



Visitor Facilities at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park

FEASIBILITY STUDY – **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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PREPARED FOR CENTRAL
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INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of a report, produced for Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), that considers options for what might be done at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park to provide better visitor facilities, especially in terms of toilets, café and community facilities. The work was done by Foster Wilson architects, Colliers (business planners) and IKS cost consultants. A draft report was issued in April 2020. It was then revised to add more detail of an option considered to have most potential. An **architectural report** by Foster Wilson and **cost estimates** by IKS have been issued separately in addition to the **full version** of this report.

CONTEXT

Analysis of the context, which included an informative survey of local people, ascertained the following:

- There is a good, family-orientated market for the park, with about 1,650 people living within 10 minute walk and 48,000 within 10 minute drive. Two neighbouring schools, with 1,900 students between them, are likely to generate business for café and community facilities from parents and children.
- The park is predominantly a local facility and is likely to remain that way even with planned expansion. It attracts people from all over Leighton-Linslade, however, and is a valued recreational resource.
- Dog walking is a main reason to visit, and a substantial number of dog owners are frequent visitors. A café should be dog friendly. An area where dogs can roam leash-free would be helpful. Dog mess is an irritation to many visitors.
- People otherwise mainly visit for walking, socialising and something to do. The number of visitors is not known, but the 275 people who responded to the survey (representing 0.7 % of the population within 10 minute drive) probably account for about 25,000 visits a year, so it is likely to be a quite substantial number.
- The survey showed high support for a café. One is likely to attract a substantial number of additional visits if the offer is of good quality.
- About 25 respondents to the survey indicated an interest in running activities of different sorts at Tiddenfoot if there was appropriate space to hire. Activities they mentioned were: performing arts workshops for disabled, children's soft play group, relaxation training, painting classes, pottery classes, sewing and embroidering, photography, health services support meetings, safe socialising space for pre-teens, baby group for twins, music recording, environmental awareness meetings, dancing lessons, pilates, yoga, language lessons, cycle rental, crazy golf, dodgeball, dog day-care, blacksmith.
- Two organisations responding to the survey indicated interest in running an entire community-orientated facility. Others expressed interest in running a café.
- One idea with potential that emerged from the survey was "Repair Café". That is a concept, with increasing popularity worldwide, of providing equipment and expertise, via volunteers, to enable people to repair things they own.

OPTIONS

Three main options for what might be done were explored in the draft report, with variations under each.

OPTIONS 1 – REBUILDING BLACKBARN'S STABLE BLOCK

The first is rebuilding Blackbarn's stable block (a better option than reconstructing the existing building) to provide a café and range of other of spaces around an attractive courtyard.

Figure 1: Indication of what the facility could look like



The café would be dual facing, looking into the courtyard on one side, and over the paddock on the other, with external seating on either side.

The other spaces could be hired to people wanting to put on activities, either on a one-off basis (like kid's parties) or on a regular basis (e.g. weekly zumba classes). They could be divided between "clean" (for activities like dance and meetings) and "messy" (for activities like painting and repairing). They would best be managed by the café operator. The response to the survey suggested there would be strong demand for this. It would have the advantage of attracting a substantial number of people to the facility, which would make the café more sustainable.

The spaces could alternatively be let for workspace of different type.

Both are likely to be successful, but the activities centre options seems to have most potential both financially and in terms of contribution to the community. It would have most potential of the options for attracting grant funding.

The courtyard itself is suited to regular small scale activities like jumble sales.

Storage space would be provided for the Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park.

OPTIONS 2 – SMALL CAFÉ

This would be a new building immediately adjacent to the car park. It would include public toilets which would be run by the café operator. Three variations of this are explored.

- A kiosk without internal seating.
- A small café with internal seating.
- A small café with internal seating and a community events room.

Figure 2: Indication of what the small café could look like



This could be done using modular construction, made in a factory and transported to the site. Figure 3 is an example. This could cost substantially less, although the overall cost may not be much different to new building of lower specification, matching that of the modular form.

Figure 3: Modular Café at Forestry Commission Mallards Pike, Forest of Dean



OPTION 3: LARGER CAFÉ

This would be a new building in the paddock. Figure 4 gives an idea of what it could look like.

Figure 4: Indication of what a larger café could look like



It could also be modular, but that would probably not be optimal from an architectural perspective in such a prominent location.

It is envisaged that, under any of the options, the property would be let to one or more organisations and they would pay rent. It may be preferable, given the uncertainty of how well they might do, for rent to be a base plus a percentage of turnover that escalates as turnover increases. That would make it more likely that the business is sustainable while giving CBC higher return should it do well.

Figure 5 summarises the options, with estimated cost¹ and rent estimates. Those shaded in grey have most potential in our opinion.

Figure 5: Summary of Options

Option	Construction Costs				Base Rent	Expected Rent	Landlord costs & long term maintenance 15%	Net Rent	Return on Invest
	GIA (sq m)	Building	Café Fitting	Total					
1a Rebuild stables as café and activities centre	285	£1,223k	£106k	£1,329k	£30k	£45k	(£7k)	£38k	2.9%
1b Rebuild stables as café and lettable work units	285	£1,228k	£132k	£1,360k	£29k	£34k	(£5k)	£29k	2.1%
2a Kiosk & Public Toilets.	62	£309k	£87k	£396k	£7k	£10k	(£2k)	£9k	2.1%
Kiosk & Public Toilets. Modular or Lower Specification	62			£289k		£9k	(£1k)	£8k	2.6%
2b Small Café & Public Toilets.	102	£442k	£97k	£539k	£13k	£20k	(£3k)	£17k	3.2%
Small Café & Public Toilets. Lower Specification	102	£314k	£80k	£394k	£11k	£17k	(£3k)	£14k	3.7%
Small Café & Public Toilets. Modular	102	£361k	£31k	£392k	£11k	£17k	(£3k)	£14k	3.7%
2c Small Café, Community Room & Public Toilets	132	£541k	£106k	£647k	£15k	£22k	(£3k)	£19k	2.9%
Small Café, Community Room & Toilets Modular or Lower Specification	132			£472k	£12k	£18k	(£3k)	£15k	3.2%
3 Larger Café	186	£769k	£102k	£871k	£24k	£36k	(£5k)	£31k	3.5%

It would be sensible, at detailed planning stage, to obtain a quote from a supplier of modular buildings to compare with new build, if any of options 2 are selected.

Options 2 and 3 would allow the stables to be demolished and the car park extended, adding about 37 spaces. The estimated cost of that is c.£503,000.

The study considered the possibility of locating a café alongside the lake. A small café of similar size to option 2b might be possible on the west side.

¹ Provided by IKS, except for the modular options.

While there would be the advantage of views over the water, the site would be constrained and access difficult. There would be disturbance to wildlife and anglers and greater risk of vandalism. Location alongside the car park is considered better.

MORE DETAILED OPTION

More work was done on Option 2c after the draft report, creating Option 2d. This extends the size of the community events room, which can also be used as overflow space when the café is busy.

Figure 6: Option 2d: Café Plus Larger Community Events Room



Figure 7 summarises the estimated cost and income from this approach.

Figure 7: Financial Implications

Option	GIA (sq m)	Construction Costs			Base Rent	Expected Rent	Landlord costs & long term maintenance	Net Rent	Return on Investment
		Building	Café Fitting	Total					
2d Large Events Room	158	£630k	£116k	£746k	£16k	£24k	(£4k)	£20k	2.7%
Car Park		£503k		£503k					
Total Scheme:		£1,133k	£116k	£1,249k	£16k	£24k	(£4k)	£20k	1.6%

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