

APPENDIX C - Maidstone Riverside Light Walk

Introduction

The Council has been looking at how we can improve links between Archbishops Palace, Lockmeadow and Maidstone Town Centre. An officer group has been formed with representation from both MBC and KCC, focusing on potential public realm improvements.

The group commissioned a study which provided a list of short-, medium- and longer-term options of public realm improvements. The working group decided that their initial focus should be on the tow path between the Thai Orchid restaurant and Lockmeadow and the route across millennium bridge.

One of the main reasons to focus on this part is that Lockmeadow continues to be improved and this autumn will see the opening of an 8-unit food hall and the installation of a play area. Both attractions will increase footfall and traffic to and from the site and we would like to encourage more people to walk along the river to get there.

Consultation and ideas.

The next steps were to obtain the views of the local councillors, colleagues in various related departments and Maidstone River Partnership. All felt the area we are talking about is very important for the town and is also very neglected, dark and unappealing.

There have been long standing anti-social behaviour issues in the area and this activity is encouraged as the routes are dark and underused by the public.

Examples from other areas were looked at including the Olympic park and Torquay Rock walk and the concept of a light walk was born.

All consulted thought that this would be a real asset to the town in terms of an attraction, would encourage pedestrian and cycling activity and solve the issue of the area being dark and uninviting.

This walk would have a wonderful view of the palace, church and surrounding buildings and the aim would be to incorporate a viewing platform on the old timber yard jetty with an information board about the historic building's opposite.

The concept

The architect who designed the food hall at Lockmeadow has worked on light projects before in partnership with a specialist lighting company. They have worked on a large project together including installations as part of Liverpool's city of culture.

We have worked up an initial concept that could be expanded if funding were available. The concept is based on a series of lights that could create different effects.

The main lights represent the skeleton of our iguanodon and benches along the part will provide places for people to sit and enjoy the view. The walk can commence in two directions either from the Archbishop's side and across the foot bridge or from the Thai Orchid.

Funding

Other authorities have used the Covid 19 grant, which Maidstone is using for Recovery and Renewal initiatives, to fund memorials to victims of the pandemic. We believe the walk would create a fitting memorial and create a lovely community space in their memory. Members are therefore invited to allocate £50,000 from the Recovery and Renewal Fund for this project.

Illustrative examples



Alexa Kersting-Woods

Leisure Property Manager 03/09/2021