STILTON PARISH COUNCIL

Children's Play Areas in Stilton

Phase 1: The under-12s

Site selection report
by the Amenities Management Committee's Sub-committee for Children's and Youth's Amenities
(Accepted by the Parish Council 9 June 2020)
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. AIM OF REPORT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. FUND-RAISING EFFORTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. SITE REQUIREMENTS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF POSSIBLE SITES</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Apreece Way</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Barn Close</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Cooper Thornhill Close</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Ermine Crescent</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Gala Close</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. The Glebe, Church Close</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Meadow Close</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Mill Road</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. The Village Playing Field</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Queen Eleanor Close</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Other sites suggested by residents</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. RESULTS OF FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONNAIRES</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. SUMMARY ANALYSIS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX 1 Sub-committee Terms of Reference</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX 2 Sub-committee Members' views on traffic hazards</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. INTRODUCTION

Apart from the small play area in Barn Close and the village playing field there are few areas in Stilton where children may play. A playground for primary-age school children is notably absent and developments over past years have done nothing to address this situation.

Currently, just a few people use the small play area in Barn Close; it is remote and very limited, only being suitable for very young children. Mostly, children are taken to play areas in other villages by car, but some, especially child minders with several children, do not have cars with sufficient capacity, so they walk to Folksworth play area and back - not an easy journey on foot with small children.

Village surveys have highlighted the absence of a children's playground, and Parish Councillors and villagers alike have considered ways to improve the situation. In 2018, Stilton Parish Council took the initiative to raise funds for a new playground (see section 4 below). The Council has received overwhelming support and encouragement for the project, from young and old alike. Councillors are keen to respond to the wishes of so many villagers.

As well as organizing fund-raising events, the Parish Council has canvassed views from the school (through the School Council and a letter and questionnaire to parents), the Playgroup (through a letter and questionnaire to parents) as well as child minders and parents within the village (see section 8). Responses from those representing more than 80 children have been received. These provide useful information to help the decision making process.

The Parish Council is aware that the two new developments planned for the village, one off North Street (90 dwellings) and the other off High Street (61 dwellings) will increase the need for play areas in Stilton. There have been some suggestion that developers should provide play areas within their developments, this is discussed further in section 7K.

It is clear to the Parish Council that there is no ideal site for a playground, and no potential site where villagers are in agreement. Council recognizes that wherever it decides to position the site there are likely to be objections - "it's too close to my property", "it's too distant for my children", "it's too noisy", "it's too small", etc. The Council therefore requested its Amenities Management Committee (AMC) to identify suitable sites by evaluating all possible options throughout the village.

The Parish Council also recognized that it cannot cater for the needs of children of all ages without access to significant funding. It is therefore prioritizing the needs of younger children in this, Phase 1, of its plan; those of older children will be addressed in subsequent phases.

2. AIM OF REPORT

In 2019, the AMC established the Sub-committee for Children's and Youth's Amenities to consider each possible site for a children’s playground in the village and provide a draft report identifying the benefits and drawbacks of the various options. The Committee agreed the Terms of Reference of the Sub-committee (annex 1). The Sub-committee prepared a draft report for consideration by the AMC.
The overall aim of this report is to provide information to the Parish Council on all possibilities for siting a children's playground for children up to 12 years of age (Phase 1 of the Council's plan); the report might also suggest possibilities for siting play areas for older children (Phase 2). The draft report was discussed and adopted by the AMC at its meeting on 12 May 2012; it agreed to submit the report to the Parish Council at its next meeting. The report aims to be suitable for wider circulation, in particular for discussion at a village meeting that is to take place before Council's final decision.

The report contains four recommendations that are highlighted in the text (in bold). The Parish Council should take special note of these when discussing its future plans. It should also be noted that annex 2 was added to the original report in response to a request from the Parish Council.

3. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

In setting up the Sub-committee the AMC recognized the important work that the informal Working Group for Children's and Youth's Amenities had done in canvassing views and raising funds. The Committee noted that the Working Group had involved several Councillors and a good cross-section of the community all with interests in children's and youth's amenities. The AMC therefore invited the established Members of the Working Group to join the Sub-committee and assess possible sites for a playground in Stilton.

The following were Members of the Sub-committee preparing this report: Cllr Darnell (Chair of Sub-committee), Cllr Gilden (Chair of Amenities Management Committee), Cllr Shailer Cllr Bull, Linda Angus, Hazel Parmenter, Jennie Longstaff, Mary Croll, Tautvile Avenauskiene, Ian Parmenter and Bex Boston.

4. **FUND RAISING EFFORTS**

Fund raising began in earnest at the Christmas Fair 2018 and has continued through 2019 with a Jumble Trail, a Table Top Sale, a Family Fun Day and a second Christmas Fair. Donations in support of these fund-raising events were received from (in alphabetic order): the Angel Spice; Beebys; Bosworth's Garden Centre; Colbrooks; David Hartley Associates; Stilton Butchers; the Stilton Cheese Makers Association; and the Talbot. A number of individuals also made extremely generous donations to support these events.

Recently, there have been contributions to the fund from village (and other) events and organizations, these include: the Talbot; Waitrose Community Scheme; the Guards Concert; Stilton church; a New Years Eve event; and Heyes Farm.

Following the funeral of Olive Main, Freeman of Stilton, who held dear the development of a playground area, Olive's family requested that donations in her memory should be to the fund and many such donations have been received. The Sub-committee believe that the Parish Council should make special acknowledgement of Olive's contributions to the village and recognize the contributions made to the fund in her memory.
Children have been involved in many of the fund raising events, helping to man stalls and games. A Member of the Committee talked to the children at an assembly at the school about the proposed play area and the Family Fun Day.

The funds currently raised stand at approximately £12,500. The Sub-committee has expressed its gratitude to all those who have contributed to the fund, and recognizes the importance that the project has in the village.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Sub-committee recognizes Olive Main's important contribution to the village and noted her wishes that a children's playground be established. It recommends that she is recognized in some way when the playground is opened.

### 5. PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Members of the Sub-committee have discussed equipment needed for the playground with children at the village school and with a number of playground equipment suppliers. Members have visited other playgrounds in the area to identify useful equipment. Children were involved in drawing designs for their new play area and identifying their favourite pieces of play equipment at the Family Fun Day. A member of the Committee spent time in school discussing the play area with the School's Council. The children put forward ideas for equipment and safety at the new play area (see section 8b).

Several suppliers of playground equipment have been consulted. These have helped narrow down the list of equipment that would be suitable for the 12 and under age range. Suppliers have also provided guidance on site location and grant applications (see below).

Three members of the Parish Council attended a playground networking event organized by CAPALC\(^1\). Speakers emphasized the need to consider the recreation of all members of the village and the importance of regular monitoring and inspection of playgrounds. The benefits and disadvantages of different playground surfaces was also stressed. A presentation also highlighted the need for appropriate insurance cover.

The Sub-committee also benefitted from a presentation by a Councillor from Ryhall Parish Council that was in the process of completing its plans for installing a new children's playground.

The Sub-committee noted that play equipment for the very young, for primary aged children and those older is very different and requires some segregation. Since spaces available are quite limited (see analysis in sections below) the Sub-committee largely confined its deliberations, as directed by the Parish Council, to the siting of a play area for those up to 12 years (which it termed Phase 1); however, it did give a little thought to a recreation area for older children (which it has termed Phase 2).

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\(^1\) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils
RECOMMENDATION 2: Equipment suitable for youths (12+) should be considered for a separate area. This should be the subject of another exercise (Phase 2).

6. SITE REQUIREMENTS

Site requirements are partly self-evident and are partly guided by drawing on advice from suppliers of playground equipment and the police. Ideal requirements for a playground site include:

(i) A reasonably sized area of ground - to accommodate all of the required equipment;
(ii) Pedestrian accessibility - to enable easy access from all parts of the village;
(iii) An open aspect in built up area - to deter vandalism and misuse;
(iv) Being relatively flat and well-drained - to avoid landscaping costs;
(v) Few "obstacles" - small trees and shrubs, manhole covers, other hazards - to avoid hazards and make best use of space;
(vi) Being some distance from A1(M) - away from noise and air pollution;
(vii) Having suitable access for emergency services;
(viii) Illumination at night - to deter nuisance and vandalism - though lighting itself could cause nuisance;
(ix) CCTV - to deter nuisance and identify problems;
(x) Free from traffic hazards (see annex 2).

7. DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF POSSIBLE SITES

A total of 10 possible sites were considered in detail and their locations are shown on the map of Stilton (figure 1). Each site was visited, measured, photographed and detailed notes taken. Sites were then evaluated. Descriptions and the results for each site (presented in alphabetic order) are summarized in the sub-sections below. Information is collated under the following headings: location and ownership; dimensions and site description (including existing fencing and neighbouring dwellings); and, limitations and problems with possible solutions.

The positive and negative attributes of the sites are summarized in a table in section 9 to help decision making. It is recognized that any analysis of the possible areas is likely to be subjective. However, by considering a variety of criteria, it is hoped that options can be narrowed and decisions made more easily.
Figure 1
MAP OF STILTON
A Apreece Way
B Barn Close
C Cooper Th Close
D Ermine Crescent
E Gala Close
F The Glebe
G Meadow Close
H Mill Road
I Playing Field
J Queen Eleanor Close
7A. APREECE WAY

KEY: A 16.2m, B 32.6m, C 21.5m. Electricity substation shown in orange.
7A. APREECE WAY

Position and ownership

Apreece Way amenity area is a patch of grassland off Manor Road by the junction to Apreece Way (site A on figure 1). It is close to the geographic centre of the village not far from the school and village shop. The site is already owned and maintained by the Parish Council and, as it is already designated as amenity land, no planning permission would be required for a playground.

Site description

The approximate area of the site is 550 m² (allowing for access to the electricity sub-station - see below). The site is bounded by a high hedge to the south and low "playground railings" to the west. There are no trees growing on the site. A footpath runs along the northern edge. There is an electricity substation in the south-eastern corner and the necessary 2.5 metre access to this is provided by the footpath and adjacent verge along the northern boundary and a strip of grassland along the eastern boundary. The gateway at the north-western corner completes the access to the sub-station. The site is level and open. There are 7 dwellings fronting onto or alongside the area and 2 dwellings with rear gardens backing onto it.

Limitations and solutions

(i) The electricity substation on the south-eastern corner requires access; this, as described above, can be continued using the footpath and grass verge adjacent to it together with a grass corridor to the east of the site. This will allow vehicles to access the sub-station area. The substation will present no hazard provided the playground is separately fenced from it.

(ii) Parking in Manor Road is difficult at times, however, the site is fairly central and most would access the site on foot. Manor Road is not on the bus route so buses would not present a hazard for parked cars or pedestrians.

(iii) There will be fencing required for the two "open" sides (approximately 54 metres) and two playground gates would be needed. There may also need to be some screen fencing/hedging along the northern boundary if local residents consider this important.

(iv) After being informed of the possibility of a playground at the site, local residents have objected and raised a petition voicing their concerns (see section 8e). A letter of complaint has also been received from one resident.

(v) The local planning officers have visited the site and have advised there would be no planning concerns save the limitation of structures to below 4 metres in height.
7B. BARN CLOSE

A = 12.2 m, B = 16.1 m, C = 15.5 m
7B. BARN CLOSE

Position and ownership

Barn Close playground area is a small enclosed area in Barn Close, a cul-de-sac, which lies off Norman Drive. It is in the north-west corner of the village (site B on figure 1). Access is via the Barn Close entrance from Norman Drive and an alleyway running from Manor Road. The site is already owned and maintained by the Parish Council and, as it is already designated as a playground, no additional planning permission would be required for further development.

Site description

The approximate area of the site is 220 m² (within the fenced area). It is bounded by walls to the north and east and by low "playground railings" to the south and west. There are two "playground gates" in the railings though some renovation work to these is required. There are a number of trees growing in and around the site (see satellite view and photo). A road/driveway runs around the west and southern perimeter. Play equipment on the site is in need of refurbishment and is only suitable for very young children: a small see-saw, a small slide, a rocking horse, a small climbing frame and "balancing posts". There is also a bench. The site is level and fairly open but needs complete renovation if its use is to be continued. There are 8 dwellings fronting onto the area and 4 dwellings with rear gardens backing onto it.

Limitations and solutions

(i) Whilst the area is overlooked by some houses, the playground has a feeling of isolation.

(ii) Parking in Barn Close is extremely limited and access would most likely have to be on foot. However, nearby Norman Drive is not on the bus route so buses would not be a hazard for parking there or for pedestrians.

(iii) A major limitation is the size of the area. There would be little scope for extension to include facilities for all children up to 12. However, the young children's equipment and railings could be deployed usefully elsewhere.

(iv) Many consider that Barn Close is far from the centre of the village and that the facilities are very limited. This is borne out by the few parents and childminders who visit the site with children (see sections 8b, 8c and 8d).
7C. COOPER THORNHILL CLOSE

A = 18.8 m, B = 18.5 m

View from south-east corner
7C. COOPER THORNHILL CLOSE

Position and ownership

The green space area lying between Cooper Thornhill Close and Manor Road is accessed by a footpath from each roadway. Access on foot is therefore relatively easy. It is just north of the centre of the village (see C on figure 1). The site is already owned and maintained by the Parish Council and, as it is designated as an amenity area, no additional planning permission would be required for further development.

Site description

The approximate area of the site is 300 m². It is bounded by walls to the north, south and west. The grassed area is currently surrounded by "paths" of tarmac. There are no trees growing in the site but some overhanging from surrounding gardens and some shrubs in the south-west corner (see satellite view and photo). There are dwellings one either side of the site and two with gardens "side on" to the footpath running alongside the site.

Limitations and solutions

(i) Whilst the area is in the built area, no houses directly overlook the site so security and child safety may be an issue.

(ii) Parking in Cooper Thornhill Close is very limited and also difficult in that part of Manor Road. Neither are on the bus route so buses would not be a hazard for parked cars or for pedestrians.

(iii) The main limitation is the size of the area. It would be impossible to accommodate the facilities from Barn Close as well as those required for older children.
7D. ERMINE CRESCENT

A = 56.4 m, B = 18.2 m

View from north
7D. ERMINE CRESCENT

Position and ownership

The Ermine Crescent green space is in the south-east corner of the village. (site D on figure 1). The only access is by the Ermine Crescent entrance from Oak Road. The site is owned by the District Council and maintained by them. Permission would be required from the District Council to use the area and we believe planning permission would also be required for any playground development.

Site description

The approximate area of the site is approximately 700 m², assuming a 1 metre buffer zone around the edge of the road. However, any playground development would probably need a more significant buffer zone as the areas is surrounded by the access road for the surrounding houses. There are a few trees to the northern end of the site and the area is covered with grass. The site is relatively level and fairly open with 20 dwellings fronting onto it. The site is not near a bus route so buses would present a hazard to pedestrians.

Limitations and solutions

(i) A significant limitation is that the site is some distance from the centre of the village.

(ii) Another major limitation is ownership. From experience we believe the Parish Council would stand little chance of acquiring the land and gaining planning permission.

(iii) The site is surrounded by a road (it is on a traffic island) so access on foot and parking are problematic.

(iv) Whilst the site is a good size, there would need to be a significant buffer zone around any playground especially where access gates were positioned. Part of the site might have to be given over to car parking.
7E. GALA CLOSE

A = 32.8 m, B = 34.8 m

View from north-west corner
7E. GALA CLOSE

Position and ownership

The site is a good-sized area at the bend in Gala Close. It lies towards the north of the village (site E on figure 1). Access to Gala Close is from Norman Drive; neither are on a bus route so there are no hazards to pedestrians from buses. There are also footpaths from Queen Eleanor Close and Norman Drive. The area is owned by the County Council and maintained by the Parish Council - the County Council provide some funds to the Parish Council for this. Planning permission would be required for any development of a play area.

Site description

The approximate area of the site is 950 m². It is bounded by hedges to the north and east and by the road to the south and west. There is a narrow pathway around the edge of the roadway boundary. The area is grass covered and there are a few trees and shrubs. The site is relatively level and open with 15 dwellings fronting onto the area and 4 dwellings with rear gardens backing onto it.

Limitations and solutions

(i) A significant problem is the ownership of the area. We understand that Cambridgeshire County Council have not been willing to sell or change the use of such land in the past. It is not known how easy it would be to gain planning permission.

(ii) Parking is not easy along Gala Close as the roadway is only just wide enough for two-way traffic. However, it is a close and there is no through traffic. Ideally, parking would be made available off road using part of the green space. This too would require planning permission.
7F. THE GLEBE, CHURCH CLOSE

A = 11.6 m, B = 36.5 m, C = 24.8 m, D = 8.6 m, E = 7.5 m
7F. THE GLEBE, CHURCH CLOSE

Position and ownership

The Glebe is an area owned by the church, though the Diocese has indicated that long-term lease to the Parish Council is possible. The area is not far from the centre of the village and close to the school (site F on figure 1). The part of the Glebe being considered as a possible playground site is that adjacent to Church Close - a long, relatively narrow strip of land which includes the track giving access to the Old Rectory (shown by a row of posts on the figure and photograph). Should the track continue to be used, a playground would need fencing off. Also, to make a playground viable, some adjacent (District Council owned) land, would need to be leased or purchased (shown by a dotted line in the figure). As well as ownership issues, planning permission would need to be sought for a playground.

Site description

The approximate area of the site, including the part owned by the District Council (as shown on the map), is 560 m². There are no existing fences or hedges so a considerable length of fencing would be required to enclose the site. There are a few trees growing on the site, mostly towards the western end (see satellite view and photo). Trees on the District Council land would not need to be enclosed. The Old Rectory access track running along the edge of the site is used regularly (though by only a few vehicles) so the playground would need to be safeguarded. The site is slightly sloping upwards from Church Close and is not very even; there may be drainage issue to the western end. There are 6 bungalows fronting onto the District Council's area and 4 dwellings facing the site from across Church Close. Church close is on the bus route so buses could present a hazard to parked vehicles and pedestrians.

Limitations and solutions

(i) There is a problem with ownership, but the church has shown a willingness to lease an area of land and the District Council has indicated it would consider an application from the Parish Council. Planning permission would be needed.

(ii) Parking in Church Close is limited in places and the road is on the bus route so there is a potential hazard to pedestrians at times. It is uncertain if it would be possible to introduce some off-road parking as space is limited near the road. Even so, cars frequently park in nearby Church Street; here parking is usually available though outside the school it causes problems at the beginning and end of the school day.

(iii) Quite a bit of work would be needed to level the area, to ensure drainage, and to enclose it with suitable fencing. Safeguarding against traffic travelling along the track and along Church Close would be particularly important and access gates could only be positioned realistically along the southern face. Relocating the Rectory access track to Walnut Way would eliminate the hazard from the track and save fencing costs as the existing hedge could be used for the northern boundary.
7G. MEADOW CLOSE

A = 45.9 m, B = 34.4 m, C = 19.6 m

View from east looking west
7G.  MEADOW CLOSE

Position and ownership

The Meadow Close green space lies just off Norman Drive, which is not on a bus route. It is towards the north-west corner of the village (site G on the map) with access only along the Meadow Close road and its associated pavement. It is owned by the District Council and planning permission would be required.

Site description

The area is relatively large being about 900 m² but there are no fences or boundary hedges around the site. The road runs around most of the area with no pavement adjacent to the roadway. A footpath borders the site on the southern perimeter with 3 dwellings facing onto the path. There are about 10 dwellings facing onto the site across the Meadow Road roadway. A few trees are growing at the eastern end of the site (see satellite view map). The site is relatively level and open.

Limitations and solutions

(i) A major problem is the ownership of the land. We believe the District Council would be cautious of leasing this land to the Parish Council. Planning permission would probably be necessary for a playground.

(ii) Parking in Meadow Close is limited and all access on foot would have to be from Norman Drive. However, Norman Drive is not on the bus route so there are no bus hazards to pedestrians or parked vehicles in the vicinity.

(iii) The site is some distance from the centre of the village so access on foot will not be so easy from the southern end of the village. It is not close to the school.
7H. MILL ROAD

A = 34 m, B = 35 m
7H. MILL ROAD

Position and ownership

The Mill Road green space is at the end of a cul-de-sac with entry solely from Mill Road. It is not on a bus route. It lies well to the north of the village (site H on Figure 1) and is owned by the County Council. Planning permission would be required for a play area.

Site description

The site is quite large with an approximate area of 950 m$^2$. Like Ermine Crescent, the site is situated in the middle of a "traffic island" with a roadway running around its perimeter. There is no pavement area adjacent to the road. The site is fairly level and open, with a few trees towards the eastern and western ends. There are 24 dwellings fronting onto the area.

Limitations and solutions

(i) The area is not owned by the Parish Council and we are doubtful that the County Council would allow it to be used as a playground. Planning permission would be required.

(ii) Parking in Mill Road is limited by the road width, however, it is not on the bus route so buses would not cause traffic or pedestrian problems.

(iii) While the area is of a good size it is some distance from the centre of the village and the school.
71. **THE PLAYING FIELD**

E = 11m x 20m (mean values)

View of E facing north
71. THE PLAYING FIELD

Position and ownership

The Village Playing Field is situated at the extreme south end of the village (site I on figure 1). Access is along the bridleway which extends southwards from High Street. A footpath is marked to the side of the bridleway. The Playing Field is the only large green space area in the village open to the public and is owned and maintained by the Parish Council. It is well used for football - seniors, colts and juniors play regularly throughout most of the year. No additional planning permission would be required for a play area.

Site description

Although large, the overall size of the Playing Field is limited. As can be seen from the satellite picture, football pitches occupy most of the available space. Of the remaining areas there is: a skate park (area A of the satellite image); an area to be fenced for use with the Pavilion facilities (area B); an area reserved for extending the Pavilion to provide storage, toilets and football facilities (area F); and, an area over the foul water tank that was reserved for a youth club building (area D). In addition, area C has been reserved for access for field maintenance equipment and area E for access for football teams. Area J was planned as a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) when sufficient funds become available; this will result in some of the football pitches having to overlap. Area E is available for a playground area; this is approximately 220 m²; this allows for a 3 m run-off from the football pitch and 1 metre distance from the patio and roadway within the fenced area). Area H is a raised area that consists of spoil from the Pavilion foundations. This is quite remote from the Pavilion and would require considerable preparation to make it usable; it is recommended that this area be considered for stage 2 of the Parish Council's plan as it might be suitable for a recreation area for older children and adults.

Limitations and solutions

(i) The Village Playing Field is well to the south of the village. While parking is easy, access on foot is problematic for most of the village. Some villagers consider it remote.

(ii) Despite the Playing Field area being large, most of its area is used for football pitches and their associated run-off areas. Most of the remaining areas are small and some are designated for other uses in the future (see map).

(iii) Because of the proximity of the senior football pitch there may be a hazard risk in a playground in area E when football is being played or practiced. Higher fencing may be required to reduce risk.

(iv) Because the Playing Field is some distance outside the village it is not overlooked by any dwellings. Child safety and vandalism risks are significant.
7J. QUEEN ELEANOR CLOSE

A = 24.1 m, B = 12.5 m

View facing south
7J. QUEEN ELEANOR CLOSE

Position and ownership

Queen Eleanor Close green space (site J on the map) is at the end of Eleanor Close, which is off Norman Drive. At the other end of the green space is Worthington Close. The site is to the north of the centre of the village. The area is owned by the County Council and maintained by the Parish Council (with County Council funding). There is a footpath crossing the area. Planning permission would be required for this site.

Site description

The largest part of the green space has an area of approximately 300 m²; this is bounded by footpaths to the east, west and south and Queen Eleanor Close to the north. There are no fences or boundary hedges to the site so the usable area of the site is therefore somewhat less than 300 m². There are three large Plane trees towards the northern end of the site. Parking both in Eleanor Close and Worthington Close is difficult. Two houses overlook the area.

Limitations and solutions

(i) A major limitation is the small size of the usable area.

(ii) As the area is not owned by the Parish Council use of it for a playground could be problematic. Planning permission is probably required.

(iii) Parking in the vicinity of the Eleanor Close site could cause problems; already part of the area is used for illegal parking by nearby houses so there are existing problems in the vicinity of this green space. However, there are no hazards presented to pedestrians by busses.

(iv) The area is open but there are few houses overlooking it.
7K. OTHER SUGGESTED SITES

Rear of Talbot Public House

While there is a relatively large area behind the Talbot public house, this belongs to the brewery (the Talbot is a tenancy) and is used by the public house on occasions. Discussions with the current publican indicate that there is no likelihood of it being made available for a children's playground.

Rear of Stilton Cheese Public House

The Stilton Cheese is for sale and it is unlikely that any land associated with it would be made available by a buyer. As the land is within the "built up area" of the village it is most likely to be seen as development land.

North Street and High Street housing developments

While there is some obligation on developers to provide "green space areas" in their development, the parcels of land set aside for this are generally small (usually the required statutory minimum) and often quite unsuited for use as a playground (e.g. for North Street it is likely to include a narrow strip alongside the A1(M)). However, the Parish Council will seek opportunities to make good use of any suitable land that does become available when detailed plans are submitted. Expectations are not high and any land is likely to be far from the centre of the village.
8. QUESTIONNAIRES AND FEEDBACK FROM THE VILLAGE

a) Feedback from child minders

The four registered childminders in Stilton have written to the Sub-committee stressing that the Barn Close playground is too small and does not have adequate equipment. They believe that a new, bigger play area would be greatly appreciated by all of the children and their parents. It would be used throughout the year. Current access to adequate play areas facilities is only by car, which is not always possible with larger numbers of children. The childminders note that with the likely increasing numbers of children in the village a playground is a necessary facility for Stilton.

b) Feedback from School Council

On 1st November 2019 a member of the Sub-committee met with Stilton Primary Academy School Council. The School Council comprises of 2 children from each age group in the school who represent children in their year and provide feedback to them from School Council meetings. The Head Teacher was present at the meeting which was held with the sole purpose of discussing the proposed play area in Stilton.

The children were incredibly enthusiastic and articulate. Location was discussed and all but one child felt that the playground should be centrally located. One child felt it would be useful to have some play equipment near the Pavilion so that children had something to play on while their siblings played football.

The children were very keen to ensure that all ages up to 12 were catered for and suggested a number of possibilities for play equipment. They were particularly interested to include provision for disabled children and wheelchair users.

The children showed a concern about safety and thought it would be a good idea to zone the play area and to design safety posters for display.

c) Results of playgroup questionnaire

A questionnaire (see Annex III) was distributed to parents and minders of children attending Stilton Playgroup. Ten replies (representing 18 children) were received and the results analysed.

All 10 responses indicated that they considered a new playground of benefit to the village and five emphasized the need through qualifying text, e.g. “absolutely”, “definitely”. A majority (6) replied that they used the Folksworth play area, while Alconbury, Yaxley and Ferry Meadows were also listed. Only 3 indicated that Barn Close play area was used and critical remarks were made of this site, e.g. “too small”, “needs revamping”.

Regarding the positioning of the playground, 6 identified the centre of the village as their preference (with one person indicating that the Pavilion was “too far to walk”), 3 the Pavilion, and one “anywhere”.

Page 29
In terms of what was considered necessary for a playground, responses indicated a need for picnic benches, a fenced/secure area and a toddler area as well as swings, slides, etc. Yaxley and Folksworth were cited as good examples to follow.

d) Results of school questionnaire

The same questionnaire was distributed to parents and carers of children at Stilton Primary Academy. Thirty-two replies, representing 62 children, were received.

All replies agreed that a new play area would benefit the village and 13 gave some emphasis to the need, e.g. “absolutely”, “definitely”. One reply noted “it’s shocking that there is not one already” and another it “would be lovely to be able to walk to a decent play area”. A large number (26) indicated that they used Folksworth playground, and others (8) Ferry Meadows and/or Alconbury Weald. Some also mentioned Barnwell Park, Stukely Meadows, Yaxley, Hinchingbrook, Fineshade and Holme Wood. Four mentioned the skate park while just one indicated the Pavilion (playing field) and two Barn Close play area.

Regarding location, only one reply suggested a site to the south of the village (as well as the Pavilion), while 8 responses were equally in favour of the centre of the village and the Pavilion. Fourteen replies had a single preference of the Pavilion, with one having some emphasis for that site. One response indicated anywhere except the Pavilion! Nine questionnaires favoured the centre of the village only and seven placed some emphasis on that site, noting the need to be near the school, to be near housing, to be safe, to be central, as well as noting the Pavilion was not suitable and that it was too far out.

For what was needed emphasis was placed upon seating (9), safe area/fencing (10), swings (11), slides (10), zip wire (8), climbing frame (9), running space (4) and the importance of being able to access on foot (5).

e) Apreece Way petition

In September 2019, before the Parish Council had discussed plans for locating a play area, some residents of Apreece Way presented a petition to the Parish Council. This carried the name of 19 residents from 15 properties in Apreece Way and the surrounding area. In the accompanying letter the signatories registered their opposition to a play park development on the Apreece Way green space. They provided a number of reasons why they opposed such a development.

Subsequently, despite no decisions having been taken and prior to this report being prepared, some residents attended Parish Council meetings to voice opposition to any change to the Apreece Way green space.

The Parish Council has formally acknowledged the petition and explained to the petitioners the procedures it had planned for future decisions on locating the play area.
9. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

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<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
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<td>PC</td>
<td>HDC</td>
<td>CCC</td>
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KEY

A  Apreece Way  *Owned by Church and HDC. Under negotiation by Parish Council
B  Barn Close
C  Cooper Thornhill Close  **Only the Apreece Way site is known by local residents to be under consideration
D  Ermine Crescent
E  Gala Close
F  The Glebe
G  Meadow Close
H  Mill Road
I  The Playing field
J  Queen Eleanor Close

Positive attributes: high ++++, medium ++, low +, none –  (Note: for fencing each + indicates one boundary already fenced)
Negative attributes: high ↓↓↓, medium ↓↓, low ↓, none -, unknown ?

PC  Parish Council
HDC  Huntingdonshire District Council
CCC  Cambridgeshire County Council
10. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Five areas (Ermine Close, Gala Close, Meadow Road, Mill Road and Queen Eleanor Close) are not owned by the Parish Council. They are owned by the District Council or County Council and maintained by them or by the Parish Council on their behalf. Whilst these are mostly of sufficient size for a playground, they generally suffer from being some distance from the centre of the village. The playgroup and school questionnaires all highlight the need for a central location or one near the Pavilion. The School Council overwhelmingly supported a location near the centre of the village.

In addition, from previous experience, persuading the District and County Councils to part with land, or change its use, is difficult. It is therefore suggested that these areas only be considered after the Parish Council owned areas, identified below, have proved unsatisfactory.

There are four areas (Apreece Way, Barn Close, Cooper Thornhill Close and the Village Playing Field) that are owned and managed by the Parish Council and one further area (the Glebe which is partly maintained by the Parish Council at present) where there is a possibility of future ownership and/or lease. It is suggested that these be considered as a priority.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** It is recommended that the sites owned, or leased, by the Parish Council be considered the first priority for selecting an area for the playground.

Taking the five priority sites, two (Barn Close and Cooper Thornhill Close) are too small for the equipment required for a broad age range. Barn Close is also some distance from the centre of the village. The remaining three sites comprise of two near the centre of the village (Apreece Way and the Glebe) and one at the far southern end of the village (the Village Playing Field).

Both Apreece Way and the Glebe are of sufficient size and well located, though the ownership of the latter may present some problems. Even so, the Parish Council are actively pursuing agreement with both the church and the District Council to see if a playground development is possible on part of the Glebe land.

Whilst the Village Playing Field may seem to provide plenty of space for a play area, in practice the use of the field for football severely limits the areas available. In addition, being some distance outside the built up area of the village presents security problems, both with regard to vandalism and to child safety. Furthermore, proximity to the A1(M) will often cause both noise and air pollution issues.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** It is recommended that Apreece Way and the Glebe be considered first as possible sites for the under-13s children's playground.
Annex 1

STILTON PARISH COUNCIL

AMENITIES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Sub-committee on Children's and Youth's Amenities

Terms of Reference

(agree by the Amenities Management Committee on 7 January 2020)

1. The Working Group on Children's and Youth's Amenities has, to date, concerned itself with fund raising and scoping the possibilities for a children's playground for the under 12's. It is now timely for the focus to be on considering the best location for such a playground so that plans and grant funding can explored in more detail. For this, a sub-committee is established to take over the responsibilities of the Working Group. This will provide better transparency and a more formal structure to this work.

2. **Main aim.** Whilst Members of the Sub-committee will continue to explore the various aspects of developing children's and youth's amenities, the Sub-committee is specifically charged with preparing a report for the Amenities Management Committee (AMC) exploring all possible options for a site for a playground area in the village. The report should identify advantages and problems associated with possible options and recommend an area or areas for consideration by the Parish Council. It is anticipated that the report will be the basis for Council's public consultation exercise to enable it to arrive at the best solution for the village.

3. **Membership.** The Sub-committee will consist of four Parish Councillors and six representatives from the village. It will be chaired by Cllr Darnell.

4. **Timetable of activities.** The Sub-Committee will convene soon after approval of its Terms of Reference to plan its work. It is expected to report to the AMC at its March meeting so that a final report on site locations can be submitted to the Parish Council in time for its April meeting.

5. **Meeting protocol:**
   
a) Meetings shall be called and minuted by the Working Group Chair; the Clerk may be asked to provide guidance on relevant regulations, procedures and reporting;
   
b) Agendas and minutes shall be posted on the web site and notice boards as for Parish Council and Committee meetings;
   
c) A quorum for meetings shall be four Members of whom at least 2 shall be Parish Council Members;
   
d) In accordance with Standing Orders, meetings shall be open to members of the public, who will be asked to speak/comment during the meeting at the appropriate time;
   
e) The Chair shall provide an update report to each AMC meeting;
   
f) The AMC and Parish Council will continue to review and adjust these Terms of Reference as considered necessary.
SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBER'S VIEWS ON TRAFFIC HAZARDS

A question was raised at a Parish Council meeting concerning traffic hazards at the various sites that the Sub-committee had evaluated. Concern was expressed that some sites were more hazardous than others.

To provide a quick evaluation all Members of the Sub-committee were contacted by the Sub-committee Chair and each were asked to provide their own assessment of traffic hazards at each of the 10 sites. A simple scoring system of "high", "medium" and "low" was used and each Member was asked to add notes to explain the basis for their score. Whilst this was very much a subjective exercise, there are no data available to the Sub-committee (or Parish Council) that could be used for a better assessment.

Of the 11 Members of the Sub-committee (which is made up of 4 Parish Councillors and 7 residents) 8 responded to the Chair's request. The results for each site, listed alphabetically, are summarized below.

- **Apreece Way**: 3 high, 4 low and 1 medium
- **Barn Close**: 0 high, 8 low and 0 medium
- **Cooper Thornhill Close**: 0 high, 8 low and 0 medium
- **Ermine Crescent**: 0 high, 3 low and 5 medium
- **Gala Close**: 0 high, 6 low and 2 medium
- **The Glebe**: 0 high, 5 low and 3 medium
- **Meadow Close**: 0 high, 6 low and 2 medium
- **Mill Road**: 0 high, 3 low and 5 medium
- **The Playing Field**: 4 high/low, 3 low and 1 medium
  (Low when field and Pavilion not in use. Can be high when they are)
- **Queen Eleanor Close**: 0 high, 8 low and 0 medium

There is quite a degree of consistency with the scores of most sites. Only the Playing Field and Apreece Way were scored high by any Member; the Playing Field only when the Pavilion and/or field were in use - when there may be many parked vehicles and vehicle movement on the approach road.

The disparity of views for Apreece Way is unusual. As far as we are aware the Parish Council has received no complaints regarding Manor Road being used as a cut through or having
particularly high volume traffic for the past 36 years. Three of the eight respondents rated the road as a high hazard so more data are obviously needed should traffic calming measures be necessary. Wherever the play area is located, we would recommend appropriate signage to warn motorists.

Five respondents noted that Church Close (Glebe location) is on the bus route through the village, though nobody rated this as a high risk.

There was a consensus from the majority of respondents that in general none of the locations experienced high or dangerous levels of traffic and that we are a village like any other and that any potential risks could be minimized and managed and as one respondent said "otherwise we'll not build a play area anywhere in the village".