FOOD WORKS

A community food growing hub for Graves Park

Public consultation proposal

Background

Over the past 2 years Food Works has worked to bring the Norton Nursery back to life so that it can be used "by the public with the object of improving their conditions of life", in line with the Graves Park Charity Objectives. In that time have supported over 6000 hours of volunteering on site and revived the disused plant nursery to support over 100 schools to grow food with plants raised on site. This year we have started a workshop programme, delivering dozens of engaging courses on sustainable gardening and food growing. All of this was realised at no cost to the charity or the council. We secured £50k of direct investment into the glasshouses and in excess of £100k of funding to enable it to be staffed.

Our vision

We would love to see a park that people don't just visit, but where they can participate and engage with intersecting activities and services. A vibrant community sace, like the animal farm and the cafe. This would be a staffed location that works to make the park an integral part of connecting the people in Sheffield with food and nature. At the same time the hub can also act as a public face and access point to the Nursery, which is currently severely constrained by the lack of a public access route. This would, in effect, double the space that is put back into public access and use.

What would this look like?

There are many ways in which this vision might be realised and it would very easily sit alongside other uses of the space.

Element	What it is, and why it works for the park
Required: Nursery public hub and classroom	An on-site base and a covered space for public workshops and activities. We propose starting with one or two portable cabin units (see section 3) so we can be operating quickly and develop a permanent building as plans firm up.
Highly desirable: Demonstration growing	An outside demonstration space for beds and planting where people can see and learn about growing food, similar to how they can experience and learn about animals at the animal farm.
Option:	A layered edible woodland — fruit and nut trees, shrubs and perennials. Green, biodiverse and publicly

Food forest, potentially linked or part of the arboretum	accessible; it presents as parkland, not nursery. Sheffield's Green Estate
Longer term option: A small café / kiosk	We would like to explore if the large park might accommodate a second cafe, making the growing hub an attractive public destination. It would present an opportunity to deliver farm-to-fork food all on site and draw a small income which can be reinvested in the site.

How does this benefit the charity?

The Graves Park charity was set up for the provision and maintenance of a park and recreation ground for use by the public with the object of improving their conditions of life. It is a fantastic facility for the city, but it is also constrained by the resources that the charity and the council can allocate. An active public facing community food growing hub would provide a staffed location that gives another genuine live and beating heart to the park and it will have an events calendar across the year. THe impact of the hub and nursery would stretch well beyond the park itself and truly change the conditions of lives of many more people across the city by supporting schools, community organisations and individuals to grow food together. Food Works would be able to maintain and invest in the site on an ongoing basis as it has already shown it can do with the Nursery itself.