

Development of Land off Leigh Road, Wimborne

Item for Decision:	To consider proposals from PMP for the future development and to look at improving public access and security
Contributors:	Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Neil Farmer, Head of Community Services
Financial Implications:	Capital Expenditure of £20,000.
Council Priorities:	COM1 COM2 COM3 COM4 CUL1 CUL2 CUL3
Recommendations:	It is RECOMMENDED that: (a) The recommendations of PMP be supported; and (b) we do not proceed at this time with the development of the land for recreational purposes, but improve public access and security, with the costs being met from within the existing capital programme budget of Bytheway.

1. Applicable Lead Member Area(s)

1.1 Culture;

2. Crime and Disorder – Section 17 Implications

2.1 Cultural services are an important tool in maintaining high levels of Community Safety.

3. Introduction

3.1 In 1999 the Council purchased 14.9ha (36.85acres) of agricultural land of Leigh Road, Wimborne, which had been identified under its local plan policy 12.64 as land suitable to be developed to meet identified shortfalls in sport and recreation provision.

3.2 Since 1999 the land has been managed by this Council's Countryside Management Service, who also manages adjoining land known as Leigh Common, which is not in this Council's ownership. Since 2000 local residents have been allowed permitted access rights to the land for informal recreation use.

3.3 In October 2004 the Council put out to tender a development brief in order to engage consultants to:

- (a) Assess and understand the level of unmet formal and informal sporting and recreational needs that might be accommodated using the land identified within this report;
- (b) Assess the suitability of the site against a number of development options;
- (c) Consult and then recommend a preferred development scheme for the site.

- 3.4 PMP Consultants from London were appointed in November 2004 and provided interim reports to this Committee on the 15 June 2005 and 29 March 2006. An executive summary of their final report and recommendations are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. A copy of the final consolidated report has been placed in the Members Room or can be viewed online at <http://www.eastdorset.gov.uk/democracy/cme/details.asp?ID=1179>

4. Final Recommendations

- 4.1 PMP's final recommendation's (see paragraph 4.3) try to take account of all the varying needs and aspirations that a number of strategic clubs have, the concerns of local residents and importantly seeks to find a development option that would be acceptable in planning terms for this important green field site.
- 4.2 It is clear that coming up with a development scheme which meets all the various needs and aspirations of a diverse range on interested parties is unlikely to be achieved without compromise on all sides.
- 4.3 It is PMP's considered option that with a number of modifications to Scheme Bii (page 52 of the consolidated report) it would be possible to commit to a scheme that would please a number of sports clubs and displease the smallest number of local residents. The revised scheme Bii would include:
- (i) Football pitches for Allendale Football Club (including one fenced off to league standards). Such a pitch to be located close to the clubhouse/changing facilities so that a future covered standing area for up to 50 persons could be catered for;
 - (ii) Rugby pitches for Wimborne Rugby Football Club. If the Council decide against providing a licensed facility on site then only two pitches would be needed and would be predominately used by the junior sections of the club but it is PMP's recommendation that every effort is made to relocate the club in its entirety;
 - (iii) A large area of land is kept in its current state for informal recreation and dog walking;
 - (iv) A Trim trail around the perimeter of the site or the perimeter of the pitches is provided;
 - (v) A skate park or similar facility for older children is provided;
 - (vi) A clubhouse/changing facility with associated parking.
- 4.4 This modified scheme has a substantial knock on effect for other community facilities. At Leigh Park Recreation Ground, Wimborne the parking issues surrounding the rugby club's usage of the two pitches would be removed and it would allow the local community greater use of this green space. It would also allow potential greater use of the existing buildings for community projects.
- 4.5 Relocating Allendale FC would free up space at Redcotts Recreation Ground, Wimborne for the tennis club to expand and again allow the local residents greater use of the green space.

- 4.6 In order to cater for older children a skate park is also recommended. The need for such a facility is well established with Colehill Parish Council and suitable pathways should be provided in order for children from the Wimborne area to gain access as well. The possibility of additional play facilities for younger children should also be considered and it is envisaged that the Council's Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 assessment would be better able to inform this need. PMP suggest that the Council may also wish to investigate whether facilities for older persons are desirable on site.
- 4.7 It is recommended that a proportion of the site be retained in a semi natural state. This will allow it to continue to be used for informal recreation and will also help to better retain the current feel of the site.
- 4.8 It is not envisaged that a synthetic turf pitch (STP) would be included in a revised scheme however the Council may wish to reconsider this as such a facility would be the main revenue stream for the site. It is recommended that further analysis be undertaken to ascertain the demand for such a facility in the area particularly as a similar facilities is currently provided at the Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Whilst this revised scheme has not been fully costed it is estimated that the capital cost of partially transforming agricultural land into formal sports pitches, providing a clubhouse, associated car parking and access of the highway would be not less than £2.5million. The revenue cost of the scheme would be in the region of £1.50 per band D property.
- 5.2 The opportunities for the Council to apply for external funding are extremely limited; therefore the full cost of development is likely to fall on this Council's capital programme. The Council's medium term capital strategy would indicate that sufficient funding is not available over the next five years to finance this scheme when taking into account all its other priorities and even if it were, the increased revenue costs associated with managing the project may also be difficult for the Council to accommodate in the current climate.

6. Illegal Occupancy of Council Land

- 6.1 Members were advised verbally at the last meeting of this Committee that the land referred to in this report had been subject to an illegal occupation by groups of travellers, seeking work in the area and visiting the Blandford Steam Fair twice this summer and for a total of three times in the last three years.
- 6.2 It is clear that this land will continue to be a risk from illegal occupant unless permanent security improvements are made to the site particularly along the Leigh Road frontage. It is also important that pedestrian and cycling access is maintained and improved to ensure that local residents can continue to enjoy using the site.
- 6.3 In addition, and if Members are minded to support the second recommendation contained within this report it is important that various maintenance works are also carried out to ensure that the fields and adjoining common land are kept well

drained. Appendix 2 to this report details proposed works with estimated costs of £20,000 that need to be carried out to improve the security of the site and bring its drainage scheme up to standard.

6.4 The Bytheway capital programme has an allocated budget of £50,000 of which £15,000 has been committed to date.

6.5 The Site Plan at Appendix 3 to this report, details where proposed works are to be undertaken.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Final Consultants Consolidated Report

7.2 Appendix 2 – List of security and improvement works

7.3 Appendix 3 – Site Plan

8. Background Papers

8.1 None

Leigh Road Development Plan Executive Summary

Summary

- 1.1 In 1999 the National Trust, who owned the land (which is the subject of this report), put a large amount of their land around Wimborne and Colehill on the market. One of the Lots offered for sale was 14.9ha (36.85 acres) identified under the Council's local plan policy 12.64.
- 1.2 The Local Plan recognised that during the Plan period there is likely to be a need for additional formal sports pitches to serve the needs of clubs and sports organisations in the Wimborne/Colehill area. The most suitable area of level ground adjacent to both settlements is the site proposed in policy 12.64. The Council secured ownership of the land in early 2000.
- 1.3 During 1999 the Council's District Plan was subject, as is normal, to a Full Planning Inquiry. Detailed in pages 5 to 12 is information relation to public objections to the Council's proposals, the Council's case for allocating the land for formal open space and the Planning Inspector's findings.
- 1.4 In paragraph 17.9 of the Inspectors report he said:

"In conclusion, I accept the appropriateness of this proposal on this green belt site. I also consider that many of the fears of local residents are unfounded. The scale of development must preserve the openness of the green belt. The site is of sufficient size as to be able to accommodate the proposal without leading to unacceptable harm to those living nearby. Accordingly, I propose no change to the plan."
- 1.5 In October 2004 the Council put out to competitive tender a development brief in order to engage Consultants to assist it with a number of factors namely:
 - (a) Assess and understand the level of unmet formal and informal sporting and recreational needs that might be accommodated using the land identified within this report;
 - (b) Assess the suitability of the site against a number of development options;
 - (c) Consult and recommend on a preferred development scheme for the site.
- 1.6 The tender brief is detailed on pages 13 to 15 of this report.
- 1.7 PMP Consultants were appointed in November 2004 to undertake the work which they carried out in three phases with the company reporting back to the Council at the end of each phase.
- 1.8 The stage one report which looked at the assessment and understanding of need (see pages 16 to 44) came up with three possible development options, see pages 39 to 44. The Council disregarded option C as they felt it would do little in terms of assisting current sports clubs and thus, it was not worthwhile considering further.
- 1.9 At a meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee held on the 15 June 2005 the Council asked PMP to prepare possible site development schemes

for options A and B. Their stage 2 report is detailed on pages 45 to 123 of this report.

- 1.10 Following the results of an ecological survey, options A and B were split into two. This was done in order to show the level of provision which might be able to be accommodated by retaining the positioning of existing trees and ditches and the repositioning of those trees and ditches. The various layout options are detailed on pages 118 to 122.
- 1.11 The estimated capital costs for these schemes ranged from £2.75 million to £3.2 million, with the estimated revenue cost to the Council on a Band D property ranging from £1.31p to £2.15p. The actual cost of developing this site will only be truly known when any preferred scheme is selected and calculated in significantly more detail.
- 1.12 At a meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee held on the 29 March 2006 the Council asked PMP to consult with major stakeholders on the various options and report back their findings to a future meeting.
- 1.13 PMP's stage 3 consultation report is detailed on pages 124 to 158 of this report. It identifies the scheme each of the key stakeholders would prefer, takes account of the options of local Councillors, other local authorities and local residents.
- 1.14 PMP's recommendation (see below), tries to take account of all the varying needs and aspirations that clubs have, the concerns of local residents and importantly seeks to find a development option that would be acceptable in planning terms for this important green field site. It is clear that the finding of a development scheme which meets the needs and aspirations of all interested parties is unlikely to be achieved with compromise on all sides.
- 1.15 PMP's conclusions:

With a number of modifications to Scheme Bii it would be possible to commit to a scheme that would please a number of sports clubs and displease the smallest number of local residents. The revised scheme Bii would include:

- Football pitches for Allendale FC (including one fenced off to league standards). Such a pitch to be located close to the clubhouse/changing facilities so that a future covered standing area for up to 50 persons could be catered for.
- Rugby pitches for Wimborne RUFC. If the Council decide against providing a licensed facility on site then only two pitches would be needed and would be predominantly used by the junior sections of the club but it is PMP's recommendation that every effort is made to relocate the club in its entirety.
- A large area of land is kept in its current state for informal recreation and dog walking.
- Trim trail around the perimeter of the site or the perimeter of the pitches.
- A skate park or similar play facility for older children.
- A clubhouse/changing facility with associated parking.

In this scenario the needs of Allendale FC and Wimborne RUFC are met in full and this has a substantial knock on effect. At Leigh Park Recreation Ground the parking issues surrounding the rugby club's usage of the two pitches would be removed and it would allow the local community greater usage of this green space. Relocating Allendale FC would free up space at Redcotts Recreation Ground for the tennis club to expand and again allow the local residents greater use of the green space.

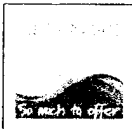
In order to cater for older children a skate park should be provided. The need for such a facility is well established with Colehill Parish Council and suitable pathways should be provided in order for children from Wimborne area to be able to use it. The possibility of additional play areas for younger children should also be considered and it is envisaged that the Council's Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 assessment would better be able to inform this need. The Council may also wish to investigate whether facilities for older persons are desirable on the site.

It is recommended that a proportion of the site be retained in a semi natural state. This will allow it to continue to be used for informal recreation and will also help to better retain the current feel of the site. It would also help to alleviate the issue of dog mess on pitches.

It is not envisaged that a synthetic turf pitch (STP) would be included in a revised scheme however the Council may wish to reconsider this as such a facility would be the main revenue stream for the site. It is recommended that further analysis be undertaken to ascertain the demand for such a facility in the area.

List of Security and Improvement Works

	Work	Description of Work	Estimated Cost £
1.	Drainage	Clean out all on site drainage ditches and create open water course along Leigh Road frontage	10,000
2.	Bridge	Build permanent bridge to accommodate pedestrian and cycle access from Leigh Road	2,500
3.	Security Gating	Upgrade gating arrangements in north east corner of site in order to improve security. Restrict and improve access to site from Cutlers Place for walkers and cyclists only	3,000
4	Signage	Install improve signage for site	1,000
5.	Planting	Carrying additional hedging and tree planting works in and around site	2,000
	Contingency		1,500
	Total		20,000



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