

Derry Hill Play Area Working Group Report

1. INTRODUCTION

In March 2023, Calne Without Parish Council established a Working Group to investigate the feasibility of developing a Play Area for Derry Hill. The Working Group has reported back to the Council in December 2023 and July 2024.

This report sets out the background to this Report, the development of Options and the results of Public Consultation, and sets out recommendations to the Council to implement the preferred option.

2. BACKGROUND

The Parish Council and local West Ward Councillors have for many years received requests from residents for children's play equipment to be installed on Petty Acre in Derry Hill. A number of those requests pointed to a perceived under-use of Petty Acre as a recreation facility and the lack of any public play equipment in Derry Hill.

It has been said that Derry Hill is the largest village in Wiltshire not to have a children's playground. Although it's hard to establish if that is true, other comparable villages in the area all appear to have play facilities.

In establishing the Parish Council's budgets in 2019/20 and 2020/21 the Council identified financial provision for a playground and equipment at Petty Acre as a potential project to improve community facilities.

In October 2020 the Parish Council considered a report to initiate a project to examine the feasibility of a children's play area at Petty Acre with equipment suitable for children up to 12 years of age, together with outdoor adult fitness equipment. In advance of commissioning a feasibility study the Council wished to undertake a public consultation study to establish the levels of support from residents adjacent to Petty Acre and more broadly within Derry Hill.

A survey leaflet was to be delivered to all houses in Derry Hill, Studley and Pewsham Ward. The key factors the council wished to consider were:

1. Overall response rate;
2. Positive response rate;
3. Weighting responses from properties adjacent to Petty Acre;
4. Community involvement.

The report considered that criteria should be set and suggested response rates that could be considered as minimum, but although these were not discussed or formally agreed by the Council, many councillors at that time, but not all, considered they were bound by those minimum rates.

The Council resolved that:

"Calne Without Parish Council agree that works be initiated to examine the feasibility of providing a Children's Playground with equipment and outdoor fitness equipment on Petty Acre, Derry Hill and the initial phase involves:

- A. Establishing the permissions necessary for providing such a facility on Petty Acre;

B. A public consultation to identify the level of community support to examine the feasibility and cost of providing a Children’s Playground, with equipment and outdoor fitness equipment on Petty Acre, Derry Hill at a cost of no more than £500.

“The consultation should also establish the potential level of community participation in the project.”

628 survey forms were delivered in December 2020 and the consultation closed on 8th Jan 2021. The responses and the ‘thresholds’ were:

Criteria	Response	Threshold	Result
Overall Response	21% (130)	65%	NOT MET
Positive Response	79% (103)	65%	MET
Weighting (residents adjacent to Petty Acre)	11% (3)	75%	NOT MET
Community Involvement	7	5	MET

Despite the overwhelming majority of responses being in favour of proceeding with the feasibility study, the Council meeting on 8th Feb 2021 agreed, by a majority:

1. That the Council notes that the outcome of the public consultation on the provision of a children’s playground and outdoor fitness equipment at Petty Acre, Derry Hill did not satisfy all the threshold to proceed.
2. That the Council does not initiate a feasibility study into the provision of such a facility.
3. That the topic of investment in community facilities be included as an agenda item for the next Annual Parish Meeting when this can be convened.
4. That the Council agree the content of the proposed article for the Website and Inspire.

At subsequent Annual Parish Meetings and Village Fetes the provision of a play area on Petty Acre has been raised by residents and continued to receive support. Further individual residents’ requests for the play area have continued to be received by ward councillors and the Clerk. Residents have stressed the physical and mental benefits of outdoor exercise for young children as well as helping to develop social skills in play with other children. There are also seen to be benefits for parents and grandparents accompanying children at play areas.

At its March 2023 meeting the Parish Council set up a Working Group to investigate options for a play area for children in Derry Hill. The Group were charged with considering location, age range, style, access and costing as well as undertaking a consultation to gauge public support for a proposal. The terms of reference of this Working Group are included in Appendix A.

In December 2023 the Council considered a report that identified an area near “the mounds” on Petty Acre for a children’s play area for children up to 10 years old and sought to contact Wiltshire Council, The Bowood Estate and the Council’s insurers to understand the liabilities, costs and necessary permissions.

At its July 2024 meeting the Council granted the Working Group’s request to undertake public consultation by holding two drop in sessions at the Lansdowne Hall in September, where plans of a number of alternative play area layouts and equipment could be displayed.

3. OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT

The Working Group held regular meetings which were supplemented by email correspondence. The initial discussions revolved around “Why” (have play equipment); “Where” (should it be positioned); “Who” (what age range should the play equipment accommodate); “What” (sort of play equipment); and “Worries” (how to mitigate any concerns raised).

“Why”

The benefits of access to a playground for children was discussed and research showed that community playgrounds provide children the opportunity to practice and hone key skills including social, emotional, cognitive and physical. Children are constantly learning through play - making new friends, sharing, taking turns and interacting with other children. The isolation suffered during the Covid lockdown periods and their damaging consequences highlighted the importance of children being able to play together as a group.

Parents or care givers also benefit from playgrounds as they provide a meeting place for young mothers who are sometimes isolated, thereby improving their mental health and sense of wellbeing. Visiting a playground gets you out of the house. Somewhere free and accessible for the children to run off some energy is a boon to any care giver.

The recent census showed that in Derry Hill and Studley there were 66 children under five and 288 school-age children, with nearly 10% of the village’s populations being under 10. Of course, the numbers will now have changed but it demonstrates there are sufficient young children within Derry Hill and Studley to warrant have their needs addressed.

“Where”

Consideration was given as to where to position a single piece of play equipment.

Petty Acre and the grassed area on Petty Lane are the only open areas available within the village, although neither are owned by Calne Without Parish Council and permission would be required to site any play equipment there. As Petty Acre has long been established as a multi-use, multi-generational recreation space, available to anyone and everyone within the village to use it was felt to be the obvious choice.

Whilst for many years the two “mounds” on Petty Acre have provided the only source of entertainment to young children, running up and down the mounds soon palls. It was hoped that by siting a piece of play equipment by the mounds it would enhance their “play appeal”. This area of Petty Acre and the football area are recognised by other users as an area likely to be used by children.

Unfortunately, the copse of trees on Petty Acre has become so overgrown with brambles that its play value is minimal. It is also used by some residents as a dumping ground for green waste. The rectangle of grass between Bowood Close and the end of Lansdowne Crescent West is not suitable for siting play equipment as access is required for any repairs to the culvert; similarly the entrance by Bowood Close is required access for the grass cutting tractor and hedge trimming tractor.



The outline of the proposed site for play equipment shown above is greater than will be required, as the precise location will be dependent on the drainage alignment. The aim is to site the play equipment near/by the mounds and towards the centre of the field, as far away from properties as is practical.

Currently children are driven out of the village if they wish to use play equipment. This is not consistent with sustainability objectives nor is it an acceptable solution. Children living in a large village should be able to access play equipment in their own village and on their own recreational space.

The accessibility of the adventure playground on the Bowood Estate is not a suitable solution either. Parents should not have to pay so their children can play locally, nor should they have to drive to use it.

The use of the play equipment on Studley Gardens was also rejected as an option. This play equipment is owned and maintained by the residents of Studley Gardens. It was considered unreasonable to expect the owners of the 53 houses on the estate to fund play provision for the children of Derry Hill, and for small children from Derry Hill to be expected to walk across Petty Acre and the A4 to access the play equipment in Studley Gardens.

“Who”

After discussion it was felt that play equipment aimed at the 2-10 year age was the most appropriate and research shows that children in this age range, both boys and girls, enjoy playing on the same style of equipment. The Working Group regretfully acknowledged that funds did not permit us to

provide wheelchair-accessible play equipment at this time, although disabled children with greater mobility would be able to benefit from the equipment.

“What”

Lengthy discussions were held around what sort of play equipment did we feel was suitable. The conclusions were that a “rustic” style was more appropriate to the setting on Petty Acre – that is that the main material would be wood, not shiny, garish metal.

Whilst swings are enjoyed by all ages, we were advised that swings are a focus for older children/teenagers to “hang out” and monopolise. For that reason, swings were not to be included in the design brief.

Various playgrounds were independently visited by members of the working group to see what was popular amongst young children.

The Group also considered that the area should be provided with a picnic bench (for parents or grandparents) and a litter bin.

After discussion it was felt that placing fencing around the play equipment would not be appropriate. With the play equipment sited by the mounds they would become incorporated within the fencing, and then adding in the picnic bench would mean that an inappropriately large area became enclosed. Whilst fencing would ensure that dogs would be excluded from the area it was noted that it is a legal requirement for dog owners to clear up after their dogs. It was not expected that many dog owners would express concern that they felt their dogs not to be safe around children. Again, there is a requirement that dog owners should ensure that their dogs are under control at all times. It was further noted that there is a planning condition on the land that Petty Acre must remain an open space, which could prohibit the installation of fencing.

“Worries”

The working group was aware that the residents most directly affected would have legitimate concerns and tried to anticipate and address them.

Antisocial behaviour by teenagers who may be encouraged to congregate by the play equipment was thought to be a prime concern and the Group sought advice from the Neighbourhood Policing Team. Their professional opinion was that a single piece of play equipment sited in full view of multiple houses was very unlikely to attract antisocial behaviour.

As Petty Acre was not lit during the hours of darkness that would also discourage teenagers “hanging out” around the picnic bench. This is supported by fact the longest running incidence of teenage anti-social behaviour in the village was when they congregated on the junction of Shelburne Way and Lansdowne Crescent West, which was illuminated by street lighting. The isolated incidences of antisocial behaviour on the field seem to be restricted to the bench closest to the fence and the path behind Shelburne Way. There have been no reports of problems with the other more exposed bench.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team have also sent a letter of reassurance that they would deal appropriately with any reports of antisocial behaviour.

Fencing the area has been covered above but it was discussed at length as a potential concern. The Council now know it is not an option.

Parking is a concern in the village. According to the recent census 24% of the households of Derry Hill and Studley have three or more cars and with the addition of visitors and staff of Kingston House, and parking linked to the school, all the village streets are congested with Lansdowne Crescent East being the worst affected. It was thought unlikely that anyone would drive to the village specifically to use a single piece of play equipment, especially as it would not be sign posted and would barely be visible from the road. Parents driving to use play equipment would have much better options for large play areas locally, such as in Lacock, Calne, Chippenham, Cherhill and the Bowood Estate. It is expected that the users will all be local and will walk to use the facility.

Invasion of privacy - the proposed site and height of the play equipment is such that no house's privacy will be invaded any more than it is by someone walking through Petty Acre. If someone six foot tall was unable to look into any of the surrounding gardens whilst standing on the mounds (we checked) it is highly unlikely that a child standing on a piece of low play equipment that is sited further away from houses would be able to see into any garden gardens.

Option Development

We held further discussion and got advice from Wiltshire Council's lead officer on play area design and had a useful online meeting.

With the Parish Council's approval, the Working Group then approached three suppliers for quotes on play equipment within our budget of £20,000 and our brief of: play equipment suitable for the 2 – 10 years age range; made predominately from wood to create a rustic look; no swings and no garish painting; not particularly high structures; preferably with grass below if the legal requirements allowed it.

The Working Group then discussed at length with the individual play park representatives as to what is suitable and affordable within their range. The objective was to have a varied range of play equipment on display so that residents could express their preference at the planned consultation meetings.

4. OPTIONS

At our request the first company supplied us with two quotes for two different styles of play equipment.



Option 1 – Proludic

£18,143.76

Play value = Climbing across and up, sliding, socialising, balancing, taking shelter, getting across
Components = Stepping stones (Japanese steps), climbing posts, log walkway, log ladder net, platform, slide (height 1.37 m), roof.

Materials – Robinia Wood, ropes all have a wire core.

Guarantees – 10 years for rope assemblies, Robinia wood – 15 years

Maintenance - Robinia wood fades to grey over time. Any loose knots should be repaired to prevent water penetration. The wood will develop cracks – these should be filled if there is a danger of entrapment. The Robinia wood may require protection against strimming (metal feet was requested as part of the quote but it has not been included).

The highest part of Option 1 would require a fall mat but this can be under the grass.

The highest footfall areas would be protected by grids inserted into the grass.

Option 2 - Proludic

£11,581.69

Age range = 3 years upwards

Can accommodate 26 children at a time

No benefit for wheelchairs users or the profoundly disabled

(The fixed bars element of option two will be withdrawn after it was brought to the working groups attention that schools are removing them as too many children fell off and broke their arms.)

Play value = Balancing, getting across

Components = Stepping stones (Japanese steps), suspended net, balancing beam, walkway, log walkway

Materials – Robinia Wood, ropes all have a wire core.

Guarantees – 10 years for rope assemblies, Robinia wood – 15 years
 The highest footfall areas would be protected by grids inserted into the grass.

Option 3 – SutcliffePlay

Toddlezone play unit, Dish roundabout, Swing frame with 2 seats = £20,595.

Calne Without Parish Council
 Pettys Acre Playing Field



02 - Dish Roundabout



03- Swing Frame with
 1 x Pod and 1 x Flat Seats





01 - Daisy Toddler Unit

Features:
 1 x 1.2m Ladder
 1 x Slide
 1 x Crawl Tunnel
 1 x Maze Panel
 1 x Bug Puzzle Panel
 1 x Binoculars



Equipment List	
No.	Description
01	Toddlerzone Daisy Play Unit
02	Dish Roundabout
03	Swing with 1 x Pod Seat & 1 x Flat Seat
04	Grass Mat Surfacing

Sutcliffe Play South West
 Farnham Road
 Lynton Matravers
 Exonnet
 BH16 6FH

Tel: 01282 821938
 Email: sales@sutcliffeplay.co.uk
 Internet: www.sutcliffeplay.co.uk



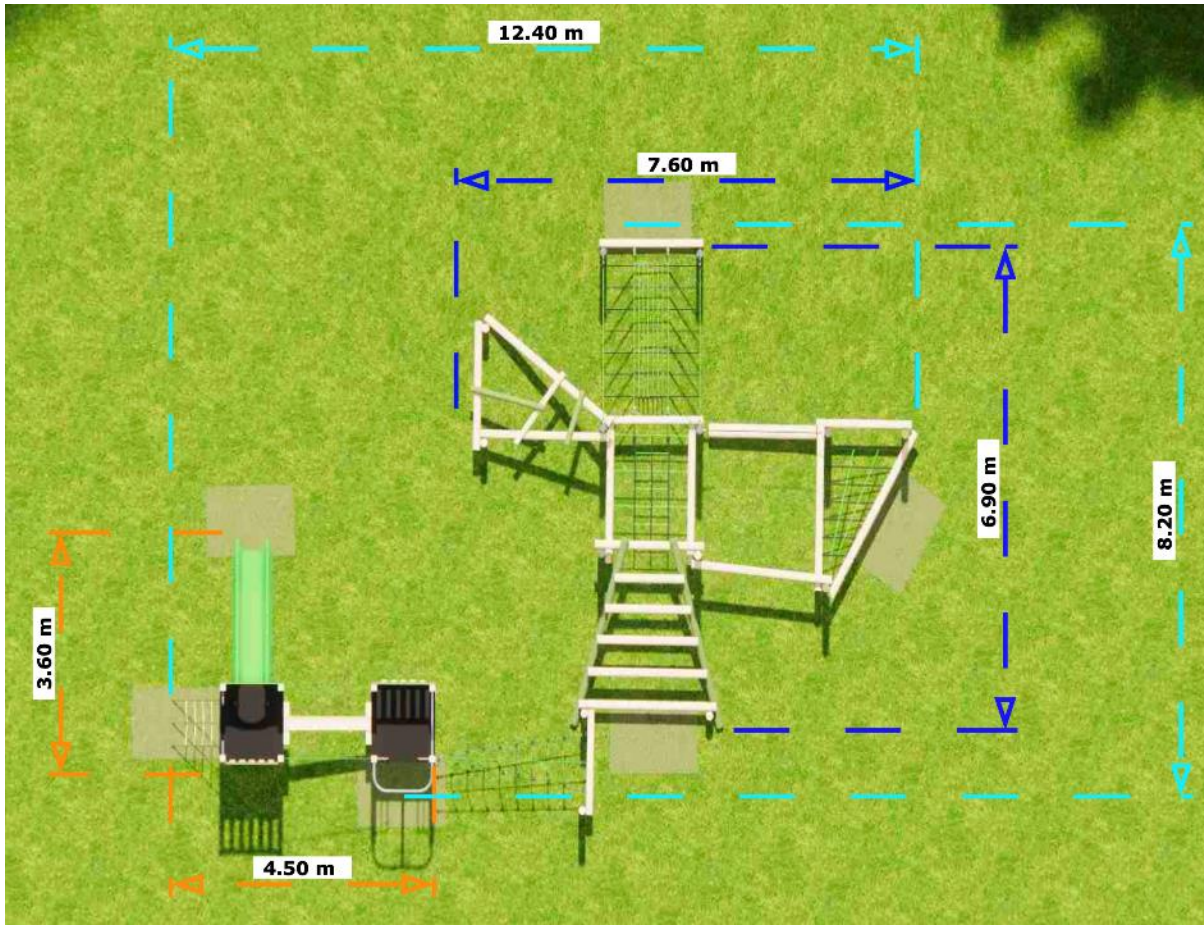
Calne Without Parish Council		Pettys Acre Playing Field	
PROJECT NO	AA	ISSUE NO	13047
DATE	27/06/2024	ISSUE NAME	
SCALE	1:200@A3		DF

Option 3 was created without the opportunity for a joint site visit, so the design provided was different to the brief. However, we considered it important to include this option in order to get a better idea of what local residents would prefer.

Option 4 - ESPPlayParks

Bespoke “Tangled Wolf”, bespoke “Play tower” = £20,000.
 Separate quote for bin and large picnic bench = £1,477.





The plans shown are not definitive and can be “tweaked” to fit our requirements – further site surveys will be required to confirm installation points.

Age range = 2/3 years upwards.

Can accommodate “a lot” of children at a time.

No benefit for wheelchairs users or the profoundly disabled.

Play value = Balancing, traversing, challenging, climbing, sliding.

Components = Wooden steps, slide, suspended net, balancing beams, net walkway, log walkway.

Materials – Glulam Wood with steel feet in the Tangled wood structure, ropes all have a wire core.

Plastic slide.

Guarantees – 15 year timber guarantee – spare parts are available.

Maintenance – Glulam wood requires little maintenance and it should not crack.

The highest footfall areas would be protected by grids inserted into the grass.

All the companies who were asked to quote comply with the required standards for play equipment, source wood from sustainable forests and provide the required certification at the completion of the installation.

5. CONSULTATION

Bowood Estate

Petty Acre is owned by the Bowood Estate; however the land is leased on a long-term basis by Wiltshire Council. The Bowood Estate has been consulted and raised no objection to the proposal for

a playground. The Estate's main expectation is to ensure that the majority of Petty Acre remains open green space for public enjoyment and that access routes remain unobstructed to enable future maintenance.

Wiltshire Council

Wiltshire Council have confirmed that they would support the provision of play equipment on Petty Acre, as long as the Parish Council was going to be taking on the ongoing management and maintenance of the new play area (which would be the case).

In July 2024 Wiltshire Council was asked whether planning permission was required for the installation of play equipment at Petty Acre. The Parish Council received a reply by letter dated 23rd August 2024 stating that this was considered as permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended and therefore planning permission was not required. There were three provisos attached to this consent:

- 1) The area should not be fenced off.
- 2) The equipment must not exceed 4 metres in height.
- 3) There should be no change in land levels.

The Council's attention was also brought to the decision notice for the original development which included a condition that the area should remain open space.

Public Consultation

A leaflet drop throughout the village was carried out in early August 2024 giving notice that there were to be two drop-in consultation events on Thursday 22 August 2024 and Saturday 31 August 2024. These meetings were well attended, with the four options set out. Parish councillors were present to answer questions.

These drop-in consultations were followed by an online survey of residents.

The results of this online survey were as follows.

196 responses were received of which **151 (77%) supported proposals and 45 (23%) objected.**

Excluding responses from outside the village, **126 (74%) supported proposals and 45 (26%) objected** (171 responses).¹

Considering only the postcodes immediately adjacent to Petty Acre, **35 (64%) supported proposals and 20 (34%) objected** (55 responses).

Of those responses expressing a preferred option, these were

- **Option 1** - Stepping stones, climbing posts, log walk way, log ladder net, platform and slide – **32 (24%)**

¹ Responses from postcodes outside the village have been excluded here, although many of these will have links to the village.

- **Option 2** - Balancing trail, stepping stones, suspended net, balancing beam, walkway – 6 (4%)
- **Option 3** - Toddler zone play unit, dish roundabout and swing frame with two seat – 11 (8%)
- **Option 4** - 'Tangled wolf' (wood and net climbing construction) with play towers and slide – 85 (63%)

Supportive Comments

Comments in support of the proposals included:

- Large village with families and primary school, so good to have somewhere that younger children can enjoy.
- Should have been provided when the houses were built.
- Avoids having to take children across the A4 to Studley Gardens.
- Aesthetically pleasing; looks good.
- Encourages outdoor play, which is known to benefit physical and mental health.
- Sympathetic to area and well positioned to accommodate other uses of Petty Acre.
- Good to have a play area within walking distance rather than having to drive.

It is noted that many of the supportive comments also expressed a preference for fencing and for the addition of swings, which had been rejected for the reasons set out above.

Opposing Comments

Comments raised in opposition are summarised below, together with responses from the Working Group:

Adverse Comment	Response from Working Group
Cost/benefit – too few children. Lack of demand.	According to the census, 9% of the population of Derry Hill and Studley are aged 0-9 years.
Already enough provision for young children	Derry Hill is a large village. There is no play equipment accessible elsewhere in the village.
Children can use Studley Gardens play area	This play area is owned and maintained by the residents of Studley Gardens. There is no latent right for use by the wider public. It will also involve crossing the A4 for children from Derry Hill.
No fence; mixing of dogs and children.	Petty Acre is multi-use public open space. It is already used for play by children. When children are present, there is already an obligation on dog owners to keep their dogs under control. It is probable that there will be times of the day where the play equipment is not in use. Rustic-looking options were chosen to blend in with Petty Acre. A large fenced area will have a high impact on the “look” of Petty Area and appears to be prohibited by a covenant on the land

Adverse Comment	Response from Working Group
Attraction of youths, teenagers, anti-social behaviour.	There are already benches on Petty Acre, so if youths are looking for somewhere to sit to hang out, then it is already there. As there is no lighting, it is unlikely that the play area would attract youths at night.
Litter	A litter bin will be provided alongside the play equipment.
Damage, vandalism, maintenance.	The equipment is sturdy, but the Parish Council is nevertheless committed to maintaining the play equipment in good working order.
Will encourage people to drive to Derry Hill to use the facilities	The play equipment being provided is quite limited in scope. We believe that people are therefore unlikely to drive to Derry Hill in preference to playgrounds in nearby towns such as Chippenham and Calne.
Too close to houses; disturbance to nearby houses	The location has been chosen to avoid occupying the middle part of Petty Acre, so that it can continue to be used for other uses.
Play equipment is outdated; we should be promoting Forest Schools and other activities such as den building.	The play equipment has been selected to have a contemporary feel, with equipment designed to encourage the development of climbing, balancing, problem solving and social skills. The provision of play equipment would not prevent children from engaging in other organised activities, such as Forest Schools.
No provision for disabled children	The equipment has been chosen to help develop climbing and balancing skills. Provision for wheelchair users could be added at a future date if there was demand. Disabled children with greater mobility will be able to benefit from the equipment.
Impact on others who use the space	The location selected keeps the majority of Petty Acre clear for other uses.
Out of place in the environment	The equipment has been chosen to have a rustic appearance so as to blend in with the environment.
Lack of lighting & therefore health and safety hazard at night	It is unlikely that parents would take their children to the play area at night. Providing lighting would encourage anti-social behaviour.
Wrong location – would be better on the side by Lansdowne Crescent East.	The location has been chosen to tie in with the mounds, which are already used for play. The alternative location proposed would not be acceptable to Wiltshire Council, as it is required for access for grass cutting equipment. The Bowood Estate also require it to be kept clear for access for plant.
Impact on house prices	The provision of a play area within Derry Hill is as likely to enhance local house prices.
Previously considered and rejected	During the previous consultation, 79% of the respondents were in favour.
Decision will be made by Councillors rather than an actual vote	The decision will be made by a vote of the Parish Council. Councillors are expected to take account of the views of the public expressed through this consultation.

6. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the Working Group is that there is a clear majority of residents in support of the proposals (74% to 26% of those responding), with a strong preference for Option 4 (the “Tangled Wolf” with bespoke “Play Tower”, from ESPPlayParks, together with a picnic bench and waste bin for a capital cost of **£21,477**).

The Parish Council will need to make further provision in its budgets for the following ongoing costs:

- Insurance – the play equipment would be covered within the Council’s current insurance coverage.
- Safety Inspection – annual inspection would be covered within the Council’s current contract with RoSPA. Regular additional inspections will need to be undertaken by councillors, with appropriate training from the Training Budget.
- Bin-emptying – a further bin will need to be included within the Council’s current contract with idverde.
- Grass Cutting – the Council will need to employ a Contractor to cut and strim the grass around the structures on a regular basis during summer months.
- Maintenance – it is recommended that annual provision is made to build up a reserve for future maintenance, repair and replacement.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation: it is recommended that the Council implements the installation of play equipment on Petty Acre, as outlined in Option 4 from ESPPlayParks, together with a picnic bench and waste bin, to a budget of £21,477, and makes further provision within its budget for future years for insurance, safety inspection, training, bin emptying, grass cutting and maintenance.

Appendix 1 – WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Calne Without Parish Council Derry Hill Play Area Working Group Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Derry Hill Play Area Working Group was established by Calne Without Parish Council on 13th March 2023.

2. Membership

The Working Group has been set up with the following membership: Councillors Todd, Rees, McInnes and Turton. The Working Group may also include members of the public and specialists. All additions and changes to the Group are to be approved by the Parish Council.

3. Aims and Objectives

The Working Group has been set up with the following aims and objectives.

3.1 Aims

To investigate the provision of a Play Area in Derry Hill and make a recommendation to the Council.

3.2 Objectives

- Investigate options for the provision of a Play Area for children in Derry Hill, considering location, age range, style and access.
- Develop a costed proposal for the provision of a Play Area.
- Subject to approval from the Council, undertake a consultation to gauge public support for a proposal.
- Submit a recommendation to the Council. This may be a costed recommendation to proceed with a defined scheme, or a recommendation not to further proceed.

4. Timescales

The Working Group shall remain in existence until such time as it considers the objectives set out above to be complete. The continuing existence of the Working Group and its Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the full Council on an annual basis.

5. Reporting

The Working Group shall submit regular reports as required by the Strategic Planning Committee.