
Agenda Item: Play Area Review

Meeting Date: Monday 1 September 2025

Contact Officer: Project Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Play Area Review, outlining progress from recent site visits and seeking approval for recommended short-term improvements to enhance inclusivity and play value across council-managed parks while the wider strategy is developed.

Background

Members will be aware, Witney Town Council's Open Spaces Strategy cited five themes to deliver improvements for our community: Parks, Sport, Leisure, Infrastructure & Effectiveness.

The Play Area Review is a large-scale project covering all twelve play parks managed by Witney Town Council. Officers are continuing to develop the full review, which will feed into the council's long-term strategy. In the meantime, this report shares updates from recent site visits carried out by officers. The aim of this report is to support members in considering officer recommendations for short-term improvements while the wider review is still ongoing.

Current Situation

Repairs to damaged or missing equipment and surfacing have either been completed or are in progress, with funding already allocated from the existing budget.

The Council has recently received public feedback highlighting concerns about the lack of inclusive play equipment in our parks. The ongoing Play Area Review has identified that, while nearly all our sites include inclusive play items, some play items do not offer sufficient play value (e.g. pretend post office counter in Quarry Road Park).

The review has identified Woodgreen Play Area as the most inclusive play area in Witney, with the best accessible surfacing and several inclusive play items already in place. It also presents a strong opportunity for further inclusive improvements, such as replacing the missing swing with an inclusive swing seat, installing a gated entrance from the footpath, and making use of available space to add a high-quality play panel with strong play value.

Officers have carried out a comprehensive inspection of Witney play parks and recommend the following items are installed in the following play parks:

Inclusive Swing: This item is inclusive but can also be used by able bodied children.



This swing would be installed at the following parks:

- Oxlease (low volume of inclusive play items)
- King George (low volume of inclusive play items)
- Wood Green (currently has missing swing bay)
- Quarry Road (low volume of inclusive play items)
- Moorland Road (low volume of inclusive play items)
- Fieldmere Close (currently has missing swing bay)

Total = 6 x Swing Seats @ £980 = £5,880

Inclusive Play Panels: These items promote inclusive play between children of all abilities.



One of the above panels will be installed at each of the following parks:

- Oxlease (low volume of inclusive play items)
- King George (low volume of inclusive play items)
- Wood Green (enhance this parks inclusive status)
- Quarry Road (replace low play value panel)
- Moorland Road (replace low play value panel)
- Fieldmere Close (low volume of inclusive play items)

Total = 6 x Panels @ £1,500 = £9,000

[Communication Panels for non-verbal/autistic children - please refer to the Town Clerk's Note at the end of this report]

Self-Closing Gate: This item is a compliant item to access parks.



One of these gates to be installed in Woodgreen Park to enable access from the pathway, which will improve wheelchair access. The other gate, which enables park access from the field will remain in place as this will give the park two entry/exit points, which is encouraged by ROSPA.

Total = 1 x gate @ £1,350 (+ £750 replacement fence panel)

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Installation of inclusive play equipment in council-managed play parks demonstrates a step toward promoting equality and social integration within the community. By ensuring that children of all abilities can access and enjoy play spaces together, the council is showing its commitment to removing barriers and nurturing a sense of belonging for every child. Inclusive play supports the physical and emotional development of children with disabilities, but also encourages empathy, understanding and shared experiences among all children. This aligns with the council's objectives of equity, accessibility and community.
- b) Biodiversity – Installation methods encourage the making good of any damaged grass or hedges.
- c) Crime & Disorder – All play items are designed and installed to be as resistant to vandalism as possible.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Care has been taken to ensure these play items are environmentally friendly, using sustainable materials and manufacturing processes that minimize environmental impact. These items support the council's commitment to sustainability, helping to create greener, more responsible public spaces for future generations.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Inclusive equipment has a higher cost than standard play equipment and with moving parts they are more prone to damage from vandalism and wear and tear, which means they are more likely to require maintenance and be replaced more frequently
- Moving parts on play equipment always increase the risk of injury and finger entrapment. This risk is managed by ensuring play items are compliant and meet the required BSN safety standards. In addition, Inclusive equipment needs to meet the Equality Act 2010 standards.
- Community and residents may misunderstand the purpose and may question the need or cost of inclusive equipment which the council will manage through effective communication.
- Installation may require the park to temporarily close to ensure public safety. This will be managed by the council through effective communication.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- Please see 'Equality' section under "impact assessments"

Financial implications

The total allocated budget for play areas in 2025/26 is £75,000, of which £13,000 currently remains available. The breakdown of available budget is as follows:

Activity:	Cost:
Splash Park underground water chamber	£20,000
The Leys and Burwell Parks repair	£16,000
Earmarked for replacement play items	£22,000
TOTAL	£58,000
Remaining budget for improvements	£17,000 (£75,000 - £58,000)
TOTAL BUDGET AVAILABLE	£17,000

Total recommended spend = £5,880 + £9,000 + £2,100 = £16,980 (vs budget £17,000)

(No installation costs as this can be achieved with our own Operations team)

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. To agree the allocation of £16,980 +VAT from the play area budget be used to purchase and install the inclusive equipment in the recommended play parks detailed in this report.

Town Clerk's Note

This project does not include it, but at the start of the financial year the Council secured £4,700 from Cllr Duncan Enright's Oxfordshire County Council Councillor Priority Fund to support inclusive play. The funding is specifically for installing communication panels designed for non-verbal and autistic children in the North/East Ward of Witney. This is a separate initiative, which Officers hope to deliver in partnership with the Ice Centre.

Communication Spot

Communication spot is an important support in everyday life for a child who does not speak or has difficulty producing or understanding speech. The product is useful for interaction and coordination support for all children. With the help of the communication board, the pictures can be used, for example, to look together in which the order the events will occur during the day. Children and families who are learning a new language can also benefit from the picture boards. Please note! The picture symbols or stickers are not available from Lappset.

[Communication Spot](#)

[Contact Us](#)

