Meeting with Apreece Way Residents 2nd 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.

If a playground is placed on the green there would be no green left

The green space would be retained, as the playground equipment will predominantly be installed on playground plastic matting that allows the grass to grow through. The Parish Council is keen to retain the green spaces throughout the village. 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.

Would not be able to relax in the summer with children playing outside the front rooms with (the windows open) – an invasion of their privacy

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. In addition, play equipment will be installed towards the centre of the area leaving a buffer zone to the north and south of the playground. This will also overcome any problems of "overlooking".

Those on shift work would be disturbed

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.

Petition has been raised by residents opposing it to which the Parish Council has not replied

We have acknowledged receipt of the petition and are taking it into account in our decision making.

There is a covenant on the land and if the PC put a play area on Apreece Way they could be in breach of the covenant

The covenant specifies "best endeavours" and the Parish Council will always seek to make best endeavours in all of its decisions. It was resolved at the September Extraordinary Parish Council meeting to fully cost Gala Close as the most viable location for the new playground. Should Gala Close be financially viable and, after considering all elements relating to building a new play area, the Parish Council resolves to be in favour of this location, the Parish Council will apply for planning permission to utilise that location. Should any of these decisions prevent Gala Close from becoming the chosen location, the Parish Council will re-consider other options.

Residents will take legal action if the PC put a play area on the green and cited case law that they believed put them in a very strong position

We would hope that we can avoid legal challenges that could result in ratepayers' funds being used in court fees. The Parish Council would prefer to negotiate and avoid confrontation.

Child safety was raised as a concern particularly for unsupervised children as there is road access to the front and pedestrian access to the rear

The Parish Council is particularly aware of child safety issues. It is following RoSPA's recommendation that playgrounds should be easily visible to ensure social safety.

Not fair to the residents to put the playground on the green

The area is already an amenity area for the village. That will not change. However, the under-12's play area will avoid some of the nuisances previously encountered as there will be no ball games and the play of older children will be avoided.

Why not put the playground 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 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 is there no playground on 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.

A playground would 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.

[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.

The electricity sub-station was a risk; children being children would see it as a challenge

The sub-station will be fenced off and separated from the playground. We believe the risks from the sub-station will be less if a playground is installed on the green.

There were lots of other good sites – Mill Road and particularly Gala Close as, in their opinion, better sites

We have looked at all possible sites in the village and Gala Close is indeed a possibility. It is important that the playground is located near the centre of the village to encourage pedestrian access. Mill Road and most other sites are too far from the centre of the village. 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.

Vehicles speed along Manor Road and this would be a safety hazard

Speeding of vehicles is a problem throughout the village. Traffic calming measures can be introduced to minimise any problems. For some time the Parish Council has been aware of some traffic hazards in the village. To get action data are essential. We need to measure speeds and volume of traffic. Speedwatch has done much to highlight the problems in some areas. The information collected has enabled us to make bids to Cambridgeshire County Council for speed calming measures.

In the coming months the mountings for vehicle activated speed signs will be set up in the village and we shall have a moveable speed registering sign; this will also record the numbers and speeds of vehicles passing, so we shall have more data. With regard to the playground, attention has been drawn to other problem areas. With the necessary data we shall be able to request more traffic calming. Playgrounds already attract additional signage and we shall work with Cambridgeshire Highways to make further improvements where they are needed.

There is very little parking available and people will drive

Parking is an issue in many parts of the village. A centrally located playground will encourage travel on foot in line. This has both environmental and health benefits. Research has demonstrated that people are prepared to walk short distances to amenities such as playgrounds.

Will resident only parking areas be provided?

Such provisions are made by the County Council and are outside the power of the Parish Council. We are aware that the County Council has considered disabled parking bays for some parts of the village.

How will emergency vehicle get access?

Emergency access will continue to be provided as at present. The playground will not limit the current access routes.

Green area would be lost (assumed areas under equipment would not be green) and why was the tree cut down

The green space will be retained as the playground equipment will predominantly be installed on playground plastic matting that allows the grass to grow through. The Parish Council is keen to retain the green spaces throughout the village. 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. The tree removed from the green was dead and was considered a risk to passers by.

The area is too small

The minimum area for a LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) is 400 square metres. This is easily accommodated on the green space at Apreece Way with room to spare.

The playground would be too close to the residents' houses

Buffer zones at the north and south boundaries of the playground will ensure that the activity zone is well away from the existing houses.

Why didn't you analyse all aspects of each of the sites under consideration before this consultation?

We spent a great deal of time looking at the possible sites in the village before narrowing down to a short list of three possibilities. We believe that the criteria used to arrive at the short list was appropriate and that it is more effective to consider the short-listed sites in more detail.

Why was Mikey Hamilton not invited onto the working group when he expressed an interest?

Mr Hamilton enquired about joining the Sub-committee that was established to produce the report of possible sites. It was explained that, although he could be a member of the sub-committee, as he had a pecuniary interest his input to the work of the sub-committee could be constrained. He could, however, attend sub-committee meetings as a member of the public and voice his views at appropriate times.

Many people are now working from home; a play area next to the home could be a distraction

As noted above, 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. For much of the daytime the playground will be little used.

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.