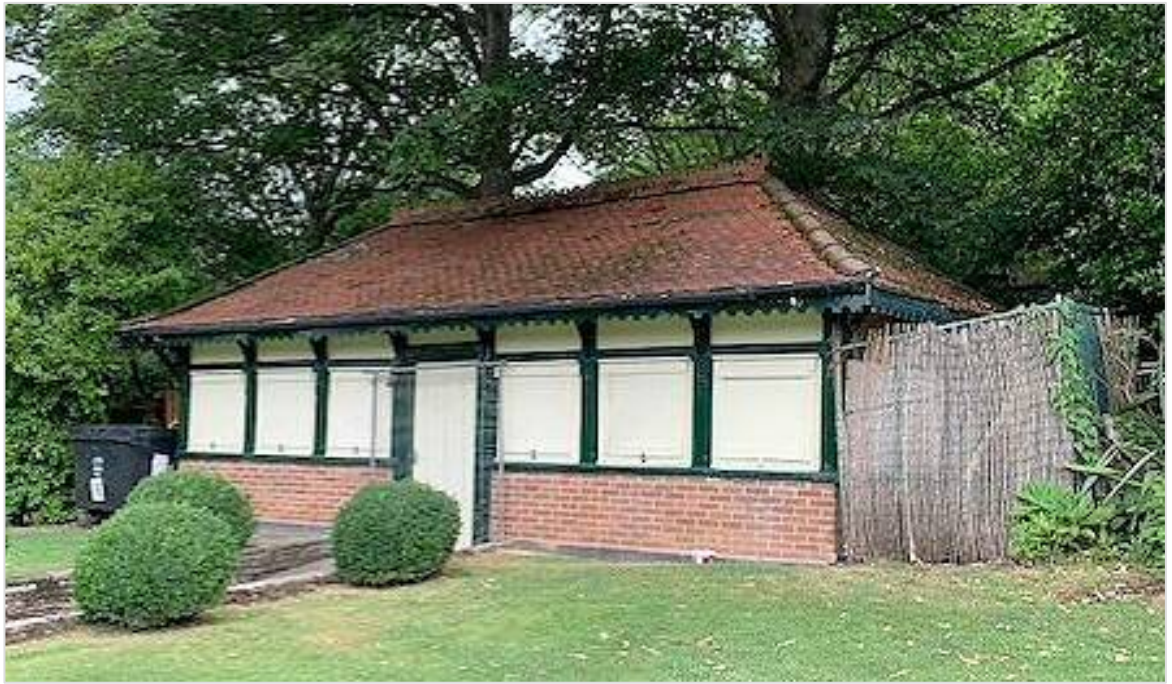
The building currently used as the café was constructed in 1890/1 as a public shelter as part of the conversion of the park from a private pleasure garden to a public amenity. It is built of brick and timber in an arts and crafts style and its location was chosen to enable park users to relax and enjoy the view across Weston bay to Brean Down. A second shelter in the north-west corner of the park served the same purpose. It is therefore an important element of the park's historic landscape, although the view is now obscured by trees and hedges. The present toilet block is purely functional, has no architectural merit and has a powerful negative visual impact on its location.

#### Conservation area and Listed Building implications

The new building should not mimic the arts & crafts design of the café, nor 'pretend' to be of antiquity. It should be a well-designed building by the side of the existing café, in keeping with the character of the park, with a shared access through a new entrance porch linking the two buildings.

Locally quarried stone from the derelict toilet block nearby (above the war memorial) could be utilised, thus maintaining the 'arts and crafts' concept. This would also remove a building which is ruinous, and potentially dangerous.

The design would enable flexible operation to allow for the toilets to be accessible when the café is closed. A separate entrance could be incorporated which could be opened when special events were



The present café

taking place. Together, the facility should enhance the area and fulfil the planning conditions relevant to its location in the Hillside Conservation Area.

#### Technical considerations

The location would enable connection to the main sewer servicing Grove House. The water supply to the toilets would be from the mains supplying the café.

#### The benefits of removing the existing toilets

Potentially, removing the toilet block would enable the car park and park entrance to be re-arranged. The priority should be to provide a safe, welcoming and enjoyable transition for pedestrians between the shops and attractions of Grove Village and the park. At present, the car park is a tarmac barrier between the two areas. It has a vital role in enabling parents and childminders to bring small children with pushchairs and buggies to the park, as well as people who use wheelchairs, but it needs redesigning.

The present layout is not by design, but the result of an incendiary attack in 1941 which created a space later used as an unofficial car park when car ownership increased in the decade after the end of the Second World War. Bringing the 'greenness' of the park closer to Grove Road and High Street would soften the present hard landscaping which is noted in the Hillside Conservation Assessment as a negative element.

#### Further considerations

The provision of canopies, awnings or a conservatory-style front extension to the café could enable it to operate during moderately inclement weather, thus improving its profitability.

It is suggested that the contract with the present concession holder is extended and amended to provide commercial stability and the requirement that the café is open for longer, possibly with an agreement as to set hours of trading. This could involve a servery hatch providing takeaway food, confectionery and drinks.

Although not directly relevant to this study, North Somerset Council could consider using that space created by the removal of the disused toilets above the war memorial for an observation



platform, constructed in wood, offering views of the park, the seafront and the town below. This vista was an important design element when the park was laid out for the public.

Near the children's play area is a level area which corresponds to the site of an early nineteenth century observatory erected by John Smyth-Piggott. This survived until fairly recently as a picturesque ruin. A raised observation tower would also indicate to those who may currently misuse the secluded rockery area at the north end of the park that their activities are visible.

---

## 7. Conclusions

---

There is overwhelming public support for the continued provision of a toilet facility in or near Grove Park. Reflecting national opinion and experience, such facilities provide demonstrable benefits in terms of public health, the increased mobility of many sections of the community, and the general economy of a town.

Grove Park is a great asset to Weston-super-Mare, for its residents and visitors alike. It is valued by residents as an open space rich in history, heritage and ecological diversity. For children, the rockery and winding paths provide excitement and adventure by stimulating the imagination. For older people, the park provides fresh air, the beauty of nature and a sense of peace and tranquillity. Yet it is only a few minutes' walk from the bustle of the High Street and from the amusement arcades and fast-food outlets of the sea front.

The present situation regarding the toilet block is not sustainable, but the potential cost of any remedial action other than minor modifications to the existing facility has been uppermost in the minds of everyone, without exception, who has contributed to this study. It is absolutely right that this should be the case, especially in the wake of the economic downturn caused by Covid-19. However, the time and expense of making good each incident of vandalism and attempting to limit the misuse could be better spent on providing an improved facility.

Finance is, of course, a key consideration for local councils, but it can also be a psychological barrier to finding a lasting solution to a problem. Various grants are available for *bona fide* ambitious schemes that strengthen community cohesion and work towards equality of access, and for projects that encourage young people to be aware of their natural environment.

Continuing misuse and the inadequacy of the systems that cleanse the toilets indicate that decisions on the future of the facility cannot be delayed. The present issues need addressing within a reasonable timeframe and certainly within the next twelve months. However, it is accepted that grant funding for a major replacement project could take several years to reach fruition.

The principal recommendations in this study have taken these challenges into account. Thus a facility that combines public toilets and the existing Grove Park café is proposed, to create a modern amenity which will enhance the experience of park users, enable equality of access for all, and offer the potential for future development.

STEPHEN BUTT  
AUGUST 2021

---

## 8. References and acknowledgements

---

### Consultees

Cllr Peter McAleer	-	Weston-super-Mare Town Council
Cllr Gill Carpenter	-	Weston-super-Mare Town Council
Cllr Mike Bell	-	Deputy Leader, North Somerset Council and Councillor, Weston-super-Mare Town Council
Paul Borthwick	-	North Somerset Disabled Access Group
Johnny Boxhall	-	Friends of Grove Park
John Horler	-	Grove Park Café concession holder
Alex Hearn	-	Deputy Director, Placemaking & Growth, North Somerset Council
John Flannigan	-	Community and Environment Service Manager, North Somerset Council
Mike McKee	-	Weston-super-Mare Civic Society

### Papers & reports

Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset: Historical and Architectural Development, Vols 1 & 2, Allan Brodie and Johanna Roeth, Research Department Reports, Historic England, 2020.

The Provision of Public Toilets Twelfth Report of Session 2007–08, Communities & Local Government, October 2008.

The Government's response to the consultation on Changing Places Toilets, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, September 2020,

EMCAMS Submission (written evidence) to the Select Committee on Communities and Local Government Committee enquiry into the provision of public toilers, 2008.

Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets: A Strategic Guide, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008.

Great Weston Conservation Area: Character Area Appraisal & Management Plan (Hillside), North Somerset Council (adopted December 2018).

[The Build Back Better High Streets Strategy](#), Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021.

[Against All Odds – Grimsey Review Research Paper](#), 2021.

### General reference material

Documents provided by Weston-super-Mare Council officers (minutes of meetings and reports to committees).

Newspaper reports in the Weston Mercury and the Bristol Post in print and online.

## Websites visited

[Historic England](#) (accessed 10 August 2021)

[The Garfield Weston Foundation](#) (accessed 14 July 2021).

[Friends of Grove Park](#) (accessed 14 July 2021).

[Weston-super-Mare Town Council](#) (accessed 25 July 2021)

[Superweston](#) (accessed 25 July 2021)

[Changing Places](#) (accessed 28 July 2021)

[UK Government Changing Places Fund Prospectus](#) (accessed 3 August 2021)

[UK Government Welcome Back Fund](#) (accessed 11 August 2021)

The photographs and graphics in this report are either the work of the author, out of copyright (as in the two archive images) or used with permission.

---

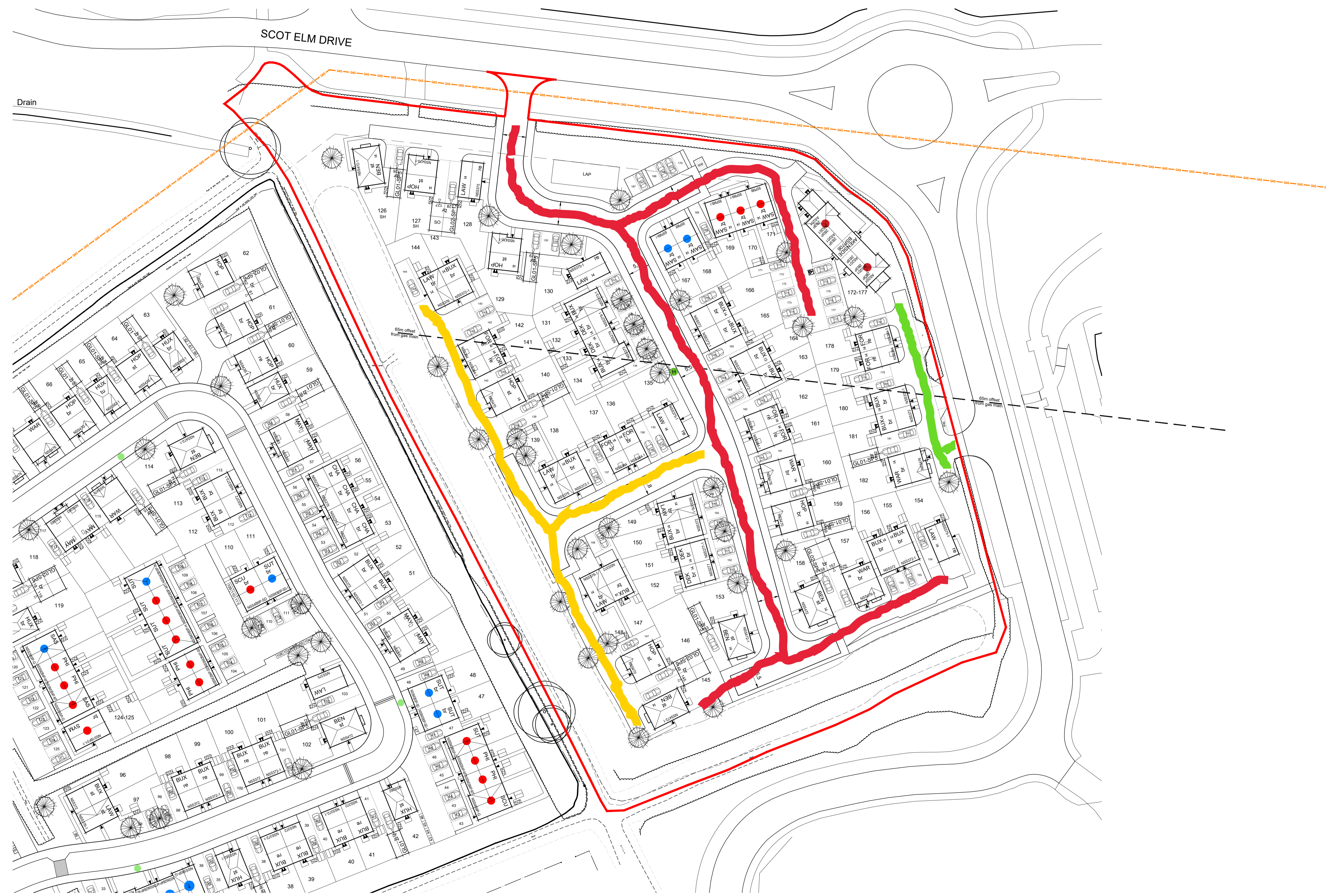
J.S. BLOOR (SERVICES) LIMITED  
 ASHBY ROAD, MEASHAM, SWADLINCOTE,  
 DERBYSHIRE DE12 7JP  
 TELEPHONE 01530 20100 FACSIMILE 01530 272006  
 THIS DRAWING AND THE BUILDING WORKS DEPICTED ARE THE COPYRIGHT OF J.S. BLOOR  
 (SERVICES) LIMITED AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR AMENDED EXCEPT BY WRITTEN  
 PERMISSION. NO LIABILITY WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR AMENDMENTS MADE BY OTHER  
 PERSONS.  
 DO NOT SCALE THIS DRAWING. USE FIGURED DIMENSIONS ONLY. IF IN DOUBT ASK.  
 THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH SEPARATE GROUP / SITE SPECIFIC  
 CONSTRUCTION NOTES AND MATERIALS SPECIFICATION.

Notes:

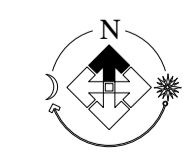
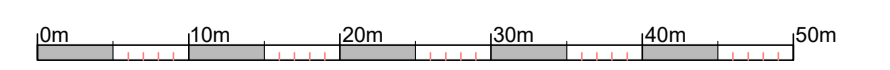
- GL01-SP5 (3.33m x 7.32m)
- GL02-SP6 (6.56m x 7.32m)
- Space (2.5m x 5m)
- Affordable Rent
- Shared Ownership
- Bin collection point
- Existing tree
- Proposed tree
- Fire Hydrant
- Shed location
- Paving slabs in rear gardens for refuse storage

N.B. Landscaping is indicative.  
 Please refer to detailed landscape drawing.

Revision	Description	Date	Author
D	All garages increased in size to match adjacent site. 1m margin introduced along western boundary between bank and shared drives. Carriageway widths revised as per regions comments. Gas governor and sub-station indicated. 2 visitor spaces placed along eastern shared drive. Door location on bin store revised. Existing mature hedge indicated. Gas mains and 65m offset indicated. Sales office/garage added to plots 127 & 128. Plot numbers revised to continue from the Westacres site.	08.01.20	ALW
E	Realignment of apartment block (172-177) and bike/bin store.	02.06.20	DWL
F	Realignment of plots 172-177. Removal of Sub Station and Gas Governor. Reposition of LAP. Boundary includes site access. Fire Hydrant location shown. Footpath connected with existing on Scot Elm Drive.	14.07.20	SD/LM
G	Plots 167-169 SIS house type replaced with SAW house type.	11.09.20	LM
H	Block of flats amended to provide required square footage.	06.05.21	AMB



# Weston-Super-Mare, Scot Elm Drive



Scot Elm Drive,  
 Weston-Super-Mare

**Site Layout**

DATE: 02.06.2020  
 SCALE: 1:500 @ A1  
 DRAWN: DWL  
 CHECKED: SD

**BLOOR HOMES**

Drawing No. SW129-SL-2001H

SNN4425

UPRN	Plot Number	Classed as 'Affordable'	Number of Bedrooms	Street Number	Street Name	Post Town	Postcode
24153556	1	Y	2	1	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>
24153557	6	Y	3	2	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>
24153558	5	N	3	3	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>
24153559	4	N	3	4	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>
24153560	3	N	3	5	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>
24153561	2	N	3	6	<a href="#">Barton Close</a>	<a href="#">Weston-super-Mare</a>	<a href="#">BS22 8FE</a>

UPRN = Unique Property Reference Number

Planning applications: 13/P/1909/F and 20/P/0201/MMA

Addresses are in [blue](#)