

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY
25 MAY 2017

CABINET 14 JUNE 2017

MADLEY PARK PLAYING FIELDS PROJECT
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND COMMUNITIES
(Contact: Martin Holland, Tel: (01993) 861556)

(The Decisions made by Economic and Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee on this matter will be recommendations to Cabinet. The Cabinet's decisions will be resolutions)

1. PURPOSE

To seek authority for the refurbishment of an existing play area and the addition of new facilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That, subject to any necessary planning consent, authority is given for the project to proceed based upon the location, concept plan and advice received as outlined within the main body of the report.
- (b) That consultation takes place with Witney Town Council regarding a leasehold/freehold transfer and/or management arrangements for the site.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Madley Park Playing fields and the adjacent public open space on Cedar Drive were acquired under the terms of a S106 agreement from the developers of the Madley Park Estate. In 2005 the Council installed a children's play area for under 12's on the Cedar Drive open space (Appendix A location plan refers). The Council also received limited capital funding for the provision of facilities for the 12+ age group.
- 3.2. Wood Green School has access to the Madley Park Playing fields via a dual use agreement at specified times during the school day. Outside of these times the playing fields are available to book by the community for adult/junior football matches, typically Saturday's and Sunday's during the football season. As a public open space informal use is also encouraged e.g. dog walkers, kick about and children's free play etc. There also exists an agreement with the School to access changing rooms within the Campus which were constructed to serve the playing fields. Bookings for the pitches and changing rooms are made via the School directly.
- 3.3. In 2011 a project group formed consisting of representatives from the District Council, Witney Town Council, Sovereign Housing Association and Madley Park Residents Association (MPRA). This was in response to feedback from residents about lack of facilities for older children in the locality. The project group decided to employ a phased approach to procure the facilities to meet this unmet demand. The first phase resulted in the installation of a sky surfer piece of equipment in 2014 on the playing fields which was funded by a combination of S106 monies and grants the MPRA

secured. In choosing the location a key criterion was proximity to residences, the sight line of the closest property being 141 metres away.

- 3.4. The installation of the sky surfer was opposed by a number of residents who live on the Woodstock Road whose properties are adjacent to the playing fields and, visually, 141 metres away from the play area. A Petition was produced which featured 297 signatories (hard copy 247 and 50 from an online version). The project steering group at its meeting on 11 July 2014 discussed the petition having previously corresponded and met with representatives of the residents to discuss concerns. (Members room information pack refers). At that meeting it was also decided there would be no further equipment installed without prior consultation with Madley Park and Woodstock Road residents. This consultation took place in June 2016 and January 2017 (3.6 and 3.8 refers).
- 3.5. In March 2015 the steering group re-convened, the impetus for this being the Town Council having successfully securing capital via section 106 funding from a nearby housing scheme for phase 2 of the project. At its September 2015 meeting the steering group decided the project scope should increase to include the refurbishment of the existing play area which at that time was 10 years old. To provide the facilities for over 12's and refurbish the existing facilities additional funding will be required, and the MPRA has committed to fund raise the balance.
- 3.6. In December 2015 the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Associations community development officer was appointed as the project manager for the scheme. A concept plan was produced and used to consult with residents in June 2016 and feedback collated for discussion by the steering group at its July 2016 meeting (Members room information pack refers).
- 3.7. In August 2016 the Woodstock Road Witney Residents Association was formed (WRWRA) in order to represent views on the proposals. A formal objection and alternative proposal document dated September 2016 was submitted by the (WRWRA) (Members room information pack refers). There followed a request for the chairman and secretary to join the steering group. This was duly considered by the steering group at its October 2016 meeting and accepted.
- 3.8. At the November 2016 steering group meeting it was determined that further consultation would be necessary based on feedback from the June consultation and revisions to the conceptual plans. The consultation event took place on 28 January 2017, various mediums were utilised. Copies of the following documents are in the Members room information pack:-
 - Project Managers report
 - WRWRA Chairman's report
- 3.9. The consultation responses were considered by the steering group at its meeting in February 2017 (Members room information pack refers). At this meeting it was also agreed that a sub group should be formed to discuss the scheme based on feedback from the consultation. It was apparent from the feedback and in response to an issue highlighted by the police that provision for wheeled sports (scooters/skaters) should be considered and incorporated into the design if feasible. Subsequent to this the chairs and secretaries of the MPRA and WRWRA met and a summary of discussion points was produced (Members room information pack refers).

- 3.10 It was also decided to seek a revised concept plan (Appendix B refers & Members room information pack) which incorporated the feedback received from the consultations. Based on the concept plan the total project cost is estimated to be £115,560.00; however Members should be aware this is a conceptual plan and the equipment specification/internal layout may be refined following further consideration.
- 3.11 At the steering group meeting on the 25 April 2017 the representatives from the WRWRA stated that the provision of a planted buffer zone circa 5 metres in depth containing trees and shrubs was a key requirement for the residents they represent. The principle of providing a screen in the form of a hedge had previously been discussed by the steering group.
- 3.12 The views of the Council's Environmental Services Manager were sought regarding the 5 metre buffer zone proposal, the following was advised:-
- The removal of part of the coppice for the extension of the play area would mitigate against the increased risk as the coppice becomes over grown
 - Should further hedgerows or trees be planted, the maintenance budget will need to be increased
 - The extended play area would only be directly overlooked by three properties.
 - Noise from the play area will be minimal and is unlikely to be heard by the surrounding properties
 - Extending the coppice to act as a visual screen around the playground will close off the area and potentially increase shadows
 - My suggestion would be not to plant any further vegetation and monitor the impact of the extension of the playground on noise levels.
- 3.13 The Thames Valley Police, Crime Prevention Design Advisor, has also been consulted and advised against providing any screening. The recommendation is that there should be a clear line of sight from the footpath up to the boundary of the houses on Woodstock Road, as there is currently. To screen off the space to the degree suggested will have the potential to create anti-social behaviour. Furthermore Woodstock Road residents should be concerned about this because it would make their properties more vulnerable to burglary as they couldn't be seen from the footpath. Therefore the recommendation is that no hedge should be provided; the advice did contain a caveat which stated if a hedge were to be provided it should be no higher than 1m in height.
- 3.14 Taking account of the expert advice regarding the 5 metre planted screen and the potential safeguarding risk this would introduce it is the view of of this scale should not be provided. As an alternative a hedge will be considered to complement the design, in order to exclude dogs and provide an element of screening.
- 3.15 In summary the steering group has consulted extensively with residents and given consideration to the feedback received which influenced the design development. Furthermore where concerns have been raised these have also been considered and discussed and the decisions reached informed by experience and advice.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

Members could choose not to accept the reports recommendation and/or suggest alternative solutions.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Witney Town Council has secured a S106 contribution of £20,328 towards the project, the MPRA currently has £2,341.00 from a previous grant awarded by OCC. Additional funding will be required, the MPRA intends to fundraise and apply for grants to reach the total project budget.

6. RISKS

- 6.1. Should the project not proceed the risk exists that the S106 funding may have to be returned to the developer via claw back conditions in the agreement.
- 6.2. The lack of provision for young people in North East Witney will remain unmet if the project does not proceed.

7. REASONS

This proposal meets the following council priorities:-

- Protect and enhance the environment of West Oxfordshire and maintain the district as a clean, beautiful place with low levels of crime and nuisance
- Work in partnership to sustain vibrant, healthy and economically prosperous towns and villages with full employment
- Be recognised as a leading council that provides efficient, value for money services.

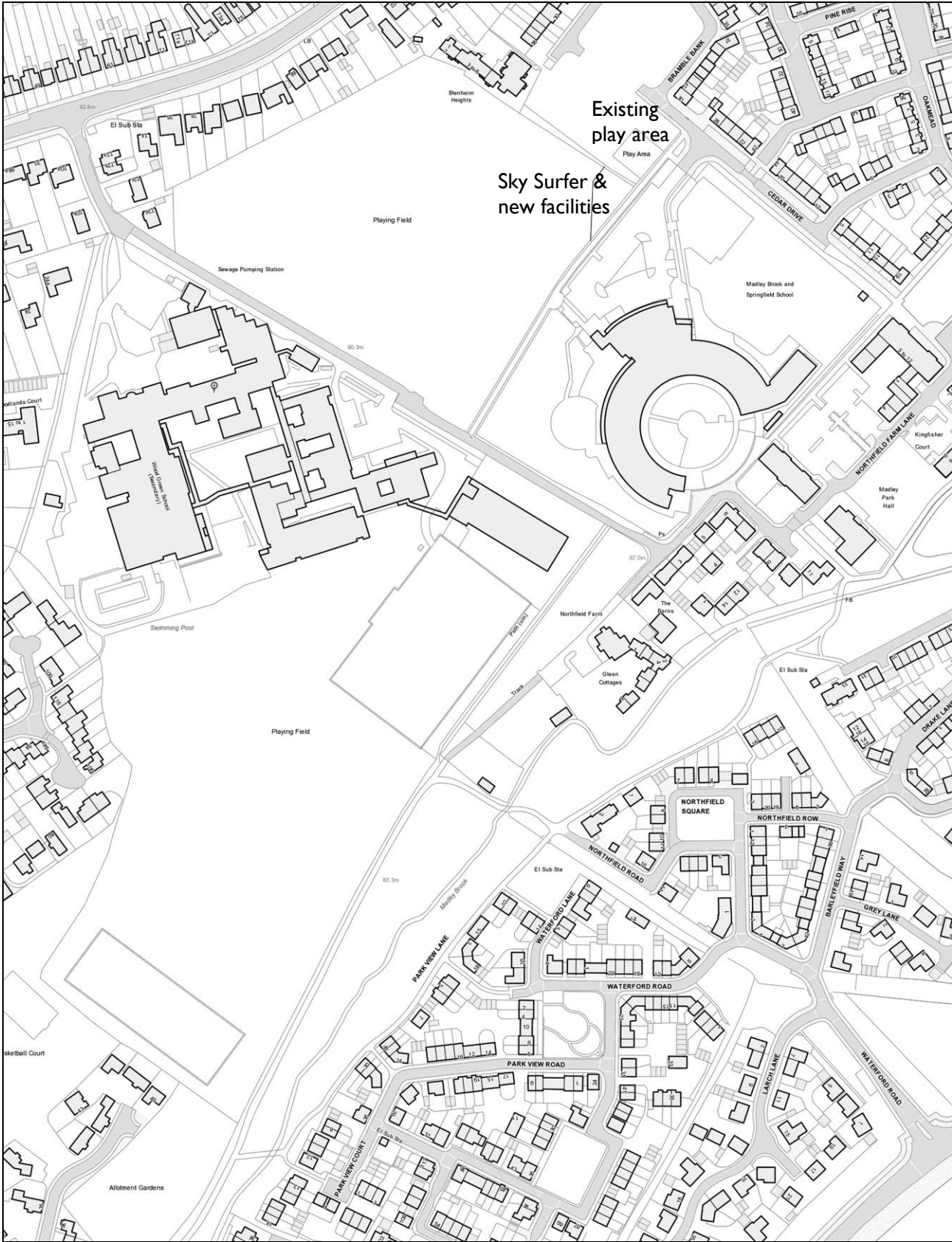
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Background Papers:

- Steering Group Meetings Minutes.
- WRWRA Formal Objection.
- Project manager and WRWRA Chairman Consultation reports.
- MPRA and WRWRA Summary of Discussion Points.

Location Plan



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