**LEISURE, WELLBEING AND HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**29 JUNE 2016**

**PART I – DELEGATED**

**7. CHORLEYWOOD PLAY AREA**

 (DCES)

1. **Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Chorleywood play area project, including recommendations from Chorleywood Parish Council. The report subsequently provides Members with recommendations on proceeding with the project, including any additional considerations.

2. **Details**

 **Background**

2.1 As part of the PPG17 Strategic gap analysis for play facilities, it was identified that there was a lack of high quality play area provision in the area of Chorleywood. As a result, officers included the proposals for a new play area in Chorleywood as part of the play area capital programme. Subsequently the capital budget was approved for this for the financial year 2013/14 and has since been rephased to 2016/17.

2.2 In 2011 Chorleywood Parish Council established a task and finish group to look at potential locations for a new play space in the Chorleywood area. The Advisory Committee assessed all areas, owned by both Three Rivers District Council and Chorleywood Parish Council. This includes the Swillet play area, Chorleywood House Estate and Chorleywood Common.

2.3 The Advisory committee assessed the pros and cons of all of the sites. This included input from local community safety officers, Members of the committee themselves and existing consultation with the local community.

2.4 Based on the report and the PPG17 Strategic gap analysis, officers pursued the Common as a location for the play space and liaised directly with the Parish Council and other key partners as part of the process. Formal consultation took place with the local community in terms of proposals and locations.

2.5 Following on from this, at the 21 November 2012 Leisure and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Members agreed to formally request permission from Chorleywood Parish Council to install the proposed play space on Chorleywood Common. This recommendation was based upon the consultation results:

* A total of 1,103 Chorleywood residents completed the survey, which is a 25% response rate for Chorleywood households.
* 91% of respondents lived within the Chorleywood parish (within WD3 5 and 4 postcodes), with 8% from other WD3 (1, 3, 7 & 8) postcodes and 1% from other areas.
* 34% of residents selected Chorleywood House Estate as the preferred location for the play area; 61% selected Chorleywood Common and 5% selected ‘other’ (this mainly included the Swillet play area)
* There were a number of additional comments in relation to the location question. However a number of the comments highlighted that it should be near to the village centre and cafes, that the Swillet should be improved/upgraded or that a play area was not needed in Chorleywood.
* Residents also had the opportunity to record any additional comments about the proposed play area.

2.6 Officers then formed a focus group in partnership with Chorleywood Parish Council and other key stakeholders to move the project forward on Chorleywood Common. This included a proposed site on the Common (known as site 13) and the development of a specification with key criteria, such as no fencing for the procurement phase. Designs were procured and then assessed with the focus group and a final design selected.

2.7 Chorleywood Parish Council rejected the placement of a play area on Chorleywood Common at their Full Council meeting on the 1 October 2013, preferring the play area to be sited at Chorleywood House Estate.

2.8 Three Rivers District Council had previously rejected Chorleywood House Estate as it was deemed less viable due to the consultation results and the inaccessibility of Chorleywood House Estate by the local community other than by car, which would lessen the play and wellbeing benefits to the local community.

2.9 At Chorleywood Parish Council’s Full Council meeting on Tuesday 14October 2014, Parish Councillors agreed to relook at play space provision in Chorleywood.

2.10 On the 28 October 2014, the Parish Council decided to set up a working party to report back to the Parish Council’s Full Council meeting in April 2016 with their preferred location, based on a number of assessment criteria.

2.11 The report to the 21 November 2012 Leisure and Community Safety Policy and Scrutiny Committee also detailed a number of factors to take into consideration if the play space were to be installed on Chorleywood Common. These include:

1. Chorleywood Parish Council is the land owner of the Common. Therefore Three Rivers District Council would require permission to install a play space on the Common.
2. Common land is subject to a number of planning regulations and as such any planning request would have to be submitted via the Planning Inspectorate and require approval of the Secretary of State – there are long timescales (approx 6 months) associated with this process.
3. The planning regulations could limit what can be installed on the Common in terms of play structures and safety surfacing.
4. Consultation results highlight the desire for more traditional items of play equipment, including swings, slides and roundabouts – the planning regulations may limit these items and consideration will need to be given to community expectations.
5. If the planning inspectorate deems there to be enough opposition to the proposal or involve complex issues, then a public inquiry will need to be implemented. The public inquiry will include representation from both the applicant and any opposition and will typically last between 1 – 2 days. A public inquiry will have financial implications for the Council.
6. There would be a number of partners who would need to be consulted as part of the planning process, including Natural England and anyone who has a legal right over access to the common (e.g. the Commoners).

**Chorleywood Parish Council recommendation**

2.12 The Parish Council working party identified four potential locations for the play area: Chorleywood House Estate, Grove Wood and 2 sites on Chorleywood Common.

2.13 Leisure officers were asked to consult on these 4 sites and to provide a response to the following brief:

To assess the relative merits of each site in relation to their suitability for a formal play space. This should be achieved by employing the following approach:

* To itemise the positive factors of each site
* To itemise the disadvantages for each site
* Where possible, to quantify the relative increase in risk for each disadvantage compared with the normal, e.g. potential for anti-social behaviour on this site compared to other play spaces.
* To suggest, for each site, how these disadvantages could be minimised or removed.
* To note any other relevant matters from the experience with other play spaces in TRDC.
* To consult with TRDC planning department where appropriate.

2.14 Officer responses are detailed within Appendix B.

2.15 Other professional views were sought from the Police and the Countryside Management Service.

2.16 The working party then assessed each location using the following criteria:

* Accessibility for users: proximity to main area of population, access to the site for pushchairs/disabled, parking for users, pedestrian access
* Safety and security: proximity to traffic, safety from and for horses walking near the site, overhanging branches (potential for danger from falling branches), anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, natural surveillance
* Environmental Factors: impact on flora, impact on fauna, impact on trees, impact on residents, loss of amenity, natural features/special environmental factors
* Planning and Legal

2.17 Chorleywood Parish Council met on the 26 April 2016 to discuss the proposal and have recommended rejecting Chorleywood Common as the site of a play area and have advised that Chorleywood House Estate is their preferred location. A copy of the email received by officers from the Parish Clerk for Chorleywood Parish Council advising of the decision of the Parish Council working group is attached in Appendix A.

 **Issues/recommendations**

2.18 Based on the scoring system detailed within the Parish Council’s report, there are a number of items to consider:

* The report highlights that Three Rivers District Council has seen a decrease in anti-social behaviour based on upgrading play areas. It is worth noting that the decrease also directly relates to ensuring the best location, which provides ample natural surveillance. Confidence levels are low in recommending that this decrease would occur at Chorleywood House Estate.
* The new crossing on the busy A404 will be beneficial, but will not support those wishing to walk to Chorleywood House Estate from the main village as there is no pedestrian access, other than across the Common. This therefore suggests that people will not walk to the site, but will instead drive. In addition, if they are passing through the common already, then the siting would be better placed on the common itself.
* It is also worth noting that the criteria and scoring system used do not take into consideration where the public’s preference is, or in fact that of the children who will be using it. This is key to ensuring a successful play area and a good return on investment to the Council.
* The report highlights the concern that fencing cannot be used on the common, but recent correspondence with the Planning Inspectorate has confirmed that this may not be an issue for a play area:

 *“I don’t see anything that suggests an application for a play area surrounded by fencing would automatically fail. In fact, this is a common type of application and they are often successful. I do not see how the scheme prohibits fencing. If the common is indeed the most appropriate place for a play area, I would recommend an application be made under Section 38 of the Commons Act 2006.”*

* The siting at Chorleywood House Estate does not serve the main village of Chorleywood and many residents wishing to use it would drive and want to park in an already congested location with limited parking facilities.
* A report dated the 26 April 2016 from Keith Dalton – Managing Director of The Play Inspection Company highlighted the sensitivities of the site at Chorleywood House Estate, which is in close proximity to the cemetery. Some members of the local community may find a playground being so close as offensive and disrespectful.

2.19 If Three Rivers District Council rejects the proposal to install a play area on Chorleywood House Estate and instead wishes to propose moving ahead with the siting on the Common, there are a number of issues to be aware of as detailed at 2.11.

2.20 In addition, it is worth noting that Environmental surveys have already been completed at the proposed site on Chorleywood Common and any further surveys will have resource implications.

3. **Options/Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Chorleywood play area project, including recommendations from Chorleywood Parish Council. The report subsequently provides Members with recommendations on proceeding with the project, including any additional considerations.

3.2 It is officers’ recommendation that the siting of the play area on Chorleywood House Estate is rejected due to the reasons laid out in this report.

3.3 Officers recommend that Members consider between two options.

 Option 1: To formally apply for planning permission to site a new play area on Chorleywood Common. Officers preferred siting for the play area is Site 15 and secondly Site 13 (please see appendix C for site locations). It is noted that Site 13 has been the main location previously focused on when the play area for Chorleywood has been discussed. Officers understand this is due to Site 15 being advised as having chalk and acid grasslands. Officers would advise that if Site 15 is the agreed location a report to ascertain the exact type of grassland and implications of siting a play area here would need to be undertaken. It must be noted that, if planning approval was obtained, the permission of the Parish Council to provide a play area on the common is still required.

 Option 2: That Three Rivers District Council agrees to use some of the monies re-phased for Chorleywood play area to 2016/2017 on refurbishing The Swillet play area. Although this does not replace the need for an additional provision in Chorleywood it would allow officers to upgrade a play area in need of refurbishment.

4. **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council’s agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is entitled:

**Community Strategy 2012-2018:**Priority 1: Children and Young People’s Wellbeing

Priority 2: Health and Wellbeing

Priority 3: Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

**TRDC Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018**

1.1.1 Reduce anti-social behaviour and crime

1.3 We will reduce health inequalities, promote healthy lifestyles, support learning and community organisations

 1.3.2 Contribute to partnership working to reduce health inequalities

 1.3.3 Provide a range of supervised leisure activities and facilities for young people.

2.1.1 Maintain the number of accredited open spaces, parks and woodland areas: - Satisfaction with quality/provision of parks and open spaces

 4.1.2 We will strive to improve and monitor customer satisfaction

 4.1.3 We will inform and update customers about the Council’s work and services.

 4.2.1 We will manage our financial resources to deliver value for money

4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators:

1.1.1 Reduce anti-social behaviour and crime

* CP14 – No. of ASB incidents (reported to the Police)

 1.3.3 Provide a range of supervised leisure activities and facilities for young people.

* LL33 – Attendances by young people at leisure venues and activities.
* LL30 – Vulnerable children's satisfaction with leisure projects

2.1.1 Maintain the number of accredited open spaces, parks and woodland areas: - Satisfaction with quality/provision of parks and open spaces

* LL34 – To maintain accreditation for Green Flag

 4.1.2 We will strive to improve and monitor customer satisfaction

* CP05 – Perception of Satisfaction with Three Rivers District Council

 4.1.3 We will inform and update customers about the Council’s work and services.

* CO02 – Public perception of how well informed they feel about public services

4.2.1 We will manage our financial resources to deliver value for money

* CP46 – The perception of value for money from Three Rivers District Council

4.3 The impact of the recommendations on these performance indicators is that they will support the Council in achieving these targets.

**Leisure and Community Services Service Plan 2015 – 2018**

5. **Financial Implications**

5.1The financial breakdown details the agreed capital (including internal fees) and revenue budgets for 2016/17 and the proposed capital and revenue budgets for subsequent years until 2018/19. The project budgets for these schemes are included in the Leisure Services Plan for 2016/17.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Capital** | 2016/17£ | 2017/18£ | 2018/19£ | Future Years£ |
| **Expenditure** |  |  |  |  |
| Chorleywood new play areaImproving Future Schemes | 102,320200,000 | 0100,000 | 0100,000 | 0100,000 |
| **Net Commitment** | **302,320** | **100,000** | **100,000** | **100,000** |

5.2 The following table shows the agreed revenue budget provision that currently exists against each Play Area in the medium term financial plan.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Revenue** | 2016/17£ | 2017/18£ | 2018/19£ | Future Years£ |
| **Expenditure** |  |  |  |  |
| Chorleywood new play area | 0 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 |
| **Net Commitment** | **0** | **1,500** | **1,500** | **1,500** |

6. **Legal Implications**

6.1 All proposed works will be tendered within the Council’s constitution and procurement procedures.

6.2 If Members decide to pursue a play area on Chorleywood Common they will need to be aware that even though the Parish Council is owner of the Common and assuming it agrees to the works proposed, it remains necessary, under S.38 of the Commons Act 2006, to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State (SOS) to carry out the works proposed. In granting consent, SOS must have regard to the interests of anyone having rights over the land, the interests of the neighbourhood and the public interest. This latter includes nature conservation, conservation of the landscape and the protection of access to the land concerned. There appears to be a good case for the obtaining of SOS consent.

6.3 An agreement will need to be made between Three Rivers District Council and Chorleywood Parish Council, relating to the on-going management and maintenance of the play area, if sited on Chorleywood Common.

7. **Equal Opportunities Implications**

7.1 **Relevance Test**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? | Yes |
| Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? | No  |

7.2 Play facilities are open access and free to the public to use. Local residents will be consulted as part of the upgrading and refurbishing play area programme, including those with a disability. Access to play areas has been considered as part of the assessment of sites.

8. **Staffing Implications**

8.1 The small leisure facilities capital programme will require the time of the Acting Leisure Development Manager, Active Communities Officer and an external Project Manager to oversee project management, consultation, negotiations and installation of the new facilities.

9. **Environmental Implications**

9.1 The installation of a new play area in Chorleywood will increase the quality of provision of community facilities in the public open spaces, serving the community of Chorleywood.

9.2 The new facilities will aim to make use of natural materials as well as recycled materials. The designs will be sustainable and will include sustainable features where possible. The users of the children’s play area will be encouraged to appreciate the natural surroundings as part of the play experience.

9.3 Regardless of the final site for the play area, planning approval will be required.

10. **Community Safety Implications**

10.1 The local Police Community Safety Officers, Crime Prevention Liaison Officer and the Grounds Maintenance team will be consulted on the final design options. In addition, should the siting be agreed for Chorleywood Common, Chorleywood Parish Council will also be consulted.

10.2 The installation of a new play area will provide the opportunity for children and young people to take part in positive activities.

11. **Public Health Implications**

11.1 Providing free and accessible play facilities will encourage children and young people to be physically active, and will support the achievement of the Council's Physical Activity Strategy. It will also providing a point for families to meet and socialise, supporting mental wellbeing and the priorities of the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

12. **Customer Services Centre Implications and Communications and** **Website Implications**

12.1 None Specific

13. **Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

13.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at http://www.threerivers.gov.uk. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council’s duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

13.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Leisure and Environmental service plans*.* Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within these plans.

13.3 The following table gives the risks if the recommendation(s) are agreed, together with a scored assessment of their impact and likelihood:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description of Risk | Impact | Likelihood |
| 1 | Chorleywood Parish Council does not allow the installation of a children’s play space on the Common. | III | A |
| 2 | The installation of a children’s play space on the Common results in a lengthy public inquiry. | III | B |
| 3 | Accidents and injuries to children and young people and adults | III | E |
| 4 | Incidents of vandalism | II | C |
| 5 | Incidents of graffiti | II | D |

13.4 The following table gives the risks that would exist if the recommendation is rejected, together with a scored assessment of their impact and likelihood:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description of Risk | Impact | Likelihood |
| 6 | The west of Chorleywood Ward remains inadequately provided with a children’s play area as identified in the PPG17 strategic planning documentation.  | III | A |
| 7 | Poor satisfaction by the 61% of the Chorleywood community who voted to install a play area in Chorleywood on the Common. | III | B |
| 8 | If installed on Chorleywood House Grounds Estate, the concerns and issues as identified within the report and supporting documentation may be realised | III | B |

13.5 Of the risks above the following are already included in service plans:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Description of Risk | Service Plan |
| No | 3, 7 & 8 | Leisure and Community Services |
|  | 4 & 5 | Environmental Protection |
|  | 6 | Development Management |
|  | 1 & 2 | To be included in the Leisure and Community Service plan |

13.6 The above risks are plotted on the matrix below depending on the scored assessments of impact and likelihood, detailed definitions of which are included in the risk management strategy. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood are plotted in the shaded area of the matrix. The remaining risks require a treatment plan.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Likelihood** | A |  |  | 1,6 |  |  | Impact | Likelihood |
| B |  |  | 27,8 |  |  | V = Catastrophic | A = >98% |
| C |  | 4 |  |  |  | IV = Critical | B = 75% - 97% |
| D |  | 5 |  |  |  | III = Significant | C = 50% - 74% |
| E |  |  | 3 |  |  | II = Marginal | D = 25% - 49% |
| F |  |  |  |  |  | I = Negligible | E = 3% - 24% |
|  | I | II | III | IV | V |  | F = <2% |
| **Impact** |  |  |

13.7 In the officers’ opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of treatment plans are reviewed by the Audit Committee annually

14. **Recommendation**

 The Leisure, Wellbeing and Health Committee agrees:

14.1 That Three Rivers District Council formally rejects the siting of the play area on Chorleywood House Estate due to the reasons advised in this report and previously advised to Committee.

14.2 Officers recommend that Members consider two options.

 Option 1: To formally apply for planning permission to site a new play area on Chorleywood Common. Officers’ preferred siting for the play area is Site 15 and secondly Site 13.

 Option 2: That Three Rivers District Council agrees to use some of the monies re-phased for Chorleywood play area to 2016/2017 on refurbishing The Swillet play area.

 Report prepared by: Kelly Barnard, Acting Leisure Development Manager

 **Data Quality**

Data sources: None

 **Background Papers**

 Three Rivers District Council Committee Reports:

* November 2009 – Play Area Capital Programme 2010-2013
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-3-november-2009>
* May 2012 – Play Area Capital Programme Update
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-30-may-2012>
* November 2012 – Chorleywood Play Space Consultation Results
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-21-november-2012-revised>
* March 2013 – Leisure Development Work Programme Update Report
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-13-march-2013>
* July 2013 – Play Area Capital Programme Consultation Results and Update Report
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-17-july-2013>
* September 2013 – 2014-2018 Play Area Capital Programme Update
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-and-community-safety-policy-and-scrutiny-committee-18-september-2013>
* November 2014 – Play Area Capital Programme Update
	+ <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/meeting/leisure-wellbeing-and-health-committee-19-november-2014>

 Chorleywood Parish Council Committee Reports:

* Play Area Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/minutes-play-area-advisory-group.html>
* Chorleywood PC Open Spaces Extra Ordinary Meeting – February 2012
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Minutes-2012-02-21-Extra-Ordinary.pdf>
* Chorleywood PC Open Spaces Meeting – January 2013
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/CWPC-Open-Spaces-Minutes-2013-01-15.pdf>
* Chorleywood PC Full Council meeting – April 2013
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/CWPC-Full-Council-Minutes-2013-04-16.pdf>
* Chorleywood PC Full Council meeting – October 2013
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/minutes/CWPC-Full-Council-Minutes-2013-10-01.pdf>
* Chorleywood PC Full Council meeting – October 2014
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/minutes/CWPC-Full-Council-Minutes-2014-10-14.pdf>
* Chorleywood PC Full Council Extra Ordinary meeting – October 2014
	+ <http://www.chorleywood-pc.gov.uk/pdf/minutes/CWPC-Full-Council-Minutes-2014-10-28-extra-ordinary.pdf>

 **APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A - Email from the Parish Clerk for Chorleywood Parish Council to advise the decision of the Parish Council working group meeting of 26 April 2016

Appendix B - Officer responses

Appendix C – Map showing Sites 13 and Sites 15 on Chorleywood Common, Chorleywood House Estate and The Swillet play area

**Appendix A - Email from the Parish Clerk for Chorleywood Parish Council to advise the decision of the Parish Council working group meeting of 26 April 2016**

 Dear Chris and Geoff

You will no doubt have heard the decision of the Parish Council taken at the Extra Ordinary Meeting held on 26th April 2016, however I have been asked to provide a little background information with regard to the decision made.

As you are aware the Parish Council commissioned a working group (PAAC) to look at all suitable sites within Chorleywood. Initially four sites were shortlisted with Grovewood being rejected at an early stage. This left two sites on the Common and one for Chorleywood House estate.

The PAAC group put forward as a recommendation to the Parish Council Site 13 on Chorleywood Common and Chorleywood House Estate. Officer investigation with additional reports from RoSPA and Graham Bellamy and Linda Carol (who specialises in play spaces and access for disabled users) identified that perhaps neither site was suitable but offered viable alternative positions for a Play Space within the Chorleywood House grounds, which would have reduced H&S implications, environmental and access implications and would be outside the Common Conservation Area, therefore reducing the Planning implications.

The Parish Council received the report from Keith Dalton (Play Inspection Company) on the afternoon of the meeting concurring that both Area 13 on the Common and Chorleywood House Estate were inappropriate sites to place a play area however felt that Area 15 on the Common would be an ideal position. The Parish Council assumes that this site inspection was taken in isolation and the commissioned reports were not taken into account. (Copies of all these reports are available on the Parish Council website.)

This recommendation from TRDC was then put forward by the Chairman of the PAAC as the preferred site for a play space which of course discussed at length at the Extra Ordinary Meeting.

Site 15 is a mosaic of unimproved grassland, unimproved neutral grassland and acid grassland and is covered by at least six environmental and planning constraints including S41 NERC Act Habitat. In short to place play area on this site (assuming planning permission and S38 applications were approved) would require translocation of the grassland. This would entail finding a host site, and preparing this site to the approval of Natural England, before translocation could take place. This can take years. The Cricket Club back in 2009 tried to carry out a similar exercise and were quoted a fee of £120,000 to carry out this very specialist work which proved cost and time prohibitive for them.

The Parish Ranger advised members of the process together with the cost and time limitations, and whilst some members considered this information to be ‘project fear’ there was concern that constraints on this site could lead to further delay and cost with no guarantee of eventual success.

The Parish Council therefore voted to reject a play area on Chorleywood Common.

It must be remembered that two different groups have now looked at Chorleywood Common as a suitable site for a play space. The Parish Council is fully supportive of the initiative and welcome the idea of additional play facilities for the increasing population of children and young families.

The Parish Council fully understand the need for good social return on investment, however Scotsbridge Play Space was mentioned at the meeting as an area which was put in primarily for the residents of Croxley Dickenson Ward. This is located 15 – 20 minutes’ walk away from the main centre of population, with a walk across a main road and a steep hill to contend with but TRDC fully admit that this play space works and is used. Scotsbridge has an area of open space surrounding the play space and tennis courts which give alternative forms of leisure for older children. This is not dissimilar from Chorleywood House Estate.

It is noted that concern was expressed about the proximity of a play space to the Cemetery, which would indeed need careful consideration and consultation, however the cemetery is close to the tennis courts and the grounds are used for football training etc.

It should be mentioned that many children visit the cemetery to visit siblings, parents and grandparents and a play space on the Estate could act as a happy distraction.

Friends of Chorleywood House Estate have no objections to a play space being put on the site, and therefore

The Parish Council voted to Respectfully ask TRDC to consider a play area in Chorleywood House grounds taking into account the additional information from RoSPA, ecological report and Linda Carol.

Having taken this difficult decision the Parish Council, with the use of CIL money gave agreed to make the Nature Trail on Chorleywood Common a priority within the Four Year Vision, which we hope will provide an environment for informal enjoyment and excise.

As you can imagine the Parish Council Officers and Members together with local interested parties have invested a great deal of time in the past two years and collected a great deal of information most of which is on the Parish Council website, however if we can be of further assistance during the future process please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yvonne Merritt

Clerk of the Council

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**Appendix B – Officer Responses**

Chorleywood Play Space Project

Three Rivers District Council’s Leisure Officer Site Assessment

The brief has been set as follows:

To assess the relative merits of each site in relation to their suitability for a formal play space. This should be achieved by employing the following approach:

• To itemise the positive factors of each site

• To itemise the disadvantages for each site

• Where possible, to quantify the relative increase in risk for each disadvantage compared with the normal, e.g. potential for anti-social behaviour on this site compared to other play spaces.

• To suggest, for each site, how these disadvantages could be minimised or removed.

• To note any other relevant matters from your experience of other play spaces in TRDC.

• To consult with TRDC planning department where appropriate.

The 4 locations to be considered are:

1. Site 13 on Chorleywood Common

2. Site 15 on Chorleywood Common

3. Grovewood

4. Site 1 on Chorleywood House Estate

Introduction

What is play?

“Children play in many different ways according to their own interests and abilities, and enjoy different forms of play at different times and places. Approximately 15 different play types have been identified, all of which are of importance to children’s enjoyment and day-to-day experience.” (Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces).

According to the Design for Play guidance, there are 10 broad principles, which should be considered when creating inspiring play spaces for children and young people to play.

These 10 principles are:

1. are ‘bespoke’ – they should be individual to the local and to the community they serve. They should fit and enhance their environment and where possible, utilise existing natural features.

2. are well located – successful play spaces are located carefully to be where children would play naturally and away from dangerous roads, noise and pollution. Whilst children often enjoy feeling as if they are away from adult oversight, there is a fine balance between a space that is pleasantly secluded and one that is remote and hidden away.

3. make use of natural elements – children benefit from access to natural environments – making it a more attractive and playable setting for equipment.

4. provide a wide range of play experiences – play spaces should be suitable for all ages and different interests and can be used in different ways for all – including children and their parents/carers.

5. are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children – children with different abilities can play together as well as the ability to gain access to the site itself. It is important to recognise that there are many different types of disability or special need – not just physical.

6. meet community needs – successful community engagement is needed in order for it to be well used.

7. allow children of different ages to play together – avoid segregation; equipment and features should be able to be used by all age groups.

8. build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge – children need to take risks to learn how to manage risks.

9. are sustainable and appropriately maintained – good play spaces are designed and constructed using recycled or sustainably sourced materials.

10. allow for change and evolution – play spaces benefit from a process of ongoing change and refurbishment.

Three Rivers District Council utilises these principles when identifying suitable locations for new play spaces and / or refurbishing and upgrading existing ones. For the purpose of the request by Chorleywood Parish Council, which relates to location, only items 1-5 and item 10 will only be considered.

In addition to the above, the following is also used when assessing locations for play spaces:

Checklist for assessing locations for play spaces

1. Accessibility: how accessible is the site for people with physical and or learning disabilities as well as for parents with pushchairs and prams? In addition children and young people being able to access the site independently.

2. Natural surveillance: is there ample opportunity for natural surveillance either from people naturally passing by, or from residential properties or from car parks or main roads? How accessible is it for the local police to pass by and monitor activity?

3. Proximity to residential areas: this can be twofold – 1) in terms of noise nuisance for residents and 2) ensuring the play space is not too isolated

4. Parking - including disabled parking bays: proximity to parking (whether it be free or paid) and ideally must include at least one disabled parking bay

5. Ground conditions: this includes – 1) accessibility for construction vehicles, 2) installation of equipment and foundations and 3) ground levels i.e. will any excavation be required to level the ground

6. Natural features: are there any natural features that will need to be removed or that will provide further enhancement to the site?

Location 13 – Chorleywood Common

Positive factors

• Natural surveillance – this is from users of the Common and from cars passing by (although not as much as at site 15).

• Children would naturally play on the Common, therefore the addition of a play space would enhance the opportunity for play.

• Natural environment – access to the natural environment and wildlife species / habitats – previous designs at this site, incorporated the woodland area in order to enhance the play experience.

• Informal car park located close by

• Accessible from the main village area and from across the Common, which means that a higher density of the population of the Parish of Chorleywood would be able to access the site (see attached mapping).

• Would encourage more users to access and take enjoyment from the Common

• Part of existing leisure facilities / users on the Common, including golf and horse riding.

• This site has been extensively resourced and investigated previously – both from an environmental perspective and from a design perspective.

• Previous residential consultation highlighted that it was the preferred option for the local community (61% selected the Common) due to its proximity to the village and accessibility.

• People are more likely to walk to the proposed site, which assists with other key objectives of Three Rivers District Council, such as increasing levels of physical activity and reducing levels of obesity.

• Already identified and established suitable location and access for construction works.

• Potential of removing trees/woodland from the Common (which is an undesirable habitat in this location), some of which could be replaced with grassland habitat (which is desired on the Common).

Disadvantages

• Land is subject to the Commons Act 2006 – therefore additional planning applications would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State Planning Inspectorate.

• Land owned by Chorleywood Parish Council so would require their agreement.

• Fencing would not be included

• Dog walking area

• Pedestrian access from the village would mainly be via the Shepherd’s Bridge, which currently does not have enough width to cater for pedestrians and vehicles crossing.

• The informal car parking area is of a small capacity, currently used to over-capacity by the existing Common users at various times throughout the year

• Certain items of traditional play equipment, such as swings and slides would need to be aesthetically included into the overall design.

• Protected species site and a designated County wildlife site.

• A major part of the play area site is not subject to effective surveillance from the road or car parking area, and none of it is subject to any meaningful surveillance from any residences in the locality.

Risks associated with the disadvantages along with possible solutions

Planning Inspectorate

• Additional time and resource would need to be accounted for with regards to the additional planning application to the Planning Inspectorate. In addition, there is the potential for a Public Inquiry, which again would incur additional time and resource. These would be included as part of the project delivery plan and costs included as part of the overall project cost to Three Rivers District Council.

Chorleywood Parish Council - landowner

• Imperative that TRDC work in partnership with Chorleywood Parish Council on development of designs and on agreement of final location.

Fencing and Dog Walking

• “Fenced boundaries around play spaces tend to make them feel segregated from their surroundings and there is a growing view that the presence of fencing can discourage some children from using the play space….On the other hand, although there is no legal requirement or recommendation for industry standards, a barrier may sometimes be desirable. Planting a hedge, creating a change in level, siting the whole space in a shallow hollow in the ground….” (Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces).

• Previous designs for this site included siting the play space within the woodland area to the left of the clearing and creating natural bunding to the entrance of the clearing (the Parish Council confirmed they could do a seed harvest, which could then be used for the grass for the bunds). These natural boundaries would be used to discourage dogs and to prevent small children from leaving the play space.

• In addition, dog tethering posts and signs were also included in the previous designs, which again add to the overall discouragement of dogs using the site.

• Fencing has not been included in 2 play spaces in Three Rivers District and there have not been any reported problems. These are at Leavesden Country Park and South Oxhey playing fields.

Pedestrian Access from the Village / lack of car parking

• Officers previously identified this as an issue and therefore worked to produce safe walking routes from the village to the site (attached). Pedestrians would be encouraged to use the cattle creep in order to travel underneath the railway line and then up to the site.

• In addition, road safety signage would be erected in close proximity to Shepherds Bridge, warning of children being in the vicinity.

Traditional items of equipment

• Community expectations would need to be addressed that not all elements of play equipment could be included due to the nature of the setting.

• Previous designs have been developed to be sensitive to the aesthetics of the natural surroundings and this would need to be included in any future developments of designs.

Protected species and wildlife site

• Any work would need to have a full environmental impact survey carried out – this would have resource implications.

Lack of effective surveillance

• Due to this lack of natural surveillance and slightly hidden location, there is the potential for ASB and the police would need to routinely check the site.

Planning Considerations

• Wildlife site and LNR

• On greenbelt land

• Application to the Planning Inspectorate Required

Location 15 – Chorleywood Common

Positive factors

• Natural surveillance from residences in the locality, users of the Common, station car park and Shepherd’s public house, and, from cars passing by.

• High visibility due to exposed nature of the site.

• Children would naturally play on the Common, therefore the addition of a play space would enhance the opportunity for play.

• Located next to the Station Car Park

• Accessible from the main village area and from across the Common, which means that a higher density of the population of the Parish of Chorleywood would be able to access the site (see attached mapping).

• Would not need to cross the railway line in order to access the site.

• Would encourage more users to access and take enjoyment from the Common

• Previous residential consultation highlighted that it was the preferred option for the local community (61% selected the Common) due to its proximity to the village and accessibility.

• People are more likely to walk to the proposed site, which assists with other key objectives of Three Rivers District Council, such as increasing levels of physical activity and reducing levels of obesity.

• Compound for construction would be located on site.

Disadvantages

• Land is subject to the Commons Act 2006 – therefore additional planning applications would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State Planning Inspectorate.

• Land owned by Chorleywood Parish Council so would require their agreement.

• Fencing would not be included

• Site adjacent to Station Car Park access road and Chorleywood Bottom

• Visibly exposed to residents living in the roads over looking the Common.

• Certain items of traditional play equipment, such as swings and slides would need to be aesthetically included into the overall design.

• Protected species site and a designated County wildlife site.

• Play area users may park within the Shepherd’s PH car parking area (causing friction with the publican, etc), on the station car park access road and on various parts of the Common.

Risks associated with the disadvantages along with possible solutions

Planning Inspectorate

• Additional time and resource would need to be accounted for with regards to the additional planning application to the Planning Inspectorate. In addition, there is the potential for a Public Inquiry, which again would incur additional time and resource. These would be included as part of the project delivery plan and costs included as part of the overall project cost to Three Rivers District Council.

Chorleywood Parish Council - landowner

• Imperative that TRDC work in partnership with Chorleywood Parish Council on development of designs and on agreement of final location.

Fencing & Site Adjacent to the Station Car Park access road and Chorleywood Bottom

• “Fenced boundaries around play spaces tend to make them feel segregated from their surroundings and there is a growing view that the presence of fencing can discourage some children from using the play space….On the other hand, although there is no legal requirement or recommendation for industry standards, a barrier may sometimes be desirable. Planting a hedge, creating a change in level, siting the whole space in a shallow hollow in the ground….” (Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces).

• The overall design could include the creation of natural bunding around the play space (the Parish Council confirmed they could do a seed harvest, which could then be used for the grass for the bunds). These natural boundaries would be used to discourage dogs and to prevent small children from leaving the play space.

• In addition, dog tethering posts and signs could be included in designs, which again add to the overall discouragement of dogs using the site.

• Fencing has not been included in 2 play spaces in Three Rivers District and there have not been any reported problems. These are at Leavesden Country Park and South Oxhey playing fields.

Visibly exposed to residents living in the roads overlooking the Common

• A play space sited at this location is more likely to receive objections from local residents due to its prominent location. There is a small woodland area to the left of this site, which could be incorporated into the design and would include the larger structures, in order to soften the impact. The smaller, low level and natural play elements could remain on the grassed area.

• In addition native planting could also be included as part of the overall design in order to again soften the impact but also to create a natural boundary to the site.

Traditional items of equipment

• Community expectations would need to be addressed that not all elements of play equipment could be included due to the nature of the setting.

• Previous designs have been developed to be sensitive to the aesthetics of the natural surroundings and this would need to be included in any future developments of designs.

Protected species and wildlife site

• Any work would need to have a full environmental impact survey carried out – this would have resource implications.

Parking

• Residents can park within the station car park (if spaces are available at a cost). Consultation would need to take place with the publican on the proposal to see if there could be any partnership work surrounding parking.

• In addition, the local community will be encouraged to walk or cycle to the route, due to its proximity to the village.

• Whilst travelling to the play area could be discouraged by the use of appropriate signage, it is likely that some parents would nonetheless travel by car. Introducing bollards to prevent parking at various areas may not be feasible and it may become necessary for Chorleywood Parish Council, the publican/company, Transport for London and the Police to take appropriate measures to discourage and/or prosecute drivers to control unauthorised parking within their respective scopes.

Planning Considerations

• Wildlife site and LNR

• On greenbelt land

• Application to the Planning Inspectorate Required

Grovewood

Positive factors

• Natural surveillance – this would be from residents living in Grovewood.

• Existing road signage indicating the presence of children.

• Neighbourhood watch area

• Natural environment – access to the natural environment and wildlife species / habitats – designs would incorporate the existing woodland area in order to enhance the play experience.

• Three Rivers District Council has experience of developing a play space in a similar environment (Prestwick Road North Play Area – photos included)

• Could include fencing as part of the overall scheme.

• Would be able to include more traditional elements of play equipment such as swings, slides and roundabouts to address the needs of all children and young people.

• High levels of accessibility from the main village area and from the main residential area, which means that a higher density of the population of the Parish of Chorleywood would be able to access the site (see attached mapping).

• People are more likely to walk to the proposed site, which assists with other key objectives of Three Rivers District Council, such as increasing levels of physical activity and reducing levels of obesity.

• Compound for construction would be located on site.

Disadvantages

• Land owned by Chorleywood Parish Council so would require their agreement.

• Small woodland area surrounded by houses – residents may object to the proposal due to the close proximity to their homes.

• Trees within the area are under Tree Preservation Orders and any designs or installations would need to take this into account.

• Pressure to remove protected trees (to enable construction and for sightlines) and the potential to damage protected trees during construction of a play area.

• Due to the nature of the site, there is potential for anti-social behaviour.

Risks associated with the disadvantages along with possible solutions

Chorleywood Parish Council - landowner

• Imperative that TRDC work in partnership with Chorleywood Parish Council on development of designs and on agreement of final location.

Close Proximity to residential area

• Consultation will need to take place with the local residents to ensure they are happy with the proposal and design.

• They may raise issues associated with parking, but due to the close proximity to the village, it is envisaged that the majority of people will walk to the play area.

• It is an existing Neighbourhood Watch area, so the residential community are already active in natural surveillance.

Tree Preservation Orders / potential for damage during construction

• Planning could reject the proposal if designs are not sympathetic to the natural environment.

• In order to site the play area, some of the undergrowth and small saplings would need to be removed – this would need to be done in partnership with Three Rivers District Council’s Trees and Landscape department and with Chorleywood Parish Council.

• The larger trees could be incorporated into the overall design, however foundations for equipment would need to consider the root systems for these trees.

Anti-social behaviour

• The area is densely wooded and any installation of a play space would need to take this into consideration.

• Shrubbery and smaller saplings would need to be removed in order to increase natural surveillance into the site.

• Three Rivers District Council has experience of this type of site in an area where anti-social behaviour was perceived to be high. However, through opening up the site and engaging residents, this has now resulted in a play area, which is well used by the community with no reports of ASB (Prestwick Road North Play Area, South Oxhey).

Planning Considerations

• TPO’s on trees – what will the impact be on the existing trees?

• Proximity to residential area (but not really an issue in planning terms)

Chorleywood House Estate (Local Nature Reserve)

Positive factors

• Natural environment – access to the natural environment and wildlife species / habitats – designs would incorporate the existing woodland area in order to enhance the play experience.

• Land is owned by Three Rivers District Council

• Would encourage more people to access and take enjoyment from visiting Chorleywood House Estate.

• Three Rivers District Council has experience of developing a play space in a similar environment (Prestwick Road North Play Area – photos included)

• Could include fencing as part of the overall scheme.

• Would be able to include more traditional elements of play equipment such as swings, slides and roundabouts to address the needs of all children and young people.

• Existing leisure facilities / provision on site, including tennis and football.

• Compound for construction would be located on site.

Disadvantages

• Not accessible by foot from the main village due to the busy A404 – this will impact on Three Rivers District Council’s aims of increasing physical activity and reducing obesity.

• Limited number of parking spaces. Furthermore, the availability of parking spaces could potentially be problematic, especially when football matches take place (normally Saturdays) within the grounds as all of the spaces are usually utilised.

• Located next to the busy A404 with high levels of pollution, noise and car fumes (point 2 of the design principles).

• Children and young people would not be able to access the site without being driven by parents/carers, which is against the Council’s aim of encouraging outdoor, unsupervised play (Play Rangers project) and providing doorstep provision.

• Low numbers of families accessing the site due to inaccessibility, therefore the cost of investment to install a play space would not achieve the required benefits of more children and young people taking part in play.

• Lack of any realistic natural surveillance on an ongoing basis, making it more susceptible to anti-social behaviour.

• Residents living within Chorleywood House Estate may object to the proposal.

• The whole of the estate is designated a Local Nature Reserve and further intensification of use could degrade the purpose of the Reserve.

• Large trees within the site have extensive root systems, therefore the installation of equipment and associated foundations would need careful consideration and it may impact on what can and can’t be installed.

• Lack of proximity to other facilities – closest facility would be The Junction situated at Christchurch, which would mean people having to cross and re-cross the busy A404 to use it in association with the play area.

 The Junction is only open (due to church benevolence) during the term times of Hertfordshire schools (Monday to Friday, between 10:00 and 12:00 and 14:00 and 15:00). It is closed at the weekends and during all school holidays, i.e. during all periods of play area peak use.

• Previous consultation with the local community indicated that only 34% of respondents wanted to have the play space located within Chorleywood House Estate.

Risks associated with the disadvantages along with possible solutions

Not accessible by foot / lack of car parking

• As the site is not accessible by foot, people will drive to the play area and parking is already at capacity, particularly during peak times at the weekend, when football takes place.

• There are no other solutions for increasing parking at the estate.

• The mapping shown for this site indicates that there are a very limited number of houses within the 440m radius and based on experience, the distance people would need to travel, even if the A404 weren’t an issue, would be too far for people to walk.

• As people are more likely to drive and walk it reduces the numbers taking part in physical activity and will have a negative impact on levels of obesity.

Located next to busy A404

• The site is located adjacent to the busy A404 with the potential for children and young people to be exposed to noise and pollution – although this is very low risk.

Children and young people unable to access the site independently

• Three Rivers District Council want to encourage children and young people to be able to access play provision independently (subject to their age and maturity) and due to the location of this site, they will not be able to.

• This will again add to the increased numbers in cars that will be parking at the site.

Low return on investment

• Three Rivers District Council want to ensure a high return on their capital investment and this will only be reflected through the numbers of children, young people and their families using the site.

• Again, due to the location (distance from the village and busy A404) the numbers using this site will be less than the other 3 sites, resulting in a low return in investment.

Lack of natural surveillance and potential for increased ASB

• The site is hidden behind the fence line of the A404 and next to the access road for Chorleywood House Estate.

• Natural surveillance would only come from people driving to the cemetery or accessing the back of the site for dog walking or football.

• Some natural surveillance may come from the residents living on site, however this would be very limited.

• Due to this lack of natural surveillance and slightly hidden location, there is the potential for increased levels of ASB and the police would need to routinely check the site.

Local residents objecting

• The proposed location is within the sight line of the residents living on the estate; therefore consultation will need to take place to ensure they are happy with the proposal and design.

Large trees

• The proposed area has large trees, which fall within the Conservation area, therefore any work done would need permission. Equipment cannot be placed within the root zone of these trees and the zone is 12 times the diameter of the tree, making this site more complicated for the installation of play equipment.

Lack of other facilities

• This is a minor factor to take into account, as facilities are not usually included as part of a play area development and there are other play areas across the district where there isn’t any access to toilets or cafes.

Previous consultation results

• Extensive consultation has already taken place, whereby the local community were asked to select their preferred location for the play area. Siting the play area at Chorleywood House Estate would go against the choice of the local community. This would need to be carefully managed and resident expectations dealt with. Further consultation would therefore be necessary, which will have resource implications, both in terms of time and money.

Planning Considerations

• Trees

• Ecology / Local Nature Reserve – would need to consider biodiversity impact

• Conservation area

• Greenbelt land

• Not ideal in terms of pedestrian access and natural surveillance

Other considerations

Environmental Surveys

• An environmental survey has already taken place at site 13 on the Common. Other sites would be susceptible to further environmental investigation and this will have resource implications and a budget would need to be identified.

Anti-social behaviour

• Local residents are often concerned about anti-social behaviour and the potential for this to develop or increase when a new play area is installed. However, from experience, this has had the opposite affect, whereby ASB levels have reduced.

• Examples of refurbished play areas include: Barton Way and Baldwins Lane play areas, Croxley Green Hayling Road and Ashburnham Drive play areas, South Oxhey, South Way play area, Abbots Langley and King George V play area Mill End. Examples of new play areas, where residents were concerned about ASB and where these concerns did not come to fruition, include: Eastbury play area, Eastbury and Prestwick Road North play area, South Oxhey.

Equipment and Consultation

• Extensive consultation has already taken place with the local community and children and young people in relation to their preferences for the play area. However, due to the time lapse between then and now, further consultation will need to take place.

• Consulting children and young people and then making sure their needs are taken into account, ensures that they take ownership of the site and are less likely to engage in ASB. This has been TRDC’s experience at all of the refurbished and newly installed play areas.

Demographics for each site location by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)



• The demographics for children and young people for each of the proposed sites are detailed above. Grovewood provides the highest return on investment in terms of servicing the local community, followed by the 2 sites on the Common and, lastly, Chorleywood House Estate.