

Purpose:

The creation of a Garden of Contemplation surrounding Didsbury War Memorial.

Address: Wilmslow Road Didsbury Manchester M20 2DN

This statement is to support a planning application to produce a new garden around the site of the Didsbury War Memorial. Replacing the existing garden which has been neglected, poorly maintained and run down over many years. The new garden will be known as a Garden of Contemplation. The Cenotaph is a grade 11 listed monument built by public subscription and managed by the Manchester City Council Public Realms Office.

Also within the public area is Didsbury Library which is also a grade 11 listed building. Funded and built by the well know American oil philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Which was in turn donated to the Manchester by the Carnegie Foundation. Both of which are located in the **Blackburn Park Conservation area**. On the opposite side of Wilmslow Road Didsbury stands a further Grade 11 listed monument namely the Dr J Milson Rhodes (1847-1909) Memorial Clock and Drinking Fountain. Making a rich area of graded monuments within a small footprint.

Didsbury War Memorial (Grid Reference SJ8468491006) was erected in honour of the 174 Didsbury servicemen who gave their lives in the First World War. The monument was unveiled on the 4th July 1921 (see attached photograph below) by Edward George Villiers Stanley 17th Lord Derby, and dedicated by the Rector of St James Church, Didsbury, Reverend Charles Cecil Ellis. Additional names were added to commemorate the 67 from the village who died in the Second World War, following that conflict. The memorial was listed in 1994. In 2005 the memorial was refurbished by Manchester City Council in time for the Remembrance Sunday of that year. In 2018 the City Council also arranged the necessary cleaning of the memorial, in time for the centenary commemorations of the ending of the First World War. A specialist cleaning company was employed..

The memorial is made mainly of soft white Portland Stone which stands in a small fenced, and gated garden area at the end of a short entrance path. There are two small lawns flanking the three stepped stone base. Which is surmounted by a tall two stage plinth square on plan, dying back via offsets to a pedestal bearing the shaft topped by a small cross Fleury. The upper stage of the plinth bears the rectangular bronze name plates on each side on which the names of the fallen are inscribed. The plates were also workshop treated during the period of cleaning. The pedestal is decorated with carved wreaths and coats of arms with tall flambeaux being carved in low relief on each side of the cross shaft. The carving can also be seen on the attached photograph.

With the memorial being listed, it's status affects its special interest and original historic fabric which will require the appropriate consent. **Importantly, The Didsbury War memorial will not be affected by the works within the garden area.**



The Official unveiling of the Didsbury War Memorial 4th July 1921



Didsbury War Memorial - showing carving relief and overgrown state September 2017

Nature of the Proposal:

The asset is the land which is 166 square metres which will all be worked on to produce the new garden. **The garden only, is the area that is proposed for being renovated comprising the full estimated area as stated of 166sq metres with all works being conducted externally.**

The memorial garden appears to have been conceived as an integral part of the memorial itself, and as such constitutes its curtilage - meaning that some otherwise permitted development would require planning permission/consent (e.g. works to the boundary and

the provision of hard resurfacing), the rear of the war memorial garden forms the boundary line, so to clarify, the City Council owns the whole area where the work is proposed (right up to the back wall).



1930's Screenshot showing the position of Didsbury Library and War memorial garden

Consultation:

There is a local Project Team lead and co-ordinated by Didsbury Civic Society. That manages this project comprising local councillors, a variety of voluntary and community groups, such as, Didsbury in Bloom, Didsbury Community Association, Scouts and Cub groups. The groups and works fully involves the local community, faith groups and continues to liaise with those which over many years contributed to Remembrance Sunday, and Christmas light switch on activities which take place within this area.

Three Didsbury local garden designers responded to a brief to submit proposals and drawings of their ideas for the area. A Public Consultation with the ability to submit response and comments on the designs was held from the 11th November to the 9th December 2022 in Didsbury Library. The most popular design being chosen by the public. All of the designs were then looked at by the Manchester City Council Planning Department and the Manchester City Council Grounds Maintenance Officer. The MCC Senior Neighbourhood Officer for South Manchester has also had the opportunity to also look at the designs. Again, the popular choice concurred with the feedback comments from the public. The chosen landscape gardener is local to Didsbury and has extensive experience in garden design and project management.

Approach and Methodology:

Being designated as a Public Realm location both officers from the Public Realm Office and City Council Officers have visited and inspected the site and have advised to submit a Statement of Historical Significance.

The garden is owned by Manchester City Council and maintained by MCC. The area to be worked will be 166 square metres which has been detailed in the online Planning Submission. Regular contact has also been maintained with Planning Officers at MCC (Heritage and Urban Design), and Planning Building Control and Licensing (Growth & Development Directorate).

Dated 27/06/2023