

**Report of:** Angela Cristofoli, Area Co-ordinator

**To:** Cowley Area Committee

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007

**Item No:**

**Title of Report :** Longer-term options for Crescent Road kickabout area

## Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To inform Cowley Area Committee of the longer-term options for Crescent Road kickabout area and for the Area Committee agree an option to take forward

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Caroline Van Zyl

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Community

**Ward(s) affected:** Cowley Marsh

### Report Approved by

**Legal:** Daniel Smith, Legal Services

**Finance:** Andrew Collett

**Planning:** Felicity Byrne, Planning Officer

**Leisure and Cultural Services:** John Wade, Parks Manager

**Policy Framework:** improve Oxford's environment, economy and quality of life

reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

be an open, intelligent and responsive organisation

**Recommendation(s):** Cowley Area Committee is requested to comment on and agree the preferred option to take forward:

- (i) **Option A: Facility remains as at present**
- (ii) **Option B: Facility improvements to site.** This would require revenue funding from Cowley Area Committee of between £7,140 and £17,140.
- (iii) **Option C: Move facility to another location and sell the site for development.** This option would require further time to develop and report back to Area Committee on the outcome

## **Background**

1. The all weather pitch is located in Crescent Road adjacent to the Oxford Brookes Halls of Residence (see Appendix 1)
2. It is sited in a residential location and residents in the immediate vicinity have reported increasing amounts of anti-social behaviour.
3. Residents have raised the issue through Cowley Area Committee and some remedial actions have been addressed:
  - a. There have been increased patrols by the Police and Park Rangers.
  - b. The fencing around the pitch has been repaired to reduce the problem of balls hitting resident's houses.
  - c. New signs have been put up clearly identifying a code of conduct and when the facility closes.
4. A report on the options for short-term solutions to improve the situation for the residents was taken to the Cowley Area Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007.
5. The Area Committee agreed to continue with the current locking arrangements, whereby Oxford Brookes University in partnership with the City Council locked the facility as a gesture of goodwill. The Parks Manager was asked to investigate the possibility and cost of providing netting to cover either end of the facility, the whole facility or one end of the facility to prevent balls being kicked over the fencing.

## **Assessing the present facility**

6. The Area Co-ordinator arranged a meeting in May with Officers from Parks, Planning, Asset Management to discuss possible options for the site.
7. There was also a site visit in April with the Parks Manager, ward councillor, Area Co-ordinator and representatives from Oxford Brookes to discuss both the security arrangements for the site and also potential ideas for any site development.
8. From the discussions there were some ideas and issues that need to be followed up in order to develop options for the future.

## Options

9. **Option A: Facility remains as at present** - do nothing. Because of the proximity of the site to residential housing, there is the potential of an ongoing issue related to anti-social behaviour. There are also costs associated with patrolling the site on a regular basis and dealing with any repairs to the site.
  
10. **Option B: Facility improvements to site** – several options were presented to Cowley Area Committee in August. These included:
  - (i) Lock up the facility at 8.00pm. The cost of locking the facility under this arrangement would be £140.00 per week. The cost per year would be £7,140.
  
  - (ii) Increase the height of the fencing to 4 metres would require planning permission. The estimated cost would be £9000.
  
  - (iii) Replace the existing side fence sections with new mesh using the same grade that was recently installed at the ends. The estimated cost would be £10,000.
  
11. Following the Cowley Area Committee meeting in August, the Parks Manager has reported back that after seeking advice from RoSPA, they are of the opinion that it would be unsafe to put a net over the area because there is a very high risk of injury from items falling through the net onto people using the area below. Items will not only get caught on the net from natural causes but there is a very high possibility that items will be thrown onto the net from youths etc. They explained that they were aware of some Parish Councils that have installed netting on sites that they inspect and the above situation occurs. Added to this, on these sites the Councils have had additional expense in putting in extra supports to take the straining wires required to keep any net taut.
  
12. Overall Option B could cost Cowley Area Committee between £7,140 and £17,140. The current revenue budget for Cowley Area Committee is £33,136 for 2007/08 and the committed expenditure is £26,477 leaving an available £10,019 to spend this financial year.
  
13. **Option C – Move facility to another location and sell the site for development.** The current location of this all weather pitch is close to student residential accommodation and also private residences. There has been a site meeting to explore the potential for moving the pitch and redevelopment of the site and also discussions with relevant Officers (paragraphs 6 and 7).

14. The Local Plan 2001-2016 has Policy SR.2 related to the protection of open air sports facility. This states that:

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would result in the loss of open-air sports facilities, including school playing fields, where there is a need for the facility to be retained in its current location, or the open area provides an important green space for local residents.

Where this is not the case, planning permission will only be granted where there is no need at all for the facility for the purposes of open space, sport or recreation, or where:

- a. there is a need for the development;
- b. there are no alternative non-greenfield sites; and
- c. the facility can be replaced by either:
  - i. providing an equivalent or improved replacement facility; or
  - ii. upgrading an existing facility.

Open-air sports facilities are identified on the Proposals Map.

15. The all weather pitch is not identified as a protected open-air sports facility on the proposals map. However in order to address the rationale of this policy and satisfy planning criteria, there needs to be evidence for a suitable replacement of the pitch area.
16. The Parks Department have indicated that a suitable site could be found within Cowley Marsh ward. This would be within Cowley Marsh recreation ground and close to the other sports/play amenities. There could also be other opportunities to explore e.g. the Lord Nuffield Sports and Social Club, Crescent Road.
17. Development of the site would need planning permission and further work with Parks, Asset Management and Planning Officers is required to develop this option.

### **Recommendation**

18. Cowley Area Committee is requested to comment on and agree the preferred option to take forward:
- a. **Option A: Facility remains as at present**
  - b. **Option B: Facility improvements to site.** This would require revenue funding from Cowley Area Committee of between £7,140 and £17,140.
  - c. **Option C: Move facility to another location and sell the site for development.** This option would require further time to develop and report back to Area Committee on the outcome.

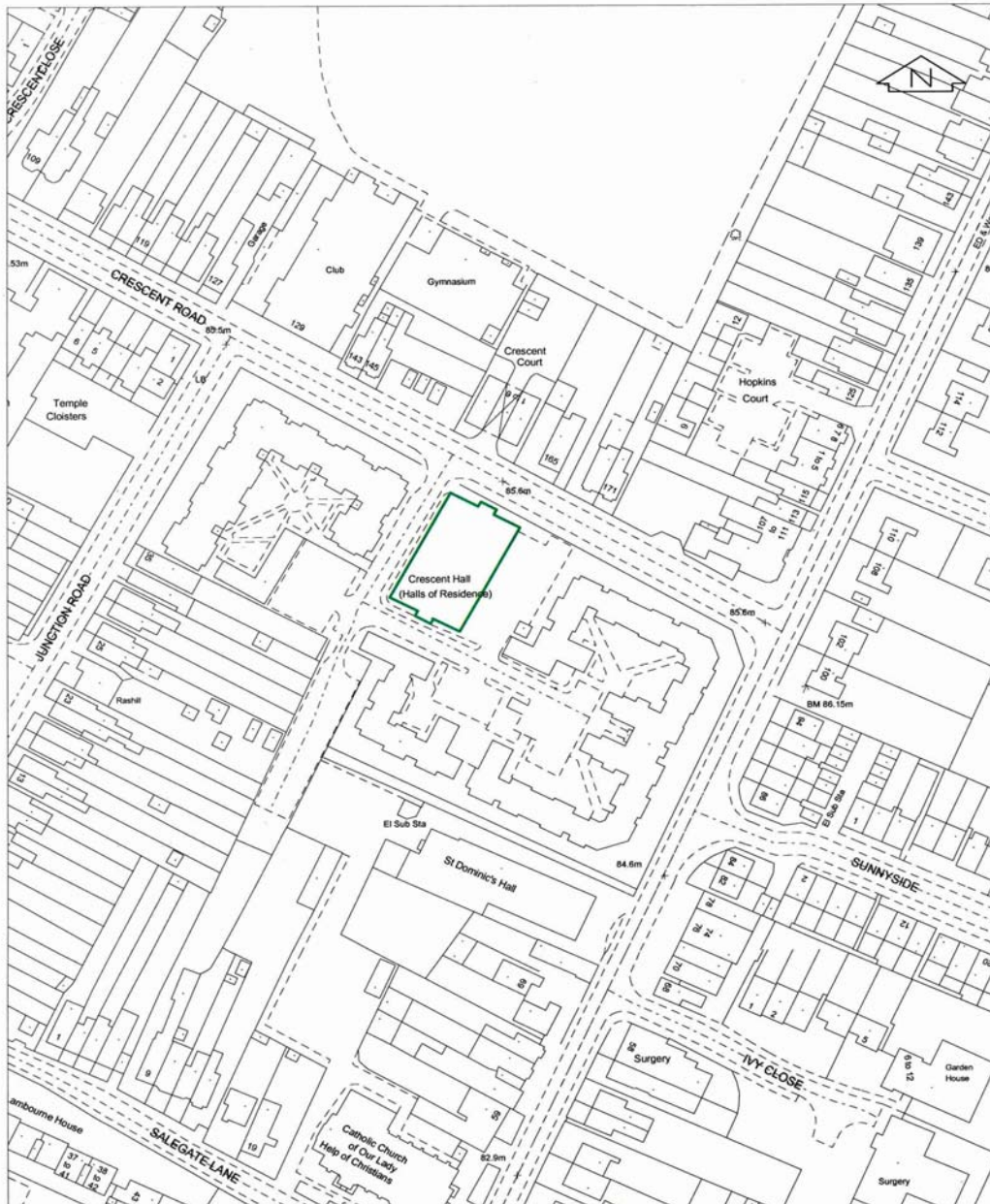
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**Background papers:**

1<sup>st</sup> August 2007. Cowley Area Committee. Crescent Road all weather pitch short-term options. Dave Reeve, Assistant Parks Manager.

Oxford City Council Local Plan 2001-2016.

Appendix 1



Title: R191-CRESCENT ROAD,ARTIFICIAL FOOTBALL PITCH  
 Scale: 1:1250; Map Reference: SP5404NE

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 Financial & Asset Management