

Pavilion and Village Green

Questions and Answers Pavillion Committee and PC Meeting 13/07/26

Introductory note

This 16 page written response has been prepared voluntarily by Councillor North and Councillor Hurlock in the interests of openness and to help residents understand the work undertaken to date. It is not a statutory requirement to provide a bespoke written answer in this form to every question raised.

Preparing the response has required a substantial and disproportionate amount of unpaid councillor time. I have spent approximately two full days reviewing the questions, Council records and proposed answers, and Councillor North has spent at least a further day preparing his initial responses. This is in addition to our normal Council responsibilities and the work already undertaken on the project.

Many of the matters raised have previously been discussed openly at public Parish Council and Pavilion Committee meetings and are recorded in published agendas, reports and minutes. Residents have been entitled to attend those meetings, listen to the discussions and raise questions during the public participation period. Much of the requested information was therefore already publicly available before these questions were submitted.

The Council has considered the relevant issues as the proposal has developed, including planning, design, funding, traffic, trees, ecology, noise, lighting, access and the legal status of the land. The fact that a resident may not have attended the meetings or reviewed the published papers does not mean that an issue was ignored or had not previously been considered.

The questions contain considerable overlap and, in several places, repeat matters already answered or publicly recorded.

They have therefore been grouped where appropriate so that the substantive issues can be answered clearly without unnecessary duplication.

The Council has sought to be transparent and has no intention of withholding information that should properly be made available. However, it is not reasonable or sustainable for volunteer councillors and a Clerk contracted for only ten hours per week continually to produce lengthy, individually tailored responses where the information is already published or where substantially the same questions are repeatedly raised.

This response should therefore be treated as a proportionate and voluntary explanation of the Council's position. It does not create an expectation that every future set of questions will be answered through a similarly extensive exercise. Requests for specific recorded information will be dealt with separately under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations, where applicable, and subject to the relevant statutory provisions concerning information already accessible and requests that impose a manifestly unreasonable or disproportionate burden.

How the questions and answers are organised

Standing Order 3(h) provides that a question raised during public participation does not require a response at the meeting or initiate a debate, and that the Chair may direct that a written or oral response be given.

A number of the submissions raise the same or closely related issues in different wording. The questions have been reordered and grouped by subject to make the response clearer and to avoid unnecessary repetition. Some questions have been shortened or lightly rephrased for clarity, but their substantive meaning has not been changed. Every distinct issue raised has been considered and is identified within the response. Grouping the questions does not mean that any question has been omitted or declined. The residents' original submissions have been retained by the Council.

A. Previous consultation, resident support and alternatives

B. Vision, purpose, scope and project governance

C. Registered Village Green status, rights and legal compatibility

D. Trees, historic significance and ecology

E. Design, visual impact, noise, access and environmental effects

F. Publication, expenditure, funding and process

G. Requests for action accompanying the questions

A. Previous consultation, resident support and alternatives

Q01

What were the results of the previous residents' questionnaire or survey concerning the playing field / registered Village Green?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell

Answered below

Q02

Did the earlier questionnaire specifically ask residents whether they supported the current or later-discussed elements, including commercial padel courts, a MUGA or multi-sports area, a café, a shop, private parties and wedding receptions?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell

Answered below**Q03**

Has any further consultation been undertaken with residents on the current proposals, which are said to extend beyond replacing the former pavilion?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell

The earlier village questionnaire received 154 responses. It was undertaken to gather residents' views about the future use of the playing field and the types of facilities that people felt would be useful. The responses indicated interest in improving the sporting facilities and in providing a flexible indoor community space, including space capable of supporting daytime activities.

The questionnaire was not a referendum on the proposal now under consideration. It did not include the present plans and did not ask residents to approve or reject a defined scheme containing two padel courts, a multi-use games area, a café, a shop, private functions or wedding receptions. The Parish Council therefore does not rely upon that questionnaire as approval of the current proposal.

The current pavilion drawings show a flexible community space and kitchen rather than a dedicated wedding venue. They do not label any part of the building as a wedding venue. Possible uses of the flexible space have been discussed during the development of the project, but the precise operating arrangements and permitted uses have not yet been finally determined.

The questionnaire remains useful evidence of the types of facilities residents expressed an interest in at that time, but the present proposal has developed since it was undertaken. The Council recognises that residents must be given clear information about the current scheme and a further opportunity to comment before the Council makes decisions about a full planning application and the associated financial commitments.

Q04

Will the Parish Council carry out a new village-wide consultation before proceeding, and if not, what mandate does the Pavilion Committee or Parish Council believe it has for the wider development?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Peter Facey

The Parish Council does not regard the earlier questionnaire as providing a mandate for the current proposal, because the scheme has developed significantly since that questionnaire was undertaken.

The project is currently at the pre-application stage. This is an information-gathering stage intended to identify the planning, ecological, highways and other issues that would need to be addressed. The Council has not yet made a final decision to submit a full planning application, approve the construction of the scheme or commit to its full funding.

The current intention is to distribute a detailed information leaflet to households next month so that residents can see the present proposals and understand how they have developed. The leaflet would be an information exercise rather than, by itself, a formal consultation.

The Council may also decide to undertake a village-wide survey or other consultation once the pre-application response has been received and there is a sufficiently developed proposal for residents to consider. Any such consultation, including its wording, timing and purpose, would first need to be considered and approved by the Council at a properly convened public meeting.

Until then, the Council's authority is limited to undertaking the preparatory and investigative work that has been properly authorised through its public meetings. Any decision to proceed to a full planning application or significant financial commitment would require a further formal Council decision.

Q05

What evidence does the Parish Council have that residents support the wider proposal, including commercial or bookable facilities such as padel courts, a MUGA, shop, café, community space or event use?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Peter Facey

The evidence differs for each element of the proposal, and the Parish Council does not claim that residents have previously approved the present scheme as a complete package.

The earlier playing-field questionnaire demonstrated general support for improved sporting and community facilities, but it did not ask residents specifically whether they supported the present proposal for two padel courts. Interest has subsequently been expressed by sports participants, residents and potential users, but that is not the same as a representative village-wide mandate for the current padel proposal.

There is, however, separate evidence of demand for a village shop. The Parish Council previously undertook consultation and began facilitating the establishment of a community shop. Residents came forward to volunteer, a community-shop group was formed and possible locations and operating arrangements were investigated. The project did not cease because there was no identified need; it was unable to progress because a suitable location and sufficient capacity to lead and operate the project could not be secured. The March 2025 minutes record ten prospective volunteers and the Council's view that residents wanted the shop.

The inclusion of space capable of accommodating a small community shop within the pavilion therefore responds to a separately identified village need. It does not mean that a shop operator or final operating model has already been approved. Any shop would require an appropriate business plan, governance arrangements and a separate decision about how and by whom it would be operated.

A café requires a similar distinction. A volunteer-run community café was previously explored as part of the community-shop work, but the Council does not presently claim that residents have approved a defined commercial café within the pavilion. The current drawings include a kitchen and flexible community space; the precise nature and scale of any refreshments or café provision remain to be determined.

Padel has been included for consideration because income from paid bookings may help support the running and maintenance costs of the pavilion and playing field. The projected usage, income, operating costs, management arrangements and treatment of any surplus must still be demonstrated through a detailed business plan.

The proposed household leaflet will explain the current scheme. Whether a further village survey or formal consultation should be undertaken will be decided by the Council at a properly convened public meeting.

Q06

What alternative smaller-scale, lower-cost or like-for-like replacement pavilion options have been considered?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Jan Lyon; combined submissions

Q07

Have traditional, wooden or modular pavilion options been properly assessed, and why were examples such as Whitwell and Abbots Ann not adopted?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Jan Lyon; Jayne Powell email variant

Yes. A number of smaller-scale, traditional, wooden and modular alternatives have been explored during the development of the project.

Following unsuccessful grant applications in 2022, the Pavilion/Sports Field Committee considered alternative designs specifically to reduce the cost. These included modular pavilion suppliers, with indicative costs considered for the shell, fit-out and foundations. Bespoke modular suppliers and local companies were subsequently researched with a view to obtaining designs and quotations.

The proposal has not followed one fixed design. More substantial clubhouse proposals were explored, but the scheme was later reviewed and reduced. In December 2025, the Pavilion Committee agreed that the plans should be redesigned as a smaller, more traditional and village-focused pavilion. Three revised layouts based on a smaller pavilion and reduced use of the site were then considered in January 2026.

Other village pavilions, including Whitwell and Abbots Ann, have been considered as useful examples. However, Fernhurst was regarded as a more relevant comparator for Owslebury. It is a recently completed pavilion within the South Downs National Park, supports several sports clubs and combines changing facilities, a kitchen, reception or community space and café provision. Councillors visited Fernhurst to understand its design, construction costs, funding sources and operating arrangements, and the observations from that visit were passed to the architect.

The Council's objective is not simply to erect the cheapest possible building. The former pavilion served the village for approximately 100 years, and the intention is to provide a durable facility capable of serving the village and community sport for the next generation and, ideally, for many decades beyond that.

Any replacement must also meet the practical and technical requirements of the sports intended to use it. The relevant cricket, football and tennis or padel organisations have requirements relating to matters such as changing facilities, toilets, accessibility, safeguarding, storage, playing standards and eligibility for sporting grants. Water, electricity, drainage and long-term maintenance must also be provided regardless of whether the structure is traditional, wooden or modular.

The project is therefore being developed with three connected objectives: to provide an appropriately scaled and durable village facility, to meet the standards needed for the proposed sporting uses, and to make the pavilion and associated facilities as financially self-sustaining as reasonably possible. Potential income from court bookings, sports use and hire of the flexible space is being considered as a means of contributing towards running, maintenance and eventual replacement costs, rather than relying entirely upon the Parish Council precept.

Q08

Has an independent feasibility study been completed for the proposed development, and if so, will it be published for residents to review?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell

No single document entitled an “independent feasibility study” has been commissioned for the whole project. The Council does not consider that a separate study is required simply to establish the need for a replacement pavilion. The playing field previously had a pavilion, is now being used regularly for children’s sport, cricket and football, and currently relies upon temporary toilet facilities without permanent changing, welfare or supporting facilities.

The question of whether the particular scheme now being considered is deliverable is being assessed in stages rather than through one general report. This includes architectural design, pre-application planning advice, the requirements of the relevant sporting bodies, arboricultural and ecological surveys, drainage, access, highways, noise, construction costs, funding opportunities and the proposed operating arrangements.

Much of that work is being undertaken by independent professional advisers within their respective areas of expertise. Commissioning an additional consultant to repeat and combine all of those assessments into one document would not necessarily provide better evidence and could create unnecessary expense.

The Council’s intention is that the construction should be funded substantially through grants, fundraising and other external contributions rather than simply through the Parish Council precept. The Pavilion Committee has already agreed to submit an application for £300,000 of South Downs National Park CIL funding and has been engaging with relevant sporting bodies and potential funders.

Capital funding for this type of project normally depends upon the necessary planning permission being secured. Some funders will consider an early application or provide an indication or approval in principle, but they will not confirm or release the construction funding until planning permission and their other conditions have been satisfied. This is a funding requirement outside the Parish Council’s control.

It is nevertheless important to approach funders at an early stage. This allows the Council to establish whether the project may be eligible, understand each funder’s design and governance requirements, identify likely funding opportunities and ensure that the eventual planning proposal is capable of meeting those requirements. It also enables the project to be known to potential funders while the planning and professional work is progressing.

No grant should therefore be described as secured until a formal award has been made and all conditions have been satisfied. Equally, the absence of a confirmed grant at the pre-application stage does not mean that the Council has no funding strategy; it reflects the order in which planning and capital funding processes must normally take place.

Before the Council commits to construction, it will need an agreed funding package and a proportionate business plan showing the anticipated income, operating costs, maintenance responsibilities and management arrangements. The reports and supporting information relied upon should be made available to residents, subject to the removal of commercially confidential or personal information.

There is therefore no single feasibility report currently available for publication. The absence of such a report does not mean that the need for the pavilion or the practical issues surrounding its delivery have not been considered.

Q09

What impact could a café, shop or community space in the new pavilion have on the use and hiring of Owslebury Parish Hall, and could it make the Hall redundant or less viable?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Jan Lyon

The proposed pavilion is not intended to replace Owslebury Parish Hall or make it redundant. Its primary purpose is to provide the facilities needed at the sports ground, including changing rooms, toilets, accessible facilities, storage, a kitchen and supporting space for those taking part in or watching sport.

The Parish Hall and the pavilion would nevertheless have some potentially overlapping uses. The pavilion’s flexible room might accommodate smaller meetings, daytime groups, sports-related events or occasional community activities that could otherwise take place elsewhere. It would therefore be unrealistic to state that there could never be any effect on individual Parish Hall bookings.

However, the pavilion would not provide the same type or scale of accommodation as the Parish Hall. The Parish Hall would continue to provide the village’s principal indoor venue for larger gatherings, performances, parties, meetings and established community activities. The pavilion’s flexible space would be secondary to its sporting and welfare functions and would be more closely connected with activities taking place at the sports ground.

The current proposal does not include a dedicated wedding venue or a separate full-scale commercial café. It includes a kitchen and flexible community space. The exact arrangements for refreshments, community hire and occasional functions have not yet been finally agreed.

The proposed shop also responds to a separately identified village need. The Parish Council previously facilitated work to establish a community shop, with residents volunteering to assist and possible locations being investigated. The project was unable to progress because a suitable and workable location and operating arrangement were not secured. Including the possibility of a small community shop within the pavilion is therefore intended to provide a potential home for that earlier community initiative, rather than to take an existing service away from the Parish Hall. No shop operator or final business model has yet been approved.

Before the pavilion’s operating arrangements are finalised, the Parish Council and Sports Club should consult the Parish Hall Committee. Matters such as room capacity, opening hours, hire charges, refreshments, private functions and the types of activities offered should be considered so that unnecessary duplication is avoided and both facilities can remain useful and viable.

The financial and operating plan for the pavilion should also consider any likely effect upon the Parish Hall. The Council cannot presently give a numerical assessment of that effect, but it does not intend to develop the pavilion as a replacement for, or direct competitor to, the Parish Hall.

B. Vision, purpose, scope and project governance

Q10

What is the wider vision and primary purpose of the project: principally a facility for Owslebury residents, or a facility intended to serve a broader sporting community across Winchester and the surrounding area?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice; Peter Facey; Jan Lyon

The primary purpose of the project is to secure the long-term future of sport and community facilities in Owslebury. It is intended first and foremost to provide a sustainable village facility for Owslebury residents, local sports participants and the community. It is not intended to create a regional commercial leisure centre.

The wider vision is to provide a replacement pavilion with appropriate changing rooms, toilets, accessible facilities, storage, a kitchen and flexible community space, together with improved facilities for cricket, football and other community sport, two outdoor padel courts, a small multi-use games area, improved access and parking, and appropriate landscaping and environmental mitigation.

As with any functioning sports ground, the facilities would not be used exclusively by people who live within the parish boundary. Visiting teams already form part of organised sport, and the pavilion and courts would also be available to appropriate users from surrounding communities.

That outside use is not the project's primary purpose, but it is expected to form an important part of the operating model. Owslebury alone may not provide enough users to support the facilities throughout the week. Bookings by visiting teams and users from the surrounding area would therefore help generate the regular income needed to contribute towards staffing, utilities, insurance, maintenance and the long-term upkeep of the pavilion, courts and playing field. The intention is that income should be reinvested in the facilities and community sport rather than distributed as private profit.

References in the earlier CIL application to serving "Winchester and the wider area" were included because funding applications generally need to demonstrate wider public benefit and a sufficient level of anticipated use. They were not intended to suggest that outside users would be prioritised over Owslebury residents or that the project's main purpose had changed.

The separate legal implications of the land's registered Village Green status have not yet been determined. In particular, the Council has not yet reached conclusions about the legally relevant locality or neighbourhood, the precise rights attached to the Green, or how those rights may affect organised, bookable or paid use by residents and non-residents. Those matters require specialist advice from a barrister and will be considered separately before the Council makes any final decision

Q11

How should the references in the CIL application to serving "Winchester and the wider area" be understood, and what level of use by people or teams from outside Owslebury is envisaged?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice; Peter Facey; Jan Lyon

The reference to "Winchester and the wider area" was included because applications for substantial external funding need to demonstrate that a project will provide a wider public benefit and attract sufficient use to justify the investment. It was not intended to suggest that the pavilion would become a regional sports centre or that people from outside Owslebury would be prioritised over village residents.

The project remains principally an Owslebury village sports and community facility. However, organised sport necessarily involves some use by people from outside the parish. Visiting cricket and football teams would use the ground when playing Owslebury teams, and padel courts would need to attract bookings from a wider local catchment if they are to generate a reliable income throughout the week.

The precise level of outside use has not yet been fixed. It will depend upon the final facilities, planning conditions, operating hours, booking arrangements and the business plan. The intention is not to attract large regional events or create a high-intensity commercial leisure operation. It is to achieve sufficient appropriate use to make the village facility financially sustainable and contribute towards its staffing, utilities, insurance, maintenance and long-term upkeep.

The separate implications of the land's registered Village Green status, including who holds the relevant recreational rights and how those rights may affect organised, paid or non-resident use, have not yet been determined. Specialist barrister's advice will be obtained before the Council reaches any final conclusions on those matters.

Q12

What is the complete long-term scope of the proposal, including any future expansion, and what is meant by references to a "first phase"?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice

The Parish Council has not identified a Council-approved document or resolution describing the proposal currently under consideration as the “first phase” of a larger, undisclosed development. The expression appears in the question submitted by the resident, which refers to a Sports Club report, but the particular report and wording relied upon have not yet been identified. The Council should therefore not speculate about what that expression was intended to mean.

The complete scheme currently being considered at the pre-application stage comprises a replacement pavilion with changing rooms, toilets, accessible facilities, storage, a kitchen and flexible community space; two outdoor padel courts; a small multi-use games area; access and parking arrangements; improvements supporting cricket, football and other community sport; and associated landscaping and environmental mitigation.

There is no separately approved programme for further development beyond that scheme. The fact that construction or funding might eventually need to be arranged in stages would not, by itself, mean that a larger future expansion had been approved.

Any proposal for additional facilities beyond the scheme ultimately approved would have to return to the Parish Council for a separate decision and would require any necessary consultation, planning permission, funding approval and Village Green legal consideration.

Q13

Will a planning application show and seek permission for the complete intended development, or only an initial phase?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice

The Council’s intention is that any full planning application will show and seek permission for the complete scheme then being proposed, rather than presenting one element as an isolated “initial phase”.

The current pre-application submission already presents the overall development so that the planning authority can assess its cumulative scale and impact. This includes the pavilion, two padel courts, the multi-use games area, access, parking, landscaping and the associated sporting and environmental works.

The purpose of the pre-application process is to obtain professional planning advice before the final application is prepared. The design may therefore need to be amended in response to advice about matters such as landscape impact, ecology, trees, highways, drainage, noise or lighting. Once those amendments have been considered and approved through the proper Council process, the full application would present the complete proposal as a single coordinated development.

Funding or construction might later need to be organised in stages, particularly because different grants may become available at different times. That would be a matter of delivery and would not mean that the Council was withholding a larger development from the planning application.

There is no separate approved future expansion plan. Any materially different or additional development proposed after planning permission had been obtained would require a further Council decision and any additional planning permission, consultation and other legal approvals required at that time.

Planning permission would also remain separate from the Council’s need to establish the lawful route under the registered Village Green arrangements. The complete scheme would not be implemented unless both the planning and separate Village Green issues had been properly addressed.

Q14

What is “The Pavilion Project”, who oversees it, and what is its relationship with Owslebury Sports Club, the Parish Council and Sport Winchester?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice;

The pavilion and associated sports facilities are a Parish Council project. The Parish Council owns the land and, through its formally constituted Pavilion Committee, is responsible for the planning, procurement, funding decisions and management of the proposed construction. The Committee exercises only the authority delegated to it by Full Council and must refer any material change of scope or expenditure beyond the approved budget back to Full Council.

Owslebury Sports Club has been closely involved because it organises and supports sport at the ground and provides practical knowledge about the facilities required by users. The Sports Club is now working towards establishing a charitable body to support the project and, subject to the necessary approvals, to take responsibility for the future operation of the facilities.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared between the Parish Council and the proposed charity. Under that proposed arrangement, the Parish Council would remain the freehold owner, lead the planning and construction process, manage public-sector funding and enter into the building contracts. The charity would seek charitable grant funding, provide community and user input and contribute secured funding to the project in accordance with funders’ requirements.

Once the facilities were completed, the intention is that the Parish Council would grant the charity an appropriate lease or licence on terms still to be agreed. The charity would then undertake the day-to-day management, hiring and community use of the facilities, maintain appropriate insurance, fundraise for their continued operation and report annually to the Council on usage, finances and community benefit.

These arrangements are not yet final. The charity is still being established, the Memorandum of Understanding remains in draft, and no final lease, licence or operating agreement has been approved. The Council will therefore retain responsibility and control unless and until the necessary documents have been formally considered and entered into.

Sport Winchester is a wider network of sporting organisations. It does not own the land, control the project, authorise Parish Council expenditure or make decisions on behalf of the Council.

The description “The Pavilion Project” appearing separately on Sport Winchester’s records still requires clarification. It may have been used as an earlier project description or while the proposed charitable body was being developed, but that should be confirmed with Sport Winchester before the Council gives a definitive explanation.

Q15

Why are Owslebury Sports Club and The Pavilion Project shown separately as member organisations of Sport Winchester, and does either listing give Sport Winchester any role or influence over the project?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice

Sport Winchester’s records currently appear to list both “Owslebury Sports Club” and “The Pavilion Project”. The Council has not yet confirmed why those entries appear separately or who originally created the second listing. It may relate to an earlier project name or to preliminary work connected with the proposed charitable body, but this should not be stated as fact until it has been checked with Sport Winchester.

Neither listing gives Sport Winchester ownership of the land, control over the project, authority to commit Parish Council funds or any formal role in Council decisions. Once the position has been confirmed, any inaccurate, duplicate or outdated entry should be amended.

C. Registered Village Green status, rights and legal compatibility

Q16

Is the Parish Council fully aware of the site’s registration as Village Green VG80, the extent of its registered boundary and the legal protections affecting the land and trees within that boundary?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

Yes. The Parish Council is aware that the recreation ground is registered as Village Green VG80 and that this status carries separate legal protections. A report addressing the registration, boundary and relevant legal considerations will be presented at the next Council meeting.

Q17

Has the Parish Council obtained specialist legal advice on whether the pavilion, fenced padel courts, MUGA, parking, other structures or any enclosure are compatible with the Village Green registration and relevant legislation?

Associated premise/context as raised: *The questioner asserts that building on, fencing or enclosing part of a registered village green may constitute a criminal offence.*

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

No specialist barrister’s advice has yet been obtained on the application of Village Green law to the current proposal. A report will be presented at the next Council meeting recommending that specialist advice be commissioned. As the instruction of the barrister and the associated expenditure require Council approval, councillors will be asked to consider and vote on this at the meeting.

Subject to that approval, the Council will obtain advice addressing the implications of the VG80 registration for the proposed pavilion, padel courts, multi-use games area, fencing, parking, charging and operating arrangements. The Council will not reach final conclusions on those matters before receiving that advice.

Q18

Will the Parish Council publish the legal advice it receives, or provide residents with a clear written summary of the legal conclusions and the route by which any proposal could lawfully proceed?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey.

No legal advice has yet been obtained. A report will be presented at the next Council meeting recommending that specialist barrister’s advice be commissioned, and the Council will vote on that recommendation and the associated expenditure.

Subject to that approval, the advice will be obtained for the Parish Council and is expected to be legally privileged. It would therefore be premature to promise that the full advice will be published.

Once the advice has been received and considered, the Council intends to explain publicly the conclusions it has reached, the effect of those conclusions on the proposal and the legal route by which any development could proceed. This will be done as fully as reasonably possible without disclosing legally privileged or genuinely confidential material.

Any decision to publish the advice itself, waive privilege or release a detailed summary will be made by the Council after taking appropriate advice on the consequences.

Q19

How would regular use by visiting teams, users from Winchester or Southampton, or other people from outside the parish affect the recreational rights and reasonable enjoyment of Owslebury residents?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey; Lisa Justice; Jan Lyon

Visiting teams already use the recreation ground as part of its established sporting use. Cricket, football and other organised team sports naturally involve opponents and participants travelling from outside Owslebury. The present proposal does not introduce the concept of visiting teams to the site for the first time.

The question that has not yet been determined is whether the nature, frequency and scale of any additional use associated with the proposed development—particularly regular bookings of the padel courts by people from outside the village—would affect the recreational rights and reasonable enjoyment connected with the registered Village Green.

The precise operating arrangements have not yet been agreed, including booking levels, hours of use, priority arrangements and measures to protect residents' continued enjoyment of the Green.

This is one of the matters on which specialist barrister's advice is proposed. A report will be presented at the next Council meeting, when councillors will be asked to approve the instruction and associated expenditure. The Council will not reach a final conclusion on the level or terms of outside use until that advice and the relevant planning and professional evidence have been considered.

Q20

Would Owslebury residents be charged to use the proposed padel courts on their own Village Green, and how would any charging and booking arrangements be compatible with rights of free recreation?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey.

Yes. The proposed operating model is that anyone booking a padel court, including Owslebury residents, would pay a court-booking charge. The courts would have ongoing costs, including management, insurance, maintenance and eventual renewal, and the income is intended to help support those costs and the wider pavilion and playing-field facilities. Any surplus would be reinvested in the facilities and community sport rather than distributed as private profit.

However, no final pricing, discounts, priority arrangements or access policy has yet been approved. The Council must first establish how charging for enclosed, bookable courts would interact with the recreational rights attached to the registered Village Green.

This will form part of the proposed barrister's advice. A report will be presented at the next Council meeting asking councillors to approve the instruction and associated expenditure. The final charging and booking arrangements will be decided only after that advice has been received and considered.

The distinction requiring advice is between charging someone to reserve and use a managed padel court and charging a person merely to exercise any existing right of general recreation on the Green. The Council will not assume that those are legally the same.

Q21

What evidence and legal basis would support a conclusion that the current proposal is for the better enjoyment of the Village Green by those holding recreational rights?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey; combined submissions

Chris draft response block(s): [B3](#) and [B4](#)

Review status: *Not yet reviewed or approved*

The Parish Council has not yet concluded that the current proposal satisfies the legal test of being for the better enjoyment of the Village Green by those holding recreational rights.

There is factual evidence that will be relevant to that consideration. The recreation ground has a long-established sporting use and already accommodates cricket, football, children's sport and visiting teams. The proposal is intended to provide supporting facilities including toilets, changing accommodation, accessible facilities, storage and improved facilities for community sport.

However, those potential benefits must be considered alongside the effect of the proposed pavilion, fenced courts, multi-use games area, parking, booking and charging arrangements upon the Green and upon those holding recreational rights. The recreation ground is already used for organised sport, community activities and visiting teams. The question is therefore not whether organised use is being introduced for the first time, but whether the particular physical works and operating arrangements now proposed are compatible with the Green's legal status and recreational rights.

A report will therefore be presented at the next Council meeting recommending that specialist barrister's advice be commissioned. Councillors will be asked to vote on the instruction and the associated expenditure. Subject to that approval, the barrister will be asked specifically whether the current proposal could lawfully be regarded as being for the better enjoyment of the Green and what evidence would be required to support that conclusion.

The barrister will also be asked to identify any consent or other legal process required before the proposal could lawfully proceed. The Council will not reach a final conclusion on this question, or decide whether to proceed with a full planning application, until that advice has been received and considered.

Q22

How will the Council ensure that obtaining planning permission does not lead to works that remain unlawful under separate Village Green legislation?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

The Parish Council recognises that obtaining planning permission would not, by itself, resolve the separate legal requirements arising from the land's Village Green status.

Subject to the Council approving the instruction, the barrister will be asked to advise whether any consent from the Secretary of State is required or available, whether VG80 is subject to any statutory scheme or other special arrangements, and whether any alternative legal process—such as modification of the proposal, a scheme of regulation, or deregistration and exchange land—would be necessary.

The Council will not assume the appropriate legal route before that advice has been received, and no physical development works will be authorised until the legal position has been established and any necessary consent or procedure has been completed.

Q23

What is the Council's response to the allegation that councillors could be personally liable, or could commit misconduct in public office, if they approved unlawful works?

Associated premise/context as raised: *The allegation of personal liability and misconduct is recorded as a premise raised by the questioner, not an accepted legal conclusion.*

Raised by / source: Peter Facey; combined submissions

The Parish Council does not accept that considering or supporting a proposal automatically makes an individual councillor personally liable or amounts to misconduct in public office. Those are serious allegations which depend upon the particular facts and the applicable legal tests.

Parish councillors are unpaid elected members who make decisions collectively on behalf of the Council. They are expected to act lawfully, in good faith, for proper purposes and with reasonable care. The appropriate response to an uncertain or specialist legal issue is therefore to obtain and properly consider professional advice rather than to speculate about the legal position.

A report will be presented at the next Council meeting recommending that specialist barrister's advice be commissioned. Subject to the Council approving that instruction and expenditure, the barrister will be asked to advise on the lawfulness of the proposal, the effect of the Village Green registration and whether consent from the Secretary of State or any other legal procedure would be required.

No councillor will be asked to authorise physical development works or enter into significant related financial commitments until the Council has received the appropriate advice and established the lawful route by which any proposal could proceed. Any subsequent decision will be taken collectively at a properly convened meeting, following the Council's standing orders and financial regulations, with relevant interests declared and the reasons for the decision recorded.

D. Trees, historic significance and ecology

Q24

What is the evidential basis for describing the affected trees as diseased or unsuitable for retention, particularly where residents say the October 2024 tree report described them as healthy and likely to survive for many years?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

The October 2024 arboricultural report categorised the affected trees as Category C and generally described their condition as fair. The Council was also advised professionally that some of the trees showed disease, defects or decline, including the maple tree. It would therefore not be accurate either to describe every affected tree as diseased or unsafe, or to suggest that all of the trees were entirely healthy and unaffected.

The proposed works were considered using the professional arboricultural information available at the time, including the condition of individual trees and their relationship with the proposed layout. The decision was not based upon a conclusion that every tree presented an immediate safety risk.

The proposed tree works have now been paused and no final decision has been made regarding removal or retention. The Council is commissioning an updated BS5837 Tree Survey and Report, which will provide a current assessment of the condition, quality and anticipated remaining contribution of each tree, together with their relationship to the proposed development and any necessary protection measures.

The Council will consider that updated report, together with the ecological, planning and legal information, before making any further decision about the trees.

Q25

What is the historical status of the horse chestnut planting, including the claimed connection with the 1911 Cricket Club minutes and a memorial to King Edward VII?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon; Peter Facey

The Council is aware of differing accounts concerning when the existing trees were planted and whether they were intended as a memorial to King Edward VII. Some residents have referred to the 1911 Cricket Club minutes, while other residents recall the present trees being planted or replaced considerably later. The Council has not verified either account and does not currently hold evidence establishing that the trees standing today form a royal memorial.

Any claimed memorial connection would not, by itself, determine whether the trees could be retained or removed. Their current condition, amenity, landscape and ecological value, together with any properly evidenced historical significance, will be considered through the updated BS5837 assessment and the planning process.

The Council does not propose to reach a conclusion based solely on unverified local accounts.

Q26

How could the Parish Council justify removing trees described by residents as a 115-year-old royal memorial in order to accommodate padel courts or other elements of the proposal?

Associated premise/context as raised: *The question incorporates the residents' description of the trees as a royal memorial.*

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

The description of the five trees as a "115-year-old royal memorial" is an assertion made by residents and has not been verified by the Parish Council. There are differing local recollections about when the trees currently standing were planted, and the Council does not presently hold evidence establishing their exact age or that they form a formal memorial to King Edward VII.

The Council does not wish to remove mature trees unnecessarily and recognises their landscape, ecological and community value. However, it must also consider the long-term future and financial sustainability of the recreation ground as a whole.

Under the layout currently being considered, retaining all five trees may prevent the proposed padel courts from being provided. The present financial model relies materially upon income from the courts to help meet the continuing costs of operating, maintaining and eventually renewing the pavilion and wider recreational facilities. Without that income, the scope and long-term viability of the project would need to be reconsidered.

The Council must therefore balance the value of the existing trees against the opportunity to provide sustainable sporting and community facilities for present and future generations. The trees' claimed age or memorial status will not be treated as established unless supported by reliable evidence, and neither that claim nor the absence of Tree Preservation Orders will automatically determine the outcome.

No final decision has been made. The updated BS5837 Tree Survey and Report, together with the ecological, planning and legal advice, will inform whether the trees can reasonably be retained, whether the layout should be altered, or whether removal and suitable replacement planting would be justified.

Q27

Are horse chestnut trees highly endangered or rare nationally, and how should the species, age, condition, landscape value and ecological value of these particular trees be assessed?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon; combined submissions

Chris draft response block(s): D3

Review status: *Not yet reviewed or approved*

The Council has not been provided with evidence that horse chestnut trees are rare or highly endangered nationally within the United Kingdom, or that these particular trees receive automatic legal protection simply because of their species. Horse chestnut is a widely planted, non-native tree in Britain, although the species is affected by recognised pests and diseases.

That does not mean that the five individual trees have no value. Their significance must be assessed according to their particular condition, quality, likely remaining contribution, landscape and amenity value, ecological potential and relationship with the proposed development.

The Council is therefore commissioning an updated BS5837 Tree Survey and Report, together with the necessary ecological assessments. Those reports will provide the professional evidence required to assess the trees individually and inform any decision about retention, removal, protection and replacement planting.

No final decision will be based simply upon a general claim that the species is endangered, or upon a general assumption that mature trees must have no ecological or landscape importance. The decision will be based upon the professional assessment of these particular trees and the needs and long-term sustainability of the recreation ground as a whole.

Q28

Did the proposed bird and bat nesting report 24 hours before removal meet the legal and ecological standard required, including under the Habitats Regulations and protected-species legislation?

Associated premise/context as raised: *The questioner characterises the proposed check as inadequate and potentially unlawful.*

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

Yes. The Council took professional ecological advice and put measures in place to comply with wildlife legislation. An ecological survey had already been undertaken and concluded that the trees did not provide suitable features or provision for roosting bats. That assessment did not suggest that bats could never fly or forage around the recreation ground; it addressed whether the trees themselves offered suitable roosting opportunities.

Because the proposed works were to take place during the main bird-nesting period, the Pavilion Committee required a further bird and bat nesting check immediately before any felling. The Committee minutes expressly record that a “bird & bat nesting report” was agreed upon 24 hours before removal. There is no blanket legal prohibition on felling trees between March and September. The legal requirement is to avoid damaging or destroying an active wild-bird nest and to avoid unlawfully harming or disturbing bats or damaging a bat breeding site or resting place. No trees were ultimately felled and no wildlife offence occurred. Following the later concerns raised, the Council paused the works and is now commissioning a Preliminary Roost Assessment and any further surveys recommended by the appropriately qualified professionals. This additional assessment is a further precaution and should not be interpreted as an admission that the Council’s earlier arrangements were unlawful.

Q29

Why was tree removal being progressed before a planning application had been made, and why did residents perceive there to be a rush to fell the trees before planning permission and funding were secured?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon; Peter Facey

The Parish Council does not accept that there was a rush to remove the trees. The proposed works had been discussed over several months at a number of properly convened and minuted Pavilion Committee meetings. The Council was following the professional advice available to it at the time, including advice that the tree works could be undertaken separately from and before the future planning application.

In December 2025, quotations and proposed communications concerning tree works were considered, the trees and their relationship with the developing layout were discussed again in January and May 2026. Three quotations were then obtained and formally considered at the June meeting before a contractor was selected.

The Council was following the professional advice available to it at the time. The proposed tree works formed part of progressing the agreed layout and were not intended to avoid planning scrutiny or ecological responsibilities.

When further concerns and additional professional requirements were subsequently identified, the Council paused the works. No trees were removed. Updated arboricultural and ecological reports are now being commissioned and will be considered alongside the pre-application response before any further decision is made.

E. Design, visual impact, noise, access and environmental effects

Q30

What type and height of fencing would be required for the padel courts, MUGA or multi-sports area, and would any additional boundary fencing be proposed around the Village Green?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell

The proposed padel courts would require their own sports enclosure, normally comprising transparent glazed walls together with mesh fencing reaching approximately four metres at the highest points. The precise manufacturer, materials and specification have not yet been selected and will be informed by the planning authority’s advice, safety requirements and the need to minimise visual impact.

The proposed MUGA or multi-sports area may also require appropriate ball-stop fencing. Its precise height, materials and design have not yet been finalised.

No additional perimeter fencing around the whole Village Green is currently proposed. Any new fencing shown within the scheme would relate to the individual sports facilities and the need to contain balls and provide safe operation, rather than enclosing the recreation ground as a whole.

The location, height, design and visual effect of all proposed fencing will be shown accurately in the plans and elevations accompanying any full planning application. It will also be considered as part of the specialist legal advice on the Village Green before the Council makes any final decision.

Q31

What assessment has been or will be made of the visual impact of the pavilion, courts, fencing and associated development on the Village Green, surrounding hedgerows, rural character and South Downs National Park setting?

Raised by / source: Jayne Powell; Jan Lyon

The visual impact of the proposal has not yet been finally assessed because the scheme remains at the pre-application stage. One of the principal purposes of seeking pre-application advice is to obtain the planning authority’s professional view on how the pavilion, padel courts, MUGA, fencing, parking, lighting and landscaping would affect the Village Green and the wider South Downs National Park setting.

The assessment will need to consider the scale, height, siting and materials of the proposed structures; views into, out of and across the recreation ground; the effect on existing trees and hedgerows; the rural character of the site; and whether planting, screening or alterations to the design would be required.

Any full planning application would include accurate plans and elevations showing the proposed buildings, courts and fencing, together with the relevant arboricultural, ecological and landscaping information. The planning authority would then assess the proposal against the policies applying within the South Downs National Park.

The present design is not fixed. It may be amended in response to the pre-application advice, the updated BS5837 Tree Survey and Report, ecological information and the specialist Village Green legal advice. No final decision on the design or visual acceptability of the scheme has yet been made.

Q32

How does the proposal align with the purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park, including conserving natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and protecting the peace and tranquillity of the rural setting?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

The proposal has not yet been finally assessed against the purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park. That is one of the reasons why the Parish Council has sought pre-application advice before deciding whether to submit a full planning application.

The National Park's purposes include conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and promoting opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy its special qualities. It also has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of its local communities while pursuing those purposes.

The proposed pavilion and sporting facilities may support community recreation, health, social participation and the long-term provision of local facilities. However, those potential benefits must be considered alongside the effects of the buildings, courts, fencing, lighting, traffic, noise, tree works and increased activity on the landscape, wildlife, rural character and tranquillity of the site.

The planning authority will assess that balance through the pre-application and, if submitted, full planning process.

The Council is therefore not claiming at this stage that the current design has already been shown to comply with every National Park consideration. The purpose of the present process is to establish whether an acceptable scheme can be achieved and what amendments or safeguards would be necessary.

Q33

Has the Parish Council considered the distinctive noise from padel courts and the cumulative effect of the pavilion, courts, MUGA, events and increased activity on neighbouring residents?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice

Yes. Noise has been considered as part of developing the proposal, and professional acoustic advice has already been sought. That advice did not identify a likely unacceptable effect on neighbouring residents, particularly because the proposed courts are positioned a considerable distance from the nearest homes.

The Council nevertheless intends to commission a formal noise assessment at the appropriate stage of the planning process. This will consider the distinctive sound associated with padel, including ball impacts and players' voices, together with existing background noise, the number and position of the courts, their orientation and distance from neighbouring properties, proposed operating hours and the cumulative effect of other activities on the site.

The assessment will also identify whether any controls are appropriate, such as limits on operating hours, changes to the layout or orientation, screening or other noise-mitigation measures.

The preliminary professional advice is reassuring, but the formal assessment will provide the evidence required for the planning authority to consider the proposal fully.

Q34

Has the Council assessed the cumulative capacity of the constrained site, including access, parking, infrastructure, traffic, noise and increased use?

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice;

The Parish Council does not accept the description of the recreation ground as a "constrained site" as an established fact. It is a long-established sports ground which has supported cricket, football and other recreational activities for generations. The playing surface is free-draining and well suited to sporting use.

However, the suitability of the ground for sport does not remove the need to assess how the different parts of the current proposal would operate together. The Council is therefore considering access, parking, drainage, utilities, traffic, noise, lighting and the likely levels and timing of use as part of the planning process.

Professional advice has already been obtained on several of those matters, and further detailed assessments will be undertaken where required for a full planning application. The planning authority will consider the complete proposal—including the pavilion, padel courts, multi-sports area, parking and associated infrastructure—rather than assessing each element in isolation.

The purpose of that work is to confirm that the site can accommodate the proposed facilities satisfactorily and to identify any appropriate design changes or operating controls. It should not be taken as acceptance that the site is inherently unsuitable or unduly constrained.

Q35

How will children and other users reach the facility safely where roads have no pavements or lighting and include a 60 mph speed limit?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon; combined submissions

Chris draft response block(s): E1

Review status: *Not yet reviewed or approved*

The Parish Council recognises that safe access for children, pedestrians, cyclists and other users must be properly considered. The absence of pavements and lighting and the present 60 mph speed limit are existing rural-road conditions which already affect access to the sports ground and other village facilities; they have not been created by the proposed development.

The Council has established a Traffic Management Working Group to examine road-safety issues throughout the parish. The Council intends to ask the Group specifically to consider the 60 mph section of Longwood Road, the evidence required to seek a lower speed limit and any other measures that could improve safety on the approach to the sports ground. The Council has previously discussed collecting speed data on Longwood Road to support a request for the limit to be reviewed.

The Council is also aware that there was historically a pedestrian path or margin along the approach to the sports ground which has narrowed or become unavailable over time. The relevant highway records, historic plans and previous correspondence have been reviewed and Highways were consulted, the Council will now consider approaching the adjoining landowner about removing any encroaching soil or other material and reinstating the former pedestrian route. Further professional highways advice will be obtained as the proposal develops. This will consider the site entrance, visibility, pedestrian access, parking, likely traffic movements and whether measures such as a restored pedestrian route, a lower speed limit, signage, entrance improvements or a travel-management plan are required.

No final decision on the scheme will be made until the Council understands the highway and pedestrian-safety requirements and is satisfied that safe and proportionate arrangements can be provided.

Q36

What assessment has been made of additional traffic and its effect on horse riders, cyclists, walkers and other users of the surrounding country lanes, and has a highway safety assessment been carried out?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

A full highway and transport assessment has not yet been completed because the proposal remains at the pre-application stage. It has not been established that the development would place significantly more traffic on the surrounding roads. That will depend on the final scale of the scheme, its operating hours, anticipated levels of use and how journeys are managed.

Any assessment prepared for a full planning application will need to consider existing traffic conditions, anticipated additional vehicle movements, the times at which those journeys are likely to occur, access and visibility at the site entrance, parking capacity and the effect on pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and other users of the surrounding country lanes. Construction traffic would also need to be considered separately.

These roads already serve the sports ground, village hall, residents, farms and other village facilities. The purpose of the assessment will therefore be to identify the additional effect of the proposal, rather than attributing all existing traffic and road-safety concerns to the development.

The Council has also established a Traffic Management Working Group to examine wider road-safety issues in the parish. It will be asked to consider the present 60 mph limit on Longwood Road, the evidence required to seek a lower limit and any other measures that could improve conditions for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The Council has previously discussed collecting speed data on Longwood Road to support a possible review of the limit.

The appropriate measures may include changes to the site entrance, improved visibility, signage, speed reduction, cycle parking, car sharing or a traffic-management plan. No final decision will be made until the Council has received the relevant professional highways advice.

Q37

How many parking spaces are proposed, and would that be sufficient for the anticipated scale of use, particularly on match days and during events?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon;

The current plan provides 25 parking spaces, comprising 16 spaces within the main gravel parking area and a further 11 grass overflow spaces.

The parking provision has been designed to serve the proposed pavilion, courts and existing playing field. The facilities would be managed through bookings and organised operating arrangements, rather than allowing several large matches or events to take place simultaneously without considering their combined parking requirements.

The proposed management arrangements may include coordinating bookings, limiting overlapping activities and making the grass overflow spaces available at busier times. Encouraging car sharing, walking and cycling where reasonably practicable may also form part of the operating arrangements.

The final number, layout and management of the parking spaces will be considered through the pre-application response and any highways advice required for a full planning application. Any necessary adjustments can then be incorporated before the plans are finalised.

Q38

Has the Parish Council assessed potential light pollution from any floodlighting, given the site's location within the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

Yes. The Parish Council is aware that the site lies within the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve and that the effect of external lighting is an important planning consideration.

The current proposal includes lighting for the padel courts, but the detailed design, intensity, positioning and operating hours have not yet been finalised. A professional lighting design and assessment will be prepared at the appropriate stage before any full planning application is determined.

The adopted South Downs Local Plan requires external lighting to be avoided wherever possible. Where lighting is necessary, it must be justified and designed to minimise glare, upward light and light spilling beyond the area that needs to be illuminated.

Any lighting scheme would therefore need to use the minimum illumination reasonably required, with appropriately directed and shielded fittings, automatic controls and a clearly defined evening switch-off time. Its effects on the surrounding landscape, wildlife, neighbouring properties and the wider dark-sky setting would all be assessed.

The lighting would not be considered separately from the overall proposal. If a suitable design cannot be demonstrated to meet the National Park Authority's requirements, the lighting arrangements or the proposal itself would need to be amended.

F. Publication, expenditure, funding and process

Q39

Why were the current plans and supporting documents not readily available on the Parish Council website, and when will residents be able to see clearly what is proposed?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

The Parish Council has not sought to withhold the plans from residents. The proposal has developed through a number of different versions as professional advice has been received and the scope and layout have been reconsidered.

At the December 2025 meeting referred to in the question, the Committee had just agreed that the scheme should be redesigned and the revised plans had not yet been completed. Subsequent versions have been discussed at public Pavilion Committee meetings and the project has been reported through the Council's published agendas and minutes.

However, the Council recognises that information spread across separate meeting papers and minutes is not as convenient as having the current proposal presented together.

The Council intends to provide every household with a detailed overview of the proposal so that residents can see the complete scheme, understand how it has developed and respond on the basis of accurate information rather than individual drawings or social-media commentary.

The material will make clear which documents are current, which are earlier options and which matters remain subject to planning, legal and professional advice. Commercially confidential information, legally privileged advice and personal data may need to be withheld or redacted.

The full proposal will be presented to residents before the Parish Council makes any final decision on whether to proceed with a full planning application.

Q40

Will the Council publish the plans and relevant supporting information, including the ownership, governance, payment and operating arrangements connected with the proposal?

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

The first step will be to provide every household in the village with a detailed leaflet explaining the current proposal, how it has developed and which matters remain subject to planning, legal and professional advice. This will give residents a clear and consistent overview of the scheme before any final decision is made.

The leaflet will explain the proposed facilities, the role of the Parish Council and Owslebury Sports Club, the intended management of the site and the broad funding and operating arrangements as far as these have been developed at that stage. It will not present possible arrangements as final or agreed where they remain under consideration.

If the Council subsequently decides to proceed with a full planning application, the application plans and supporting documents required by the planning authority will be placed in the public domain through the normal planning process. Residents will then be able to view the formal proposal and submit comments directly to the planning authority.

Relevant information will also continue to be reported through the Parish Council's public agendas and minutes. Personal data, commercially confidential information and legally privileged advice may need to be withheld or redacted in accordance with the usual legal requirements.

Q41

How much public money has been spent on the project to date, including architect, planning, consultant, survey and other professional fees?

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

This question requests recorded financial information relating to the proposed development and will be dealt with under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The Parish Council already publishes its accounts, payment schedules and approved expenditure through its normal financial records and meeting papers. The Council is required to provide information that it holds, but it is not required to create a new document or undertake fresh calculations in order to answer a request.

The Clerk will consider what additional recorded information is held and whether it can reasonably be provided, having regard to the cumulative scale of the requests received, the Council's limited staffing resources and the applicable provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations. A formal response will be issued separately in accordance with those Regulations.

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 any interested person are by law entitled to exercise their right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records will be made available for inspection by any person interested. They are made available on reasonable notice by application to the Parish Clerk.

This year's exercise of rights was announced on 21st June and commenced on 22nd June and ends on the 31st July.

Q42

What budget, if any, has the Parish Council set aside to deal with a contested planning application and the prospect of numerous formal objections?

Associated premise/context as raised: *The question refers to a claim that more than 30 residents intend to object.*

Raised by / source: Jan Lyon

No separate budget has been set aside to deal with a "contested planning application" or to oppose residents who may object. The submission of objections is a normal part of the planning process and does not create a separate category of application.

If a full planning application is submitted, residents will be entitled to support it, object to it or make neutral comments. The planning authority will consider the material planning issues raised. The number of people repeating a point does not, by itself, determine whether that point is valid or whether permission should be granted.

The Council has not verified the claim that more than 30 residents intend to object and does not propose to speculate about the eventual number of representations. The household leaflet will first provide residents with clear information about the proposal and the professional assessments being undertaken.

The ordinary costs of preparing any full planning application would need to be approved through the Council's normal budgetary and decision-making procedures. No decision has been made to incur expenditure on challenging individual objections or to pursue an appeal if planning permission were refused.

Any significant additional professional, legal or appeal expenditure would require a separate report and formal approval by the Parish Council before it was incurred.

G. Requests for action accompanying the questions

R01

Pause further progression of the development until the plans, legal position, professional evidence and financial arrangements have been made clear and residents have been properly consulted.

Raised by / source: Peter Facey

The Parish Council does not consider that all further work on the project should be paused. Obtaining pre-application advice and the necessary legal, arboricultural, ecological and other professional information does not commit the Council to the current design or to submitting a full planning application. It is the process by which the Council establishes whether an acceptable and lawful proposal is achievable.

There is, however, an important distinction between continuing to gather information and committing the Council to the development. No construction or other physical development will take place, and no trees connected with the proposed scheme will be removed, while the Council awaits the pre-application response and considers the relevant legal and professional advice.

Once that information has been received, the Council will review the design, its likely costs, the proposed funding and operating arrangements and any alternative options. Those matters cannot sensibly be finalised before the planning authority and specialist advisers have identified what would be acceptable and what changes may be required.

The first stage of wider engagement will be a detailed leaflet delivered to households explaining the current proposal, how it has developed, the professional information obtained and the matters that remain undecided. Residents will then be able to respond on the basis of a complete and accurate explanation rather than an earlier plan or an incomplete account of the project.

The Parish Council will then decide at a properly convened public meeting whether the proposal should be amended, progressed to a full planning application or not taken forward. If a full application is submitted, the formal plans and supporting documents will enter the public planning process and residents will have the usual opportunity to make representations to the planning authority.

The Council is therefore not agreeing to a blanket pause which would prevent it from obtaining the information needed to make a responsible decision. It is continuing the investigative and advisory work while pausing irreversible works and retaining the freedom to amend or discontinue the proposal.

R02

Do not fell or remove further trees until the relevant planning, legal, ecological and funding position has been established.

Raised by / source: Peter Facey; Jan Lyon

The Parish Council has already formally resolved to remove the identified trees, and that decision remains in force. The Council is not proposing to rescind that decision or repeat the vote.

If planning permission is granted for the scheme in a form that requires the removal of those trees, the Council intends to proceed with the works in accordance with that existing resolution.

Before any removal takes place, the Council will ensure that all relevant planning conditions, ecological requirements, wildlife protections and other legal obligations have been satisfied.

A further vote merely to approve the same tree-removal decision again is not presently proposed. The Council will nevertheless consider any material professional or legal information received before the works are carried out and will ensure that their method and timing comply with its statutory responsibilities.

R03

Provide a written response to each question and, where appropriate, identify the relevant policies, procedures, minutes, legal advice and supporting information.

Raised by / source: Lisa Justice

The Parish Council will provide a written response addressing the substantive issues raised. Where several questions concern the same subject, they are grouped together to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Where appropriate, the response may refer to published Council minutes, policies, procedures and professional reports which support or explain the Council's position. It will not reproduce every document or undertake a separate documentary review for each individual question.

Relevant legal principles may be explained, but the Council will not publish legally privileged advice or confidential communications. It may instead explain the decisions reached after considering that advice, where it is lawful and appropriate to do so.

Requests for copies of particular records or wider searches of Council documents are separate information requests and will be considered under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, as applicable. They do not form part of this voluntary written response.

The Council has one Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer contracted for ten hours per week, supported by volunteer councillors. The response will therefore be proportionate and will focus on answering the material issues clearly, rather than creating an extensive evidence bundle or responding repeatedly to substantially overlapping questions.

Anyone dissatisfied with the handling of a formal information request may use the applicable review and complaint procedure.