

Minutes 7th May 2008 Public Meeting Reeds Farm

Cllr Sanderson, the Chair of the Malmesbury Town Council Leisure and Youth Committee, welcomed residents to the meeting and made the following points:

- Malmesbury Town Council has been fortunate to secure a part of the “Big Lottery” funding allocated to North Wiltshire District Council, to provide much needed play equipment for Reeds Farm.
- Malmesbury Town Council has not yet formulated any ideas or plans, as to the type of equipment, or agreed how it will be laid out.
- The “Big Lottery” and North Wiltshire District Council have the power to veto any plans put forward by residents.
- £65,000 will be available for the project, however this is to include the first year’s maintenance.
- The £65,000 has been made up of the lottery funding and section 106 development finance for Malmesbury
- The lottery requires that the project is completed by April 2009.

Cllr Sanderson introduced Mrs Claire Edmeston, the Chair of Action for Children in Reeds Farm. Mrs Edmeston made the following points:

- Action for Children on Reeds Farm was set up in May 2000 by a group of local residents. The group was set up to achieve two core aims:
 - To create a dog free play area for younger children.
 - To influence the outcome of planning applications that may affect the residents of Reeds Farm.
- The group became involved with the current project when it was advised by MTC that lottery funding would be available for Reeds Farm. They saw this as an opportunity to achieve one of their aims.
- MTC are happy for their group to steer and lead the ongoing consultation.
- The Big Lottery have stipulated that provision is made for a range of ages and can veto any design that does not reflect this.
- The group would like more residents to become involved, but the group appreciates that this may not be possible for everyone. Residents can have as little or as much involvement as they wish, whether it is attending fortnightly meetings or simply being on a posting list. Ideally the group would like a representative for each street.
- The group is aware that the prospect of equipment for older children has raised concerns and anxiety within the community, but believe that if provision is made for just younger children then older children will use the equipment anyway, which may result in misuse of the equipment and vandalism.
- The group wishes to retain as much of the natural setting as possible.
- Enhancing the site in this way could safeguard the area against future development proposals.
- It is hoped that the group will have a proposal to submit by mid July.

Cllr Sanderson invited questions from residents:

Mr Graham Hayward Bonners Close expressed concerns about the drainage of the site and suggested that the area marked A on the map was not suitable as it became too wet during parts of the year.

Cllr Sanderson advised that NWDC did require that the drainage issue was resolved before they adopted the piece of land (marked A) some years ago. MTC are still waiting for clarification from Persimmon regarding the land marked B (still in Persimmon's ownership) who will be sending a site engineer to the site shortly. He agreed that further investigation into the drainage of the site will need to take place.

Mrs Lynda Jones Bonners Close expressed concerns regarding potential problems with noisy children and youths causing damage. She explained that she and her neighbours had already suffered damage to their fences. On two occasions youths set fire to her fence.

Cllr Woodcock pointed to the White Lion Park transformation and explained that through working with the community to create a play area, problems such as vandalism actually reduce. He pointed out that through the hard work of the White Lion Recreation Association youngsters now have a personal stake in the park and vandalism has dramatically reduced.

Mrs Diane Payne Elmer Close stated that children who do not live on Reeds Farm use the area with motor bikes, which may be dangerous for younger children using play equipment nearby. She stated that the site was perhaps too isolated, backing onto fields and not overlooked and suggested that a site between Filands and Reeds Farm would have been more suitable.

Mrs Edmeston advised that Action for Children on Reeds Farm had considered lobbying to join Filands and Reeds Farm with a path and play area, but felt it would be better and safer for children, to preserve Reeds Farm as one large cul de sac. It was felt that amalgamating the estate with Filands could damage the community and close knit feel of Reeds Farm.

Councillor Sanderson stated that he appreciated the community's concerns and advised that the police had been consulted. He was aware of only a number of isolated incidents at the site, of children camping out and lighting fires. He advised that an alcohol exclusion zone already exists in Malmesbury and will endeavour to include this site, if it is not already part of the zone.

Mr Chris Jackson Elmer Close asked whether the grass would be cut regularly enough for a play area as presently NWDC cut the grass but leave the grass cuttings to rot down, which would make playing football difficult. Mr Jackson also stated that the bench very often has broken bottles and cans left next to it and feared this could get worse. He also highlighted the problem with motocross bikes on the rough ground to the rear of the proposed site.

Cllr Killane explained that White Lion Park residents had experienced very similar problems with their playing field and they had had similar problems with motorbikes, teenagers with alcohol and smashed bottles. Adults and elderly residents felt intimidated and did not use the park. However since the enhancements the park is

well used by everybody. The problems experienced with youths have decreased dramatically. The White Lion Recreation Association took steps to improve the situation for residents who have now in fact benefitted from the enhancements. For example they sited equipment and seating further away from housing, they placed seating directly on grass without any hardstanding so that bottles could not be smashed and created a dog free zone within the park.

Cllr Blake pointed out that controlling access to the area should be considered to prevent access for motorbikes to the site.

Mrs Helen Small Elmer Close stated that she was in favour of a safe place for children to play but felt that the area could become a hangout for drug pushers and suggested the use of surveillance cameras.

Mr Hayward suggested that it was difficult to walk dogs because of the level of broken glass in the area. In addition he stated that on one occasion he had to call the police who did not turn up. He suggested using another site in Reeds farm.

Cllr Sanderson stressed that he will take any concerns that residents may have regarding anti social behaviour to the police.

Mrs Heather Gibson of the Action for Children on Reeds Farm group advised that their group had looked at other sites but it was felt other sites were far too small or not level.

Mrs Kate Cloke Niebull Close pointed out that £65,000 was not such a substantial sum to spend anyway.

Cllr Killane suggested that residents take a look at the White Lion Park Recreation ground where a similar sum was spent. They also paid for paths, seating and mature trees, that the Reeds Farm site already has.

Mr Chris Jackson pointed out that there should be as little environmental impact as possible and trees and shrubs should be protected.

Ross Elmer Close asked whether the rough ground further away from housing and beyond the proposed site could be considered as suitable site.

Cllr Sanderson advised that the land is owned by Persimmon who could be asked whether this would be a possibility, however at this stage only the two pieces of land marked A and B on the map are part of the equation.

Cllr Snell suggested that it would be unlikely that Persimmon would be happy for this land to be used and suggested that it may already be earmarked for a link road to the A429 in the future, especially as the levels of traffic in Malmesbury are increasing. Cllr Snell explained that the problems experienced by Reeds farm residents are Malmesbury's problems and suggested that things are improving within the community.

Mrs Anne Osborne Lacemakers said she was in favour of a safe place for children to play on Reeds Farm and suggested that if equipment is fenced then residents' fences should be protected.

Cllr Sanderson advised that the original idea was to install a multi use games area which would be fully fenced and stated that this could have prevented balls hitting fences, however it was up to the local community to decide what they would like on the site.

Mr Jamie Robinson Old Railway Close expressed concerns with dog fouling and suggested that any ball games area would need to be fenced.

Cllr Killane pointed out that their play area is now self supervising and they no longer have a problem with dog fouling. A new dog bin was installed at White Lion Park which is now regularly used.

Mrs Georgina Lockett of the Action for Children on Reeds Farm group stated that they want the same outcome as the residents who have expressed concerns this evening. The group do not want their children to be influenced by the anti social behaviour of others.

Jamie Robinson suggested that a list of issues and proposals and actions should be made available to the public.

Mrs Edmeston advised that either their group or MTC would be happy to undertake this. In addition the web site can be used as a public forum. Mrs Edmeston accepted that those living closest to the site should be kept informed.