



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Pocket Parks Plus

End of Grant Report

Refurbishment of Weavers' Piece, (Siam Gardens) Sudbury and creation of new Dye Garden

#PocketPark #DyeGarden #CommunityGarden #SudburyinBloom #Weavers'Piece #SudburySilk #Regeneration



The Headlines

- Regeneration of Weavers' Piece, Sudbury opened
 - Support shown for Sudbury Silk industry
- New structures and interest added to encourage visits
 - New path created to add interest and access
 - Formerly tired garden lifted and brightened
 - Future management simplified and encouraged
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour reported since project work commenced
- Link to Sudbury's history and heritage through 'Talbot' to encourage all ages
 - Encouraging tourism and local visits

The newly refurbished Siam Gardens, including a weaving structure and statue, were unveiled as part of an official opening at Weavers Piece in Sudbury on 14 March 2020.

Representatives from Babergh District Council, Sudbury in Bloom community group and Sudbury Town Council gathered at Siam Gardens in Sudbury on Saturday 14 March to officially unveil the weaving themed dye garden.

Regeneration works include a new loom structure, dog statue named after the famous Talbot dog on the Sudbury Crest, wooden carving of a silk worker and seasonal dye plants used as part of the silk dying process.

The project has been supported by Sudbury Town Council and Sudbury in Bloom, and was funded by a Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Pocket Park Grant of £25,000. Officer time and project management by SB Surveyors, Sudbury Town Council and Babergh District Council make up an additional £7,500 plus of match funding.

The re-design pays homage to Sudbury's rich silk heritage, and further connects the garden to other areas.

Designed, with the community, by Herbaculture CIC Contractors and various partners including John Moore Tree Services, Escar UK Bronze, ActivLives, A J and SB Surveyors it is hoped the garden will be enjoyed for years to come.

Chris Storey, Chair of Sudbury in Bloom, said:

"I'm very proud to officially open the newly designed garden at Weavers Piece, which follows months of hard work by the community, Sudbury in Bloom volunteers and our partners, including Sudbury Community Wardens.

"We wanted to be able to make this space more connected and entrenched in the town's silk history by creating a garden which could be explored and enjoyed by all - with Gainsborough House, and the Sudbury Heritage Centre nearby we intend this to be an established part of the Sudbury visitor and tourism offer.

"I hope that the garden will be well used over the coming years and I'm sure it will feature as part of future Sudbury Silk Festivals."

Cllr Derek Davis, Babergh District Council Cabinet Member for Communities, said:

“It’s always exciting to open something we’ve invested in to inspire our residents to get outside and explore Sudbury’s unique history and connections to the silk industry.

“Supported by the Sudbury Vision Group, the garden forms an important part of investing in the town’s public landscape and creating a place for the community to explore and enjoy at any age.”

The background to our new pocket park or refurbished park.

Weavers’ Piece was previously envisioned as a location for sign boards that gave details of the history of weaving in Sudbury. Some of the elements of the park had failed to provide a sustainable solution and had deteriorated in condition. The path through the garden had reached a point where it was uneven and at risk of becoming dangerous. This was compounded by part being pushed up by roots from the tree in the corner of the garden and settling of the original path surface which was formed from asphalt.

The main bed in the garden was wide and filled with shrubs that had become overgrown and was difficult to manage because of the depth of the bed and height of the shrubs. The trees in the garden were providing shelter to those in the garden who felt empowered to act inappropriately by the screening offered. Without structure and form that would provide for encouragement to others to enter the garden the garden was avoided by local residents, discouraged by the reputation of the park.

The garden is surrounded on two sides by residential property. On the third side is a public car park with an opticians beyond. On the fourth side is the end of a parade of shops presenting a blank wall beyond car parking spaces. The wall has a CCTV camera linked to the town CCTV scheme mounted on it.

The park has had a history of antisocial behaviour and challenges. It had become known for its drinking and drug taking. A public consultation at the commencement of the project resulted in poor attendance but those attending all had the same concerns. These were the lack of attention to antisocial behaviour from the authorities and general concerns regarding the way the park was being used.

Sudbury has a great business structure built in part on a nationally significant silk weaving industry. There are five silk businesses including three principle silk mills. Sudbury was also a wool town which provided much of the funding for the historic churches in the town. As the original home of Thomas Gainsborough, Sudbury also has a rich artistic talent that still is celebrated through Gainsborough House and through other artistic and cultural events in the town.

An initial appraisal of the park indicated that it was difficult to manage with volunteers due to the large area of unmanaged shrubs and lack of interest due to its layout. This was compounded by the concerns for the behaviour of those using the park. It was reported that for a short time after the park was last renovated it did benefit from reduced antisocial behaviour. This was soon overtaken when the condition of the garden deteriorated and management declined. A new approach was required that

considered the reasons for past challenges and that provided some longer term benefits for the town that built on previous actions and respected the character that had been built in before but which had been unable to provide sufficient interest to make it sustainable.

The park is in a key location close to the town hall and heritage centre and also close to Gainsborough House. Its potential as a heritage asset with a boundary wall of some character and quality as recognised by Sudbury Society, make it essential to bring back to full management and to make that management more sustainable.

The main outcomes we are trying to achieve through our new pocket park or refurbished park

Summarise in this section, the kinds of outcomes that the park is trying to achieve – that you will measure (ideally before and after the park refurbishment/ development begins). As a guide, please tick the outcomes from our list, which your pocket park project will help to deliver and explain in a about 200 words the detail about the original need you are trying to address and the kinds of outcomes you think the refurbished park will produce, plus the kinds of measurements (see guide) you will use to show the reader those outcomes have been achieved.

Outcomes from our new or refurbished park	✓
Improve the physical appearance of the existing park/develop a park on this site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increase the use of the park (more people visiting the park/green space) than before the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increase the use of the park (green space) by more people from different backgrounds than before the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increasing local people's satisfaction with the park/green space / local area than before project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increase the number of people who volunteer to work to support the park/green space than before the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increase in the use of the park to bring people from different backgrounds together (social mixing) than before the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improve bio-diversity and environmental impacts than before the project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improvements in wellbeing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other please specify	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1 Improve the physical appearance

The park was run down and lacking in diversity and character and in danger of becoming an health and safety risk. A tree in the corner had dead wood overhanging the adjoining road and the Yew tree had the appearance of a bush. The work has created a special area of interest that is inviting to visitors and residents alike.

2 Increase the use of the park

The former use of the park was restricted by the reputation and lack of “draw” to attract families and others into the park from outside the park. This has been attended to by including structures that can be seen from outside the park and which encourage visitors to enter the park to see what is there. Also to provide further interest once visitors enter the garden.

3 Increase the use of the park (green space) by more people from different backgrounds than before the project

By bringing diversity of interest and appealing to a tourist as well as local visitors and by providing an explanatory leaflet, aimed in part at children, the garden has already seen more visits from families and visitors. The Sudbury Silk Festival and Sudbury Walking Tours both used the park as part of their repertoire.

4 Increasing local people’s satisfaction with the park

It has been challenging to document satisfaction as it is far easier to get confirmation of problems. Those who have previously expressed dissatisfaction before the project have preferred to wait as their previous experience was of a park which after a few years deteriorated and with it behaviour. Therefore long term management is required to sustain this satisfaction. This is part of the reason for design making maintenance easier for the future. The path being surfaced with a surface suitable for long term use and a lighter colour surface. Easier maintenance of borders with nearly all of the plants within 2 metres of a path now. Ongoing involvement as part of Sudbury in Bloom and with direct linkage to the history and heritage of the town with a dye garden. Feedback from visitors has been positive to date. Ongoing and sustained maintenance is however required to ensure that this satisfaction can become engrained.

5 Increase the number of people who volunteer to work to support the park

The previous layout and challenges facing the park made this difficult to maintain. There was too much to do and no structure to deal with this. Sudbury in Bloom has sought to tackle this with intentions to maintain this area on a long term basis now that the maintenance has more relevance to the town and is easier with the new paths and subdivisions and structure. Also, it is a pleasant place to work with good soil and major challenges removed. Some old roots and obstructions were removed as part of the initial cleaning of the site. This leaves a real character that encourages attendance at work parties.

6 Increase in the use of the park to bring people from different backgrounds together (social mixing) than before the project

This has been covered above – those from different backgrounds are encouraged by the interest and character of the park

7 Improve bio-diversity and environmental impacts than before the project

The planting of a dye garden has introduced a far more diverse planting scheme with native species used for dyeing of clothing showing a range of plants that were not present before. The significance of these plants is also set out in the leaflet for the park.

8 Improvements in wellbeing

Wellbeing can only be achieved by following a structured maintenance of an attractive park. This is as already outlined. It is recognised from comments received as an ongoing process not a settled end point. We recognise and have tried to build a sustainable approach to achieving sustained improvements in wellbeing through future improvements in management and promotion of the park.

9 Other issues

The linkage and support for the history and heritage of the town, linkage to the town council and intention to encourage this as an essential stop on the tourist trail around Sudbury demonstrates the importance of this park to the town and the benefit of the investment in the park.

The main partners in our Pocket Parks Plus project

This project has been led by and project managed by Christopher Storey, Chairman of Sudbury in Bloom and proprietor of SB Surveyors. The project has been a personal challenge and substantial personal and professional investment in developing the park which has been an ambition by Sudbury in Bloom, Sudbury Town Council, Babergh District Council and Activlives as well as the Sudbury Silk Festival and other partners including Suffolk Police, Greener Sudbury, Humphries Weaving, Robin Drury, David Burnett and the Sudbury Heritage Centre, Lorna Hoey and Sudbury Society.

Herbiculture CIC also provided design input that was essential to the project on a consultancy basis. As well as paid design work other input to the project through discussion of options and specific encouragement of the tree carving was invaluable.

The original garden design work was intended to be carried out over three months but in practice the work took 12 months to complete. This was as a result of technical and logistical challenges which had to be overcome. This included new uses for materials, testing weather and other challenges with suppliers.

The aim has always been to develop a dye garden that linked to the town heritage and also to link other features to the weaving history and heritage of the town.

All of the partners have agreed that the park should be a focal point highlighting, through a modern interpretation, the importance of a key industry in Sudbury, Sudbury Silk. The initial opening of the garden was held at the Sudbury Silk Festival on 7 September 2019 when a temporary explanation of the main 'loom' structure was in place for the day and most other features were completed.

The main costs /resources associated with the project

Set out the costs and resources spent during 2019, rounding the costs to the nearest £100.

Resource	Number of people	Cost £
Staff who ran managed the project	3	
Staff who delivered the project		
Contractors who delivered the project	8	
Consultants who helped during the planning/design stage	1	£600
Volunteers who delivered the project (you may not need to include costs, if people were not offered any incentives)	10+	
Capital costs for fixtures/fittings in the park		£20,500
Other costs, please specify		
Leaflet design and print		£1,000
Site clearance, plants and mulch		£2,900
See further details regarding project costs below		
Totals		£25,000

This project has been run, project managed and organised by SB Surveyors in conjunction with Babergh District Council. SB Surveyors have provided structure design, project management and planning time free of charge and the total time allocated to the project and required to deliver all of the elements completed amount to in the region of £20,000 of voluntary time. This was not the original intention! The original estimate of a three month project mushroomed as time progressed and the complexity of the project and technical challenges developed. This has therefore been a major issue that has had to be resolved and some time charges to essentially cover overheads – not labour – have been included in the charges. SB Surveyors organised materials including payment and recharge at cost to allow the project to proceed at the shortest timescale possible and to avoid any contractor down time. Tight cost control was required and some limited costs were incurred by SB Surveyors after the project budget had been used. Sudbury in Bloom also provided plants for the final plant up and labour and materials to complete works with a fantastic work party day helping to effect the final transformation ready for the final opening in March 2020. SB Surveyors also renovated the existing displays in the park and Sudbury in Bloom painted the posts in the garden using paint supplied by Robin Drury and SB Surveyors. Original leaflet concept was by SB Surveyors and details other sponsors who have made contributions in terms of time and materials.

Babergh District Council provided additional assistance as match funding with officer time committed to enable the work to be carried out. Babergh District Council carried out work to the tree £525 which was then carved to provide a feature in the garden. Babergh District Council also arranged for all waste plant materials to be removed as required. This included three lorry loads in the initial clearance and the cost treated as part of match funding.

What has been the impact so far?

Summary of works completed: -

- Silk Lady Tree Carving
- Bronze Labrador
- Existing path resurfaced
- New path created
- Loom structure created
- Explanatory leaflet produced
- Dye Garden created
- Renovation of existing displays
- Repair and repurpose of the garden
- Pride restored to a central garden area close to the town centre!

The physical changes to the park/green space

The original condition of the park before the commencement of work is shown in the photographs in Appendix 1. What is not apparent from these is that the display boards were scratched and dirty and that it was almost impossible to get or keep these clean as the scratches held dirt and made the displays nearly unreadable in part. The potential trip hazard from the settling of the tarmac on the path and missing section of edging is apparent and the whole appearance of the garden was lacking in love and attention and interest to draw in visitors or hold their attention. This is a small area but it is only about 130 metres from the town hall and 150 metres from the Market Hill and town centre.

What was deteriorating and becoming unsafe has been made safe and new interest brought into the garden in line with the history and heritage of the town. Sudbury needs to develop its tourism offer to encourage and attract visitors to the town and to provide interest and knowledge about the towns past. This project has allowed for the transformation of the park to support the town centre and to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour.

The leaflet produced to explain the garden is attached at Appendix 2 and confirms the background to the garden. It is difficult to put it any better than “Talbot” has explained it but the additional information sheet at Appendix 3 sets out further details about the structures in more graphic form.

To further explain the work and to give it more context and meaning this report is supplemented by a more visual and explanatory report at Appendix 4 which sets out the work in more graphic detail. This helps to spell out the journey that we have been on in creating this new environment for the future and we hope makes this more personal and relatable.

What has been learnt so far

The project has been a learning process and some of the challenges has been with suppliers who were unable to deliver and who held up the process of purchasing by a considerable time. Other challenges were around labour availability and each stage had to be planned as time was available. It was apparent from the start that the work would need to be planned on the basis of achieving as much as possible and this meant planning had to be fitted around other business priorities given that the work was not being

charged for. Had planning and design been charged for the work would not have been completed unless additional funding had been found. The project therefore extended into weather conditions that made work even more challenging. The final opening of the garden was therefore delayed until just before prohibitive Coronavirus restrictions came into effect. It did however also mean that the garden was given a good weeding just before it became impossible to do more.

A project of this size may seem straightforward but there is more to it than meets the eye. Unless you are up for a challenge then keep it simple. Ensure that you have the skill set to manage the project safely and to protect the public.

We have planned for all ages and have talked to visitors to the garden on each occasion that we were working in the garden. On a recent visit a grandfather, mother and children were enjoying the garden and were given a leaflet to explain more. This garden should have something for everyone – all they have to do is look. Facebook did allow engagement, particularly when the tree carving was installed. Comments were positive once the grant was confirmed as the source of funding. Generally all comments have been positive but there remains concerns that if not managed for the future that the garden will slip back to its past anti-social behaviour. Sudbury in Bloom are now maintaining the beds in the garden and this is intended to continue. The much easier weeding makes this much simpler and quicker and there is a clear purpose for the planting that did not exist before. This should give encouragement to others to maintain this.

Another issue that became apparent was that some dog owners were shutting the gates so that they could let their dogs run around in the garden. Also, some groups were shutting the gates so that they made it less attractive for others to walk through the garden. The gates have now been locked open to prevent this.

At the Chelsea Flower show a very appealing stone sculpture was the only item that looked interesting and which was of similar size (but very different appearance) to the Silk Lady Tree carving. On asking the price it was confirmed that this was £25,000. I think this puts what has been achieved in terms of value into perspective!

Contact details

For all enquiries and further details contact Christopher Storey MRICS, SB Surveyors, 1 Bank Buildings, Sudbury CO10 2SP Tel 01787-311140 chris.storey@sbsurveyors.co.uk

Chris is Chairman of Sudbury in Bloom and has project managed the rejuvenation of Siam Gardens/ Weavers' Piece. Further information on volunteer work at: -

www.sudburyinbloom.org.uk

Sudbury is a great community and a lovely market town which should be on everyone's list of places to visit. More information including what is happening guide is available at

www.seeanddosudbury.co.uk