

Pembroke Garden Landscaping and MUGA Project

Committee: Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date: 6th November 2025

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Project Title: Pembroke Garden Landscaping & Multi Use Games Area Project

1. Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with further information relating to the indicative landscape enhancement scheme at Pembroke Gardens, including the installation of a circular accessible path, biodiversity improvements, seating, and the development of a new low level Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The report also outlines consultation requirements, impact assessment considerations, indicative costs, funding opportunities, and recommended next steps.

2. Background

Pembroke Garden Open Space is a large green area bordered by Barton Road, Abbey View Road, Wickdown Avenue and Pembroke Gardens. The site currently features a new children's play area and zip wire in the northeast corner but is otherwise largely open green space.

The Leisure & Recreation Committee has identified this site for further enhancement to:

- Increase recreational opportunities for all ages
- Improve accessibility and inclusivity
- Enhance biodiversity and ecological value
- Support physical and mental wellbeing
- Strengthen community ownership of local green space

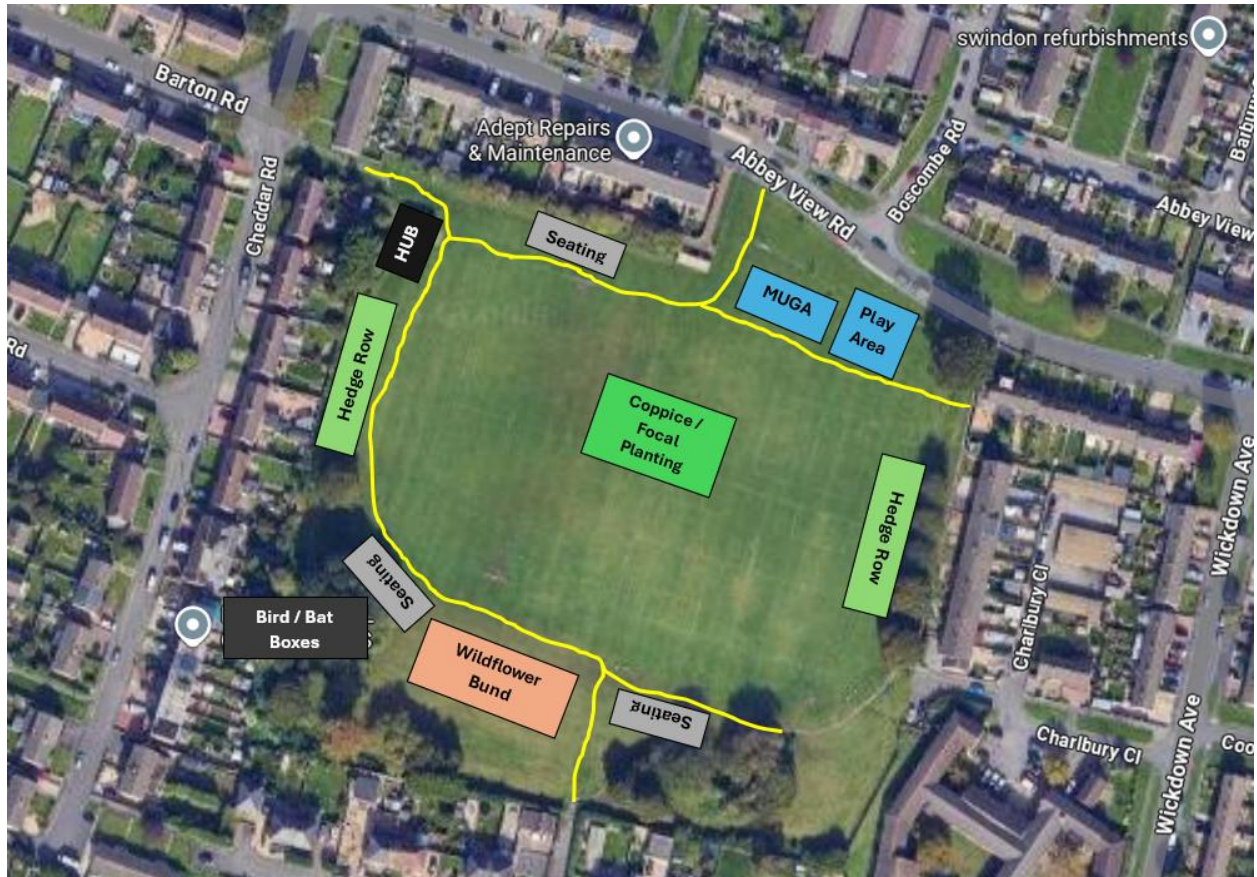
3. Proposed Scheme Overview

3.1 Landscape Masterplan

The proposal includes the following key components:

- **2 – 2.5m wide freeform circular path:** resin bound or compacted stone path around the perimeter, suitable for walking, jogging, pushchairs and wheelchair use, with access points from Pembroke Gardens, Cheddar Road, and Wickdown Avenue.
- **Biodiversity enhancements:** wildflower meadow planting along the southern and eastern edges, new native tree planting (e.g., birch, lime, rowan), and native hedgerows on the eastern and western boundaries.

- **Pocket planting and nature features:** ornamental grasses and shrubs near path edges, log piles, bug hotels, and bird/bat boxes.
- **Seating and amenities:** benches spaced around the path and interpretation boards.



Indicative drawing – formal design to follow

3.2 Play & Active Recreation

- **Retention of existing play area and zip wire** in the northeast corner.
- **New low level Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)** immediately west of the flats in the northeast corner, providing a durable, multi sport facility for football, basketball, and informal play.

4. Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)

4.1 Role and Benefits

A MUGA is a durable, all weather facility that accommodates a variety of sports and physical activities on a single surface. It significantly increases playable hours and caters to multiple age groups and abilities. It complements existing facilities by creating a physical activity hub adjacent to the current play zone.

4.2 Technical Considerations

- **Surface options:** porous macadam (versatile, cost effective) or polymeric (enhanced grip for basketball/netball).
- **Size:** approx. 30- 36m x 18- 20m with 1.2m fencing, integrated goals/hoops, no lighting.
- **Location:** west of existing flats, directly adjacent to existing play equipment for shared use.
- **Accessibility:** integrated with perimeter path and surrounding seating.

4.3 Construction Process

Industry best practice identifies the following stages:

1. Design and planning (including planning permission)
2. Environmental and noise considerations
3. Health & Safety/CDM compliance
4. Groundworks and drainage installation
5. Base construction and surfacing
6. Installation of ancillary equipment and fencing

Estimated onsite build time: 6 weeks post planning approval.

4.4 Indicative Costs

- Small macadam MUGA with fencing: £150,000 – £200,000
- Enhanced surfacing, lighting or equipment may increase total cost to ~£400,000
- Full landscape scheme (path, benches, planting, MUGA): broad estimate £300,000.

5. Community Consultation

Meaningful community engagement is essential for project success. It is recommended that the following actions are undertaken:

- **Initial engagement:** publish concept plans and invite feedback from residents and stakeholders.
- **Consultation tools:** online survey, drop in sessions, and stakeholder meetings.
- **Feedback report:** summarise key responses and adapt the design to address concerns.

Consultation themes will include: MUGA design and location, path material, planting preferences, seating positions and lighting.

6. Impact Assessments

Given the introduction of a MUGA and increased site use, the following assessments are recommended:

- **Noise assessment:** to model likely activity levels and propose mitigation (e.g., orientation, surfacing, acoustic planting, restricted hours).
- **Lighting assessment:** if future floodlighting is considered.
- **Ecological survey:** to ensure biodiversity net gain and habitat protection.
- **Accessibility and safety audit:** to confirm inclusivity and safe circulation.
- **Landscape and visual impact assessment:** to ensure sensitive integration into the open space.

These assessments will support the planning application and address potential objections.

7. Funding Opportunities

7.1 Sport & Recreation Funding

- **Sport England Movement Fund** – £300 to £15,000 for projects promoting physical activity.
- **Football Foundation Small Sided Grants** – up to £25,000 for small sided football and multi sport facilities.
- **National Lottery Community Fund** – capital support for projects with strong community benefit.
- **Government Multi Sport Grassroots Programme** – large scale capital grants (subject to future rounds).

7.2 Nature & Landscaping Funding

- **Trees for Climate** – national grant covering up to 100% of planting costs and associated infrastructure (trees, hedgerows, benches, fencing, and potentially pathways). It can significantly reduce Phase 2 costs of the project.

8. Phased Delivery Plan (Indicative)

Phase	Element	Notes
1	Consultation, impact assessments, detailed design	3 – 6 months
2	Landscaping works (pathways, benches)	2 – 3 months
3	Landscaping (trees, hedgerows, wildflowers)	Planting season (Nov–Feb)

Phase	Element	Notes
4	MUGA construction and ancillary features	6 weeks
5	Community launch and activation programme	Post construction

9. Future Community Hub and Youth Provision (Changing Rooms Redevelopment)

As part of the Council's wider vision for Pembroke Garden Open Space, there is a strategic intention to repurpose the existing disused changing room building on site into a Youth and Community Hub with café facility. This forms a crucial element of the long term plan to transform the open space into a vibrant, multifunctional destination that supports health, wellbeing, education, and social inclusion.

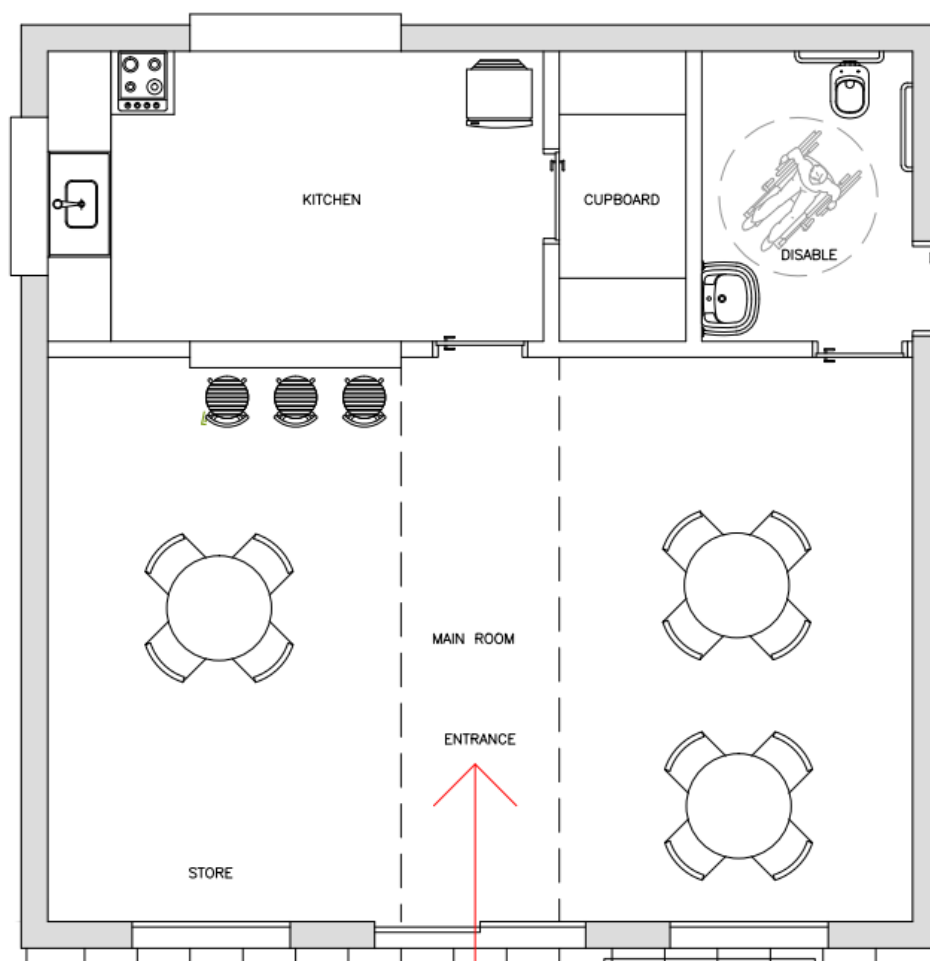
9.1 Project Vision

The proposed hub will provide a flexible, inclusive indoor space that complements the outdoor improvements set out in this report. Early concept objectives include:

- A **multipurpose indoor community room** for youth clubs, workshops, group activities, and community meetings.
- A **small café or refreshment kiosk** providing a social meeting point for parents, carers, park users and visitors.
- **Toilets and accessible facilities**, including changing spaces, to support longer visits and more inclusive use of the site.
- Potential co-location of services such as **youth outreach, wellbeing programmes, adult learning classes, and volunteer coordination**.

9.2 Strategic Benefits

- **Enhanced community activation:** A permanent indoor space will extend the usability of the park beyond good weather and create opportunities for year round programming.
- **Support for young people:** A safe, inclusive environment for youth engagement, diversionary activities, and skills development.
- **Local economic and social value:** A café hub can become a community run enterprise or social business, supporting employment and volunteering.
- **Complementary function:** The hub will directly support the proposed MUGA, play area and landscaped path by offering shelter, refreshments, supervision space, and programming space.



10. Considerations

While the proposed landscaping, MUGA, and future community hub present significant benefits for residents, councillors should be aware of several key considerations relating to the long term operation, maintenance, and sustainability of the facilities. These are not obstacles but practical factors for informed decision making and forward financial planning.

10.1 Ongoing Grounds and Path Maintenance

- The introduction of a 2 m circular path and associated seating will require routine inspection and periodic resurfacing (anticipated life cycle: 10 - 15 years for resin-bound or compacted stone surfaces).
- Seasonal maintenance will include litter clearance, hedge trimming, and vegetation management to maintain accessibility and safety.
- Maintenance could be absorbed into the Council's existing grounds maintenance contract or managed through a new community partnership arrangement.

10.2 Landscape and Planting Maintenance

- Wildflower areas and new tree/hedgerow planting will require establishment maintenance for the first 2 - 3 years (watering, selective weeding, and re-seeding).
- Thereafter, these features are low input but still need annual cuts and inspections for biodiversity monitoring and safety.
- If Trees for Climate funding is secured, maintenance contributions for up to 15 years may be available, reducing Council costs.

10.3 MUGA Operation and Maintenance

- Regular inspection of surfacing, fencing, and sports equipment (goals, hoops) is recommended to meet safety standards.
- Surface cleaning or recoating may be required every 5 - 7 years depending on usage levels.
- It is proposed that the MUGA remains open access and unlit at this stage, keeping ongoing running costs low.
- Should future demand warrant lighting, this would introduce additional maintenance and energy considerations but may be offset by extended use and potential rental income.

10.4 Community Hub and Café Operation

- The redeveloped hub and café facility will create both opportunities and ongoing operational responsibilities.
- Key areas for consideration include:
 - Staffing and management model - options could include direct Council management, partnership with a local community organisation, or a concession lease to a social enterprise or café operator.
 - Utilities and energy costs – to be estimated through feasibility work; energy-efficient design and renewable systems should be prioritised.
 - Maintenance and compliance – routine building checks, insurance, and public liability costs will need to be budgeted annually.
 - Revenue potential – café income and room hire could offset operational costs and support youth and community programmes.

10.5 Security and Antisocial Behaviour

- As usage of the park increases, there will be a need to monitor behaviour and ensure positive activation of the space.
- Design features (clear sight lines, good lighting, active edges) and community presence via the café/hub should mitigate risks.
- The Council may wish to liaise with local policing teams and youth services to promote stewardship and regular use by local groups.

10.6 Insurance and Asset Management

- All new assets (path, MUGA, benches, structures) should be added to the Council's asset register for insurance.
- A maintenance plan and asset condition schedule should be established post construction.

11. Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

1. **Approve** the proposed Pembroke Garden Landscaping and MUGA Enhancement Project concept.
2. **Authorise** officers to proceed with community consultation, planning, and necessary impact assessments.
3. **Support** the exploration and submission of funding applications (Sport England, Football Foundation, Trees for Climate, NLCF).
4. **Request** a further report with detailed design, confirmed costs, and final funding package.