

REPORT REGARDING SECTION 106 FUNDING FOR RECREATION

Background

As part of the planning conditions for the construction of 100 houses between the village and the eastern by-pass (since named Hazeldene Close), the developers agreed to contribute £150,000 “towards the provision of a floodlit artificial turf multi use games area or other recreational facilities” within the village. This money is held by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) but they have entrusted the process of identifying the most appropriate use for this money to the Parish Council.

From 2009 onwards, informal discussions were held with Eynsham Football Club with a view to identifying a suitable site in the village for an artificial pitch. The Football Club had hoped to be able to bring in additional funding, but these hopes were not realised and in 2011 they indicated that they could not make a significant contribution towards the scheme.

In the meantime, and unconnected with the Section 106 agreement, Eynsham Primary School secured planning permission for the construction of a floodlit synthetic multi use games area (MUGA) with floodlighting. Although permission was granted in May 2010, funding difficulties meant that the decision to proceed with construction of the MUGA was not taken until the summer of 2012.

At the meeting of the Parish Council held in February 2012, it was agreed to contact the Primary School so that discussions could take place regarding their plans for the MUGA. Martin Holland, Leisure Officer with WODC, was informed of this and indicated that he had also been contacted by Bartholomew School regarding the possibility of using S106 funds for a pitch at the secondary school. Accordingly he convened a meeting in May with representatives of the Parish Council, Primary School and Bartholomew School present to discuss the options.

That meeting was told of the current plans of the schools, but the discussion went wider than artificial games areas to touch on many aspects of recreational provision, as permitted by the S106 wording. It was felt that the net should be cast as widely as possible and it was agreed to initiate a process whereby any organisation within the village could indicate an interest in accessing some or all of the money (the invitation can be seen at <http://eynsham-pc.gov.uk/news.asp?NewsID=768>).

Applications

A total of seven responses, bidding for over £300,000 were received by the August deadline. On the advice of WODC, Eynsham Primary School’s application for new play equipment and for an extension to their tarmac playground, the Wharf Stream

Team's application for an information board and the Bartholomew Players' application for lighting were considered to be outside the scope of the S106 agreement. These organisations have all been informed of this and alternative sources of funding suggested where possible.

Of the remaining applications, that from the Football Club for an upgrade to changing room facilities was uncosted and did not show any additional funding. Given the time constraints and the quality of the other applications, the Council confirmed at its October meeting that this application should not be considered for S106 funding, but it was agreed to meet with the club as requested.

This leaves four applications which are, in descending order of cost:

- 1 Bartholomew School £150,000 towards a floodlit MUGA
- 2 Eynsham Cricket Club £65,000 towards a new pavilion
- 3 Eynsham Primary School £7,000 towards their MUGA
- 4 Parish Council Play Area Committee £6,000 for a trim trail

Copies of the four applications have been sent to all councillors and can be briefly summarised as follows:

- 1 Bartholomew School £150,000 towards a floodlit MUGA

A synthetic sports pitch of sand-filled artificial grass measuring 42m x 35m, allowing e.g. two pitches for playing netball or tennis or one for five-a-side football. The pitch would be floodlit and have perimeter fencing and would be located at the Witney Road end of what is currently the school's 400m running track (which would be relocated to the school's remote pitches to the west of Witney Road). Bookings and management of the facility for community use would be via the Sports Centre. The school has undertaken to spend £47,000 on associated infrastructure improvements.

- 2 Eynsham Cricket Club £65,000 towards a new pavilion

A pavilion of 137m² (in accordance with English Cricket Board guidance) at School Piece, Cassington Road, to replace the one destroyed by fire in February 2012. In addition to use by the Cricket Club for matches (senior and youth) and by Eynsham Croquet Club (who share the field), the pavilion would also be available for hire. The estimated cost of the pavilion (granted planning permission in August 2012) is £140,000 of which £61,000 will come from the insurance cover for the previous pavilion and £12,500 from existing fund-raising.

3 Eynsham Primary School £7,000 towards their MUGA

A MUGA of sand-filled artificial grass measuring 19m x 36m, equivalent to a single netball or tennis court, was installed in the summer of 2012 at a cost of £51,000. It has perimeter fencing but no lighting and the school wants to hire out the pitch on a small-scale basis in much the same way as it hires out its games hall at the moment. At the time of submission the school had committed £25,000 plus £14,000 of fundraising, but has since been successful in securing another £5,000 grant leaving a revised shortfall of £7,000.

4 Parish Council Play Area Committee £6,000 for a trim trail

A Playdale trim trail comprising five separate pieces of equipment is proposed for the western end of the north side Oxford Road playing field. The equipment is suitable for use by all ages and would replace the old trim trail which was removed during the recent Play Area improvements.

Recommendations

The Parish Council now needs to make a decision on how best to spend the £150,000, given that the four applications under consideration total £228,000.

There is little doubt that the Bartholomew School application provides the widest potential benefit to users. The facility would be available to all outside school hours using the existing booking facilities provided by the Sports Centre. There is the possibility to free up capacity within the Sports Hall by transferring some existing users to the MUGA and income generated would be used to provide maintenance and replacement as required over the coming years. It would be possible to give less than the full amount to the school, but a minimum of £120,000 is necessary for the scheme to proceed and that would in turn involve a reduction in pitch size.

The application from the Cricket Club is for £65,000 and if granted in full would inevitably mean that a floodlit MUGA could not be funded. As this was the clear intention of the S106 agreement, such a decision would seem perverse and is not recommended. A smaller grant could be made, depending on decisions made with respect to the other two applications.

Both the Primary School application and that for the trim trail could be met in full without affecting the viability (if not the size) of the floodlit MUGA at Bartholomew School. As an alternative, councillors may wish to consider whether to use some of its Community Programme Reserve, which currently stands at just over £45,000. There are no current or planned commitments relating to this fund which largely reflects money raised from the precept in the past, notably for the village hall.

Councillors are free to propose using some part of this money to fund any of the proposals which could otherwise be unsuccessful.

At its October meeting, councillors indicated that would welcome a recommendation as how best to proceed. **Accordingly councillors are recommended as follows:**

- 1 To grant £150,000 to Bartholomew School for a floodlit artificial turf multi use games area, in accordance with the terms of the S106 agreement, but subject to the school obtaining planning permission and subject to a suitable joint use agreement.
- 2 To indicate to Eynsham Cricket Club that the Parish Council is willing to help with its forthcoming application for a Community Facilities Grant from WODC (maximum 25% of the total project cost); and to decide the maximum amount that it is willing to earmark from its Community Programme Reserve to provide supplementary funding if required.
- 3 To consider granting £7,000 from its Community Programme Reserve to Eynsham Primary School to make up the shortfall in funding for their MUGA, subject to a suitable community use agreement.
- 4 To consider inclusion of £6,000 in the Council's 2012-2013 budget for expenditure on a trim trail on the north side Oxford Road playing field.