

# WHEATLEY PARISH COUNCIL— FULL COUNCIL 06.02.2023

## ITEM 196— LITTLEWORTH FIELD REPORT

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<b>Author:</b>	Cllrs Alison Sercombe and Newman
<b>Strategic Goal:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To continue to support the village so it becomes a vibrant and sustainable community for everyone</li><li>2. Celebrate and protect our environment, landscape, heritage and facilities.</li></ol>
<b>Legislation:</b>	Public Health Act 1875, Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 & 10
<b>Summary:</b>	Council's requirement to consider and approve its budget before setting its precept for coming year
<b>Decision:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To progress the initiative of securing a lease for Littleworth Community Field (working title) and preferred route of managing the asset.</li><li>2. To agree to commission a Tree Survey on trees around the site.</li></ol>

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### Background

The Shotover School was built post war for secondary age pupils, and as such had a number of facilities and areas that were necessary for education and physical fitness. This school was absorbed into Wheatley Park School and in the 1980's Wheatley Primary School and the John Watson School moved into the empty site. The playing fields were more than the primary school needed and became very expensive for them to maintain appropriately.

It has been a goal for Wheatley Parish Council (WPC) to use the Playing Field for many years, and negotiations were held to try and form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and for that trust to obtain a sub-lease on the site from the leaseholders Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust and the landowners Oxfordshire County Council. Negotiations continued for 6-8 years but there was a lack of appetite due to the perceived difficulties with the legalities and non-agreement between WPC & ODST.

Early 2023 WPC Chair was approached by Wheatley Primary School (WPS) to see if negotiations could be kickstarted and a lease of the playing field passed to the Parish Council. There is a real impetus to make this initiative happen now due to a change in Head Teacher and a change in the Chair of Governors. The aim is to bring the field into community use for play/environmental activities for all.

### Opportunities

Wheatley has a population of approx. 4800 but there is a distinct lack of open spaces for our villagers to enjoy. Wheatley is a rural community and has three small recreation grounds for various age groups, but they are not expansive. We currently have no provision for informal sports.

Littleworth Community Field will add to the village's portfolio of available open space. It borders Shotover Estate so there are further fields beyond it ensuring a plentiful array of flora and fauna for children to see and learn about care for the environment and eco-systems.

As part of the offer for our village we need to consider the children who do not want to or are physically/emotionally/mentally unable to participate in organised sports. We must provide for their well-being as much as children who join clubs to obtain physical wellbeing. It is vital that WPC demonstrate inclusivity, particularly as a special needs educational establishment is close by.

There is very little for older children in our village. The securing of Littleworth Community Field will allow WPC to develop activities suitable for older children and young adults. There is an opportunity to provide more challenging physical equipment for children to understand dynamic risk assessing, and subject to consultation, provide a skate park and pump track (Skate boarding is now an Olympic sport) a trim trail, and dog walking area, outdoor productions, and picnic area etc.

Flooding. There is an opportunity to build an attenuation pond at the bottom of the field where it is very boggy and unusable for any other activity. This will alleviate potential problems from the culvert at the back of Westfield. Currently SODC have money available for this work.

### **Supplementary Information**

Currently Wheatley owns sports fields located in Holton Parish which is used for organised sports and is run by Wheatley Playing Fields Trust. There are lots of organised sports offered by WPFT. Wheatley Rugby Club also operate from this site.

Wheatley has land managed by the Howe Trust for wildlife, grazing paddocks and allotments but it is all situated on a steep hill, making access for small children in buggies and villagers with mobility issues very difficult.

### **Challenges**

The site of Littleworth Community Field (working title) has not been maintained properly for some time. The following actions need to take place.

1. A Tree Survey to establish the health of the trees and potential future maintenance required:
2. Annual costings of mowing by contractors have been asked for from WPS.
3. Exact boundary to be agreed with ODST & OCC. The school requires 8,400m<sup>2</sup> of useable space. A first diagram has been produced by the primary school but has gone back to them for revision.
4. Fencing is required to go along an agreed boundary for safeguarding purposes. As soon as the boundary is agreed, costings can be obtained.

### **Options**

1. Straightforward sub-lease to WPC. To be run by a management committee to include members of the school for the benefit of all members of our community.
2. Sub-lease to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Trustees to be recruited. Operating control is managed by the charity.
3. Sub-lease to Community Interest Company. Management to be recruited. Operating Control is managed by the CIC.

### **Financial Position**

It is likely that this project may take up to twelve months to come to fruition, and the Council does not currently have any budget set aside for this project. Any rental and additional maintenance costs will need to be considered within the budget and precept setting process for 2024-25.