
PLAY AREA IN CHORLEYWOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE – 19th JANUARY 2015**MEMBERSHIP & ATTENDANCE**

- Chairman: * Cllr Barbara Green
- Members: * Cllr Alison Preedy
* Cllr Martin Trevett
* Cllr Steve Watkins (Vice Chairman)
Substitute Cllr Tony Edwards
* Michael Hyde - Friends of the Common
* Maria Larkin – Chorleywood Residents Association
* David Walker - Friends of the Chorleywood House Estate
* Keith Williams - TRDC
* Simone Tyson Chorleywood Mums
- *Denotes members present

Also in attendance: Cllr Tony Edwards, Alison Rubens

14/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

14/15 MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that on page 2 of the minutes Cllr Keith Watkins should be corrected to Keith Williams. It was noted that Grovewood had been included as a possible site in Chorleywood and that The Clump had been discounted by a majority vote.

With the amendment the minutes were approved as a true and correct record.

14/16 SITE VISITS, CONCLUSIONS AND SHORT-LIST

The Chairman suggested that the group look at the remaining sites on the list to discuss and agree whether any further sites need to be added and then reduce the remaining sites to a short list of four as a reasonable number to take forward. The short list would then be given out for the expert advice required. Once these reports were available the Advisory group would then recommend a way forward based on these reports to Full Council.

Friends of Chorleywood House Estate asked whether all sites on the estate had been considered. Discussion followed on the site next to the football pitches which had been suggested. It was noted that this site had been turned down previously for additional football pitches. It was also noted that this site was further away from the centre of population and therefore further to walk. At weekends this area is also very busy with users of the football pitches and therefore access to any play space in this area would be very difficult.

(Secretaries note: TRDC and the Planning Inspector on appeal had previously turned down the additional football pitches due to the rare grasses and therefore it is felt unlikely that this decision could be overturned for a play space which would have a similar or greater impact on the grass).

The necessary ecological surveys were initially felt to be more important for the Common, but it was stated that a survey should be undertaken for the site in Chorleywood House grounds. There was a need to be more specific on the site in the House Grounds under consideration. There was then further discussion on the reasons for the additional football pitches in the House grounds being turned down. Chorleywood Residents Association stated that the refusal of the football pitch was about protected grasses and therefore a play space in this area would still be an issue. Cllr Martin Trevett stated that the appeal against the TRDC decision had been turned down for two reasons:

- 1) Local Nature reserve Status therefore issues about protection of the area and
- 2) Increase in parking

Cllr Barbara Green then proposed that site 1 be put on the short list as the primary site within Chorleywood House Grounds for further investigation. This was agreed with one abstention from Friends of Chorleywood House.

Other sites were then discussed. The details of the site visits at Grovewood and Valley Road (The Clump) were gone through for the benefits of members of the group who were not able to be present at these visits.

Grovewood: Looking at the criteria sheet for Grovewood, Cllr Alison Preedy raised an issue with regard to the comment of “there not being too many trees” and the possibility of Health and Safety assessments disagreeing with the assumption. It was stated that nearly every site was surrounded by trees so health and safety assessment would be the same for all and was not therefore specific to Grovewood. Clarification was sought on the requirement for the location of the play space and whether this was a requirement to be close to the centre of population or the centre of the Village. It was felt that there was not such an overlap with the Swillett for the Grovewood site but one of the main problems would be oversight in terms of the impact on housing in Grovewood and possible objections from residents. Views were also expressed that people bought houses in Grovewood because it was quiet. It was suggested by the Chairman that the group could try to second guess what people are going to think but that at this stage the group should not be precluding any site in terms of how people may react. It was further emphasized that residents objecting may happen on any of the sites under consideration and consideration of this is part of the planning process. The focus should be on identifying those sites that need to go to the second stage and not to judge the possible outcome at this stage.

The Clump (Valley Road): This site had been discounted on the site visit as not suitable on location, low density of housing, isolation and the fact that it was a small site.

Gun Dell: This has also been discounted previously.

Chorleywood Common Site 15: The Chairman expressed her view that this was one of the good sites to put forward. There was good oversight, it was good for walking to, the area is not generally used by dog walkers with dogs off the lead therefore from a dog fouling aspect it may be better than other areas of the Common. Cllr Trevett felt that a lot of people don't see this as part of the Common although stated that clearly it is and therefore all the rules apply but that therefore it may be less contentious. Others noted that the site had been identified 15 years ago and then by Officers 3 years ago therefore it must be a good site and should therefore stay on the list. Friends of Chorleywood Common questioned why it had been ruled out and were given the reason that it had been turned down by the Council 15 years ago because of local opposition. The point was again raised that there could be opposition for any of the sites considered.

There was then discussion on the motives behind the choice of sites and the fact that surveys and police reports produced last time seemed to have been ignored. It was pointed out that the current process was about making it a better independent process and there will be more information on each site considered. It was also stated that the three reports being sought on the short listed sites would this time not only identify if there was a problem but also how, if at all, it may be mitigated which would give a more balanced view.

The group discussed the possible ranking of the short listed sites with views being expressed that no ranking would mean no bias or priority and the experts can give an independent assessment of all the short listed sites. Cllr Keith Williams confirmed that the land owner of any chosen site would at some point have to give permission. The process for this was then discussed and it was agreed if any of the sites was on land owned by the Parish Council then this would need to go to Full Council for a decision. The view was also expressed that TRDC were asking the Parish Council for their views and recommendation on behalf of Chorleywood residents which would as a necessity go to Full Council.

(Secretaries Note: Whatever recommendation is put forward by the Working Group will be put to the most appropriate meeting of Full Council following the recommendation being made)

Warings Field: The site survey established overlap with the Swillett, isolation of the site, no passive surveillance. The view was expressed that a new Play space for Chorleywood should serve the maximum number of residents and have the least crossover with other sites e.g. the Swillett. Views were then sought on whether Warings field should be on the short list with isolation of the spot being a general voiced concern. At this stage Warings field remained on the short list.

Chorleywood Common Site 13: It was noted that this was the site that had been put forward in the previous considerations of a play space in Chorleywood. Some discussion then took place on the status of possible improvements to Shepherds Bridge. The Group were advised by Cllr Martin Trevett that the latest suggestion is that there will be a demarked pedestrian area across the Bridge but no raised pavements.

(Secretaries note: The Parish Council have not been advised formally of the latest thinking on the Bridge nor the likelihood of whether this particular solution will go forward or not)

Several members of the group noted that a major change since the last report regarding site 13 is that there was a much better situation with regard to parking at both Shepherds Bridge and War Memorial Hall permissive parking areas following the introduction of the parking scheme and it was suggested that this made Site 13 more accessible than before. It was questioned whether this should be noted on the survey for site 13. It was noted however that the improvements would affect site 15 as well. It was also noted that if consideration was now being given to those that would drive to the play space needing to be accommodated, other sites should not be ruled out where there are car parking issues. It was suggested that wherever a play space is put there will be a proportion of people who would have to drive but that if it is put in a place that a majority can walk to, less will need to drive and therefore the weighting of this factor is less. It was suggested that site 13 allows greater access to other areas of the Common to enjoy the other aspects of the Common. This generated considerable discussion on what families will and won't do on the Common. The issue of trees was also raised. Cllr Keith Williams made the point that trees are actually an important part of any play space.

The focus then returned on the sites left on the list:

- Chorleywood Common Site 15
- Chorleywood Common Site 13
- Chorleywood House Grounds
- Grovewood
- Warrings Field

and the need to get to a short list of 4. The question was raised as to whether there was any problem with a short list of five. Simone Tyson proposed excluding Warrings Field which was seconded by Cllr Martin Trevett and carried unanimously.

14/16 BRIEFS

The Chairman had drafted briefs for each of the three experts - The Police, CMS (or similar body), Play Specialists (TRDC Officers)- to use on each site. These had been made available at the meeting for consideration by the Group. Copies of the briefs as presented to the meeting are attached.

The costs and funding of the three surveys being requested was raised. Cllr Keith Williams confirmed that the Play Space Officers will look at the four sites at their cost and not out of the Play Space budget. The Chairman was not sure how the other elements would be funded.

The briefs were discussed and the following amendments made:

- Consultation with Herts Biological Records (acknowledging that the name had now changed) to be added to the CMS brief
- Consultation by the Play space officers with the Planning Department to be added to the Play Officers brief
- Recommendation for mitigation of any issues to be requested from the Police report.

The question was raised as to whether the individuals undertaking the surveys would be visiting the sites on their own or with someone from the group. It was suggested that they should be on their own to ensure complete independence of their reports.

(Secretaries note: it was subsequently agreed that the Chairman of the Advisory Group and the Chairman of the Council go together with the experts to ensure no bias is given to any of the experts)

Cllr Keith Williams pointed out that as the Anti Social team and Crime Prevention teams are now one that there would only be one contact need and undertook to provide this to the Chairman.

(Secretaries note: This was subsequently provided as Chief Inspector Deidre Dent)

The Contact for the Play Space Officers was noted as Charlotte Gomes.

Discussion also took place on whether the findings of the site surveys be given to the experts being asked to undertake the next stage of surveys. The general feeling of the group was that they should not be provided and that the experts undertake the surveys from scratch with no preconceived ideas that the site surveys may give them.

Following a request that background information be provided to the reports when produced, it was suggested that this would be reasonable if specific issues or difficulties came up but noted that professionals were being asked to undertake these surveys and should therefore be respected as such.

With the amendments made to the briefs there was further discussion on whether there should be a legal brief. This resulted in discussion on the byelaws where it was stated by Cllr Martin Trevett that it was quite clear that swings and roundabouts could be put on the Common with the Council's permission as they were present on Village Day. It was noted that this was for a one off event and not a permanent fixture. It was suggested that byelaws could be changed. The Chairman advised that whatever was being said about the byelaws, it would still be a requirement to go through a section 38 application when the legal issues would be covered. This led to discussion on how much knowledge the experts would have on the byelaws and the Scheme of regulation and whether this information should be included with the briefs. It was pointed out that the Play space officers were aware but also whether there was any harm in providing to all experts. It was agreed that the fact that there is regulation and byelaws governing the Common should be pointed out and added to the briefs.

(Secretaries Note: Changing of the byelaws is a time consuming process that ultimately involves submission to the Secretary of State. Previous experience of this involved about 8 submissions and a timeframe of months rather than weeks)

It was suggested that there should be only one point of reference back to the Group. This should be the Chairman and no discussion should take place between the experts and other members of the Group. This would ensure that there was no bias given and no suggestion of bias. Any request should therefore go through the Chairman of the Group who may then need to get information from the Clerk.

Initially it was felt that 4 weeks should be given for the reports to be undertaken which would give a report date of the 16th February. It would therefore not be possible to pull this together before the next Full Council meeting on the 10th February so there may be a need to suggest an extraordinary meeting of the Council. It was then suggested that it needed to be ascertained whether four weeks for CMS was achievable before any dates were set. Cllr Keith Williams confirmed that as the next Leisure Committee will be missed, with the forthcoming elections the next committee that would consider any report would be in June. He also confirmed that the Play space budget would be rolling forward as the project was moving forward.

(Secretaries note: CMS have subsequently confirmed that given the time of year, any survey undertaken at this time of year would not be fruitful and that therefore their surveys should be undertaken in late Spring/early Summer)

14/17 TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Given the uncertainty over the report completion dates no date of next meeting was set at the meeting. It was however confirmed that Monday evenings were not the most convenient for some members of the group and that Wednesdays would be better.

(Secretaries Note: The date of the next meeting has subsequently been provisionally arranged for 7.30pm Wednesday 18th March at the Parish Office).

14/18 CLOSURE

The Meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm closed at 9.36pm

These minutes have been checked and signed by the Chairman

SignedAgreed by email Date28.01.15.....

These minutes were agreed as a true and correct record at the Advisory Committee meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Signed..... Date.....