

**Supporting Evidence SB13.EV1 Southbourne’s Green Ring Park – Updated
Strategic Vision (Amended Feb. 2021)**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The establishment of our ‘Green Ring’ (Policy SB3, Southbourne Parish Neighbourhood Plan adopted 2015) was and remains one of the most popular and outstanding features of the Plan. The parts of the Green Ring between the A259 and the railway line are – or are in the process of being – delivered. The policy and the aspirations behind it are very much still valid, including the emphasis on north-south connectivity for people and nature, but the situation described in paragraph 4.36 of the adopted Plan has arrived much sooner than anticipated:

“The Green Ring will become a defining landscape feature of the settlement of Southbourne in years to come. It is accepted that its completion will take many years beyond the plan period...”

1.2 This report sets out in much greater detail the community’s vision for the delivery of the Green Ring in the years to come.

2.0 Southbourne’s Green Ring Park: People and Nature

2.1 Most Southbourne residents have a garden, even if only a small one, so the Green Ring needs to offer more than the much-needed village connectivity of a walkway and proper cycle path (essential though they are) in order to attract families, young and older people to go there regularly throughout the year. Provision for dog walking is important to draw some activity away from the coast, but we need much more.

2.2 Enjoyment is as important as doing 10K steps a day. Our Green Ring Park should be truly dynamic, attracting residents and visitors of all ages and abilities all year round to enjoy, relax, learn, to find stimulation and to be inspired.

2.3 It is vital that the Green Ring be located as close to the current settlement boundary as feasible to ensure that it serves the existing community and the residents in the new development equally. Our Wildlife Corridors are where nature absolutely comes first; the Green Ring, while including areas of important biodiversity, is ‘nature for people’. To expand upon the vision presented in the original Policy SB3, the Green Ring is more than just a ring: **it is a park.**

3.0 What qualities/activities will draw people to our Park – often, regularly and all year-round?

3.1 SPACE:

- a) distant views, some including the South Downs, at present visible on the horizon from Kelsey Avenue and Cooks Lane, or Southbourne Church, linking the area north of Cooks Lane to the centre of the current settlement;
- b) big skies, also good for evening star-gazing;
- c) attractively landscaped paths for walking;
- d) spacious open grassy areas for relaxing and informal play;
- e) sensitively planted areas for personal reflection;
- f) sunrise/sunset views as focal point of walk (NB. new buildings should be designed and constructed to retain views of Walderton Down and Bow Hill to the north).

3.2 TREES:

Imaginatively landscaped, as few people have large trees in their gardens, and none in the small new development gardens. People of all ages need trees for their health and wellbeing. Potential to include a community orchard. Crucial contribution to our biodiversity + climate change needs.

3.3 SEASONAL VARIETY OF FLORA AND FAUNA:

The Green Ring Park, framed by trees and native species hedgerows, could be experienced as a series of seasonal 'glades' or zones linked by a generously landscaped sandstone walkway, so that people are regularly drawn to see and enjoy nature's latest seasonal delight, including Scented planting near the path. App delivered information about the flora/fauna would combine exercise with bio-education.

Some possibilities:

- Jan/Feb: snowdrops
- Feb /Mar: primroses, daffodils
- April: bluebells in our mini bluebell copse
- May: Southbourne in bloom: wild cherry/pear/hawthorn blossom
- June: Wildflower meadow
- July: butterfly/bee glade with buddleia etc.
- August/September: people led activities eg: puppy show (v successful one in Battersea Park); Southbourne Bio-Fair; Food Fair. Need to consult teens/young adults about their Park 'likes', mainly digitally driven according to recent research.
- October/November: autumn colour – maple glade, mini-beechwood
- December/January: cluster of pine/fir trees, beautiful when covered in heavy frost/snow. One large fir planted on edge of open space easily accessible from Cooks Lane could also be the community Christmas tree, focus for group carols etc.

Our seasonally dynamic Green Ring Park would attract people and visitors all year round, which would also be good for local businesses, pubs, etc.

3.4 WATER:

Research shows that being near water, seeing the sky reflected in the tranquil surface of a pond, has a significant beneficial effect on mental health and wellbeing. Adjacent willows would help drain surface groundwater, aid biodiversity and connect the Park with the many old willows throughout the parish from Lumley to Nutbourne and Hambrook.

Feeding the ducks is a major lure for a park visit offering connection with nature for young families and residents of all ages and abilities.

3.5 EXERCISE, LEARNING AND LIFELONG WELLNESS:

The Green Ring will be essential for promoting walking and cycling as a means of safely travelling around and through the expanded settlement of Southbourne in an environmentally sustainable way, including for commuter usage, but it must be much more than this. The route should incorporate:

- Children's Adventure Playground; also potential forest school for local children.
- Adult fitness equipment. Perhaps not in a single cluster, but spaced out along the Green Ring East as the west side of village already has a set. Equipment linked to apps giving medical information and, if required, to the user's GP/consultant. *Teenagers consulted said they would definitely use this equipment.*
- Recreation meadow big enough for informal family ball games, kite-flying, yoga, etc.
- Potential inclusion of a skateboard zone, as frequently requested by young people.
- Full consideration of the needs of mobility scooter users.
- Areas specifically with the needs of dog owners and walkers in mind. There is already pressure on the Prinsted foreshore, particularly upon overwintering bird populations which are of international importance. Population growth will seriously intensify this. While people will always walk down to the Harbour, the Green Ring is intended to provide an alternative, attractive, nearer option for those living north of the railway.
- The needs of horse riders should also be considered. There are currently no north-south bridleways or safe routes linking Southbourne to the SDNP or connecting East to West.

3.6 PEOPLE HUBS IN NATURE – TO FOSTER SOCIAL COHESION AND INTERACTION:

- Benches grouped near children's playground for parents, teachers or child-minders.
- A couple of benches in each seasonal zone/glade for rest and reflection.
- Sunrise and sunset benches – ideally with interesting focal point in distance. Also good for evening star gazing and astronomy.
- Possible planetary trail round entire Green Ring (cf Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Clanfield).
- Suitably spaced seating areas to function as informal 'people hubs' for spontaneous chats (as at Prinsted foreshore benches). Especially important for the mental wellbeing of older residents and those living alone.
- Outdoor performance bowl: possibility of using developer's spoil (and pond spoil) to create a semi-circular horseshoe shaped 'bowl', with gently sloping grassed slopes round a central outdoor performance area (like the man-made C18th one at Chiswick House or the natural one on Petersfield Heath used at their wildlife events for falconry and archery displays, etc.). Benches placed round the top the 'Southbourne Bowl' would offer great potential for community open air summer events, festivals, theatre, cinema. Given the possibility of COVID-19 stretching on for years this feature could take on additional importance.

4.0 Community Centre (Community Hub):

4.1 The new Community Centre hub (potentially including library, work spaces, exercise and FE classes, wellness/medical facility, café, etc.) should be easily accessible from the Green Ring to ensure the success of both Green Ring Park and Community Centre hub in fostering social cohesion and fusing Southbourne's existing and new residents into a truly dynamic, interactive 21st century community enjoying life in a unique 'coastal garden town' located between the tranquil landscapes of the South Downs National Park and the diverse marine life and water sports at Chichester Harbour AONB.

4.2 The design of our new Community Centre should echo the gentle curves of the nearby downland hills, ideally with a bio-dynamic green roof, its communal spaces filled with the luminous light characteristic of our parish's coastal panoramas.

4.3 Residents of all ages and abilities can combine exercise and interaction with nature and their neighbours in our flagship Green Ring Park, along with work, FE classes, a library visit and a coffee or local ice cream on the café terrace – guaranteeing the nature- and culture-rich quality of life of all Southbourne residents for decades to come.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Southbourne's Green Ring Park is our opportunity to make our community one that will be widely admired and – in stark contrast to unplanned development over the preceding years – greatly appreciated by all residents for the quality of its design.

5.2 "Green development is more sustainable and delivers important environmental, social, health and economic benefits. Green space can be used as a community resource and provides recreational benefits, aids social cohesion, improves quality of life and increases property values. Trees and plants contribute to tackling climate change as well as providing habitats for different species." (Essex Design Guide 2018)

- *Minor amendments to clarify the vision for the Green Ring.*

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