Meeting with Gala Close Residents 4th September 2020

Points Raised by Residents

The following questions (in italics) were raised by Gala Close/Norman Drive residents at the meeting at the Pavilion. Our replies to each question are also summarised – some are already available on the Council's website (www.stiltonparishcouncil.org) others will be added to the information on the website.

Will the trees be kept?

The Parish Council has no intention of removing any trees in preparing for the playground. We have recently commissioned an extensive tree survey for the village. We value our trees and only those trees or branches in a dangerous condition or causing obstruction are being removed. We all appreciate green spaces, although regularly mown recreational grassland is seldom of great biodiversity value. Even so, the playground will retain much of the existing grass and the Parish Council will be planting 20 oak trees in the coming months with the potential to vastly increase biodiversity in the village. Our green spaces strategy will also be seeking to improve biodiversity through adapting our green spaces to more biodiverse areas, e.g. wild flower beds and more trees.

Will it be properly looked after and have the PC considered the cost of future maintenance?

The Parish Council is, together with considering the costs of the playground, planning an annual budget to ensure its upkeep. In addition, on advice from both playground providers and others, we plan to have regular inspections of the play equipment so that any damage can be made good without delay.

Why not put it in the proposed new developments?

While development proposals might indicate plans to include play equipment, the Parish Council has little chance of influencing what might be installed or even if the original proposals are implemented. Remember, the outline planning applications were made by the owners of the land at the time but both developments have now been sold on and full planning applications have yet to be made. Whether these will include playground facilities is, as yet, unknown but we will not be in a position to insist on their inclusion, as it was not identified as a planning requirement when permission was granted.

Why not at the Pavilion?

The Council's document outlining the reasons for not choosing the Pavilion playing field site is available on our website (www. https://www.stiltonparishcouncil.org/news/new-playground-update). The Parish Council has looked in depth at safety issues and recommendations from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)[1], other

[1] The advice is given in RoSPA's website at https://www.rospa.com/Play-Safety/Advice/Design.aspx. The advice on siting is found on these pages. There is no specific report for Stilton but playground providers directed us to this advice for guidance for our decisions on siting. Other councils have also cited this advice from RoSPA in their own decision making and planning.

councils and playground providers. It has also drawn from its experience, and those of others, on the playing field site and has also noted some comments on the site made by villagers. It concluded that the site is not suitable for the under-12's playground but could be used for equipment for older children/adults.

Why not Mill Road or Meadow Close?

Ideally, the playground site should be near the centre of the village. Having excluded the Glebe from the short list, Gala Close is considered the next best area. Mill Road is much further from the centre and Meadow Close is also more distant.

Why not three smaller areas dotted around the village?

The area planned is not large and will have limited play facilities. There are not sufficient funds to provide equipment for three sites. Furthermore, the plan was to have one site for all ages up to 11 years so that parents/carers could take a range of ages to the same play facilities. In view of this, the play area at Barn Close (which is too small for the new playground) will become redundant after the new playground has opened. The Parish Council will then consider the best use of this space for the village.

Parking is an issue

Like so many roads in Stilton we recognise the issues with parking. However, the main reason for having a central location for the playground is to enable villagers to walk to the site. It is government policy to encourage walking and playground design advice emphasises the need for pedestrian accessibility.

Many vehicles come down and turn round – they drive too quickly (it was noted that there is no dead end sign at the entrance to Gala Close so vehicles may mistake the turning for Manor Road) so road safety is a concern

We note that the "no through" signs are only on the road name sign at the end of Gala Close. We shall take steps to have a proper no through sign installed together with playground warning signs. These should help improve the situation. If these fail further measures will be considered in consultation with residents.

Would it affect property value?

We do not believe that the small-scale playground development will affect property values. The area is already an amenity space with few controls available to the Council for managing the area. Better management in the future will enhance the amenity benefits of the surrounding houses.

It will disturb my peace

The noise from such a small-scale playground will not be great. We shall not install equipment that encourages noise such as zip-wires, speaking tubes or tunnels.

Older children will use it

The type of equipment installed will be of little interest to older children. Signage will also indicate that the equipment is for the use of children up to 12 years. The Skate Park has

recently been renovated so older children will have that as an alternative play area. Once plans for the under-12's playground (phase 1) are finalised we aim to engage with the older children and begin planning phase 2

Will it attract antisocial behaviour?

Whatever the future of our green spaces, there will always be risks of anti-social behaviour. However, by providing facilities for the young children we would hope to instil a sense of ownership and pride that can continue when these children become teenagers and adults. Playgrounds themselves are not the cause of anti-social behaviour. We might also consider the option of closing the playground late evenings and overnight to avoid anti-social behaviour and noise from older children.

Will it affect wildlife – in particular hedgehogs were mentioned

The type of fencing planned is designed to keep children in and large animals (e.g. dogs) out. Hedgehogs will have little difficulty crossing the play area (under the fencing) and there will be nothing that might trap or harm hedgehogs. Furthermore, the Parish Council is keen to promote wildlife so it plans to carry out further planting of shrubs and wild flowers in the green space.

Think it should have a high fence around it

The fencing used will be that advised for playgrounds. High fences are only advised where there is risk of injury to children from, for example, footballs from nearby football pitches.

Could it not be at the school if part if the land at the end of Cooperthornhill were to be used?

Following the suggestion to use school grounds for the play area, the Parish Council approached the school and had a lengthy discussion with the head teacher. While it was noted some schools, such as Elton, have play areas, which they share with their village out of school hours, these facilities are separate from the school buildings and its playgrounds. This is not the case in Stilton. Problems with security and insurance would prevent any shared use of play equipment on Stilton's school property.

Have the Parish Council considered whether or not the likes of ROSPA criteria would preclude the Pavilion from being used for Stage 2 of recreational development within the village?

The Parish Council has not taken any steps as yet to consider stage 2 of the recreational development

How will the PC control the number of children? Demographics suggest that there are 250 under 12's to cater for

It is highly unlikely that large numbers of children will use the playground at any one time (though it may attract larger numbers on its opening day). As for many other amenities, numbers tend to be self-regulating. They tend to be avoided if they become overcrowded.

Will there be any light pollution that will cause disturbance to resident

There are no plans at present to install additional lighting. This could be considered if local residents consider it useful but the type of lighting would be carefully chosen to ensure light "pollution" or nuisance was minimised.

Don't think additional parking should be provided, as it would encourage people to drive to the area

The Parish Council agrees. Users should be encouraged to travel to the playground on foot.

Some shift workers live around the area, how will it affect them?

We hope that there will be no effect on shift workers. As noted above, our intention is for the playground to create minimum noise disturbance.

When the project is in the detailed design stage will residents be consulted?

The Parish Council will continue to consult with residents at appropriate stages of the development so that we can benefit from local knowledge and input.

Have the PC considered the cost of purchasing or renting the site should they select Gala Close

The Parish Council is aware of the need to cost all aspects of the project and is currently assessing the various costs associated with using Gala Close before a final decision is made for the new playground location.

If you have further questions or would like clarification on any of the points, please email clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.org and we will do our best to provide an answer.

Parish Council meetings are always the 2nd Tuesday in the month and all residents are invited to these meetings to ask councillors questions directly. Agendas will be on the notice boards and website (www.stiltonparishcouncil.org) from the Thursday beforehand. Email the clerk and a log in will be sent to you so that you can take part in the public participation session.