

**EQUIPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE GREEN, STONEYFIELD DRIVE, STANSTED
South West Area Panel, item 5**

Committee: SOUTH WEST AREA PANEL

Agenda Item

Date: 23rd November 2006

5

Title: EQUIPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE
GREEN, STONEYFIELD DRIVE,
STANSTED

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Item for
decision

Summary

1. This report sets out the results of a consultation of members of the community affected by issues relating to the Green, Stoneyfield Drive, including a request for new equipment to be considered by the Area Panel.

Recommendations

2. That the Area Panel:
 - (a) Notes the report.
 - (b) Considers whether the proposal for installing a full sized ball court should be approved in principle, thus authorising officers to investigate funding options and to apply for planning permission and other consents as necessary.
 - (c) Considers whether the proposal for installing smaller items of sports/recreation equipment should be approved in principle.

Background Papers

Survey results, drawn from all surveys conducted (Appendix 1).

Responses to surveys undertaken in December 2005, February 2006 and June 2006 (Appendix 2).

'Arena' Sports Systems brochure – extract showing *San Diego* full ball court (Appendix 3).

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The balance of wishes between residents overlooking The Green and young people who may or may not live nearby is something that the consultation process has tried to address. The consultation comprised 3 surveys dated December 2005, February 2006 and June 2006; and 3 community meetings which were
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**EQUIPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE GREEN, STONEYFIELD DRIVE, STANSTED
South West Area Panel, item 5**

	held in July 2005, September 2005 and April 2006.
Community Safety	The installation of a full ball court would require additional lighting plus CCTV.
Equalities	No specific implications.
Finance	By way of application by SY2000 to external grant giving bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund. The supply only cost of the games court would be £41,582 plus VAT plus 2.5% carriage. Costs of installation, lighting and CCTV would therefore also need to be taken into account. The issue of maintenance costs would need to be considered.
Human Rights	No specific implications.
Legal implications	Planning permission will be required as the Green is a designated open space. Accordingly any development should not result in the loss of openness of the area, and would be permitted only if it was a small proportion of the total area, retaining recreational use. Preliminary enquiries indicate that a limited loss of open space may be permitted if a successful design can be achieved. ECC would need to consent to any alteration to the kerb required in installing equipment.
Ward-specific impacts	Stansted.
Workforce/Workplace	To be co-ordinated by SY2000, with assistance in applying for funding to be provided by UDC Funding and Strategic Partnerships Officer; and with assistance in consulting residents to be provided by UDC Housing Service.

Situation

- 1 UDC has conducted a consultation of nearby residents and users of this open space over the past 18 months in response to various complaints about issues affecting this area.
- 2 The Green is owned by UDC Housing Revenue Account. It is surrounded on all four sides by residential streets. Amenities comprise a bench, a pair of goal posts, one of which has protective wire fencing behind it, and a young children's play area which is currently enclosed by a fence of wooden palings. The present condition of these items is as follows: the bench is in a fairly good

EQUIPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE GREEN, STONEYFIELD DRIVE, STANSTED South West Area Panel, item 5

state of repair (but is being considered for removal due to persistent damage caused by groups of young people to the hedge and fencing behind it); the goal posts are in good order; the wire netting behind one of the goals is rather worn and the wires have been cut in several places; the play area has recently had new swings installed, but many of the fence palings have been pulled off – replacement metal fencing is currently being investigated by the Parish Council.

- 3 The Green is well used by children and young people from the surrounding estate, but some also come to the area from further away. The open grass is used mainly for football. Other people who use The Green include parents with young children, dog-walkers, and children on bikes.
- 4 According to by-laws, children over the age of 14 are not permitted to use the equipment in the play area, unless accompanying a child under this age. During the day the equipment is apparently used by the correct age group under supervision from their parents. However, after school the play area tends to be occupied by older children.
- 5 The bench, sited on the corner of the Green near Mountfitchet Road and Mount Drive is the only seating available on The Green outside the play area, and consequently many teenagers gather here. (This has been a source of persistent problems such as noisy behaviour and damage to the hedge and fencing near the bench.)
- 6 The issues reported to UDC Housing Service as persistent problems for residents include the general dilapidated appearance of the area due to the worn grass near the goal posts; litter and vandalism to the fence posts around the play area and more recently to the fencing supporting the new hedge; allegations of anti-social behaviour such as abusive language and intimidation towards adults who intervene when they see equipment being damaged; damage, mostly but not always, accidental, to parked cars; allegations of repeated late-night disruption due to groups of up to 20 or 30 young people drinking alcohol, talking, arguing, coming and going in cars – all of this at extremely unsocial hours; broken glass and empty alcohol bottles on the grass. Additional comments mention speeding cars, lack of adequate off-road parking, and the poor condition of the Highways owned grass verges due to cars being parked on them.
- 7 Further problems identified by young people who took part in the consultation, were: the lack of seating and recreation equipment available to their age group; the fact that the grass suffers wear and tear when football is played; the fact that a minority of young people spoil things for others by damaging equipment.
- 8 As a result of the concerns expressed to Parish and District Councillors, UDC Housing Service conducted a consultation with nearby residents. The consultation process was then widened to enable the views of those young people who use this amenity to also be taken into account. This culminated in Stansted's Youth Service and SY2000 putting forward suggestions for seating and sports facilities at The Green.

**EQUIPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE GREEN, STONEYFIELD DRIVE, STANSTED
South West Area Panel, item 5**

- 9 The proposals comprised a sheltered seating arrangement or “teen shelter”, a multi-use games court with a hard surface and high fencing, and additional benches and bins.
- 10 A majority of residents opposed the proposal to erect a teen shelter, citing concerns that it would encourage prolonged disruption from noise and anti-social behaviour late at night, and that it might encourage additional young people from outside the area to come to the Green. Accordingly this report assumes that this suggestion will not be progressed.
- 11 A majority of residents responding to the survey were in favour of the proposed games court, although reservations were expressed.
- 12 The games court suggested by the young people is shown on page 17 of the Arena Sports Systems brochure. The court is suitable for playing both football and basketball or netball; it would also prevent wear and tear to the grass; the fencing would help to prevent children from running out after a ball and would protect parked vehicles from damage. The maximum area of this type of court is given in the brochure as 30m x 20m.
- 13 If the games court is not to be installed, the young people have requested that alternatives be considered. These could be a single basket ball hoop, or one wall with a hoop. Further ideas put forward to UDC are for a variety of sports equipment, each item with a small “footprint” in terms of area required, to be placed on the Green, whether in one group or placed in separate areas with a view to dispersing large noisy groups of youngsters.
- 14 The Area Panel is therefore asked to choose which option for new equipment would be appropriate for The Green, taking into account the views of both young people and occupants of nearby homes.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to cater for needs of teenagers may result in continuing disaffection.	High	Continued disruption from anti-social activities.	Installing amenities specific to this age group, whether the full sized ball court or smaller recreation equipment.