

STILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Village leaflet and views on a new playground site

The Parish Council received 106 replies to its leaflet request for views and ideas on the short-listed sites for an under-12's playground. These provided useful insight into the views of many villagers. The replies were wide ranging and initial analyses indicate no clear preference for any of the three sites on the short list. Indeed, views for and against each of the sites were quite similar in number. Reasons for and against each site often differed though there were some common issues. At the time of writing the Parish Council is studying the results further and aims to complete a report on the overall evaluation of the sites in September. This will take into account the leaflet responses, other data previously gathered as well as new information that is still being collected. We are also planning to meet up with residents close to the proposed sites to see how best to address any concerns.

It is clear already that there have been some misconceptions as well as questions to answer, and we are keen to provide more information to help residents better understand the playground project. Here we try to answer some of the most frequently asked questions from residents.

Will we lose trees, green spaces and biodiversity?

The Parish Council has no intention of removing any trees in preparing for the playground. We value our trees and only those in a dangerous condition or causing obstruction are being removed in line with our recent comprehensive tree survey. We all appreciate green spaces so the playground will retain much of the existing grass. However, amenity grass generally consists of few species; the fertility and management regime discourages biodiversity. To improve biodiversity in the village, the Parish Council is planting 70 oak saplings (all donated) in the coming months which will have great potential for the future. Our Green Spaces Strategy also seeks to improve biodiversity through adapting existing green spaces.

What about speeding traffic hazards?

The Parish Council is well aware of traffic hazards in some parts of the village but to get action, evidence of speeds and traffic volume is essential. Speedwatch has highlighted the problems in some areas; its records have helped bids to Cambridgeshire County Council for traffic calming measures. Recently we've had the white and yellow road markings repainted in much of the village and soon a vehicle activated speed sign will be set up around the village; this will record the numbers and speeds of vehicles passing, so we shall have more data to argue for further improvements. Regarding the playground, we intend to seek additional traffic calming and we shall work with Cambridgeshire Highways on this. Do let us know about particular problems in your area.

What about noise or nuisance from the playground?

The Parish Council is keen to ensure that nuisance from the playground is avoided. There will not be a zip wire in the under-12s playground nor any equipment that contributes to noise

levels. Ball games will not be permitted; not only will there be insufficient space for these but they may be hazardous to the very young. The playground equipment will also be restricted for the use of under-12's.

How will you deal with problems of older children in the evenings and at night?

Some village green spaces already attract older children in the evenings which concerns some residents. For safety reasons, young persons' play areas are usually completely fenced. The Parish Council intends that, as was suggested by some villagers, the playground will be closed at night to prevent disturbance to local residents. This should be an improvement on the current situation. Facilities for older children, including possibly a zip wire and adult trim trail, are being considered for the playing field as the next phase of our project.

Why not expand Barn Close for the new playground?

For a playground that is sufficiently large for primary-aged children and younger, we need at least 400 square metres of space. The area of Barn Close is only about 220 square metres; it also has several large trees so the usable area is even less. While some consider some of the other sites "small", their measured areas are, in fact, much greater, e.g. Apreece Way 530 and Gala Close 950 square metres.

Why not use the Pavilion/playing field for the playground?

Following a number of suggestions the Parish Council is revisiting its decision to exclude the playing field as a possible site for the playground and will prepare a separate document on this. As noted above, we are already targeting the playing field for phase 2 but the playground for the younger children requires special consideration. The report will be available in September.

Further information is available at www.stiltonparishcouncil.org or from the Parish Clerk (clerk@stiltonparishcouncil.org).