

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:
Title:	Claypits Plantation	Tuesday, 16 October 2018
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Simon Howell, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration	
Report Author:	Nicola Wittman, nwittman@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. To decide the future use of the Clay Pits wooded area known locally as Hilly Bumps. The site is currently a mix of a woodland walk and a former BMX jumps track. The BMX Group using the jumps ceased to operate about eight months ago and public consultation has resulted in two options for the future of the wood
 - a. Continuation of the BMX jumps by entering into an agreement with a new BMX group; or
 - b. Designating the site as a forest school.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Cabinet
 - a. Approves the allocation of the site as a forest school; and
 - b. Delegates to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services authority to agree the requirements and arrangements with the users.

Financial Implications

2. Both options have one-off financial implications ranging from £2,000 - £5,000 which can be met from existing budgets.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Advertised in the local press and local Ward Members involved in the discussions.
Community Safety	Higher risk with the BMX track option but any accessible woodland area contains risk. The more the site is used and maintained the less chance there is for anti-social behaviour to take place.
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	Whichever option is chosen necessary Health and Safety inspections will be undertaken.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No specific implications
Sustainability	No specific implications
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden Shire Ward Members have been involved with the proposals as have Saffron Walden Audley Ward Members whose Ward abuts the site.
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

4. undertook to maintain the wooded area beside Herbert's Farm in Saffron Walden. The lease is for 50 years with no break clause.
5. In 2010 agreement was reached with Audley End Estate to allow a group of BMX riders to formalise the unofficial BMX track that they had developed. This was on the basis that they maintained the jumps to the cross-country biking standards and undertook the necessary Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) checks. The BMX group installed a shed and maintained the site in accordance with the 2010 agreement. However in recent times there has been significant vandalism to the shed along with other anti-social behaviour and the group has become disillusioned and has now left the site.
6. Appendix One shows the location of the site.
7. Attached at Appendix Two is an extract from the lease between Audley End and Uttlesford District Council which specifies 'Pedestrian access to the whole of the land for quiet informal recreational or education purposes'.

8. An advertisement was placed in the local press seeking expressions of interest to take on the BMX track which resulted in 3 responses.

- 1 – A group of riders most of whom live in Uttlesford. A group of experienced rider's age range from 16 to 50 who wish to maintain the site as a BMX track and carry out the necessary inspections (proposal Appendix Three).

- 2 – Katherine Semar Infant and Junior schools. This proposal is for a joint venture forest school to include RA Butler and St Thomas More schools. A forest school is where children get to explore the woodland in a safe environment (proposal Appendix Four).

- 3 – Saffron Walden Town Council green infrastructure team would like the area managed as woodland/natural green space (Appendix Five).

9. There are financial costs dependent upon the final option chosen

- 1 – Given the time since the jumps were last used there will be costs in clearing vegetation and reinstating routes through the site. Cost likely to be in the region of £2,000

- 2 – The schools option would require the existing jumps to be flattened and the area returned to woodland at a cost of about £3,000

10. A further meeting was held with representatives of various schools and pre-schools and it has been established that an arrangement for the following schools to use the site as a forest school is the preferred option

Katherine Semar Infant
Katherine Semar Junior
RA Butler
St Thomas More
Bell Nursery
Meadow's Nursery

11. It is anticipated that the forest school site, once established, would be used several times each week. Records of usage will be maintained by the users.

12. With either option the wood will also be available for use by the general public and the reinstatement of the internal walkway is central to this.

13. On balance the school proposal is more in line with the original lease between the Council and Audley End Estate. Therefore the preferred option is for the establishment of a forest school. Both proposals have been discussed with the Resident Agent for the Estate and he is supportive of the preferred option.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The schools and nurseries do not make use of the site	1 – the site will be used regularly by the schools	3 – lack of use would see the wood fall back into an overgrown and under used asset	The fact that six users have been identified means that the wood will be in regular use. Records of use will be maintained.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix One – Site Location



Appendix Two – Extract from Lease

(d) To permit members of the public to have (without charge) pedestrian access to the whole of the land for quiet informal recreational or educational purposes subject to the right of the Council (i) to close off and prevent access to any part of parts of the land for temporary periods as it may deem necessary for the good management of the woodland or in order to facilitate protect or enhance any planting or other works which the Council may carry out in order to preserve maintain reinstate or improve the woodland and (ii) to impose such restrictions and conditions on public access as may be necessary for the purpose of protecting and preserving the woodland or preventing or avoiding any nuisance damage or misuse of the land or any part thereof

Appendix Three – Response from potential BMX users and completed questionnaire

Dear Uttlesford council,

Myself and four others are interested in the opportunity to take up the maintenance of the bmx jump facilities located at Clay Pit Piece, was Saffron Walden. All five of us are part of the bmx racing community and we have built a few local trails and tracks, but this opportunity to maintain and improve this local jump spot sounds great. As briefly mentioned we have experience with building jumps and would like to bring more riders together at the jumps so everyone can work together and help each other improve everyone's riding. Please email me back as soon as possible so we can get ourselves down there and start to refurbish the jumps and creating a safer cycling area. We would love to have safety signs to optimise and control the maximum amount of safety hoping that the risk of injury is minimal and once all complete would like to host a local jam in celebration of the new and improved jumps.

Questionnaire sent to BMX group

1. How many people would be helping you run the site and what are the age ranges?

There are currently five people who will help run the site, our ages range from 16 to 50+. This number will increase as more people start riding at the site.

2. Are the riders likely to be local?

We are likely to have a mix of riders; mainly local but some will be coming to Saffron Walden to ride the trails. One of the reasons the trails previously fell into disrepair was because they were only usable by riders with an extremely high skill level, meaning that they had less local riders to help with maintenance . we plan to increase the variety of trails, and by providing easier trails we will be able to open the site to more riders and bring new people to the sport.

3. How would you promote the site?

We will promote the site through two main outlets, social media and word of mouth.

Social media:

Create social media pages for the site, this will help advertise the jumps to all riders.

We are lucky to have quite a few well known riders in the local area, we will invite these riders to come to the jumps, they will intern post about the site on social media, showing it to more riders.

Word of mouth:

We will also advertise the site through word of mouth, by talking to local riders in skate parks and other sites. We are lucky enough to have a busy skate park in the local area, we can use this to tell local riders about the site. We are planning to have a jam style event to reopen the site; This will give local riders a chance to get used to the site. It will also help boost the sites social media presence.

4. Would you set up a formal group or would you propose an informal set up?

The jumps would be set up as an informal group, as the land is open members of the public will be able to gain access to the jumps so a formal group wouldn't be

possible. However we will have a group of riders who will help with the maintenance and safety assessments of the site.

5. What would you see as the days and times the site would be open for use?

The site is always accessible so will be open at all times in the summer months. However we will ensure there are signs to ensure riders do not stay at the site too late, as it is close to houses. During winter maintenance and repairs will be carried out to the site.

6. Would you look to run formal events at the site and if so how would you marshal the parking etc. that would come with an event?

We would look to run a few formal events a year, in order to raise money to help with the maintenance of the site.

Parking locations

Currently there is only space for one car to park, this is in a layby on Debden road (marked in black). There are two other possible locations for parking.

Herbert's farm playing field

For larger events the car park at Herbert's farm playing field (marked in blue) could be used. We would have to ensure that events do not clash with events at the playing field to prevent overcrowding.

Land adjacent to the site (marked in red)

This land could possibly be adapted to be used for parking.

7. If you are successful the council will need to enter into a formal lease arrangement with you and clearly there would be obligations on you (such as the daily ROSPA inspections, keeping the place tidy and working with the nearby residents to minimise the impact of the jumps being so close to houses). Can you set out how you would look to address these requirements?

To minimise the impact of the jumps on the local area we will:

Install signs with the rules of the site, the rules will include:

Not having excessive noise

No motorised vehicles

No littering

No loud music

No riding the wrong way on the jumps.

We will also make sure that all local residents, feel that they can talk to us about any concerns or issues they have with the jumps

To keep the site clean we would provide bins on both entrances and on the site. We would be responsible for emptying the bins; the bins will be emptied once a week and when the bins are emptied we will also ensure any litter left on the ground is removed.

The ROSPA inspections would have to be carried out weekly, as we are currently unable to be at the site every day.

Appendix Four – School Proposal

Katherine Semar Infant & Junior Schools

Ross Close, Saffron Walden CB11 4DU
01799 521720 (Infant) & 01799 521120 (Junior)
www.katherinesemar.essex.sch.uk



Executive Headteacher: Mrs Julie Puxley

Dear Mrs Morris,

I just wanted to write to reiterate that we propose that the Hilly Bumps should be used as a community interest site as a joint venue for forest school. Katherine Semar Infant and Junior school, R A Butler Infant and Junior school and St Thomas school would all benefit from a local forest to do forest school and the hilly bumps would be an ideal location. Additionally, the Meadows nursery, the Bell nursery and Saffron nursery all have indicated that they would benefit from a forest school. ACE holiday club would also be able to use this space every school holiday (70 children attend this every holiday period). I estimate that from the area given back to the local community for this venture it would benefit more than 1000 local residents. With this number of users, the site would be looked after and monitored closely.

Forest school is a session where children get to explore the woodland in a free safe environment. Parents and Grandparents are invited to these sessions which means this proposal will positively impact further on community use. Two of our Level 3 trained forest school leaders have already visited the site and have identified it as an ideal site with very minimal work. Research now backs up what forest school practitioners have known all along – that children and young people are stimulated by the outdoors and typically experience, over time, an increase in their self belief, confidence, learning capacity, enthusiasm, communication and problem-solving skills and emotional well-being

I have tried to summarise the benefits of forest school for children:

Enjoy and achieve

Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school

Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation

Forest School sets learning in a different context for children where they can undertake a range of practical activities and carry out small achievable tasks. At Forest School children can develop their team working skills and also learn to become more independent. Those who are unfamiliar with woodlands and green spaces can become confident in using them and this can form the basis of a life-long relationship with natural spaces

Be healthy

Physically healthy

Mentally and emotionally healthy

Healthy lifestyles

At Forest School children are physically active a lot of the time and their stamina improves as they go through their Forest School sessions. Their experience can also help to lead to the development of healthier lifestyles as children ask parents to take them on trips to woodlands and green spaces outside of school times. As the children gain confidence and improve their self-esteem this can impact on their emotional and mental well-being.

Stay safe

The 'wild', and yet controlled, safe environment of Forest School ensures that children taking part naturally learn to assess risk and are encouraged to make sensible and informed decisions about how to deal with unfamiliar and unpredictable situations (such as exploring or climbing trees, using tools to build shelters and dens). Much of the learning for a child comes as a result of the opportunities they have for testing their own abilities in a real life context.

Make a positive contribution

Develop self confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges

Developing enterprising behaviour

Forest School helps children to develop their confidence. As they become familiar with Forest School they can take their new-found confidence into school and into other areas of their lives. Forest School can be particularly effective for children who do not do well in the classroom environment. Children learn to solve problems and be creative and imaginative at Forest School thus showing enterprising behaviour.

More recently . . .

('A marvellous opportunity for children to learn - A participatory evaluation of Forest School in England & Wales') Murray & O'Brien go on to make a number of recommendations, primarily making Forest School more widely available:

Forest School benefits many children and should be used on a wider basis as a vital part of children's outdoor learning experience, and to provide many more children with the opportunity to experience this as part of their overall education.

If need any further information about our proposal please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

Julie Puxley

Executive Headteacher

Appendix Five – Representation from Saffron Walden Town Council

11 Emson Close
Saffron Walden
Essex, CB10 1HL

T: (01799) 516501
T: (01799) 516502
F: (01799) 516503



04.04.18

Uttlesford District Council

Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB11 4ER

Dear Adrian Webb

The Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan group - through work completed by its Green Infrastructure team - believe that the public area known as Clay Pits should be managed as a woodland/natural green space going forwards.

This area has always been known as an informal natural area, a purpose it suits well, and a type of provision for which the town is significantly below recommended levels.

The Neighbourhood Plan group also wishes to see the restoration of a public footpath through the copse and recommends that an application is made to vary the current route (which is behind the hedge on the side of the road) so that the right of way follows the winding path through the centre.

We hope this view can be taken into consideration during the current deliberations over the future management of the site and would be happy to provide further information and input should it be helpful.

Yours Sincerely,

Cllr S Goddard
Green Infrastructure team lead

Cllr M Hibbs
Chair, Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan