

Report to the Saintbridge Trust Management Committee

13 February 2023

Options for the further enhancement of the Saintbridge Recreation Ground

Report jointly prepared by:

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1. Purpose of the report

To advise the Committee of the decision taken by Gloucester City Homes to not proceed with the redevelopment of the recreation ground, and to invite the Committee's views on how it wishes to see the recreation ground improved in the light of the resources available.

2. Recommendation

That the Committee recommends to the Council the improvements it wishes to explore to increase the usage of the Saintbridge Recreation Ground.

3. Background

3.1 Redevelopment of the site by Gloucester City Homes (GCH)

At its meeting on 17 February 2022 the Committee received a presentation from the then Chief Executive of Gloucester City Homes, making a case for the redevelopment of the recreation ground for housing. The development would facilitate a greater scheme to regenerate the Matson estate.

The Matson Ward members were invited to a meeting at GCH in November 2022 to be advised that GCH no longer wishes to proceed with the redevelopment of the recreation ground and that its plans for the estate-wide regeneration scheme would also not be progressed. GCH pointed to the likely financial deficit in the estate-wide scheme as well as to the potential opposition from local residents over the loss of the recreation ground.

3.2 Local Consultation

At its meeting on 20 April 2022 the Committee received a report of the findings of a community consultation exercise, which had been carried out by the Matson, Robinswood and White City Partnership on commission from the Council. The research aimed to ascertain current usage of and aspirations for the future of the recreation ground, and it comprised a head count of the number of people using the ground and a survey of nearby residents. The report of the research is at **Appendix 1**.

In summary, although the recreation ground was used modestly during the survey period in spring 2022 (averaging 60 people per Monday to Saturday period) most residents claimed to use the site regularly for recreation, and the significant majority of respondents wished to see it improved. Furthermore, it was suggested were it to be improved more local residents would use it more frequently. Respondents referred to childrens’ play equipment, the planting of trees, facilities for informal recreation, better lighting, and bio-diversity measures as facilities that would improve its amenity value.

3.3 Recent Improvements

Members were informed at the last meeting that the Council had erected goal posts and marked out two junior football pitches on the recreation ground for use by a local club (The Rising Stars). The club currently has a seasonal tenancy for the two pitches, which are used by 4 teams for home games and practice sessions. In addition, three small wildflower areas have been created as part of the City wide Urban Greening project (ESIF funded).

The improvements have led to increased usage of the recreation ground, particularly at weekends. Whilst this is positive, correspondence has been received recently from a member of the public concerned over anti-social behaviour since the football posts were installed. The person says:

“We now have bad parking by the adult players and parents of the children, we have littering by the adult players and the spectators, we have children climbing fences and stealing items from the garden (pretending to get a ball back) and not to include the shouting from matches late evening”

4. The future of the Recreation Ground

In the light of the recent improvements, and with housing no longer a live proposal, the Committee is invited to consider how the site might be further improved in order to meet the trust’s primary purpose to provide recreation facilities.

There appear to be a number of options:

	Resource Implications
<p>Option 1. Status quo - existing maintenance programme.</p> <p>The recreation ground is currently mowed fortnightly during the growing season and pitches are marked out as required. Goal posts are erected at the start of the season and removed at the end. Goal mouth and centre spot renovation and reseeding takes place at the end of the season. The three wildflower areas are cut on an annual basis and the arisings collected.</p>	<p>Included within existing maintenance regime so no additional budgetary implications.</p> <p>Any hire fees generated are retained by Ubico as part of their grounds contract with the Council.</p>
<p>Option 2 Provision of better recreation facilities and amenities for children and their guardians,</p>	<p>Any additional infrastructure such as hard standing, children’s play equipment or a multi-use games areas (MUGA) for older</p>

such as hard surfacing, children's play area, lighting, seating, etc	children/youths would require the Council to provide additional resource as this would be outside of the scope of existing budgets. Very basic play provision for younger children would probably cost in the region of £15k.
Option 3 Provision of informal recreation facilities for unaccompanied children and young adults, such as a multi-use games area / facility, lighting and seating, etc	A MUGA (without lighting) could cost between £70k and £120k depending on the size and facilities provided.
Option 4 Provision of improved facilities for formal sport for adults and children, including changing rooms, floodlighting and amenity lighting, etc. Provision of outdoor gym equipment.	Improved sports infrastructure would also require additional funding to be made available. Some options would also require planning permission. Outdoor informal gym equipment could be provided. Outdoor gym equipment would cost in the region of £1k per unit. Outdoor gym equipment could be placed at locations around the open space with appropriate guidance also provided to encourage and facilitate usage.
Option 5 Measures to enhance bio-diversity, such as tree planting (including fruit trees) and additional designated wildlife areas.	Funding for a small number of standard trees could be found from existing budgets. Additional wildlife areas could also be identified and planted, subject to identifying the necessary funding.

5. Financial Implications

Existing open space revenue budgets for playground and open space maintenance and repair within the Council are insufficient to fund capital projects such as new sports facilities and play areas. The availability of funding from external parties is extremely limited both for installation and maintenance.

The Trust could consider submitting a bid to the Enover Community Trust ([Enover Community Trust](#)), which is an environmental body that provides support to environmental and community projects within a 10 mile radius of landfill sites operated by the company, which includes Hemstead landfill site. Projects funded by the Enover Community Trust across the UK includes improving community halls, the creation of new play areas and skate parks, and restoring green spaces. However, it should be noted that officers' capacity to draft a submission would be limited.

Funding from developer contributions (section 106) is designated for specific projects within or in the vicinity of the area of the development. There are currently no section 106 funds available for projects at Saintbridge Recreation Ground. In relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the Council has taken the decision that Council services should be ineligible to apply for grants from the Neighbourhood fund.

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