

Relocating the playground

Introduction

This note has been prepared primarily for publication on Winslow Town Council's (WTC's) website in order to explain the circumstances which have led to the question whether or not the children's playground in Elmfields Gate should be relocated. It is hoped that all those residents of Winslow who are concerned about the proposal, whether they are for or against the relocation, will read this note and then attend the **public meeting to be held at 2.30 pm on 28 November, in the Public Hall** to make their views known. The Council also invites comments in writing (either by e-mail to clerk@winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk or delivered to its office at 28 High Street). Comments should reach the Council by Thursday 2 December so that they can be collated in time for them to be considered by Council at its December meeting. The note sets out all of the details relevant to the proposal in order to make it fully understandable, particularly by those residents who have only recently moved to Winslow.

Councillors will reach a conclusion after considering the issues identified in this paper, as well as any additional arguments which are raised at the public meeting or submitted in writing.

The note contains eight sections:

- *Background*, explaining the position in which WTC finds itself;
- *Needs*, identifying the town's requirements which WTC is seeking to address;
- *Solutions*, setting out the possible means WTC has identified of satisfying those requirements;
- *Pros*, listing the arguments favouring relocation of the children's playground in Tomkins Park and Arboretum (TPA) with some responses;
- *Cons*, listing the arguments against such a relocation with some responses;
- *The wider context*, of Winslow's green space allocations and requirements;
- *Summary*; and
- *Next steps*.

Background

The Public Hall, Winslow's main, and largest, indoor community space, was built in the 1970s, at a time when the town's population was around 3000. It is now approaching 5000, and planned housing developments means it will continue to grow to beyond 6000.

In the early 2010s, as the Winslow Neighbourhood Plan of 2014 (WNP 2014) was being prepared, focus groups were formed and extensive public consultations took place in order to determine, among other things, what residents of Winslow thought of its facilities. The conclusion, as recorded at paragraph 2.15 of WNP 2014, was that the town had 'inadequate leisure and sports facilities ... need a new community centre...'. In other words, the available rooms were becoming increasingly inadequate, both in number and in size, to accommodate the range of leisure, indoor sports and games and cultural activities for which a town of Winslow's population should be able to cater. That range of activities is examined in more detail in the next section of this note. Since then, two significant

spaces available for community use—the former secondary school, on what is now known as the Winslow Centre site, and the Youth Club building—have been demolished without replacement, making the shortage of available spaces even more acute.

WNP 2014 sought to address the problem which had been identified by its Policy 11, which was as follows:

The Neighbourhood Plan will support proposals to provide a new community centre facility to serve the town on land at The Paddock, off Elmfields Gate, as shown on the Proposals Map, provided the design respects the special historic and architectural character of the designated heritage assets of The Paddock and Winslow Hall.

The reasons behind the Policy were set out at paragraph 4.73:

The existing Public Hall facility, although popular, is not well suited to modern needs. A new building on a suitable site that is convenient for all the community would enable a greater range of community activities. The new building should provide a larger facility that is capable of accommodating a variety of uses.

Policy 11 was widely supported by residents, and the NP as a whole was approved by a substantial majority in the referendum which was held before it was made. It led also to Policy 18, for the conversion of the Public Hall to a small supermarket, a project which (if realised) would have provided some of the funding for the construction of a new community centre.

Shortly after WNP 2014 was made, the Town Council took up the opportunity of acquiring what was then known as The Paddock, a private area of land located to the rear of Winslow Hall and extending to about 5 acres (2 hectares), on which it planned to construct a much larger replacement of the Public Hall. The Paddock had not hitherto been generally accessible to the public though an area of it had, since 1984, been leased to Winslow Bowls Club to create the bowling green. The aspiration in 2013-2014 was that the new building would contain at least two lettable halls with a stage and changing rooms for performers, some smaller meeting rooms, a commercial-style kitchen and a bar. It might also have housed the Council's offices and its meeting chamber. Sufficient car parking, necessary for users of the building and to satisfy planning requirements, was to be provided, also within the Paddock.

However, it eventually became clear after extensive investigation and debate that the construction of a large building on the site, with the required car parking, would be wholly unacceptable because of the loss of amenity and the need to remove some of the rare and protected trees within the Paddock. It was instead seen as being of much greater value to the town as a public open, or green, space than had previously been appreciated. The Council accordingly began the process, with the aid of architectural consultants, of attempting to identify an alternative site for a new Community Centre. In the meantime the Paddock was re-named Tomkins Park and Arboretum (TPA) and the Council undertook significant maintenance and improvement of the trees and grassland area.

Five possible alternative sites were identified:

1. TPA (retained as a comparator, and in case, despite what has been said above, it should be concluded that the need for community spaces outweighed its amenity value);
2. a scheme for rebuilding the Public Hall, in whole or in part, and encroaching on TPA to a lesser extent;
3. Three Hills;

4. the former Winslow Centre; and
5. part of the Recreation Ground.

All of those possibilities were found to have such great drawbacks that WTC was compelled to reject them.

Option (1) was rejected not only because of the loss of amenity already described but because WTC was also advised by AVDC, then the planning authority, that planning permission would almost certainly be refused.

Option (2) would have had a lesser detrimental impact than (1) on the amenity value of TPA, but WTC deemed that it—and particularly the encroachment on TPA and the consequent loss of protected trees—would still have been unacceptable. In addition, this scheme would have been prohibitively expensive and depended on some land acquisition that may have been difficult to secure.

Option (3), the Three Hills site, would have led to the loss of a large area of green space of great value to residents of the eastern side of the town. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate the noise nuisance to neighbouring households of late-evening use of the car park, and it may have been necessary to re-align Little Horwood Road in order to provide safe vehicular access to a car park. WTC does not own the land and it was not clear that it would be made available by AVDC, then the owner, at no or negligible cost, or whether planning permission for the erection of a large building on it would be forthcoming. Even if those obstacles could be overcome the construction cost would have been expensive, although manageable, but the forecast income of the building would not cover its running costs and service the loan WTC would have had to take on. In addition, though a relatively minor objection, the site is not central to the town, as a community centre should be. Those factors led WTC to reject this option.

The insurmountable objection to use of the Winslow Centre site (option (4)) was that no acceptable means of providing for the heavy volume of vehicular movements, which would be generated if the site was used for a community centre, could be found. Avenue Road and Park Road, the only roads from which the site can be accessed by car, cannot accommodate the likely increased volume of traffic. In addition, the site is owned by Buckinghamshire County Council (now Buckinghamshire Council). It is previously built-on land and accordingly it has development value: the acquisition cost which WTC would have to find, added to the construction cost, made this option too expensive for further consideration.

The recreation ground, option (5), is an impractical site for a variety of reasons. It is leased until 2037 to the Sports Club. The Club is, understandably, unwilling to move from its long-standing home. Even if (which is doubtful) it were thought desirable to do so, WTC cannot force vacation of the whole or part of the site not only because of the terms of the lease, but also because WTC would be compelled to make alternative provision by virtue of paragraph 99 of National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and of the requirements of Sport England. If, nevertheless, all those objections could be overcome, or the Club could be persuaded that it should move, a move is in practice impossible because there is nowhere else for it to go. There is insufficient space to accommodate either the football or the cricket pitch on the proposed Sports Hub site—even a full-size croquet lawn would be a challenge (the croquet lawn in use is about half the size of a competition lawn)—and no other suitable site within reasonable distance of the town centre is available to WTC at affordable cost.

Accordingly WTC resolved in late 2019 not to proceed with the idea of constructing a single, all-purpose building, but instead to explore the possibility of making better use of the town centre's existing facilities at the Public Hall, the Sports Club and (possibly) the Royal British Legion building. At

about the same time, the Co-op decided to enlarge its existing High Street store, making the idea of converting the Public Hall to a small supermarket redundant. In early 2020 WTC appointed architects to undertake a feasibility study, examining all of the available options. The scheme recommended was to improve and extend the Public Hall (Phase 1) and to replace the Sports Club building with a larger building housing not only sports facilities but also community space (Phase 2). The RBL building does not have attributes which would enable it to be incorporated in the scheme and it does not feature in current plans. The project decided upon, and the reasoning which led to it, are described in more detail in the Solutions section which follows.

At its meeting in December 2020 WTC decided to proceed with Phase 1, and to explore Phase 2 further in conjunction with the Sports Club. It was recognised, for the reasons described later, that if Phase 2 was to proceed the children's playground would need to be relocated in order to make way for the parking which would be required, and investigations were begun into possible sites for its relocation. The conclusion reached was that a replacement playground should be provided in TPA. That conclusion was set out in the leaflet distributed to households in the context of the preliminary consultation on the proposals for a revised Neighbourhood Plan. Various comments, both for and against, were made, and considered by the Council at its August 2021 meeting. WTC resolved that Phase 2 should proceed, and that, there being no other suitable site for it in or near the town centre, the playground should be relocated in TPA.

Some residents remained opposed to the relocation and have campaigned to have the decision reversed. Although others have supported it, WTC recognises that the decision is controversial and councillors have listened to and read numerous representations made by several residents. They have resolved to revisit the decision and, in the course of the Council meeting on 4 November 2021, though after most members of the public who attended had departed, decided that the best way of resolving the matter was to prepare a briefing paper—this note—and to hold a public meeting at which further views and arguments could be aired, before making a final decision.

Needs

As already mentioned, there has been pressure on community meeting spaces in Winslow for several years, exacerbated by the loss of the secondary school on what is now the Winslow Centre site and the Youth Club building, which formerly hosted not only a youth club but also other activities. The remaining facilities—the Public Hall, the St Laurence Room, the Sports Club, the Bowls Club, the Royal British Legion Hall, the Scout and Guide huts and the churches or chapels—cannot make up for those losses, and are frequently having to turn down bookings.

It would be possible to catalogue the problem in great, and lengthy, detail, but one simple example should be enough to illustrate the problem. Since the lifting of Covid restrictions, the Bowls Club has taken bookings from several organisations but, for lack of space at the required times, has been obliged to turn down bookings from the Liberal Democrats, the Women's Institute, a martial arts group, a keep fit club, a gardening society and the bridge club. Some have no doubt found space elsewhere; but the experience of the Bowls Club is replicated in the other venues. What is apparent from the information provided to WTC by those running the various facilities is that some organisations are struggling to find the space they need, and that some among them, particularly those providing adult education, have ceased to exist for that reason.

The Winslow Centre formerly hosted several language classes for adults, as well as classes for those wishing to learn sign language, flower arranging, pottery and other crafts and hobbies, to undertake

various forms of exercise or to meet in faith or special interest groups, and it also hosted cinema showings. Some of those activities have found replacement homes, but others have not, and unfortunately they no longer take place.

WTC's perception is that the problem of lack of space will inevitably get worse as the population of the town increases. The development on the triangle of land between Great Horwood Road and the railway line, for part of which planning permission has been granted and for the remainder of which is expected within the next few weeks, will accommodate 335 houses, adding 1,000 or more to the population within a few years—and other, albeit smaller, developments in the pipeline will add yet more.

The absence of sufficient rooms means not only that existing organisations struggle to find space but that there are no, or at least limited, opportunities for new organisations to come into existence. What had already been perceived as a problem in the early 2010s is now, in WTC's view and after ten years of debate, something which cannot be ignored: the shortage of space suitable for a variety of community uses must be addressed as a high priority. Any community needs adequate spaces to meet and socialise in a variety of ways if it is to function well.

Solutions

The obvious remedy for a lack of space is to provide more. One important feature of the idea of building a new, all-purpose community centre in what is now TPA was that it was a central location, easily reached on foot or by cycle from all parts of the town. WTC owns two town-centre buildings with potential for community use, or more extensive community use—the Public Hall, managed on its behalf by trustees, and the Sports Club building, leased to the Sports Club. Various ideas were considered, for example putting a second storey on the Public Hall, but most were rejected as impractical or prohibitively expensive. The only scheme which could be identified as practical and affordable was that decided upon: to extend and improve the Public Hall and to replace the Sports Club building with a larger building which would accommodate not only the needs of the Sports Club but also some additional community space. It is worth remembering, when considering what follows, that every solution proposed would have required WTC to find the space for additional parking.

Phase 1, the Public Hall project, has given rise to negligible adverse comment, and appears to be generally supported. Planning permission has been obtained, and the detailed specification has reached the tender stage. When the works are complete, the Hall will have a new entrance at the western (High Street) end, improved visibility of the stage from some seats and greater floor space within the main hall, a medium-sized meeting room, changing rooms for performers, improved lavatory accommodation and a re-positioned kitchen capable of catering for dinners, parties etc. The exterior appearance of the hall on the western and southern sides is also to be improved, with a view to making it a much more appealing building. It is expected that work will begin in the spring of 2022, and be completed within about six months. The existing car park is large enough to provide the parking spaces needed to meet the standards laid down by Buckinghamshire Council. At times, however, the car park (which also serves the Bowls Club, the Sports Club and those using the football, cricket and croquet areas, shoppers and town centre residents) is full and motorists are compelled to park in the Greyhound Lane car park, which is itself also frequently full, or along Elmfields Gate. In other words, the parking at the Public Hall is not always adequate for current demand and will struggle to meet increased demand.

Once it had obtained the agreement of the Sports Club to the proposal, WTC decided in early 2021 to instruct its architects to prepare more detailed plans for Phase 2 of the project. The intention, if this phase proceeds, is to demolish the Sports Club building (parts of which are nearing the end of their useful life) and replace it by a larger building containing the changing rooms and similar facilities needed by the Sports Club at the eastern end, a large community space of suitable size to accommodate a youth club or activities such as table tennis, with adequate storage, at the western end, and to link the two with a central bar and social area available for use by the Sports Club, by community groups, by individuals for parties or similar events, or by other organisations as demand dictates.

It was apparent from the outset that additional car parking would need to be provided (to meet Buckinghamshire Council standards and to keep intrusive roadside parking to a minimum) if Phase 2 were to proceed, and it also became clear that the only area sufficiently close to the building, accessible from a public highway and capable of accommodating the additional spaces (about 50) which must be provided if planning permission is to be obtained was the site of the children's playground in Elmfields Gate (along with an adjacent area of grass which the Sports Club is prepared to make available). Other possibilities were considered but rejected: extension of the Public Hall car park into TPA would have led to an unacceptable loss of protected trees, with considerable detrimental effect on the internal appearance of the park, and (even assuming permission to remove the trees could be obtained) would have provided too few spaces; and the creation of 90-degree-to-the-carriageway spaces along the northern edge of Elmfields Gate would have eaten to an unacceptable extent into the cricket pitch, would have involved laying the spaces over service supplies, would have presented a potential traffic hazard and would also not provide enough spaces.

Accordingly WTC explored the possibility of relocating the playground, either in TPA or on the area between the football pitch and the rear gardens of some of the houses in the High Street; a central location needs to be maintained in order that the playground is easily accessible to as many as possible. Many parents combine a visit to the playground with shopping or other town centre activities. The latter site proved to be too small (so would not satisfactorily accommodate a similar amount of equipment as the existing playground), and to have other disadvantages. The equipment would have been close to, and probably overhung by, the existing mature trees; and, because of FA rules designed to protect players and officials, it would be necessary either to erect a 1.8m fence along the entire western edge of the football ground or to close the playground on match days. Neither was considered acceptable. For those reasons the idea of relocating the playground on that site was discarded.

Since no other town centre site is available to WTC the decision was taken to relocate the playground in TPA. It is fair to say that while some councillors were in favour of that solution, thinking that TPA is the ideal place for a children's playground, others were unenthusiastic but reconciled to the idea on the ground that there was no other solution to the much wider problem. It should be borne in mind that the role of the Council is to balance all of the interests within the community. Once it had been concluded that providing the additional community space could not be done without moving the playground, WTC was driven to a choice between moving the playground to TPA, or leaving it in place but foregoing the additional community space. Since it was also apparent that the town needs the additional space, and as a priority, the decision was made that the playground should be relocated.

The Council's intention is not that the existing equipment should be moved—much of it is old and tired, and it is not economic to move it—but that the replacement playground should be equipped with new, much more up-to-date, items in order to establish a modern creative play environment. It has been said that WTC proposes to reduce the size of the playground but this is not the case. The

intention is to provide a similar number of items—because of the evolution of children’s play equipment an exact like-for-like comparison is not possible—occupying a similar area. The younger children’s playground currently occupies about 500 m², and an area of at least that size will be set aside for its replacement. TPA covers about 1.9 hectares (19,000 m²), so the new playground as proposed would take up less than 3% of it. There is a commitment on the part of WTC that, if relocation of the playground in TPA proceeds, the new playground will be installed and open for use before the old one is decommissioned. It will also be placed so as to cause the minimum possible inconvenience to those playing bowls or pétanque, or who simply wish to sit in the park for quiet contemplation. No decision has yet been made on the nature of any fencing which might be placed round the playground.

It has also not yet been decided whether there should be provision for older children in TPA, at the forthcoming Sports Hub, or perhaps both. The Sports Hub is a Buckinghamshire Council project which WTC can try to influence, but it has no control over what will be installed. WTC’s current aspiration is that equipment suitable for teenagers should be installed at the Sports Hub, alongside a much-hoped for skate park, and, if possible, that there should be a facility for younger children there as well. If older children’s equipment is to be installed in TPA, possibly doubling the allocated area, it would still occupy only about 5% of the total park area.

Pros

This section sets out, in no particular order, the observations WTC has received in support of the proposal that the children’s playground should be relocated in TPA. Comments have been edited to eliminate repetition (though some remains) or, so far as possible, points covered already, but not otherwise. Some of the comments are not wholly supportive of, or opposed to, the proposal.

Issue raised and comments made	response
TPA is the natural location for a children’s playground.	
Existing play area is rubbish – a couple of swings and a poxy baby area – let them make it better. Stop moaning – you will all be loving the new play park and won’t be moaning then.	This is a unique opportunity to create a modern play experience for Winslow to replace the old-fashioned equipment currently in use
No single kids’ team trains and plays in Winslow – we don’t have the facilities for them, just for adults – facilities have not kept pace with growth of town.	
This represents an opportunity to put the playground where it should have been at the outset.	It’s been at its current location for decades – so the opportunity to move it has only arisen in the last few years
The town is so short of meeting facilities that this is a minor sacrifice to make for a greater benefit.	
I’m sure you’ll all be loving the NEW park once it’s done tho eh. So let the work be done on what needs to be done. Winslow [playground] is rubbish as it is. Couple swings and a poxy baby area. So let them make it better. Jeez.	As above

There are more than 8 games of cricket played a year - during the summer season there is a game every week and it's great to see the facility being used for the purpose it was gifted for. In addition, WUFC has in excess of 200 children affiliated to the club across all age groups and genders, many of whom have ambitions to play at senior level at Elmfields Gate like their parents and grandparents before them (who may I add have put a lot of money, time and effort into maintaining the club's history and facilities). This is an essential facility for the community of Winslow	
Having the [playground] moved isn't such a bad thing. The Winslow [playground] is crap and hardly anything good to play on. Couple swings. Poxy baby bit, and couple of spinney things.	
The sound of young children enjoying themselves is one of life's pleasures.	
Sometimes when meetings [are] on in community hall I can't park and I am actually worried about when the station opens! Those that live on the High Street all park in the car park we don't have anywhere else.	Car parking in the town centre is used by all those who need it without restriction – but it is in short supply and is not adequate at all times

Cons

This section sets out, in no particular order, the comments and observations WTC has received against the proposal that the children's playground should be relocated in TPA. Comments have been edited to eliminate repetition (though some remains) or, so far as possible, points covered already, but not otherwise. Some of the comments are not wholly opposed to, or supportive of, the proposal.

Issue raised and comments made	response
What is the need for additional meeting spaces? – the existing ones are not fully used.	Meeting rooms can never be full at all times – but there are many times when there aren't enough to meet demand (let alone provide for groups that simply haven't got off the ground yet)
Many activities that used to occupy meeting/function rooms (eg: Judo, Adult Education) have ceased to operate in the town and won't come back – so what's the business case for providing more rooms? Doubt new rooms will be well used.	With continuing growth of the town we are not resigned to groups and activities not coming back – the feedback from public consultations in 2011 and 2013, and a community-based working group in about 2018, all concluded that more meeting / function rooms are needed

There's a dearth of other children's play spaces and equipment in the town – and the two associated with the Glade and Grange area were locked for a long time, one floods frequently, and a second one in the Grange (Bloor) area has not yet been built.	WTC only owns the town centre play area. The ones in the Grange and Glade areas are controlled by residents' management companies. All new developments above a certain size have to provide play equipment. Bloor have to do so in the Grange.
How many extra parking spaces are required? Why is the extra parking required? Where else could the parking spaces go? Could a small multi-storey car park achieve what is required?	We estimate that 50 parking spaces are required to serve the needs of the new community and sports pavilion. We have considered all possible alternative locations and could find none that could be delivered.
I am appalled that someone is planning to move the children's play area to Tomkins Arboretum. If the present play area is converted to parking spaces they will be filled not by patrons of a sports hub but, like the public hall car park, by others who don't have their own parking spaces.	Parking spaces in the town centre are insufficient to meet demand from residents, employees, shoppers, visitors etc. The new community and sports pavilion needs to provide for its own requirements – but at times that will offer some that others can use.
Could perpendicular parking be provided alongside Elmfields Gate and Cricketers Row? How many EV charging points will be provided?	Unfortunately not, for reasons noted in this report. WTC is considering the provision of EV charging in its car parks, and new planning rules will probably dictate how many new spaces will have to have EV chargers with them.
Is there any covenant restriction on the use of the recreation ground land from the time when it was gifted to the town by the McCorquodale family?	There is no covenant on the whole recreation ground. There is a covenant on the playground area but WTC is confident that Fields in Trust will allow this to be transferred to the new location.
Need to recognise that not everyone likes children, so Tomkins Park can be a haven for such people.	
Why can't the rugby field be used for community benefit in the short term and even in the longer term?	This is owned by Buckinghamshire Council and allocated for residential development. In the meantime it is protected for use by STFS.
Concern that this represents a loss of green space in the town.	Please see the Wider Context section below.
More parking spaces in the town will bring more cars into the town.	That is the price of maintaining a thriving community and town centre
The town needs a youth club – but previous experience demonstrated that this will be hard to establish and run successfully even if there were to be a dedicated building for it.	Youth Clubs can be hard to run but not impossible – but to start with there needs to be a space in which the Club can operate. One possibility will be the Community Space within the proposed Community & Sports Pavilion.
Would it not be possible for a playground to go where the Croquet Lawn is now, by moving Croquet into Tomkins Park?	That space is leased to the Sports Club and is not available to WTC.

Wasn't the land that forms Tomkins Park bought for the creation of a new community centre for the town rather than to create a park?	WTC bought the land in order to protect it from development, and it then proposed it as the site for a new community centre. However that proved to be unaffordable and impractical for several reasons.
Are the current car parks well used?	At peak times there is insufficient capacity to meet demand
Guide hut really struggling to get bookings even before Covid.	Every meeting space has its specific attributes and those booking them choose the one which best meets their requirements. The Guide hut probably suffers from not being in the centre, and not being well supported by parking spaces.
Many other new build sites have community centres built there. Can another site be considered for the community centre and parking be added where the existing community centre is?	One of the strengths of Winslow that comes out from survey responses is that it is a tight knit community, and it benefits from community facilities being in the centre of town, easily accessible to all.
Why can new meeting rooms not be built at the new sports hub, particularly if they are to be used by people not only in Winslow but from surrounding villages?	The Sports Hub is a Buckinghamshire Council project which focuses on sport and recreation. BC's initial plans include a function room alongside a café in the pavilion at the Sports Hub. It will be a welcome addition to the town but will not meet the needs for meeting rooms suitable for pedestrian and bike access by residents of the town.
Clarify what age range the existing playground is designed for, and what age range its replacement will be designed for	We do not believe there is a stated age range for the existing playground – but some say it is 0-12yrs (with the older ones using the grass area). The aspiration is to find equipment for the new playground which will offer challenges to those in the 0-12yrs age range.
How much will all this cost, split between the various elements of the proposals?	At this stage there is no fully costed proposal – that would have been done by now, but work was stopped to allow these further deliberations on the principles of the scheme.
What's the overall business case for adding more meeting rooms in the town? What's the utilisation of existing ones and what is expected for the new ones? How much will use of meeting rooms cost?	

Cricket ground is regularly used and not a waste of space – but some think relocating or losing the cricket ground should be considered.	The cricket ground is a long-established flat area with specialised drainage for which there is no obvious alternative location. It is regularly used – and WTC and the Sports Club are keen to make sure the public realise that (other than the square in the middle) it is available to the public for informal play whenever the ground is not otherwise in use.
No need for a new community centre nor for more parking.	The evidence does not support this view
New parking spaces will be filled by those who don't have their own parking spaces, not just by users of the community hall.	The town needs to provide for all its residents and businesses.
Move the croquet club to Tomkins Park and increase use of Bowls Club facilities.	The croquet lawn is part of the area leased to the Sports Club and there is no willingness to see this relocated at present
Never seen Greyhound Lane car park full.	It is full very often.
Has WTC challenged BC on parking requirements for new building?	No, there is no means by which the requirements can be challenged. In any event, WTC should be a responsible developer and to create a new community and sports pavilion without sufficient parking spaces would simply create problems on local roads within the town.
Concern about crossing of Elmfields Gate between the recreation ground and the park if children doing different things are no longer in one place.	The aim is to provide playground space in one place in Tomkins Park. However, the additional off-street parking spaces should significantly reduce or eliminate the need for vehicles to park on Elmfields Gate. It would also be possible to seek traffic calming on Elmfields Gate – but that would be an additional cost.
Tomkins is just not large enough for a play area. People walking dogs have very little space in the town to start with.	Tomkins Park is about 2 hectares. The playground is unlikely to take up more than about 5% of this area. The new Sports Hub will add a further 10 hectares of varied open space.
Yet more green space to be removed.	Please see the Wider Context section below.
Why destroy a beautiful green space in the centre of Winslow?	
I have nothing against children playing ... but you should be able to choose a quiet space, away from them.	
Tomkins Park is Winslow's only tranquil green space. Surely a better solution can be found if the current [playground] has to move.	

<p>Why the play park and Tomkins Park can't remain as they are and any expansion of the Sports facilities, including meeting space, can't be included in the new Sports Hub to be built on the edge of town seems ridiculous. If a skate park is being included in the Sports Hub why not include an additional play park there on top of our current play parks? The town is expanding so rapidly we need more facilities.</p>	<p>See earlier comments.</p> <p>On the Sports Hub WTC hopes to see not only a Skatepark, but also other play equipment for teenagers – and the establishment of a play area for younger children.</p>
<p>Like most people I've talked with I think it's an appalling decision to build the children's playground in the Arboretum. Lord and Lady Tomkins would have given Winslow this land for quiet reflection in a natural environment, not for a children's playground.</p>	<p>Tomkins Park & Arboretum was created from land previously known as The Paddock, which was purchased by WTC from the estate of Sir Edward Tomkins in order to ensure it was used for the benefit of the community. An initial proposal to site a new community centre in the Park has not been pursued for various reasons including planning restrictions and cost.</p>
<p>Exactly and with this proposal the space or what's left of it won't be quiet or reflective.</p>	
<p>I am not in support of this move. It would be more appropriate to move the croquet pitch, a quiet area that would fit in more with the calm of the Tomkins arboretum. The play area will be too invasive.</p>	
<p>If it ain't broke why fix it. Nothing wrong with it as is. Why spend the money on a non starter.</p>	

The wider context

WTC is very conscious of the concern felt by many that the town lacks adequate green space for recreation, whether for walking or for exercising dogs, for casual ball or similar games or for simply sitting in quiet contemplation. The position has been made worse by the closing by Network Rail of several footpaths while the East-West-Rail works are in progress, and while it is true that the footpaths will eventually be restored, it is recognised that restoration tomorrow is of little comfort today. WTC also acknowledges that relocating the playground in TPA represents an incursion into the existing green space—it will still be there, but available to one section of the community to the exclusion of others.

The forthcoming Sports Hub will, however, make good that loss, and more. There will be extensive open space—ecological areas—on which no sporting activities will take place, and where the public will be able to roam at will, free of charge, with dogs if they have them. It is expected that there will be a 1.5 km or so paved, or at least hard-core surfaced, path which will remain mud-free throughout the year, and which may be used from time to time for Park Runs or similar activities. It is true that the Sports Hub will be at the northern end of the town, and so some distance from many of the houses, but there will be ample parking for those who need to visit it by car.

Modern planning requirements are much more demanding than was the case in the past about the provision of green space in housing developments. The forthcoming development on the triangle of land between Great Horwood Road and the railway is expected to have three quite extensive areas of green space, accessible to all, with some play equipment; the proposed redevelopment of the

Winslow Centre site will include a large play area as well as publicly available green space—also an ecological site but available for recreation—linking it and the housing to be constructed on the rugby pitch and easily accessible from the Glade and Grange estates; and the housing development on the site of the Station Road industrial estate, if the pending planning application is successful, will have a play area in its centre.

Many residents have asked that the rugby pitch should instead be kept undeveloped, as public green space, or at the least should be made available as green space until it is developed. WTC has no control over that site, which is owned by Buckinghamshire Council. It has never been available as public green space, but only as a rugby pitch, though WTC is aware that in the past residents did use it for recreation, taking advantage of breaches in the fence. It has been more securely fenced in order that it may be used by Sir Thomas Fremantle School as a rugby pitch; the fencing is designed to ensure that dog faeces are not left there by irresponsible dog owners, so as to present a health hazard to the children. The proceeds of development of that site are needed to finance, in part, the Sports Hub, and WTC's judgment is that, even though the pitch could represent valuable green space if released for that purpose, the value to the town of the Sports Hub, for its sporting and other facilities as well as for the additional green space it will provide, outweighs the value of the rugby pitch as green space. Moreover, that view was endorsed by the residents of Winslow in 2014 in the referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan; development of the pitch for housing appears at Policy 3.II.

It has been suggested that WTC should buy land to be dedicated as public green space. It would be possible to do so, but only at very high cost. Land immediately outside the settlement boundary, which it would be necessary to acquire if that land is to be readily accessible for residents, has a high value, not because it has planning permission but because, in the event that further housing allocations are imposed on Winslow—as is likely to happen in years to come—that is the land on which the houses will be built; thus it already has a 'hope' value. If WTC were to acquire such land its funds would stretch to only a modest area, and it would no longer have the money for other projects. For those reasons, buying more land is not a solution WTC can recommend.

Summary

The town is, unfortunately, faced with a stark choice: if we are to expand the indoor space available for community use the only feasible course is to replace the Sports Club building with a larger structure, and in order to obtain permission to do that we must provide about 50 extra car parking spaces (some of which, incidentally, would have electric vehicle charging points). The only area on which those places can be created is the site of the children's playground (with some adjacent land). If the playground is not removed and replaced elsewhere that project cannot proceed. The only site WTC has been able to identify which can accommodate the replacement playground is TPA.

It has been suggested that a new facility to supplement the improved Public Hall could be provided elsewhere, perhaps on the western side of the town. WTC does not consider that a site away from the town centre is appropriate, but even if it were, it is by no means clear where such a site, sufficiently large to accommodate the new building and its car park, available at affordable cost, and accessible by car without presenting an unacceptable nuisance to local residents, might be found. Moreover, such a project would do nothing to improve the facilities at the Sports Club building, which is in pressing need of refurbishment if not replacement. The proposed replacement facilities should, as an additional benefit, not only provide better accommodation for existing members but encourage others to join and make greater use of the pitches.

Next steps

Relocation of the playground is only one of the steps which must be taken if the project of replacing the Sports Club building is to succeed. If this decision is confirmed in principle then WTC will seek design advice from specialists to consider the design and location options for a playground in Tomkins Park. This will lead to a further consultation before any contracts are let for this part of the Phase 2 project.

At the same time WTC will need to agree with the Sports Club a design for the Community and Sports building which serves everyone's needs (this has already been done in principle); planning permission must be obtained; highways approval to the making of new access points on Elmfields Gate must be obtained; and tenders for the demolition and construction must be obtained for an amount which can be afforded.

WTC is confident that all of these steps can be successfully accomplished. Relocation of the playground is, however, a show-stopper: if it does not happen the project cannot proceed and it will have to be abandoned. There is no Plan B: no other site within the town of a suitable size and location is available to WTC at an affordable price.