

Ref: Prestbury Parish Council Pavilion

SUPPORTING STATEMENT – PROPOSED EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO PAVILION TO FACILITATE INTERNAL REORGANISATION AND NEW COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ERECTION OF NEW TRACTOR/GROUND KEEPER’S STORE AT PRESTBURY PLAYING FIELDS, CHELTENHAM

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND


The project is part of the Prestbury Parish Council's plans for the development and improvement of community facilities at Prestbury Playing Fields. The Parish Council is seeking to use funds allocated to it by Cheltenham Borough Council from developer contributions acquired from the recent housing development at Starvehall Farm. Such contributions are specifically aimed at improving facilities in the local area for the benefit of the community.

In recent years the Parish Council has already invested in a new floodlit all-weather pitch for a variety of sports - a multi-use games area (MUGA) incorporating activity panels, an all-weather running track, outdoor gym equipment and enhanced children's play area to sit alongside tennis courts and senior and youth football pitches, the former being home to Prestbury Rovers FC and Prestbury Reserves and the latter home to Prestbury Phantoms Youth U10s.

The playing fields are served by the Pavilion building which provides changing rooms and facilities used by the football clubs and those using the tennis courts. The changing rooms, shower and toilet facilities have recently been completely refurbished along with a small meeting room. Solar panels were recently added to the building as part of the Parish Council's commitment to Cheltenham Zero.

The Pavilion building is home to the Parish Council's offices and a playgroup which has operated for 4 decades






The playgroup occupies a large proportion of the building and its immediate surroundings. The children have use of a large playroom at the front of the building, child accessible cloakroom and toilets with hand-washing facilities, and a large outdoor play area to the front of the pavilion building enclosed by low level park railings. In addition, the playgroup has its own kitchen space through which the children have access to a rear garden, enclosed with tall palisade fencing, where they can dig, plant, grow and harvest plants/vegetables or explore the world of bugs, grubs and pond life. The pavilion's roofspace also provides storage for books and a few other items used by the playgroup.

The nature of the playgroup use is such that, out of term time, the areas occupied by the enterprise have little in the way of alternative use.

In 2005 planning permission was granted to replace an existing separate tractor shed and store with a larger purpose built tractor shed and store as an extension to the rear of the main pavilion building. The completed extension comprising the tractor shed/store and its outdoor yard area is secured with tall galvanised steel/powder coated palisade fencing and accessed from the west side of the pavilion building through secure/lockable galvanised steel/powder coated gates.

The Parish Council employs a full-time groundsman to maintain its land at Prestbury Playing Fields, Barley Road Public Open Space and Robson Field. 



/s. During spring, summer and autumn the tractor is used on a daily basis to keep the playing surfaces and fields at their best. To exit and enter the tractor shed and compound the tractor has to be manoeuvred across pedestrian footpaths used to access the pavilion building from the car park and main entrance to the site. The Parish Council acknowledge this conflict between the vehicle and pedestrians, which includes small children attending the playgroup.

Furthermore, the recent introduction of new bike racks on the west side of the pavilion building and the establishment of Whiskers Coffee Bar in a kiosk between the car park and the building have increased pedestrian and cycle movement in the immediate area of the tractor compound/store.

Whiskers Coffee Bar has been a great success since its establishment. It serves the needs of all visitors using the facilities at the site whether that be dog walkers, adults/teens/parents and children using the sports/play equipment, MUGA, daily mile running track, tennis courts and those playing and attending the football training sessions and matches.

The Parish Council have carefully considered how best it can utilise the pavilion building and serve the community going forward and address some of the operational issues arising from the maintenance of the site. As such planning permission is being sought for a new groundsman's tractor store and compound on an area of existing hardstanding between the existing enclosed tennis courts to the east side of the pavilion building and the boundary with properties on Laurel Drive. This would minimise any conflict between the tractor and visitors to the playing fields and pavilion building. It would also provide a more direct route off the site for the tractor onto Prestbury Road when it is driven to Robson Field.

The relocation of the tractor store and compound away from the pavilion building would allow the existing tractor store to be refurbished and integrated into the main pavilion building to provide additional useable space. The application therefore includes proposals to convert the tractor store and install new doors and windows into that part of the building. This will allow for reorganisation of the internal and external facilities provided at the site and within the building. Specifically, the playgroup would relocate to the newly created area at the back of the building with a single outdoor play area and garden incorporating the former tractor compound and existing garden without the need for access through the kitchen.

It is intended that the rooms at the front of the pavilion building vacated by the playgroup would be used to provide a community hall/function room and café facilities with seating both inside and outside the front of the building with potential to expand on the existing provisions currently offered by Whiskers Coffee Bar.

Traditionally sports pavilions would offer refreshments, seating and shelter for those attending sporting fixtures. The enhanced facilities at the pavilion building would satisfy this need. The proposal requires the installation of new access doors to the café area on the front of the building but would not require any change of use as the community use of the building would remain unchanged.

Currently all windows and doors to the pavilion building are fitted with lockable metal shutters. These shutters are hinged and exceptionally bulky so much so that they are rarely all unlocked and opened. The proposed changes to the building would see these replaced with retractable overhead shutters which would vastly improve ease of use, whether electronically or manually operated, and the visual appearance of the building when in use.

This statement supports the application for the proposed works and provides a more detailed description of works to accompany the submitted plans.

THE SITE

The Prestbury Playing Fields site comprises an area of 2.87 hectares located approximately 0.5 miles southwest of the village centre. It is bordered to the south by Prestbury Road, to the west by Barley Road Public Open Space, to the north by New Barn Close/New Barn Mews and to the east by Laurel Drive. The main access to the site is off New Barn Close which provides for pedestrians (able-bodied and disabled), cyclists and motor vehicles. A car park is located at this main entrance along the boundary with properties on New Barn Close. Further pedestrian entrances are located off Prestbury Road and Barley Road Public Open Space and a vehicular access solely for use by the tractor off Prestbury Road.

The facilities offered at Prestbury Playing Fields are extensive and well used by the community and the Parish Council has invested heavily in new and improved facilities over recent years. Facilities include a new floodlit all-weather pitch for a variety of sports (MUGA) incorporating activity panels, an all-weather running track, outdoor gym equipment, children's play area, 2no. enclosed tennis courts and a senior and junior football pitches. The pavilion building includes the Parish Council Offices, the community based playgroup Little Explorers and the groundsman's tractor shed/store with secure compound.

THE PROPOSAL

The application is supported by plans and documents detailing the changes to the existing pavilion building and the new groundsman's compound and tractor store.

The application would see the new groundsman's compound and tractor store located at the northeast corner of site on an existing tarmac hardstanding area adjacent to the existing tennis courts enclosure and along the boundary with properties on Laurel Drive. The new tractor store would be a steel building measuring 6m by 10m with a shallow pitched roof with 3m eaves and 3.529m ridge height. It would be positioned away from the boundaries with neighbouring properties on Laurel Drive, tight against the tennis courts enclosure at the back northeast corner. The compound would be secured by new galvanised steel palisade gates and fencing to match the existing palisade fencing around the pavilion building located towards the front of the tennis courts enclosure.

The groundsman will maintain his existing working hours and practices. The tractor store will house the Parish Council's tractor and machinery along with all oil and weedkillers (all in a locked cabinet). Light maintenance work is undertaken inside, primarily over the winter months, as is the current practice. Such work would not involve continual noise from machinery, just occasional drilling or cutting. Two trailers, a bowser and various items of building maintenance material, not subject to deterioration from the elements/weather would be stored outside as currently. Activities outside are limited to the washing of the tractor and the very occasional cutting and drilling. It should be noted that the tractor shed and compound currently occupy a space to the rear of houses on New Barn Close and New Barn Lane. The activities are currently concentrated in a much more confined area closer to these residential properties [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It should be further noted that relocating the tractor store from the pavilion building will remove the dangers associated with the tractor entering and exiting the tractor compound across pedestrian footpaths to and from the pavilion building and playgroup. The grassed areas along these paths regularly gets churred up by the tractor especially in the wetter months which further impedes pedestrian access to the building.

The external works to the pavilion building comprise new windows and doors to the converted tractor shed/store, new double door opening to the proposed café facility and roller shutters to all windows and doors. The existing tractor shed roller shutter door would be replaced with glazed doors and panels which would serve as the new entrance to the [REDACTED] playgroup. A simple canopy over the entrance door would provide some shelter.

The existing ridged concrete tractor compound would be resurfaced with a combination of wetpour and soft surface play area for the safety and enjoyment of the children attending the playgroup and to minimise/absorb the noise of play equipment including pedal cars and push along buggies.



Examples of wetpour and soft play surfaces

The maximum number of children attending the playgroup is 24 and not all would be playing in the outdoor play area at any one time. [REDACTED] games and play equipment is generally limited in its nature and extent to the likes of small balancing beams/boards/balls, nursery trampolines with supporting handles and miniature basketball nets. The play surface could be designed to incorporate traditional games like hopscotch. Quiet areas for outdoor reading would be included. This new play area would link to the existing garden used for digging, planting, growing and harvesting plants/vegetables and explore the world of bugs, grubs and pond life. The turfed area would be extended to further enhance these facilities [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It is considered that relocating the playgroup within the pavilion building and providing a single outdoor play area and garden would be more safe and secure for the children than the existing arrangement which includes 2 separate outdoor areas including a large area at the front of the building enclosed only by low level park railings and a garden only accessible through the existing kitchen. The way the playgroup operates would otherwise not change and the establishment would continue to offer the children opportunities to play and learn in a fun, safe and exciting environment.

The outdoor play area at the front of the building would be removed with the area likely repurposed for outdoor seating.

The creation of a function room for community events would significantly enhance the Pavilion as a community facility. Prestbury Playing Fields is a great asset to Prestbury offering so much to young and old, able-bodied and disabled alike. It is a hub of activity on a daily basis and hosts home and visiting senior and junior football teams most weekends during the football season. The alterations to the pavilion building and relocation of the tractor store and compound would improve overall safety of the site, enhance existing facilities and provide a more to the people of Prestbury and visiting groups that use the site.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Chapter 17 of the adopted Cheltenham Plan states that 'Most people want to live in an area that has a strong sense of community....Ultimately, bringing people together and providing sufficient opportunities for social activity contributes to quality of life, health and well-being.' Policy INF4 of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) seeks to protect and enhance community facility provision across the JCS area. Policy SD4 of the JCS complements INF4 in terms of the emphasis that needs to be placed on good design in achieving sustainable development. Policies C11 and C12 of the Cheltenham Plan seek to secure community infrastructure benefits and sports and open space provision from development proposals.

The proposals are supported by local and national planning policies.

CONCLUSION

The Parish Council is committed in its aims and purpose to serve the community and provide enhanced facilities at the Prestbury Playing Fields grounds and pavilion building. The current proposals are part of the ongoing plans for development of the site for enhanced community use and benefit. The recent investment in the playing fields has been welcomed by all user groups, young and old, able-bodied and disabled. The Prestbury Playing Field site is a well-used, well-loved facility and these proposals will only serve to build on its existing strengths.