

SUBJECT:	CHIPPENHAM PLAY AREA, MONMOUTH
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	25th July 2018
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL MONMOUTH WARDS

1. PURPOSE

To agree the location and refurbishment of the play area at Chippenham Mead;

2. RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 the Council adopts the area shown on the plan attached at **Appendix B** as its preferred location for redevelopment of the Chippenham Mead play area and that it proceeds to submit applications for planning permission and village green consent to enable the project to proceed;
- 2.2 if and when planning permission and village green consent is granted, the Council works in consultation with interested parties in the locality on the detailed layout and content of the refurbished play area to ensure the provision of a safe, inclusive and exciting fixed play area on Chippenham Mead.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 In 2014 the Council allocated Section 106 (S106) funding of £335,000 to eleven projects, one of which was the refurbishment of the main town centre play area at Chippenham Mead. A sum of £85,000 was allocated for this project. The Chippenham play area is the only fixed play provision to serve a large part of the town located between Cinderhill Street and the Dixon roundabout.
- 3.2 The Council's objective is to provide a safe, inclusive and exciting fixed play area on the village green. To achieve this, the location and the design of the play area need to be considered. This report deals only with the issue of where the play area should be located. If it is decided to locate the play area on any part of the village green other than in its existing position then planning permission and village green consent from the Welsh Government is required, due to the fact that Chippenham Mead is a registered village green. In considering the alternative locations, the council wishes to establish a relocated play area of (or as close to) the same size as the existing play area, which measures 1,410 m².
- 3.3 Up until January of this year the council's intention was to refurbish the play area in its current position. This view was supported by the Town Council, which considered the matter in May 2014 and in January 2017. However, at a meeting held on 15th January this year, the Town Council members expressed the view that the current location was not the best place for the play area. This view was

reinforced at a further Town Council meeting held on 15th May. At a site meeting on 5th February this year Cabinet members also came to the conclusion that the existing site is unsuitable, principally because of road traffic noise from the adjoining A449 dual carriageway, the smell of diesel fumes and the oppressive appearance of the buildings that form the rear boundary to the existing play area.

- 3.4 During the past four years a number of possible alternative locations for the play area on the village green have been suggested. Initially four sites were identified, previously referred to as Areas A (the existing site), B, C and D. Over the last twelve months, a few variants of these sites have also been considered (A+, D- and C+) plus one potential new area, Area E.
- 3.5 In addition to the play area provision, the village green is used extensively for sport, in particular by the town's football and rugby clubs, which have a joint membership of over 500 registered players, the vast majority of whom use the sports pitches on the village green on a regular basis. Both clubs are run by volunteers that provide coaching and sports participation opportunities to children, young people and adults resident in the town. The council is committed to supporting local sports clubs to maintain and develop these activities. For this reason, when deciding on the revised location of the play area, the council does not wish to reduce the number of sports pitches available on Chippenham Mead.
- 3.6 The council is conscious of the need to maintain the status of the village green in line with both the appropriate legislation and the scheme of regulation drawn up by Monmouth Borough Council in 1987. However, this has to be balanced against its responsibilities under the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires local authorities to take into account the health well-being of its residents when making important decisions.
- 3.7 Since the funding was originally allocated in 2014, and more particularly over the last two years, the location of the play area has been the subject of extensive local debate and discussion and a number of alternatives have been put out to public consultation. Although there is a body of opinion that the play area should remain in its existing location, the majority of responses received favour relocation of the play area to another part of the village green.
- 3.8 There is a need to make an early decision on the location issue, because the availability of the funding for this project has a limited timescale. Under the terms of the original Section 106 Agreement, the "use by" date for the funding was 12th August 2019. This deadline has since been extended to August 2021 by agreement with the developer. If it is not spent within this timescale then it has to be returned, plus any accrued interest, to the developer that contributed the funding under the terms of the S106 Agreement.

4.0 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 4.1 Attached to this report at **Appendix A** is a full options appraisal, which looks at the various potential sites for relocation.

4.2 Based on this appraisal, and on the views so far expressed by members of both the Town Council and the County Council, plus feedback from local groups and individuals received during the public consultations undertaken to date, it is being recommended to Cabinet that the play area should be relocated to the position shown on the plan attached to this report at **Appendix B**.

4.3 This will involve realigning the Under 8s junior rugby pitch on the triangular area of land shown on the plan. By doing this, it provides sufficient space to develop a play area of the same size as the existing play area. The area occupied by the existing play area next to the A449 dual carriageway would then be returned to an open landscaped area, with additional tree planting.

5.0 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Please see attached at **Appendix C**.

6.0 REASONS

6.1 To enable the Council to proceed with improved play provision on Chippenham Mead, which is strategically located in the centre of the town. The upgrading works are long overdue as the existing play area is in poor condition and the fixed play equipment offers very little play value.

6.2 To ensure that a safe, inclusive and exciting play area is provided to meet local needs.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The original funding of £85,000 allocated to this project back in June 2014 has been increased to £102,196 via a single member decision on 27th June this year, by re-allocating an underspend of £17,196 on the Monmouth Gateway project;

7.2 If the recommendations in this report are agreed and if the planning and village green consent applications are approved then the available Section 106 balances from the Section 106 Agreement will be used within the revised "spend by" date agreed with the developer.

8.0 WELL BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

Please see attached at **Appendix D**.

9.0 CONSULTEES

Cabinet Members
Senior Leadership Team
Head of Legal Services
Friends of Chippenham Mead
Monmouth Sports Association
Monmouth Rugby Club
Monmouth Civic Society
Assistant Head of Finance/Deputy S151 Officer

Local County Council Members
Monmouth Town Council
Monitoring Officer
Open Spaces Society
Natural Resources Wales
Monmouth Football Club
Monmouth Archaeology

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Cabinet on 4th June 2014

Village Green Scheme of Regulation dated March 1987

Friends of Chippenham Mead Proposals Document – December 2016

Draft report to Cabinet on 1st February 2017 (published but not considered)

Draft report to Cabinet on 6th June 2018 (not published officially but used as the basis for local consultation)

11.0 AUTHOR

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Report to Cabinet on 25th July 2018 – Chippenham Play Area**OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

The Council's view is that the play area should be located on the village green, as this is the main open space in the centre of the town and it is accessible to the area of the town that it is intended to serve. However, during the consultation period, there have been suggestions that there may be suitable alternative sites on which to locate the play area.

There are currently twenty play areas in Monmouth – of these fifteen are located on the Cinderhill Street/Rockfield Road axis, there are two play areas in Wyesham (Tudor Road and Woodland Road), there is a small play area in Troy Gardens and a small play area intended for the under 5s age group which was provided in Osbaston approximately two years ago.

The play area on Chippenham Mead is located in a strategic position and is intended to serve a large part of the town located between Cinderhill Street at the bottom end of the town and the Dixton roundabout at the top end.

Possible Alternative Sites

Officers have looked at the other open spaces in the town and none of them are large enough or centrally located enough to serve the catchment area outlined above, except the two spaces referred to below.

Monnow Bridge Site

There is an open space adjacent to the old Monnow Bridge which is large enough to accommodate a play area, but officers have not looked at this in more detail because:

- it would mean locating the play area to a position on the Cinderhill Street/Rockfield Road axis where there are fifteen play areas already;
- this site would be further away from that part of the town which it is intended to serve;
- access to this piece of land is more dangerous than the village green, as families and children would need to cross Blestium Street (which is the main southern access route into the town) and the busy Cattle Market car park;
- it would mean locating a play area immediately adjacent to one of the most important historic monuments in the county;
- it would sanitise an area of land that will be an important element of the Monmouth Gateway project, if that scheme is ever looked at in the future.

Village Green (Riverside) Site

At the Monmouth Town Council meeting on 15th January, a suggestion was made that the play area could perhaps be relocated to an alternative site on that part of the village green located between the A449 dual carriageway and the River Wye, where the town allotments are also situated. Officers would not recommend such a move, due to the following factors:

- this part of the village green is in a much more remote location, away from that part of the town which it is intended to serve;

- this part of the village green is bordered on one side by the River Wye, on another side by the River Monnow and on another side by the A449 dual carriageway and it is more prone to flooding than that part of the village green located on the town side of the A449;
- access to this part of the village green is much more difficult to achieve, particularly for prams, push chairs/buggies and wheelchairs;
- there would be direct conflict between parents and children accessing/leaving the play area on foot and those accessing the allotments in cars on the narrow riverbank of the Monnow, which is the main vehicle and pedestrian access under the A449 to the far side of the village green.

It has been concluded, therefore, that the only sensible location for the refurbished play area is a site on that part of the village green located on the “town side” of the A449. Any site chosen other than the existing play area site will require the Council to obtain planning permission and Welsh Government consent under the village green scheme of regulation.

Objective

The Council’s objective is to provide a safe, inclusive and exciting play area on Chippenham Mead village green that will create a rich play environment as defined in the Welsh Government’s statutory guidance.

The purpose of this report is to agree the location of the play area and to do this the main considerations are those of safety and inclusivity. The detailed design & layout and the choice of play equipment will be the main determining factors in creating a rich play environment after a decision on the location has been made - and, hopefully, planning permission and village green consent have been granted.

There now follows an assessment of the various locations that have so far been considered. The issues considered as part of this assessment include:

- Accessibility
- Safety
- Air pollution
- Noise pollution
- Proximity to residential properties

Proximity to public toilets and car parking are secondary considerations - there are two public car parks in Blestium Street and one in Glendower Street. The closest public toilets are located in Agincourt Street (240m from the Chippenhamgate Street entrance to the village green) and next to the original Monnow Bridge (opposite the Robin Hood public house), which are some 250m from the Blestium Street entrance to the village green. The car park and toilets at Waitrose are intended for patrons of the supermarket and are not public facilities.

Area A	Site of the existing play area
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface, but the main access into the play area is direct from Chippenhamgate Street, where there are parked cars and traffic movement immediately next to the play area entrance gate
Safety	The site is not particularly well overlooked – children playing cannot be seen from the rest of the village green. Because access is direct from Chippenhamgate Street there is potential for conflict between pedestrians accessing the play area and cars using the road
Air pollution	Air pollution is measured from a site immediately adjacent to the play area but closer to the A449. The results are included in returns to the Welsh Government and are published on the Council's website. The results reveal that the site is well within the air pollution guidelines for nitrogen dioxide for both long term and short term exposure.
Noise pollution	Noise levels were measured on site in March 2018 and the levels recorded were in excess of the WHO (World Health Organisation) guideline of 55dBA – readings were taken at two different times of the day and these measured 63.9dBA and 61.6dBA
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located in Chippenhamgate Street, a distance of 38m away
Comment: The general consensus that this area is no longer suitable for a children's play area	

Area A+	Existing site with some landscape modifications
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Access would be on a flat level surface, but the landscape modifications proposed would relocate play area entrance to a position on the village green, rather than direct from Chippenhamgate Street
Safety	The landscape modifications proposed would have lowered the level of the grass bund to allow a better view of the play area, but there would have been a "blind spot" as a result of the bund located between the two existing footpaths leading onto the green from Chippenhamgate Street
Air pollution	Ongoing air pollution monitoring reveals that the site is well within pollution guidelines for nitrogen dioxide for both long term and short term exposure.
Noise pollution	The modifications proposed include the erection of a 2m high acoustic fence along the top of the re-positioned bund, intended to reduce the noise levels from the A449 dual carriageway – but there is no conclusive evidence of the effect of this proposal.
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located in Chippenhamgate Street, a distance of 39m away
Comment: Landscape alterations improve the footprint area but still too close to the A449	

Area B	Site next to existing Under 8s rugby pitch
Footprint area	986 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface, direct from one of the main footpaths on the village green.
Safety	The site is well overlooked from the main footpath that leads from Chippenhamgate Street into Blestium Street and is perhaps the best used footpath on the green. This site is also well overlooked from the permissive footpath that runs along the back of the village green, which is parallel to the access road to the rear of the properties in Glendower Street. Access is also much safer here when the play area is approached from the direction of Blestium Street, as the access is fully visible.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide levels) have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be significantly less than those at Area A or Area A+.
Noise pollution	Noise levels have not been measured at Area B but it is safe to conclude that the noise levels on this site are less than those at Area E
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located in Glendower Street. Area B is 21m to the closest residential curtilage and 43m to the façade of the nearest dwelling.
Comment: Restricted site area – the loss of one rugby pitch has been suggested	

Area C	Site adjacent to Blestium Street, next to Chippenham Court
Footprint area	586 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface direct from one of the footpaths on the village green - the site can also be accessed via existing set of steps from Blestium Street
Safety	The site is well overlooked from one of the main footpaths on the village green, as described in relation to Area B above. It is also overlooked from Blestium Street.
Air Pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide) levels have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be significantly less than those at Area A or Area A+. Some concerns have been expressed that nitrogen dioxide levels here could be significant from traffic using Blestium Street but there is no evidence to support such a claim
Noise pollution	Noise levels here measured 52.7dBA & 54dBA in March, which are below the WHO guideline of 55dBA
Proximity to residential properties	Area C is 20m to the façade of the nearest flat at Chippenham Court, where there are 32 flats
Comment: Size of the site is very restricted and it is overshadowed by large mature lime trees	

Area C+	Same as Area C but with a larger footprint created by shortening the Under 11s rugby pitch by 10m
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface direct from one of the footpaths on the village green - the site can also be accessed via the existing steps from Blestium Street
Safety	The site is well overlooked from one of the main footpaths on the village green, as described in relation to Area B above. It is also overlooked from Blestium Street.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide) levels have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be significantly less than those at Area A or Area A+.
Noise pollution	Noise levels here measured 52.7dBA and 54dBA, which are below the WHO guideline of 55dBA, same as Area C
Proximity to residential properties	Same as Area C - 20m to the façade of the nearest flat at Chippenham Court, where there are 32 flats
Comment: Amended site is larger but still overshadowed by trees – plus there is a registered footpath that crosses part of the site	

Area D	Site located close to the main vehicular access gates onto Chippenham (next to demountable storage cabins)
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Flat, level surface gives good pedestrian access from existing footpath but the site forms part of the main vehicular access onto the village green and there is a 7m “exclusion zone” due to the recent installation of a rising water main
Safety	The site is well overlooked from one of the main footpaths on the village green - it is also well overlooked from Blestium Street.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide levels) have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be significantly less than those at Area A or Area A+ - possibly slightly higher than Area C or C+ due its closer proximity to Blestium Street and the roundabout next to the second Monnow Bridge
Noise pollution	Noise levels have not been measured at Area D but it is safe to conclude that the noise levels on this site will be similar or slightly higher than those at Area C
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located at Howells Place, a distance of 100m away
Comment: Site not suitable due to access issues and sewer restrictions	

Area D-	Same general location as Area D, but does not interfere with the vehicular access onto the village green
Footprint area	705 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface direct from one of the main footpaths on the village green – the one that runs parallel to the boundary of the Monmouth Sportsground
Safety	The site is well overlooked from one of the main footpaths on the village green - it is also overlooked from Blestium Street.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide levels) have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be significantly less than those at Area A or Area A+ - possibly slightly higher than Area C or C+ due its closer proximity to Blestium Street and the roundabout next to the second Monnow Bridge
Noise pollution	Noise levels have not been measured at Area D but it is safe to conclude that the noise levels on this site will be similar or slightly higher than those at Area C
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located at Howells Place, a distance of 110m away
Comment: this site involves significant loss of trees and has a very restricted footprint area	

Area E	Site located at the top end of senior rugby pitches between the two main footpaths leading from Chippenhamgate Street, on the village green side of the earth bund
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Excellent access on a flat level surface from both main footpaths on the village green
Safety	The site is well overlooked from both of the main footpaths on the village green. It is also well overlooked from the rest of the village green.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide levels) have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be less than those at Area A or Area A+
Noise pollution	Noise levels here measured 55.2dBA & 57.6dBA in March, which are slightly in excess of the WHO guideline of 55dBA
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located in Chippenhamgate Street, a distance of 52m away
Comment: This site is highly visible from most parts of the village green but it does conflict with the rugby training area adjacent to one of the senior rugby pitches on the green	

Area B+ (recommended site)	Located on triangular area of the village green between the main footpath (that leads from Chippenhamgate Street and Blestium Street) and the buildings at Chippenham Court
Footprint area	1,410 m ²
Accessibility	Access is on a flat level surface, direct from one of the main footpaths on the village green.
Safety	The site is well overlooked from the main footpath on the village green – this is the footpath that leads from Chippenhamgate Street into Blestium Street and is perhaps the best used footpath on the green. This site is also well overlooked from the permissive footpath that runs along the back of the village green on top of the grass bund, which is parallel to the access road to the rear of the properties in Glendower Street. Access is also much safer here when the play area is approached from the direction of Blestium Street, as the access is fully visible.
Air pollution	Air pollution (nitrogen dioxide levels) have not been measured at this site but it is safe to conclude that nitrogen dioxide levels here will be less than those at Area A or Area A+
Noise pollution	Noise levels have not been measured at Area B but it is safe to conclude that the noise levels on this site are below those at Area E
Proximity to residential properties	The closest residential properties are located at the Henry Burton Homes site in Glendower Street. The distance between the play area in this location and the residential curtilage of the Henry Burton Homes site is 20m and it is 30m to façade of the closest residential unit.
Comment: Realignment of the Under 8s rugby pitch creates a suitable sized play area footprint that has a good balance of light and shade. Also this site does not involve the loss of any trees	