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Project Outline: Owslebury Village Sports Pavilion

The development of a new sports pavilion, with changing rooms, a community area and kitchen. An outdoor sports facility which will include, a cricket pitch, football pitch, 2 five a side pitches, one padel court, MUGA and new parking facilities

Please provide a description of the project, its need and the outcomes

Project Description

The proposed project is the development of a new community pavilion and enhanced outdoor sports and recreation facilities in Owslebury. The pavilion will include two accessible changing rooms, an official's room, a small kitchen, and a flexible community space designed for use by both residents and non-residents. This indoor space will be suitable for a wide range of activities and events, including community gatherings, parties, wedding receptions, and sports-related functions and even a community shop or café, which the Parish Council have been exploring but unable to pursue as there is no community space in the village to use currently.

The wider site will be significantly improved through thoughtful re-landscaping, with the planting of a new hedgerow along the road edge, and new native trees to enhance biodiversity, visual appeal, and environmental sustainability. The outdoor facilities will include a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), one padel court, a cricket pitch, a full-size football pitch, and two five-a-side football pitches. Together, these facilities will create a high-quality, multi-purpose sporting and community hub that supports both organised sport and informal recreation.

Project Need

There is a clear and growing need for improved sporting and community facilities in Owslebury and the wider Winchester area. Cricket has been played in the village for over 100 years, but in recent times the cricket team has had to play some of its games in neighbouring pitches due to the lack of facilities. In the last 2 years there has been an after-school cricket club run at the site, and local football and rugby clubs from Winchester and the surrounding areas have used the site for training. However currently there is no facilities for them to use except 1 portable toilet. The Parish Council would like to expand setting up a girl's cricket club and an after-school football club but due to the lack of facilities are unable to do so.

Winchester currently lacks sufficient high-quality playing pitches to meet the demands of the many football and cricket teams active in the area. As a result, teams often struggle to secure suitable venues, particularly during periods of poor weather.

The existing site in Owslebury is uniquely well-suited to address this need. The chalk subsoil provides excellent natural drainage, allowing the pitches to remain playable throughout the year, even after sustained rainfall. This makes the site particularly valuable at a time when climate change is leading to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and more frequent periods of heavy rain.

In addition to the sporting need, there is also a strong demand for a modern, accessible community space. The village currently has limited facilities capable of hosting larger social events or supporting sports clubs with appropriate changing and catering amenities. The pavilion will address this gap, providing a welcoming space.

Project Outcomes

The project will deliver a high-quality sporting and community facility that benefits Owslebury, Winchester, and the surrounding areas. Key outcomes include increased access to year-round football and cricket pitches for local and regional teams, helping to relieve pressure on overstretched facilities elsewhere in Winchester.

The availability of well-drained, all-weather-capable pitches will enable more consistent training and match schedules, reduce cancellations, and support player development across all age groups. The inclusion of a MUGA and padel court will broaden participation opportunities, encouraging engagement from a wider section of the community, including young people, families, and those new to sport.

Beyond sport, the pavilion will become a focal point for community life, the Parish Council hope to open either a community café or shop in the community area and would like to host social events, celebrations, and community activities that strengthen local connections. The landscaping, tree and hedge planting will enhance the natural environment, promote biodiversity, and create an attractive, welcoming setting for both users and visitors.

Overall, this facility will represent a significant and lasting investment in the physical, social, and environmental wellbeing of Owslebury and the wider area, positioning the village as a key contributor to addressing the wider shortage of sporting infrastructure in Winchester.

Funding and Delivery

The Parish Council will take a proactive and mixed-funding approach to deliver the project. Funding applications will be made to Sport England and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), alongside a programme of local fundraising activities within the village. The Parish Council will also approach local businesses for grant support and sponsorship and, if required, will consider taking out a loan to ensure the project can be fully delivered.

This blended funding strategy demonstrates strong local commitment, sustainability, and a determination to deliver long-term benefits for both the local and wider community.

How the Pavilion Project Supports the SDNPA Purposes, Duty, Special Qualities, and Partnership Management Plan

The proposed pavilion and associated sports and community facilities have been carefully designed to support the statutory purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), while conserving and enhancing the National Park's special qualities and delivering against the priorities of the Partnership Management Plan.

Support for the National Park Purposes and Duty

Purpose 1: Conserve and Enhance the Natural Beauty, Wildlife, and Cultural Heritage

The project actively supports this primary purpose through sensitive siting, landscape enhancement, and biodiversity-led design. The surrounding area will be re-landscaped, with new native tree planting to strengthen landscape character and improve habitat diversity. In addition, new native hedgerows will be planted along the Longwood Road boundary of the pitch, creating a wildlife-rich corridor that will contribute to biodiversity net gain.

These hedges will provide shelter, foraging, and nesting opportunities for birds, small mammals, and insects, while also strengthening historic field boundary character typical of the South Downs. The hedgerows will help soften views of the pitches from the road, reinforcing the rural setting and integrating the development into the wider landscape.

The pavilion itself will be of an appropriate scale and form, ensuring that it respects local character and does not detract from the natural beauty or tranquillity of the area.

Purpose 2: Promote Opportunities for the Understanding and Enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the National Park

The pavilion and sports facilities will promote enjoyment of the National Park by providing high-quality opportunities for outdoor recreation in a landscape setting. The well-drained chalk land allows pitches to remain playable throughout the year, reducing the need to relocate sporting activity to more sensitive or less resilient areas of the National Park.

By supporting traditional rural sports such as cricket and football, alongside more modern facilities including a MUGA and padel court, the project encourages inclusive participation while helping people connect with the landscape and community life of the South Downs.

The Duty: Foster the Social and Economic Wellbeing of Local Communities

The project makes a strong contribution to the SDNPA's duty by supporting the social wellbeing of Owslebury and surrounding communities. The pavilion will provide a flexible, accessible space for community events, celebrations, and gatherings, strengthening social cohesion and supporting village life.

The use of the site by teams from Winchester and the wider area will bring visitors into the National Park in a managed and appropriate way, supporting local services while reinforcing the role of Owslebury as a sustainable rural community.

Support for the Special Qualities of the South Downs National Park

The project respects and enhances several of the National Park's special qualities, including:

- **A rich variety of wildlife and habitats** – through native tree planting, new hedgerows along Longwood Road, and landscape enhancement delivering biodiversity net gain
- **Tranquil and unspoilt landscapes** – by carefully managing recreational use and screening development through planting
- **Strong sense of place and local distinctiveness** – by reinforcing historic boundary features such as hedges and supporting village-scale facilities
- **Opportunities for enjoyment and recreation** – by providing inclusive, accessible sporting and community facilities
- **Well-conserved cultural heritage** – by supporting long-established rural sports and community traditions

Alignment with the Partnership Management Plan (PMP)

The Partnership Management Plan seeks to conserve the natural environment while supporting thriving communities. The pavilion project directly contributes to PMP outcomes by:

- Supporting **healthy and active lifestyles** through year-round sport and recreation
- Delivering **biodiversity enhancements**, including native hedgerows and tree planting that strengthen ecological networks
- Improving **green infrastructure** and landscape character alongside necessary development
- Strengthening **community resilience and cohesion** through shared facilities
- Demonstrating **local stewardship and partnership working** led by the Parish Council

The hedgerow planting along Longwood Road will form part of a wider landscape and biodiversity strategy, ensuring that recreational use delivers measurable environmental benefits alongside social and health outcomes.

Summary

The pavilion project strongly supports the Purposes and Duty of the SDNPA, enhances the special qualities of the South Downs National Park, and aligns with the objectives of the Partnership Management Plan. Through sensitive design, native tree and hedgerow planting, and the delivery of high-quality community and sporting facilities, the project demonstrates how development within the National Park can achieve biodiversity net gain while supporting healthy, sustainable rural communities.

Consideration of People with Protected Characteristics

The pavilion project has been designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring that people with protected characteristics can benefit positively from the facilities. The Parish Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, and has considered how the project may impact different groups, taking steps to remove barriers to access and participation wherever possible.

Age

The project will benefit people of all ages. Children and young people will benefit from access to football pitches, a MUGA, and padel court, supporting physical activity, teamwork, and wellbeing. Adults and older people will benefit from organised sport, informal recreation, and use of the pavilion for social activities, events, and gatherings.

The availability of year-round pitches helps ensure consistent access to sport regardless of season, while the pavilion provides a warm, accessible space for social interaction, helping to reduce isolation, particularly for older residents.

Mitigation: Safe pedestrian access, clear signage, and well-lit internal spaces will support use by all age groups.

Disability

The pavilion will be designed to meet relevant accessibility standards, including level access, accessible toilet and changing facilities, and clear internal layouts. The community space will be flexible to accommodate wheelchair users, people with mobility impairments, and those with sensory needs.

Outdoor areas will be designed to be as accessible as practicable, with firm, even surfaces where appropriate and clear routes between facilities.

Mitigation: Inclusive design principles will be applied at all stages, and reasonable adjustments can be made for events and activities to ensure equal access.

Sex

The provision of two changing rooms supports participation by all sexes in organised sport. The pavilion's community space will be available to everyone on an equal basis, supporting mixed-use activities, clubs, and events.

Mitigation: Clear booking and safeguarding policies will ensure fair and respectful access for all users.

Gender Reassignment

The project aims to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for people who are transgender or gender diverse. The community space will be flexible, and use policies will be developed to ensure dignity, privacy, and respect.

Mitigation: Where needed, private changing arrangements can be accommodated, and user policies will emphasise inclusion and zero tolerance for discrimination.

Sexual Orientation

The pavilion and sports facilities will be open to all, regardless of sexual orientation. By supporting inclusive sports clubs and community events, the project promotes social inclusion and helps create a safe, welcoming space for everyone.

Mitigation: Codes of conduct and booking conditions will promote respect and inclusivity.

Race

The project will be open to people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, including residents and non-residents from Winchester and the wider area. Sport and community events provide opportunities for social integration and shared activity.

Mitigation: Information, booking processes, and communications will be designed to be clear and accessible, and the Parish Council will work with clubs and users to ensure inclusive practices.

Religion or Belief

The flexible design of the community space allows it to be used by people of different faiths and beliefs for social, cultural, and community events. The pavilion can accommodate a wide range of activities without privileging one belief group over another.

Mitigation: Booking arrangements will be fair and transparent, ensuring equal access for all groups.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

People who are married or in civil partnerships will benefit equally from the project, including the use of the community space for celebrations, social events, and gatherings such as wedding receptions.

There are no anticipated negative impacts on this group.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The pavilion will provide a comfortable, accessible indoor space suitable for pregnant people and those with young children. The community area can support family-friendly events, and accessible toilets will be provided.

Mitigation: Seating, indoor shelter, and flexible space layouts will help ensure comfort and safety for users during pregnancy or maternity.

Managing and Mitigating Potential Negative Impacts

Potential impacts such as increased activity, noise, or traffic have been considered. These impacts will be mitigated through:

- Careful site design and landscaping
- Clear management and booking systems
- Consideration of event timing and scale
- Encouraging local access to reduce travel impacts

These measures ensure that increased use does not disproportionately impact any particular group.

Summary

The pavilion project has been developed with a strong commitment to equality and inclusion. It is expected to deliver positive outcomes for people with all protected characteristics by improving access to sport, recreation, and community facilities in a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment. Where potential barriers or impacts are identified, the Parish Council will take proportionate steps to mitigate them, ensuring the project benefits the widest possible range of people.