

Report: Playground Consultation – Summary of Key Points

1. Rationale for Developing a Village Playground

The proposal for a new village playground aims to create a safe, accessible, and welcoming space for children and families. A local play area supports physical health, wellbeing, outdoor activity, and social connection. It also enhances the appearance of the village and may help attract and retain young families. The Village Hall location offers good accessibility, parking, and opportunities to strengthen community activity.

2. Engagement and Consultation

Engagement with the parish has taken place over the past eight months through newsletter updates and social media posts. Two consultation events were held in November, **resulting in 81 completed questionnaires**, submitted in person, via email, and through collection points. No written objections were received. However, there were some concerns raised regarding aspects of the project which can be largely addressed as the plan is implemented. (see implementation section 11).

Responses **identified 83 children** who could benefit directly from the playground, including those living in the village and regular visiting grandchildren. **The average age identified was 6 years.**

The preferred design is wooden, fenced, and includes seating for carers. Most requested play items include swings, monkey bars, and slides. Some respondents felt that the playground should serve all ages. All agreed it should include accessible features.

3. Location Assessment

A feasibility study considered several potential sites:

Cricket Field: Unsuitable due to flood risk, poor drainage, distance from the village centre, and increased risk of vandalism.

Burton Green: Too small, surrounded by housing, lacking parking, and more suited to quiet recreational use.

Village Hall Green: Preferred location due to central access, availability of parking (including disabled spaces), compatibility with hall activities, and natural contours that help limit visual impact. Regular footfall at the hall provides informal oversight, deterring antisocial behaviour.

4. Parking Considerations

Parking at the Village Hall was funded jointly by the Hall and Parish Council to support community use and reduce verge damage. Playground use is expected mainly during the day, minimising overlap with evening hall activities.

5. Planning permission

This may not be needed as small playgrounds are included within a Parish Council's permitted development rights. We have applied to confirm this and are waiting to hear the outcome.

6. Costs and Funding

The estimated cost for installation, equipment, and groundwork is approximately **£30-40,000.**

Current funds amount to **£10,000**.

Funding will be secured through:

- Grant applications, including the National Lottery and smaller funding bodies.
- Community fundraising, with a goal of raising **£15,000–£20,000** to enable match-funding opportunities.
- A forthcoming crowdfunding page.
- Local fundraising events, including regular pub quiz evenings in collaboration with the village pub, and other community-led activities.
- **Corporate contributions: any local businesses or employers willing to donate are warmly encouraged to do so. Supporters are asked to email Elaine for next steps – Elaine.McInnes-Rich@Withersfield-pc.gov.uk.**

7. Maintenance and Insurance

The selected contractor will provide annual inspections for five years. Ongoing maintenance and insurance will be funded by the Parish Council, with existing insurance already including playground cover.

8. Aesthetic Impact

A wooden, conservation-appropriate design has been selected to blend with the surrounding environment. Council planners have confirmed their support for this approach.

9. Use of Children's Numbers in a previous Survey

Data indicating 3,300 children using the Village Hall annually were derived from an 18-month average across groups and events. These figures support grant applications by demonstrating potential community benefit.

10. Supervision

Parents and carers will remain responsible for supervising their children. Signage around the periphery will make this clear.

11. Implementation Considerations

To ensure safety, accessibility, and long-term usability, the following considerations will be included in the implementation phase:

- Bins for litter and waste management.
- CCTV to deter vandalism and support site safety.
- Appropriate lighting (e.g. PIR) to improve security without increasing light pollution.
- Positioning away from the road to maximise safety for children.
- Screening / soft landscaping to help it blend in
- Accessible for all children
- Clear signage for drivers indicating children crossing or playing nearby.
- Disabled parking.

These measures will help ensure the playground remains safe, attractive, and well-managed.

On 11/11/25, the Parish Council unanimously resolved that the playground project should continue as planned.