

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

9 MARCH 2011

REPORT OF HEAD THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

STEPHEN'S FOOTPRINTS MEMORIAL GARDEN

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of Stephen's Footprints baby loss support group and the voluntary service they provide to the local community.
- 1.2 To seek approval for Stephen's Footprints Baby Loss Group's proposal, to create a baby loss memorial garden in Melton Country Park with the support and endorsement of Melton Borough Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members approve the proposal to create a 'baby loss' memorial garden in Melton Country Park**
- 2.2 **Members agree a further report be brought back to CSA regarding a financial contribution towards establishment costs**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Stephen's Footprints Baby Loss Support Group is a voluntary community group (see appendix A) supporting local families through the loss of a baby. The group meets fortnightly at the Samworth Centre in Melton Mowbray offering support and advice to affected individuals and families and have built up a network of contacts and users locally and around Leicestershire.
- 3.2 The proposal for a memorial garden would provide a place where parents and siblings can reflect on their loss in a calm and tranquil environment. The need for such a site would greatly help families suffering from such losses that find it uncomfortable visiting a traditional cemetery and others who have suffered losses for various reasons; some may not even have a burial site to visit.
- 3.3 The intension is that the garden be used for baby losses to include: Neonatal, Stillborn and Infant Mortality
- 3.4 The group looked at different locations for a memorial garden including St Mary's Church yard. However, after obtaining quotes for the works required the location proved to be financially unviable.
- 3.5 Melton Country Park was suggested as a suitable alternative location with the additional benefits to visitors to the garden of having free parking, use of the visitors centre café and rest facilities with adjacent children's play area's and access to the country park.
- 3.6 The group's intention is that memorial pebbles with an inscription of the name of the baby on them will be purchased by visitors and secured in the garden to become part of the

pathway that goes through the garden. The intension is that all pebbles would be locally sourced and secured professionally by the councils Environmental Maintenance Team.

- 3.7 The group have already enlisted a number of professional volunteers, friends and family together with support from local businesses who have offered to help with the establishment of the memorial garden. The group have already started to raise funds and their intention, is through the sale of 'Pebbles', donations and various fundraising activities, that they continue to fund the memorial garden on an on going basis .
- 3.8 The group have asked if the council would consider contributing towards the initiative, firstly financially towards the establishment costs, and secondly with the provision of on going assistance with the gardens maintenance.
- 3.9 The design of the garden has been carefully thought out to ensure that it compliments the surroundings and environment of the Country Park. All planting will be low maintenance with the use of mulch to suppress weeds
- 3.10 Maintenance of the garden will be predominantly carried out by volunteers; however the group would like Melton Borough Council to contribute, either in the form of labour or materials. These resources could be incorporated into the Melton Country park maintenance schedule;
- 3.11 Should members be minded to resolve the reports recommendations 2.1 & 2.2 the amount of financial contribution being requested will be the subject of a further report when establishment costs become fully known;

Works	Labour / Installation £	Material £
Ground works	SFG & EMT part of MCP programmed work	500
Perimeter Fencing	SFG	2,500
Boarding for border and beds	SFG	200
Weed-suppressant materials	SFG	200
Plants etc	SFG	2,000
Bench	SFG	600
Central feature / path / signage	SFG & EMT (as above)	200
Total (one off set up)		£6,200
Proposed contribution 32%		£2,000

- 3.12 The location (Appendix B) and proposed design for the garden (Appendix C) has been approved by Friends of The Country Park (FTCP) and Melton Environmental Action Plan (MEAP).

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Councils key strategic objective concerned from this report is providing a cleaner and greener environment.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 If members are minded to support the proposals within this report, a further report to CSA will be prepared regarding the establishment costs associated with the memorial garden and brought back to members for consideration. In regards to this report are no direct financial implications.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

- 7.1 There are no direct links to community safety arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 This report gives consideration to increasing the Borough's provision and facilitation in regards to cemetery and related services. As such if approved a 'child's' memorial garden is expected to impact positively upon Equalities issues.

9.0 RISKS

Probability ↓					
Very High A					
High B					
Significant C					
Low D		3			
Very Low E		2	1		
Almost Impossible F					
		IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic
		Impact →			

Risk No.	Description
1	Support Group cease to exist
2	Ongoing Maintenance support ceases
3	Vandalism

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 Not directly related to the recommendations, any design will seek to take into account any climate change issues.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Extensive discussions have taken place with MBC officers and Stephen's Footprints Group.

11.2 The proposal has been approved by Friends of the Country Park (FTCP) and Melton Environmental Action Plan (MEAP)

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 The country park is within the Newport Ward however the facility would be available to residents of all wards.

Contact Officers: Environmental Services Officer – Amanda Hume
Principal Assistant (Environment) – Raman Selvon

Date: 14th February 2011

Appendices: Appendix A – Stephen's Footprint Group Information
Appendix B – Memorial garden location
Appendix C – Memorial Garden Plan

Background Papers: None

Reference: X: Committee\Ctee, Council & Sub Cttees\CSA\2010 11\090311\Stephen's Footprint

Stephen's Footprints Baby Loss Memorial Garden Proposal

Stephen's Footprints Baby Loss Support Group is a voluntary community group supporting local families through the loss of a baby either by miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death or other complications. It was founded by Mrs Alicia Hill and her family, after the loss of her son Stephen at 40 weeks in July 2009 after finding that there was no support locally for bereaved parents and families going through the heart wrenching shock and grief of losing a baby. Baby loss is more common than some would realise, indeed most individuals will know of a Family who has lost a baby.

The group meets fortnightly at the Samworth Centre to offer support, friendship, comfort and hope. The group has built up a network of friendships from as far afield as Leicester, and Sleaford, mostly bereaved mothers in need of support, as well as links with organisations such as SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society), the Miscarriage Association and the local clergy.

A Memorial Garden for baby loss is proposed by the group in partnership with Melton Borough Council to provide families with an opportunity to have a special place in which to remember their cherished babies. There are many baby loss memorial gardens nationally but currently no provision in Leicestershire. The nearest ones are Lincoln and Nottingham, both are situated within cemeteries, which are suitable for babies buried there, however there are still many parents who do not know where their babies are buried and others have moved away from the area and therefore want to go somewhere independently to visit. We have had contact from two other baby loss groups who have said that a garden near a park in the centre of the UK would be somewhere they would be interested in visiting with their groups.

SANDS do have their own Memorial Garden which is at the National Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire which is well attended, but there are limited facilities for families.

A small site is needed locally and has therefore been identified by MBC and the Group in Melton Country Park close to the Visitors Centre, which would provide a reflective, tranquil, accessible and fitting tribute as well as an ideal location, a sanctuary of peace to dwell on the thoughts and memories of children lost, but not forgotten. The park nearby is perfect for families and other groups to visit. A long journey to the memorial garden would be complemented with the extra facilities of free parking, a small café, tranquil woodland walks, picnic areas and places where young siblings can play and would be a completely unique site to any other baby memorial garden in the UK. There are many reasons why a memorial garden is needed, many parents do not get the opportunity to have a formal acknowledgement of their lost child with first or second trimester baby loss and feel they need somewhere they can go to remember their baby, some families are also uncomfortable visiting a cemetery and find it too oppressive, whilst others many years ago simply were never told where their baby was laid to rest or had access to it, therefore a Memorial Garden is needed for the whole community to use as a special place for all those who have been touched by the death of a baby.

The group are keen to start work on the project as soon as possible when it gets the go ahead and would ideally like to complete it by the summer of 2011. In order to realise this project, the group seek support from MBC, fundraising, individual donations and local business involvement. We have already raised a small amount of funds via a quiz, name the teddy competition, children's party and individual contributions. And if we get the go ahead then more fundraisers are planned including Christmas Party, social events, cake sale, jumble sale, Summer black tie event, cookbook, sponsored bag pack at a well known supermarket chain.

We envisage the Memorial Garden being sympathetic to its environment and unobtrusive within Melton Country Park. It will be made up of a circular path going through the garden made of wood chippings with wooden sides surrounded by soft landscaping, planting and individual

Pebbles, these symbolic pebbles will be laid by families in remembrance of their child perhaps with a date, maybe a name, or a small poem. A small fence will be erected to define the area and an information board will be displayed explaining what the garden is for. A Wooden bench will also be sited within the garden. There could possibly be a small sculpture as focal point within the garden which would also contain a plaque.

In order to complete this work, ground works, landscaping, fencing and planting will have to be undertaken and the group has already had a few volunteers to contribute both their time, expertise and some materials. It is hoped MBC can also contribute to this.

There would also be a requirement for minimal maintenance which could possibly be incorporated into the Melton Country Park Maintenance yearly scheme. The group would however be involved in day to day maintenance. Being so close to the Visitors Centre would also provide for a safe and secure site in which to locate the garden.

It is envisaged that the cost of the works will be materials only as labour will on the whole be provided free of charge by volunteers and local businesses.

So far the group have received positive press coverage and support locally through Heart FM, the Eye radio station and the Melton Times. The group has also been involved in the recent International Wave of Light Ceremony and National Baby loss awareness day including a remembrance service at St Mary's Church where families came from as far afield as Bedfordshire to attend. We will also, for the second year running, be contributing a dedicated tree at the forthcoming Christmas Tree Festival at St Mary's Church.

Once the garden is complete then an opening day and service of remembrance will be planned.

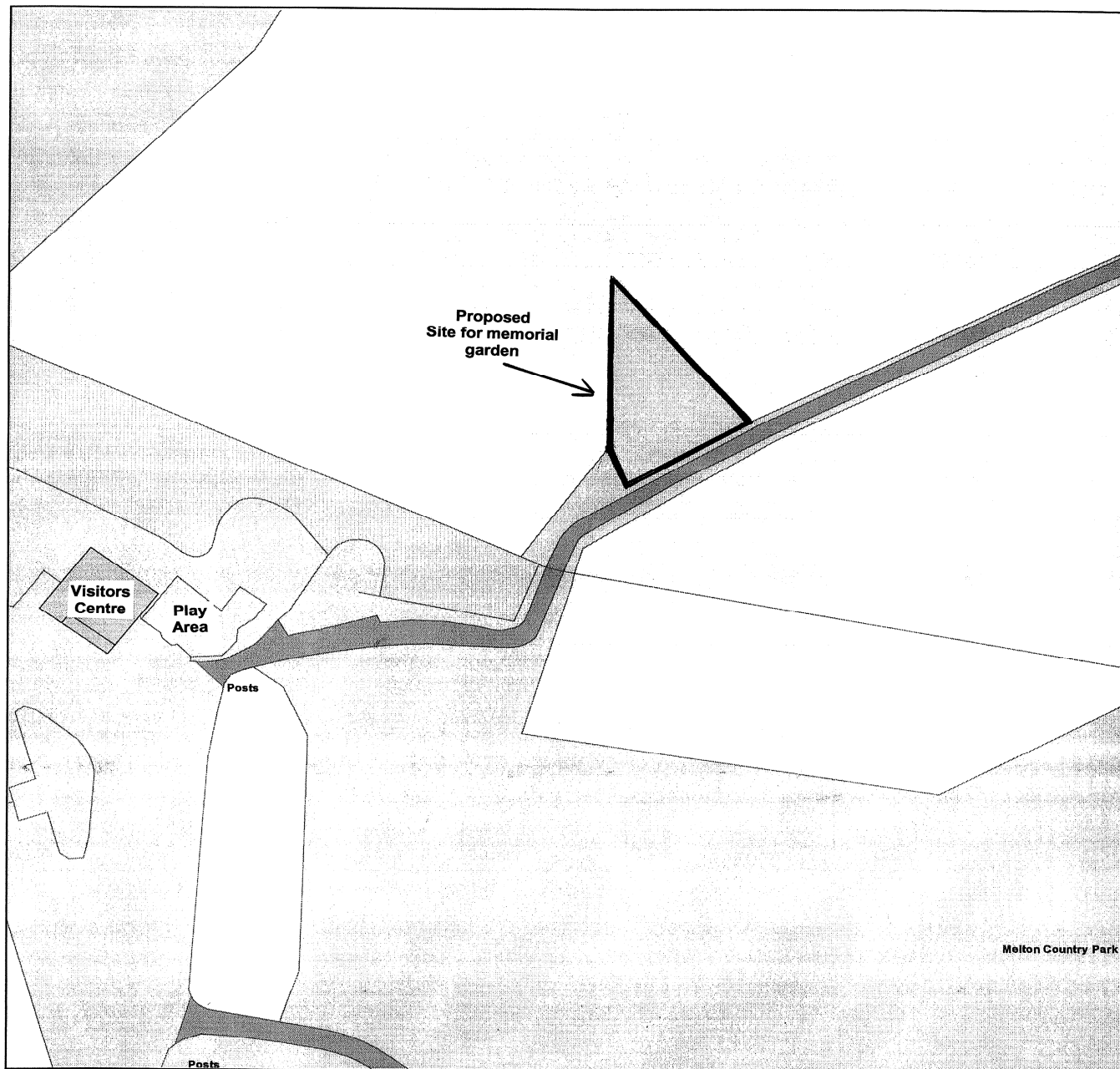
It is envisaged that there will be other events once the garden is established, including special bulb planting days, and funds from this and the sale of pebbles etc will be put into a garden fund to help with the future upkeep of the garden.

We hope that with the Support of MBC and Friends of Melton Country Park, Melton in Bloom and others, we can create a garden where parents and families can find a dignified peace for their precious babies.



The Forget-me-not Hemel Hempstead and St Albans Baby loss Memorial Garden in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council opened in 2004.

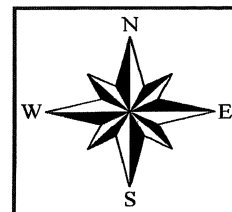
Proposed Location of Memorial Garden



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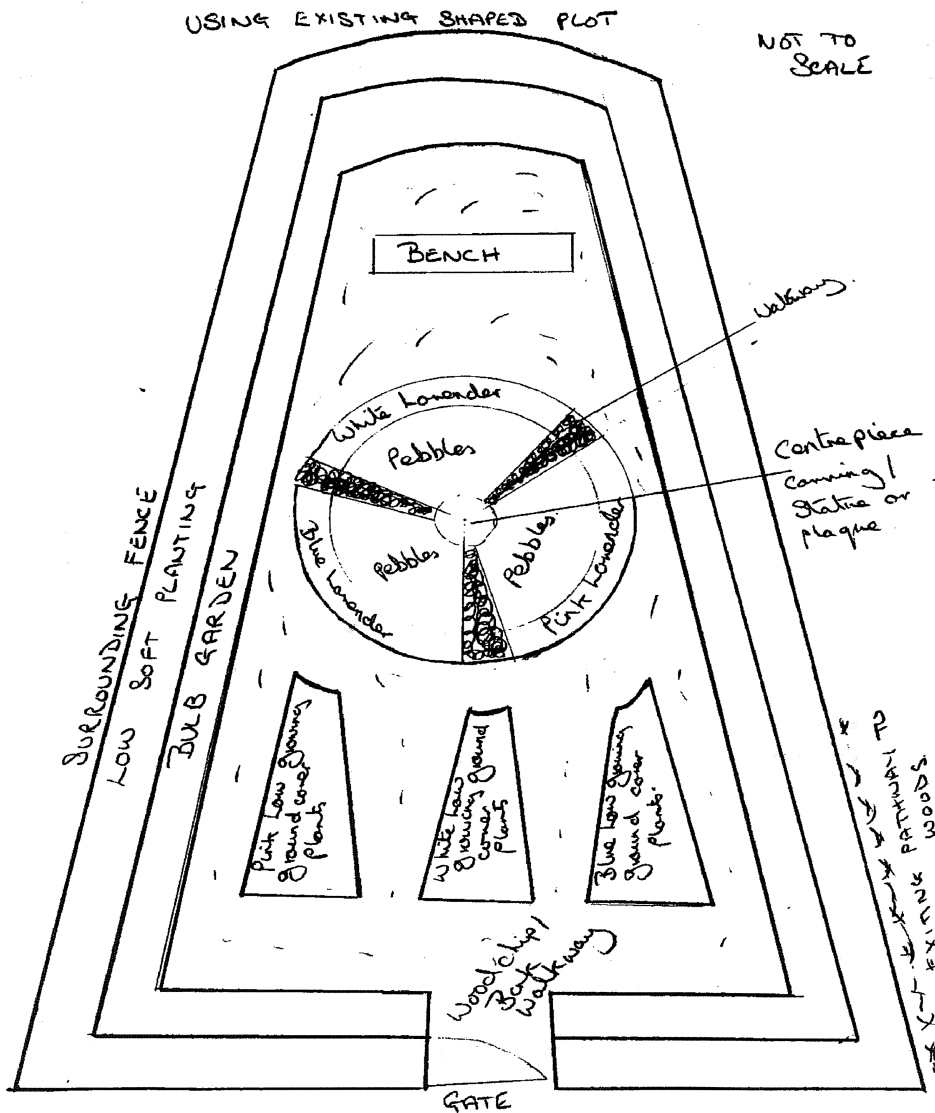


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Proposed Design of Memorial Garden

Plan of Garden not to scale



Using natural existing shape of proposed plot