

# **Proposal for Denehurst Park & House Consultation**

## **DRAFT Denehurst Consultation – June 2026**

### **Overview**

In 1932 Denehurst House and Park were gifted by the Turner Family to the Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Rochdale (aka ‘the Corporation of Rochdale’). Rochdale Borough Council subsequently became the legal trustee of Denehurst House and Park.

Since 1932 the House and Park have been used for a variety of purposes, including the well-used parklands which are open to the public still. The house has formerly been used as council offices but has been vacant for several years.

Please click the 'More information' arrow below for background on the **The Legal Status of Denehurst Park & House** and more detail regarding the **Denehurst Park & House Consultation**.

### **The Legal Status of Denehurst Park & House**

The Council has undertaken a detailed review to ensure that the legal status of each part of the original gift (whether parkland, House, properties on the land, or ancillary buildings) are being dealt with in accordance with legal requirements. The following is relevant to this consultation:

#### **Parkland**

Residents may remember that in 2012/13 a small part of the original parkland was formally appropriated by the Council to be used as a cemetery following a public consultation similar to this one and using the Council’s powers under section 122 Local Government Act 1972 as referred to below.

The original 1932 conveyance granted full ownership of the land to the Council and did not create a *charitable* trust. The land has been used as public parkland for many years; it is therefore likely to be subject to a *statutory* trust under the Public Health Act 1875.

This is a statutory trust held by the local authority and is distinct from a charitable trust. As such, it is not regulated by the Charity Commission. The Council will continue to manage the land on this basis, to ensure the parkland is kept as it has been for the enjoyment of the residents of the Borough.

#### **Denehurst House**

The main House which is located centrally within the park is not itself strictly subject to the statutory trust and therefore likely belongs to the Council itself rather than being trust property. This is because the building is a former dwelling rather than a structure

intrinsically linked to the operation of the park and has been used for many years for offices and other operational purposes.

However, to ensure full compliance and transparency, the council will treat Denehurst House as if it were within the statutory trust **for decision-making purposes only**. Accordingly, this then triggers the undertaking of a public consultation under sections 122-123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Following the outcome of this consultation, if the proposed use for veteran's accommodation is endorsed, then the Council will complete an internal governance report to ensure formal appropriation of the House to formal housing use in perpetuity.

### **Denehurst Park & House Consultation**

The original 1932 Conveyance directs that the House and Land are to be used for any of the following purposes:

- A public park
- Museum
- Art Gallery
- Similar municipal institution [or some building or other erection incidental thereof]

The Council will continue to maintain the public park in the same manner as it has done previously. There is the potential however to create additional uses within the House which are in line with the original 1932 Conveyance.

A former delivery model for this was in direct legal partnership with the charity Groundwork Greater Manchester (Groundwork GM). It has now been decided that whilst Groundwork GM will likely continue to be involved with the project it will not be through a formal legal agreement. The Council therefore is suggesting completing the following:

**1. Residential Accommodation for Veterans:** Only for veterans meeting the eligibility requirements of the Council's Housing Register meaning that they are in housing need. The accommodations would be let via a third party, with 100% exclusive rights to the Council to nominate prospective tenants to a private-let style tenancy. This provision would be limited to veterans in perpetuity, i.e. could not be changed to other groups in the future and would not be subject to the statutory 'Right to Buy' (see further information below).

**2. Changing Places Disabled Bathroom:** This is a larger, fully equipped accessible toilet for people with profound and multiple disabilities who cannot use standard disabled toilets, featuring a height-adjustable adult-sized changing bench, a tracking hoist, ample space for carers and a peninsula toilet allowing dignified access to public spaces. These essential facilities will provide space and equipment (like hoists) missing

from typical accessible toilets, enabling people with complex needs to enjoy the park alongside everyone else.

**3. A Park Café:** The operator would be selected from a tender process to deliver a public café facility in Denehurst House. The café would operate within hours set within the terms of the lease and would include a requirement that the toilet facilities are made available to non-customers during opening hours.

### **Veteran's Accommodation**

It is recognised that there is a national and local housing crisis, of which specialist housing has proven to be in even shorter supply (Local Housing Needs Assessment).

Across Rochdale there are around 5,455 households where at least one person has previously served in HM Forces, with a total population of at least 5,617 veterans. Of these veterans:

- 69.2% own, 19.0% are social renters and 11.7% are private renters
- 33.7% are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 and 17.2% of all veterans were disabled under the Equality Act and their day-to-day activities were limited.
- 44.8% are in employment. 2.1% unemployed and 53.1% not economically active.
- 20.3% were aged under 44, 33.1% aged 45 to under 65 and 46.6% were aged 65 and over.

The proposal is to have 5 apartments designed exclusively for local armed forces veterans in housing need. This is in line with Rochdale Council's Armed Forces Community Covenant pledges, which encourage the integration of armed forces personnel back into civilian life. The creation of disabled and adapted living within a park-style therapeutic setting would achieve these aims.

The proposed use of part of the building is considered to sit comfortably within the broad spirit and general requirements of the 1932 Conveyance, as providing accommodation for veterans is a clear municipal and community focused purpose, delivering public benefit, social value and welfare support to a recognised group within the community.

### **Café for the Park**

It is hoped that, as with other cafes in parks, the ability to create one at Denehurst in line with the original 1932 Conveyance will bring significant benefits including but not limited to:

- Creating a vibrant community hub
- Enhancing social connection
- Supporting the local economy
- Boosting wellbeing through nature access
- Providing convenient amenities for park users (including the disabled, parents and dog walkers)
- Increasing accessibility

Alternatively, there are PDF versions of the content provided under 'Related Documents' section at the bottom of this page.

### **Why your views matter**

Before the Council formally approves the completion of the veterans' accommodation, café and Changing Places facility, in line with the legal status of Denehurst (see above), it is seeking the view of residents of the Borough. The purpose of the original 1932 Conveyance was to benefit the residents of Rochdale through the provision of parkland and Denehurst House as a local asset. It is suggested that these improvements will enhance the use of the local asset for a wide variety of communities and specialist needs.

The proposed programme will deliver a marked increase in both amenities to the park, and to a broad cross section of existing and new park users; as well as creating a mixed-use space to improve local well-being, security, economy and green standards.

The Council will give full consideration to the responses received during this consultation before reaching a conclusion as to the proposed use of the Park and House going forward.