RESIDENTS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions (in italics) were raised by residents of Gala Close/Norman Drive (GC) and residents of Apreece Way (AW) at meetings with Parish Councillors at the Pavilion. Questions have been grouped for convenience and our replies summarized. These will be circulated to local residents in those areas and made available on the Parish Council's website (www.stiltonparishcouncil.org). Any further questions together with replies will be added to the information on the website as necessary.

GREEN SPACES: ***If a playground is placed on the green there would be no green left. (AW) Will the trees be kept? (GC) Green area would be lost (assumed areas under equipment would not be green) and why was the tree cut down? (AW)***

The Parish Council is keen to retain the green spaces throughout the village. The playground green space will be retained as the playground equipment will be installed predominantly on playground plastic matting that allows the grass to grow through. 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 mown 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 Parish Council has no intention of removing the trees in Gala Close 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. The tree at Apreece Way was removed because it was dead and was considered a risk to passersby.

WILDLIFE: ***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 spaces.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING: ***Vehicles speed along Manor Road and this would be a safety hazard. (AW) There is very little parking available and people will drive. (AW) Will "resident only" parking areas be provided? (AW) Parking is an issue (GC) 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. (GC) Don't think additional parking should be provided, as it would encourage people to drive to the area. (GC)***

Speeding of vehicles is a problem throughout the village. Traffic calming measures can be introduced to minimize any problems in Manor Road. Parking is also an issue in many parts of the village. A centrally located playground will encourage travel on foot; this has both environmental and human health benefits. Research has demonstrated that people are prepared to walk short distances to amenities such as playgrounds.

"Resident parking" provisions are made by the County Council and are outside the power of the Parish Council – we would need to make representation to the County Council with evidence of need. We are aware that the County Council has considered disabled parking bays for some parts of the village.

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.

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 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.

THE PAVILION PLAYING FIELD: ***Why not put the playground at The Pavilion? (AW) Why not at the Pavilion? (GC)***

A separate document is available which further considers this option (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.

NEW DEVELOPMENT SITES: ***Why is there no playground on the proposed new developments? (AW) Why not put it in the proposed new developments? (GC)***

[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.

While development proposals might indicate plans to include play equipment, the Parish Council has little chance of influencing what might eventually 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 SCHOOL SITE: ***Could it not be at the school if part if the land at the end of Cooper Thornhill 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.

OTHER SITES IN THE VILLAGE: ***There are lots of other good sites – Mill Road and particularly Gala Close which are, in their opinion, better sites.(AW) Why not Mill Road or Meadow Close? (GC)***

We have looked at all possible sites in the village and Gala Close is indeed a possibility. Having excluded the Glebe from the short list, Gala Close and Apreece Way were considered best options. 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.

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 utilize that location. Should any of these decisions prevent Gala Close from becoming the chosen location, the Parish Council will re-consider other options.

SMALLER SITES: ***The area is too small (AW) why not three smaller areas dotted around the village? (GC)***

The minimum area for a LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) is 400 square metres. This is easily accommodated on the green spaces at Apreece Way and Gala Close with room to spare. However, LEAP areas are not large and they have limited (4-6) play facilities. Regarding 3 sites, there are insufficient funds to provide equipment for these. Furthermore, the plan is to have one site for all ages up to 11 years so that parents/carers can take a range of ages of children to the same play facilities. In view of this, the play area at Barn Close (which is too small for a LEAP)

will become redundant after the new playground has opened. The Parish Council will then consider the best use of this space for the village.

FUTURE MAINTAINANCE: ***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.

PROPERTY VALUES, COVENANTS AND NUISANCE: ***Would it affect property value? (GC) 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. (AW) Residents will take legal action if the PC put a play area on the Apreece Way green and have cited case law that they believed put them in a very strong position. (AW) Not fair to the residents to put the playground on the green. (AW)***

We do not believe that the small-scale playground development will affect property values. The Apreece Way and Gala Close areas are already amenity spaces with few controls available to the Council for managing them and preventing nuisance. With a playground they will remain amenity areas but better management in the future will improve the amenity benefits for, and impacts on, the surrounding houses. 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. The covenant on Apreece Way specifies "best endeavours" and the Parish Council will always seek to make best endeavours in all of its decisions. We would hope that we can avoid legal challenges that could result in ratepayers' funds being unnecessarily used in court fees. The Parish Council would prefer to negotiate and avoid confrontation.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND OLDER CHILDREN: ***A playground would attract antisocial behavior (AW) Will it attract antisocial behavior? (GC) Older children will use it (GC)***

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 instill 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. 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. We might also consider the option of closing the playground late evenings and overnight to avoid anti-social behaviour and noise from older children

NOISE PROBLEMS: ***Those on shift work would be disturbed (AW) 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 (AW) Many people are now working from home, a play area next to the home could be a distraction. (AW) The playground would be too close to the residents' houses (AW) It will disturb my peace (GC) Some shift workers live around the area, how will it affect them? (GC)***

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 buffer zones (to the north and south in Apreece Way) around the activity zones with the play equipment. This will also overcome any problems of "overlooking" of local residences. We hope that there will be no effect on shift workers. Our intention is for the playground to create minimum noise disturbance.

CHILD SAFETY: ***Child safety was raised as a concern particularly for unsupervised children - as for Apreece Way there is road access to the front and pedestrian access to the rear (AW)***

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.

OTHER SAFETY ISSUES: ***How will emergency vehicle get access? (AW) The electricity sub-station is a risk; children being children would see it as a challenge. (AW)***

Emergency access will continue to be provided as at present. The playground will not limit the current access routes. The Apreece Way sub-station will be fenced off and quite separate from the playground. We believe the risks from the sub-station will be less if a playground is installed on the green.

LIGHT POLLUTION: ***Will there be any light pollution that will cause disturbance to residents? (GC)***

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 minimized.

CONTROLLING NUMBERS: ***How will the PC control the number of children? Demographics suggest that there are 250 under 12's to cater for (GC)***

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 with many other amenities, numbers tend to be self-regulating. Users avoid them if they become overcrowded.

PHASE 2 (OVER 12'S PLAY AREA) ISSUES: ***Has 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.

FUTURE DESIGN: ***Think it should have a high fence around it. (GC) Have the PC considered the cost of purchasing or renting the site should they select Gala Close? (GC) When the project is in the detailed design stage will residents be consulted? (GC)***

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. The Parish Council is well aware of the need to cost all aspects of the project and is currently assessing the various costs associated with using Gala Close. The Parish Council will continue to consult with residents at appropriate stages of the development so that we can all benefit from local knowledge and input.

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.