

Play Area Working Group Notes

Date: 22nd June 2026

Time: 11.30am

Venue: Pinetrees Community Centre

Present:

Cllr S Absalom

Cllr J Ballman (Chair)

Cllr P Exell

M Ware – IDV

L Whatley – CSNPC

A Bird - MOAM

B Maddern – PiPA Play (Online)

1. Purpose of Meeting

The Working Group met to review the revised proposals for the Alanbrooke and Barnum Court play area refurbishments following the June Leisure and Recreation Committee meeting. The Committee had requested further local consultation before a final recommendation was brought back for approval.

2. Resident Consultation

Following the Committee's previous decision, over 100 properties were leafleted in the vicinity of both Alanbrooke and Barnum Court.

The consultation produced approximately:

- 33 responses for Alanbrooke;
- 21 responses for Barnum Court.

Overall feedback was positive, with residents supporting improvement and refurbishment of both play areas. There was no clear objection to refurbishment itself.

Key themes from residents included:

- a desire to see the existing play areas improved;
- requests for better surfacing, as the current surfacing is poor;
- a desire for as much play value and equipment as possible within the available space;
- at Alanbrooke, a clear preference to retain a set of swings;
- some concerns around potential noise and anti-social behaviour due to proximity to housing.

It was noted that both sites are existing play areas and the proposals do not involve relocating them. Any existing anti-social behaviour concerns would need to be managed through normal site management arrangements, including liaison with local PCSOs if required.

3. Alanbrooke Proposal

The Working Group reviewed the revised Alanbrooke design.

The key amendment following consultation was the inclusion of a set of swings. The revised design includes:

- one cradle/toddler swing seat;
- one high-backed accessible swing seat;
- a basket swing;
- a wheelchair accessible ramped play unit;
- a seesaw with high-back seats and footrests;
- a flush-to-ground spinner;
- sensory and interactive panels.

The inclusion of the high-backed swing was welcomed as it improves accessibility while also being suitable for wider use by children without disabilities.

The Working Group discussed whether a third standard swing could be accommodated. It was noted that this may be difficult due to space, safety zones and the existing play area footprint, but officers can ask Wicksteed to confirm whether any further adjustment is possible.

It was noted that the Council had decided not to expand the play area footprint, as retaining the existing boundary and surfacing area avoids a significant increase in cost.

4. Barnum Court Proposal

The Working Group reviewed the Barnum Court proposal and noted that the site is small, with limited scope for additional equipment due to space constraints.

The proposal was generally supported, subject to an accessibility amendment to the train unit. The current design includes a lip/panel at the back of the train, which could make access more difficult for some children and may present a trip issue.

Officers confirmed that Wicksteed had indicated the rear panel could be removed to provide easier level access to the front of the train. This would not make the item fully wheelchair accessible, but it would improve access for children with mobility needs, children using walking aids, and children accessing the unit with support.

The Working Group supported this amendment, subject to Wicksteed confirming that removal of the panel does not affect the structural integrity, safety certification or play value of the unit.

The position of benches at both sites was also discussed. One view was that benches should not be placed too close to the entrance gate, as this could feel intimidating if people congregate there. Another view was that seating close to the entrance can assist parents and carers in supervising younger children and preventing children from leaving the play area. It was suggested that seating should remain near the entrance side but not obstruct the gate.

5. Costs and Budget Position

The revised proposals are slightly cheaper than the previous designs.

The current combined cost for Alanbrooke and Barnum Court is approximately £91,550, subject to final quotation confirmation.

The Working Group noted that there is approximately £4,500 of ward funding remaining from previous allocations, plus a further £2,200, giving just under £7,000 of ward funding potentially available for the two projects.

There may also be relevant CIL/S106 funding available.

The play area Public Works Loan Board budget has approximately £190,000 remaining, subject to final coding corrections. If both Alanbrooke and Barnum Court proceed, approximately £100,000 would remain for future play area works.

The Working Group noted that the Council is achieving strong value for money when compared with other play area schemes elsewhere.

6. Recommendation on Alanbrooke and Barnum Court

The Working Group supported progressing both Alanbrooke and Barnum Court, subject to the minor design amendments discussed.

The proposed recommendation to Committee is that both schemes should proceed on the basis of the revised designs, including:

- retention of swings at Alanbrooke;
- inclusion of accessible and inclusive play elements at Alanbrooke;
- removal of the rear panel/lip from the Barnum Court train unit, subject to Wicksteed confirmation;
- final officer review of bench positioning
- use of available ward/CIL/S106 funding where applicable, with the remaining balance funded from the approved play area capital budget.

7. Edinburgh Street Recreation Ground

The Working Group then discussed Edinburgh Street Recreation Ground as a potential next priority.

It was noted that:

- the play area is in poor condition;
- surfacing and equipment are dated;
- some timber/kick boards and fencing elements are rotten;
- the current equipment is not well suited to the location;
- the play area is close to a primary school and has high passing footfall;
- children are regularly seen using the site despite its poor condition.

The Working Group considered that Edinburgh Street may be suitable for a full refurbishment rather than piecemeal repairs. This would avoid spending several thousand pounds repairing existing elements that may later be removed.

It was suggested that the Council should begin consultation with residents and the nearby school to understand what type of play provision is needed. The school should be directly engaged given the number of children passing and using the site.

It was also noted that there is some CIL/S106 funding available for Edinburgh Street, currently around £2,000, with a further wider allocation of approximately £2,300, giving around £5,000 - £5,500 potentially available before any Council capital contribution.

A refurbishment similar in scale to Pembroke Gardens was discussed as an example, with an estimated cost in the region of £90,000, subject to design and tender.

The Working Group supported officers beginning the process of consultation and concept design for Edinburgh Street, with a view to bringing a further report back to Committee.

8. Mannington Recreation Ground

Mannington was discussed as another site requiring future consideration.

It was noted that:

- there is resident interest in improving the play area;
- the site has some available ward/CIL/S106 funding, currently estimated at around £5,000;
- there may be potential for more funding this year;
- the site has scope to be a larger play area, but parking and proximity to housing are constraints;
- some existing equipment may be capable of reuse or relocation.

The Working Group agreed that Mannington should remain on the list of future play priorities, but further consideration is needed before a recommendation is made.

9. Trowbridge Close

Trowbridge Close was discussed as a smaller adopted play area.

It was noted that:

- the site currently has very limited play value;
- the equipment appears to be a basic developer-provided provision;
- residents have previously asked what is happening with the site;
- it may offer a relatively quick and low-cost improvement opportunity;
- the site is open and close to Cricklade Road, meaning fencing and safety should be considered.

The Working Group considered that consultation with local residents would be appropriate to understand whether low-cost improvements would be supported.

10. Other Play Area Funding

The Working Group noted that there are several smaller pots of CIL/S106 funding which may be capable of supporting future play improvements, including:

- Pinehurst: approximately £4,900;
- Rodbourne / Moredon / Ferndale ward: approximately £5,685;
- Even Swindon: approximately £637;
- other smaller allocations linked to Gorse Hill and Mannington.

It was agreed that officers should develop a clearer plan for how these funds could be linked to specific play area priorities, rather than making general allocations without a project plan.

11. Wider Points

The Working Group noted that the Council should continue moving away from bark surfacing where possible, as it is not user-friendly, can be difficult to maintain, and is less accessible than modern safety surfacing.

The group also discussed the possibility of reusing suitable equipment from sites that may be fully refurbished, provided it is safe, compliant and offers value.

The meeting ended early due to an incident requiring officer attendance at Moredon Sporting Hub.