

CASTLE BYTHAM RECREATION FIELD DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS PLAN



***A COMMUNITY SPACE FOR
YOUNG AND OLD***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Castle Bytham Parish Council (CBPC) owns a large Recreation Field¹ situated off Glen Road, allocated for leisure activities for the community. The field covers 2.3 acres/9348 sqm and has a perimeter of 481 metres. It currently has two sets of children's swings, see-saw, slide, Football/Basket Ball wall, two 5 x side football goal posts and 4 picnic benches. In recent years efforts have been made to bring the whole field into use by controlling nettles and bramble growth and through improved grass cutting.

In 2008, a survey of the pupils at the Bytham's School showed that 93% placed the need for play areas in the parish in their top 3 priorities and 81% made it their no 1 priority. The analysis of the adult and teenage priorities conducted by the 2010 Village Plan group in their household community survey evidenced that 2/3rds of respondents regard the lack of play and recreation facilities a serious deficiency in Castle Bytham. It is also noteworthy that the adjacent parishes have striven to improve their play areas in recent years.

From case studies of similar rural facilities, the need for improved recreational facilities can be identified under the following 5 headings:

- a. Children's Play areas
- b. Sports Field area
- c. Family picnic area
- d. Car park
- e. Woodland areas

Breaking down a programme for developing the field allows for a series of projects that can be progressed independently of each other. This has the advantage that as the components may attract funding from different sources the whole programme will not be disrupted by the need to follow differing timelines for funding allocations.

This Business Plan builds on the work started in 2009 and details the proposals for a five year programme. The cover picture shows the installation of the present, (2020), equipment. In the last few years improvements in the ground maintenance have made the whole site accessible and much more ground is now available for development as a community leisure space.

In the years between 2010 and 2020, CBPC undertook to improve the ground maintenance to bring back into use neglected and overgrown areas. There is a contract for grass cutting and ground maintenance for the areas unsuitable for mowing. In year 2019/2020 this contract cost £1305. The field also has an external annual audit of its facilities for insurance purposes at a cost of £140.

CBPC has lodged a request with SKDC that S106 funds allocated from the housing development in the disused Quarry in the village for children's play equipment, estimated at £58,000 in 2019, will be transferred to CBPC in due course. Grant applications to Sport England and the Lottery are also being submitted for up to a further £20,000. These, in September 2020, are on hold due to Covid 19 impact on these grant funds criteria.

¹ The field was granted to the PC in 1982, the Deeds specify that it is solely for recreation purposes. SKDC signed a Deed on 20 Aug 1982 agreeing to laying and maintaining an access road to the field from Glen Road.

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REFERENCES:

- A. Design for Play: Guide to creating successful play spaces. Published by the Dept. for Children, Schools and Families <https://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/design-for-play/>
- B. SKDC Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Report (2017) <http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21278&p=0>
- C. Best Play: What Play Provision Should do for Children (2000) <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

1. This plan sets a number of objectives aimed to make the Recreation Field an asset that will benefit all age groups by enhancing its leisure and sports facilities.

CHILDREN PLAY

2. At present young children, under 11, are the main users of the field. However, the limited range of play equipment means many children have a short play attention span. The Foreword to Ref A begins with the comment that *“By a range of measures, there is growing evidence that children in England spend less time enjoying outdoor play than at any point in our modern history. Addressing this problem will not be simple.”* Ref C describes the benefits of play for children in some detail (page 11). It is noteworthy that most studies on the subject identify the need for an element of physical challenge in play, including the need for children to explore risk. In other words, play should have an element of challenge. In our risk averse environment this need is itself a challenge to play provision. Ref A also adds *“Much public play space currently relies primarily on the design and installation of manufactured play equipment. Much of this is high quality in terms of play value, but a lot of it is not and seems to be based on a narrow view of how children play. A lot of play equipment is designed with a primary focus on safety, offering little opportunity for play that offers risk and challenge. Equally, avoiding wear and tear often appears to be a bigger priority than user enjoyment.”*
3. What exactly is “play”? Studies have shown that play is essential to the healthy development of children and young people – not just their physical development, but their social and cognitive development too. Ref A notes: *“We should not prevent children and young people from doing things they enjoy because of risks that can be managed. Children and young people themselves recognise that ‘you can’t make everything safe’ and that a balance is needed between risks and fun. Children recognise that knowing about risks and how to manage them is an essential part of growing up.”*
4. The Play for England study also notes: *“Many studies have shown that children benefit from access to natural environments (Lester and Maudsley, 2006). Grassy mounds, planting, logs, and boulders can all help to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, and planting can also help attract birds and other wildlife to literally bring the play space alive. It is also beneficial in rural areas where children can often have very limited access to natural features and materials.”* This theme is expanded to show the benefits of more natural playscapes, many of which have the added advantage of low maintenance. The Recreation Field offers both space and terrain opportunities for this type of “adventure” play areas.

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SPORTS FIELD

5. The use of the title “Recreation Field” is no accident. The terms of the grant are explicit in identifying its use as a leisure area for all age groups. The two sports facilities comprise the 5 a Side pitch and the games wall.



At present there is no organised sport in the Parish but this could change and marking out the 5 a side pitch accurately might be required. The sports wall (shown above) is well used but has one disadvantage. In winter the area in front of the wall can get very muddy and the grass surface is unsuited to the use of the basketball ring. An artificial surface immediately in front would improve matters.

ACTIVE LIFESTYLE BENEFITS

6. Many organisations involved in health and fitness are emphasising the need for all age groups to lead more active lives but especially the very young and the elderly. Sport England has made extensive studies on the subject and the following points are drawn from their in-depth research into the benefits of getting children and young people and “older adults” to be more active.

“Getting young people active

There are currently seven million children aged five to 15 in England and nearly four in five are not doing the recommended daily amount of exercise.

The Chief Medical Officer in England recommends that children do at least 60 minutes of activity every day. For one reason or another, this isn't the case for the majority of young people.”

“Getting older adults active: We have an ageing population – the number of people aged 60 or over is expected to pass the 20 million mark by 2030 according to the Office for National Statistics. We know that as you get older, you're far more likely to become inactive. Our research shows that 42 per cent of people aged 55 and over are inactive compared to 29 per cent of the adult population. This can be for a range of reasons and not necessarily directly connected to age and physical ability. It can be work, greater family and caring commitments and even social attitudes about the 'right time' to start getting active.

But those who are least active stand to benefit the most in terms of their health and happiness by getting active. It's true even for seemingly small changes like walking slightly faster or further than you normally would.”

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7. To encourage both age groups to be more active outdoor fitness equipment is recommended. The main difference lies in the size of the equipment for children or adult use. Many companies offer timber versions that might be considered more appropriate to the Recreation Field location. Fitness equipment designed for children tends towards climbing and swinging equipment, whereas adult equipment emphasises agility and stamina. The final choice being largely dictated by the available budget. The aerial view of the field on the front page clearly shows the space available for additional facilities. This study paper offers a range of options designed to encourage wider use of the field, by all age groups, to promote both a healthier lifestyle and appreciation of outdoor leisure activities. The proposed development requires facilities that can combine play and an active lifestyle with a parkland experience.

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

8. Village facilities for young people are under resourced by SKDC. Typically, available public open spaces and play areas are dependent on fund raising by local community groups for equipment and development and on Parish Councils for ongoing maintenance. External grant funds frequently require that the sponsor organisations or other third parties provide some funding which can complicate the process. However, there are a number of grant funds available that specifically recognise rural issues and support play and sport opportunities for younger people; fitness and recreational facilities and environmental improvements. The natural isolation of rural communities' places a greater burden on community self help compared to larger urban populations which can attract substantial local authority funding based on population.

SITE ANALYSIS

9. Of the available 9348 sqm less than 500sqm actually has facilities on it and that even includes the 5 a side pitch. A further 2600 sqm at the Western end of the field can be described as woodland and includes two large mounds created as part of the original play site for children. The remaining 2/3, just over 6000 sqm is relatively flat and available for additional facilities. Annex A depicts how, in 2010, it was envisaged that this space might be developed. However, this plan has taken into account the advice on other factors that would enhance the wellbeing of a wider cross section of the public. Some key elements from the original plan are included and expanded on. The other learning element gained since 2010 is around the ongoing effort of maintaining facilities and the need to keep costs within the parameters of a relatively small Parish Council ability to sustain them. Too often similar projects that have taken advantage of available capital funds but without a full appreciation of ongoing maintenance costs.

10. The objectives of this proposal are to develop the following facilities:

- a. Children's Play areas
- b. Health Fitness and Sports
- c. Family Leisure Site
- d. Car park
- e. Woodland areas

This list is not in a priority order and actual development will largely depend on available funds. The main source of capital funds come from grants. Applications for grants can be complex as grant fund

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bodies often change their criteria, sometimes from year to year. The Lincolnshire Grant Fund Portal (<https://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/lincolnshire/>), is a useful source for identifying suitable grants. However, it is also important to take a sounding of public opinion on what the community wants and consider the evidence from available case studies and research.

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS



10. Children and young people need to be made more welcome in the public domain, but with so many factors now restricting their access to the outdoors, it is becoming all the more essential that their play spaces provide a far wider range of play activities and environments than they have in the past. To quote the Reference A foreword *“Play should be at the heart of children’s everyday lives and experiences throughout childhood. We want children to enjoy a healthy balance of structured and unstructured play in their leisure time.”* The Guide goes on to say *“We should not prevent children and young people from doing things they enjoy because of risks that can be managed”*. Children and young people themselves recognise that *“you can’t make everything safe’ and that a balance is needed between risks and fun. Children recognise that knowing about risks and how to manage them is an essential part of growing up”*. It is noteworthy that the “Design for Play” Guide is supported by both the HSE and RoSPA. A final quote from Reference A is significant:

“Research suggests that children playing outdoors and establishing relationships with other children in their community can also have a positive effect on community cohesion. The more social networks children have in a neighbourhood, the greater the confidence parents have in the safety of that area. Parents also establish their own networks through their children, meaning that play also supports community cohesion amongst adults”.

In short, play areas must offer both fun and challenges to help children to develop. Annex B provides a list of suitable Play providing companies who are legally obliged to carry out “risk assessment of their provision (of play equipment) and to act on their findings”. This approach is supported by the HSE and RoSPA. A survey of children, aged 8 to 13, using the Field noted the most popular facility they wanted was a Zip Wire slide; they craved excitement as well as physical challenges.

11. Following the agreement with SKDC, approximately £58,000 S106 funding, resulting from the housing development in the Quarry on Station Road, will be made available for new equipment on the Field. The S106 contract with the developer specifies this must be used for children’s play facilities and is expected to become available within the 2 to 3 years. A list of approved play facility companies that will be invited to tender for design, delivery and installation of suitable equipment is at Annex C. It only remains to agree with SKDC whether the Parish Council project manages this major development and invoices SKDC or the funds are transferred directly to the Parish Council.

HEALTH, SPORT AND FITNESS

12. Being physically active can help us lead healthier lives and has an important role in improving wellbeing². We cannot force people to participate, even when it would be in their best interest, but we can encourage all age groups to be more active by providing the facilities to do so. These facilities fall in to 2 broad categories, games and fitness. Games facilities encompass pitches and courts. The existing 5 aside already has goal posts and could be used for hockey or “walking football”. The latter is designed to get the elderly outdoors and active and has a growing number of local teams already looking for suitable pitches. Early surveys suggested a local desire for cricket nets and a tennis court. However, interest in team activities appears to be low amongst the younger residents. Moreover, both are high maintenance facilities. One option would be an all-weather concrete table tennis table, suitable for all age groups.

Walking Football



With rules designed to reduce the speed and physicality of the game, the format is suited to those over 50

Outdoor Table Tennis



Tables are fixed in place and weather proof

13. Fitness equipment provides opportunities for older teenagers right up to the retired to take anaerobic exercise to improve muscle strength. Many adults in the local community already enjoy aerobic exercise, mainly running and cycling, but lack facilities for anaerobic training. Outdoor fixed anaerobic equipment tends to focus on muscular resistant exercise and circuit training and is very robust. Fitness equipment suitable for younger children is very similar, just smaller.



Much of the available adult equipment is designed to be used by a ranges of age groups and physical fitness standards. Even just 20 minutes of use a week has valuable benefits for all adults.

² Sport England “campaigns” <https://www.sportengland.org/campaigns-and-our-work#overview-5689>

Children's fitness equipment has to be fun as well as challenging



FAMILY LEISURE SPACE

14. When the Recreation Field was gifted to the Parish Council the Deeds were not specific about the meaning of "Recreation" but they are implicit that it was to be used as a family leisure space. Over many years the Parish Council and community groups³ have provided picnic tables and benches. However, these have all suffered from being moved around by people or by contractors carrying out grass cutting. The Parish Council has resolved in 2021 to purchase replacement picnic tables from its precept and funding has been obtained⁴ to provide a shelter to protect these assets as well as their users. It has also been noted that this facility would be appreciated by adults less formal use when they are accompanying children playing on the field. The shelter consists of a sturdy wooden gazebo, 3m x 6m on a concrete base. The picnic tables will be anchored to the base by chain and padlock to ensure they cannot be moved without Parish Council permission.



The Gazebo Shelter supplied by Dunster House Ltd

³ The last set of picnic tables were provided by the Midsummer Fair Committee

⁴ Lottery Grant of £9500 obtained in 2021

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The picnic tables are being made to order by a charitable foundation in Oakham and will include one example capable of accepting wheelchair users.

CAR PARK

15. The Glen Road Recreation Field access location lacks adequate road side parking for much of the time. The addition of a small car park area within the Field itself would enable families to take picnic items on to the site. However, the access road is narrow and passes between houses and, of course, the presence of children has to be taken into account. The proposed surface on the Field would consist of plastic mesh pressed into the ground that can be mown over, with space for no more than 6 vehicles. The edges of the car park would be marked by long logs pegged in place. Speed from Glen Road onto the field would be signed at 3mph (walking pace).



WOODLAND

16. Over the years, attempts have been made to introduce planting, to enhance the visual aspects of the site, screen parts from adjacent housing and encourage wildlife. From 2009 to 2020 the Parish Council sought to ensure the whole of the site was accessible by controlling areas previously overgrown with brambles and nettles. In 2021 an additional 85 small trees were planted to create a new woodland area. These trees are all natural broadleaf native varieties; over time it will become necessary to thin out the growing trees to provide adequate space for the best of them and offer some sunlight to the undergrowth. Following the principle that the whole of the Field should be accessible to everyone, there are three options for the maintenance of the new wooded area, they are:

- a. Continue to mow the grass on a regular basis to maintain a “parkland” effect.
- b. Reduce mowing to 2 or 3 times year to encourages meadow effect, encouraging low lying wild flowers⁵

⁵ Within 1 month of planting this course of action had already started to produce the desired effect

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- c. Allow the woodland to take its natural course which, after a number of years of uncleared leaf fall will lead to relatively life less ground cover⁶.

The effect chosen must still take account of the priority for continued public access as well considering the different maintenance costs over time.



The variety of trees planted takes into account their benefits to a range of wildlife as well as well as their aesthetic appearance.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- 17. The following items for the Recreation Field should be taken into account:
 - a. ISO storage
 - i. Need for a Community storage facility for the PC and other community groups.
 - ii. Might include moveable play and sport equipment
 - iii. Needs to be secure and accessible to vehicles
 - b. Security/safety/Inspection regime/insurance
 - i. All householders adjacent to the Field and all users should be encouraged to monitor the site as well as the PC conducting monthly formal inspections.
 - c. Fencing & Access
 - i. Establish who is responsible for all fencing
 - ii. Access normally limited to pedestrians, vehicle access with specific PC permission?
 - d. Noise disturbance/ASB

⁶ Similar to the effect of the older woodland are to the west of the Field. Ongoing work will still need to be taken to ensure it does not succumb to brambles, nettles etc.

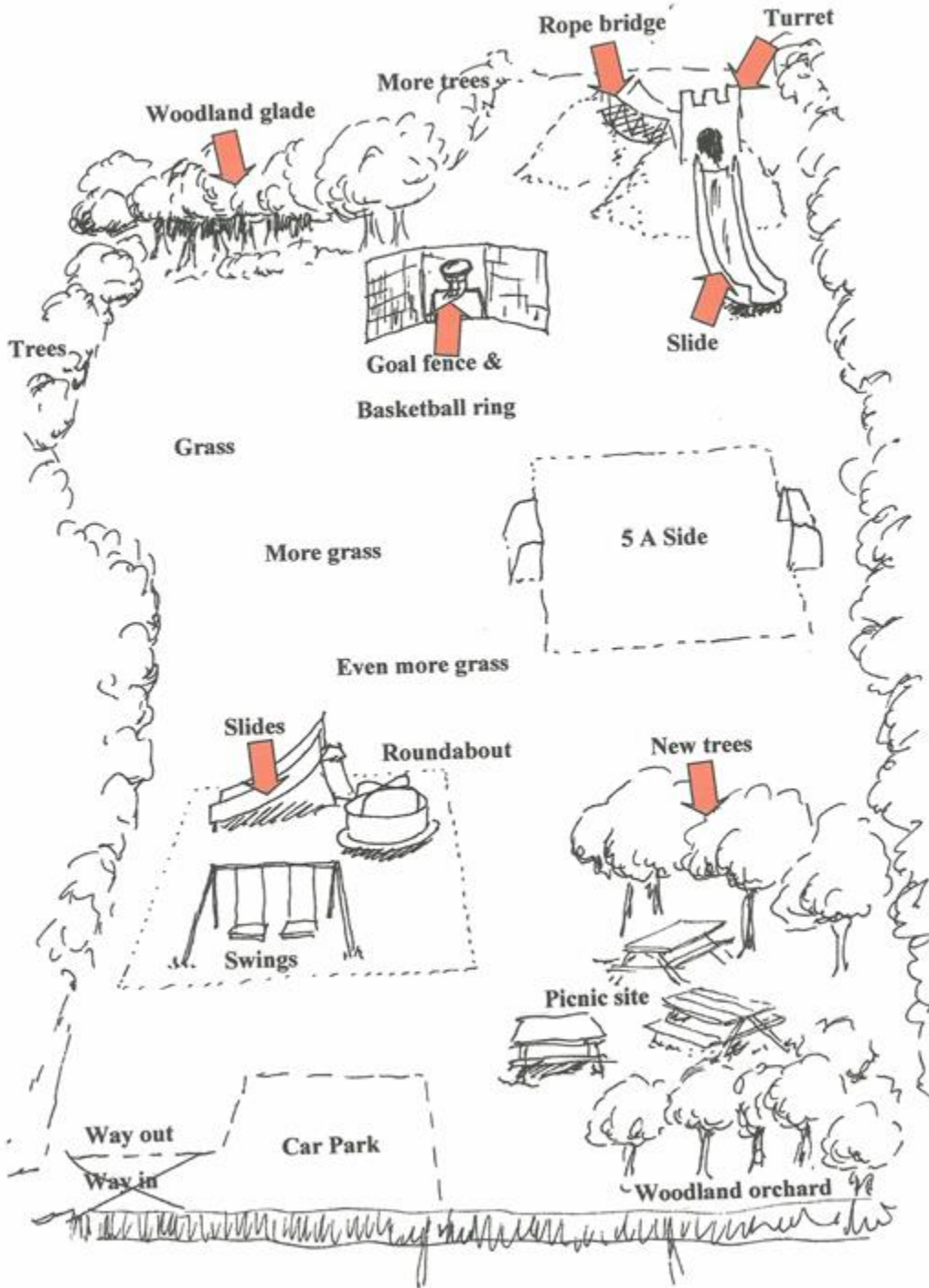
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- i. Castle Bytham has a very low incident rate of antisocial behaviour. However, prompt action when incidents occur must be reported
- e. Public access/ROW
 - i. One public footpath (Right of Way – ROW) crosses the Field and must be maintained by law.
 - ii. A Permissive Path links to the ROW across the field but its exact route is at the discretion of the Parish Council.

Peter Hinton
Chairman, Castle Bytham Parish Council

12 May 2021

2010 VISION FOR THE RECREATION FIELD



In broad terms this vision is still relevant but actual play/fitness equipment design can be left to the professional companies listed in Annex B.

PLAY EQUIPMENT LEADING COMPANIES

The following play equipment companies are extensively used by Local Authorities:

- a. Wicksteed
 - i. Wicksteed Leisure Limited, Digby Street, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN16 8YJ. Tel 01536517028. Email sales@wicksteed.co.uk, website <https://wicksteed.co.uk/>
 - ii. Wicksteed installed the original swings on the Field.
- b. Proludic
 - i. The Play Hub, Bradmore Business Park, Loughborough Road Nottingham, NG11 6QA. Tel 0115 982 3980. Email info@proludic.co.uk website <https://www.proludic.co.uk/>
- c. Streetscape
 - i. Streetscape Products & Services Ltd. Raleigh Works, Vivars Way, Canal Road, Selby, North Yorkshire, YO8 8BE. Tel 01757 706607. Email info@streetscape-products.co.uk website <https://www.streetscape-products.co.uk/>
- d. Miracle design
 - i. 14 Duncan Close, Redhouse Square, Moulton Park, Northampton NN3 6WL. Tel 01604 658240. Email sales@miracledandp.co.uk website <https://www.miracledesignandplay.co.uk/>
 - ii. Miracle have recently installed equipment in Swayfield

When the S106 funding becomes available good practice would be to invite these companies (and others) to produce play area and exercise equipment designs within a given budget. Based on the predicted £58k that will be available it would be advisable to keep the capital expenditure to around £50k and retain the remainder for ongoing maintenance costs. Best practice would be to allocate the annual maintenance costs on a reducing level year on year whilst increasing the amount taken up from the Precept year on year.