

**Report
of the
Northleach and Eastington
MUGA Working Group**

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Final

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to the Town Council the views of the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) Working Group and to ask the Town Council for a clear recommendation/resolution to progress the project or otherwise.
- 1.2 To build on the excellent work done and report presented by the MUGA Working Group in 2008.
- 1.3 The Northleach Town Council to resolve a preferred location for the MUGA and to resolve same.
- 1.4 This report does not intend to replicate the work done in the 2008 Working Group report and project. However it is noted that the focus and primary objective of use for the MUGA in this report is slightly different; hence the justification for a new report.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The priority as resolved by the Council is to improve recreational facilities for young people in the Town. Providing an informal kick about/ball sports area (a MUGA) for the youth and young people will be a significant improvement in provision.
- 2.2 Whilst three options are presented, the Working Group on balance prefers installation of a MUGA at the Westwoods site without floodlights.
- 2.3 Capital cost will be funded by external organisations. Grants are to be sought, having had initially positive and supportive responses from various organisations.
- 2.4 There is an ongoing maintenance and management cost implication for the Town Council. A PC sum for an annual budget of £600 without lights and £1,100 with lights has been made. These are initial estimates based on advice from suppliers.
- 2.5 In addition the life expectancy, before significant maintenance, is at least 20 years. A renewal fund for the surface should be considered to ensure funds are set aside, i.e. £1000 per annum. This is a PC estimate and will need to be confirmed through the contract tender process.
- 2.6 Both the King George V field (KGV) and Westwoods site options are possible. However the committee has regretfully concluded that the KGV location is impractical.

3. Objective

- 3.1 The resolution of the Town Council is to improve the provision of recreational facilities for young people in the town.
- 3.2 The Working Group has pursued the provision of a MUGA on a no capital cost basis to the Town Council.
- 3.3 The objective is to provide a facility with minimal annual running costs.

4. Reference Documents

- 4.1 Fields in Trust – Planning and Design for Outdoor Play – 2008
- 4.2 Sport England – A Guide to the Design Specification and Construction of MUGAs – undated
- 4.3 Sport England Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport – 2013
- 4.4 Northleach and Eastington Town Council – All Weather Sports Pitch Working Group Report – 2008
- 4.5 The SAPCA Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Tennis Courts
- 4.6 The Northleach MUGA 2008 report.

5. Progress So Far

- 5.1 The 2008 report from the Working Group was comprehensive. It did have a slightly different focus, with the focus being on provision of organised sporting activities. Whilst both the 2008 and this report use the term MUGA, this report sees the provision of a MUGA more as an informal play area as opposed to as significant focus on sports training or organised use.
- 5.2 In April 2014 the Working Group presented its draft report to the Town Council. The resolution was passed to focus on improved recreational facilities for young people as a priority. The Working Group sees the provision of a MUGA as a key opportunity to achieve this objective.
- 5.3 The Working Group has met on a number of occasions and the meetings have been minuted.
- 5.4 Meetings were held with Farmington Trust who indicated that any financial support would be dependent on a quid pro quo for development, e.g. on a Section 106 basis. However the Trust was supportive of the

principle of the project and Mr Hudson made a personal financial commitment to support the project, which was welcome.

- 5.5 Meetings have taken place with the Leisure Services Department at Cotswold District Council (Mr Martin Holland) who have confirmed their support and assistance. We have been made aware that CDC has currently commissioned a playing pitch strategy for the district and a provision of a MUGA is being considered within that context.
- 5.6 Discussions have taken place with Sport England and a brief meeting with the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association. Both bodies have expressed support in principle. Sport England has been particularly supportive. Whilst the working group are aware of the funding opportunity that Sport England presents, it should not overly influence the final design.
- 5.7 One member of the Working Group has visited the Chipping Norton MUGA and feedback obtained. In particular it is very popular, although there is a significant litter issue.
- 5.8 Feedback has been obtained on the MUGA at Lechlade, which has a sand filled synthetic surface. Whilst this is not a type of surface we are recommending, the feedback is that since refurbishment in 2011/12, it is regularly in use out of school hours. Floodlights are provided and available on a paid for basis.
- 5.8 Meetings with local clubs and a residents' meeting has taken place.
- 5.9 peter Mills has visited a number of MUGA's and similar facilities during the course of his work including Wishaw and York.
- 5.10 Research has been conducted on the social impact of MUGAs through contacting a number of organisations who appear to have installations close to residential housing.

6. Why a MUGA?

- 6.1 What is a MUGA? It is simply a multi-use games area which is used for informal kick about and possibly for organised ball sports. It is predominantly for young people (7-16 years). The preferred design would be an area which could be used informally for football, basketball and some netball.
- 6.2 An extract from the Fields in Trust Guidance sums up the benefits of such a facility as part of a NEAP:

The NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) can provide a greater variety of opportunity for both active and passive play. It can provide play equipment and a hard surface area for ball games or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling. It may provide other

facilities such as a ramp for skateboarding, a rebound wall and a shelter for meeting and socialising. The facilities are linked in the one site because children of different ages and abilities like to take part in a range of activities, as do their siblings. Careful consideration should be given to the location and interaction of the different facilities provided, both on site and in relation to the local environment. Consultation is a key ingredient of successful design and community acceptance.

- 6.3 The State of the Parish Report, extracting information from the 2011 census, showed there were over 200 children aged between 5 and 14 in the Town.
- 6.4 The 2007 survey which was quoted in the 2008 report showed reasonable support for a facility.
- 6.5 The Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association support the provision of a MUGA in the Town.
- 6.6 Sport England, (whilst having indicated initial support), will we believe only fund facilities that fit into their facilities planning model. Funding will need to be applied for through their Inspired Facilities lottery funding.
- 6.7 We hope that the CDC Playing Pitch Strategy will also provide support for the provision of a MUGA in Northleach.
- 6.8 The Working Group believes that the provision of an informal recreational space such as a MUGA will be popular and successful in the Town. It will provide a complementary facility to the playground for the under eights that is currently available.

7. Design Principles and Philosophy of Use

- 7.1 The priority is a ball sports area for football, basketball and netball.
- 7.2 It will be free to access and use, unless rented out to local organised groups for training.
- 7.3 A standard - size for a MUGA is 37m x 18.5m. This includes pitch markings for 5-aside football (state size), and basketball/netball (state size). We do however recognise that a smaller facility can be feasible for informal recreational use, e.g. 30mx15m
- 7.4 There are effectively two choices of surface. We have discounted the synthetic grass or sand filled synthetic grass as these are prone to vandalism and have higher maintenance costs. The choice rests between a tarmac surface with a painted/polyurethane coloured coating or a Polymeric surface. The Polymeric sports surface a rubberised finish that has a colour coating applied which provides slip resistance and is a superior surface for general use. However tarmac is cheaper. Tarmac

provides for increased ball bounce and therefore the quality of play for football is lower. Both surfaces are low maintenance.

- 7.5 The Working Group recommends Polymeric subject to funding, however accepts that if it is a choice between no surface and a polyurethane coated tarmac surface, the tarmac surface should be pursued.
- 7.6 Provision of floodlights can provides the potential for an additional 1000-1500 hours of use per year. (See CIBSE Lighting Guide LG4). Use of floodlights would be limited to local clubs for training purposes only. A positive response from the adult football club and a positive response from the junior football club “subject to coach availability” was received. Floodlights however do not contribute significantly to the primary objective of informal play for young people, but they do add to the overall community benefit of an asset such the MUGA.
- 7.7 Fields in Trust (FIT) recommends that MUGAs be located at least 30m from the nearest property. All options can achieve this, but it is noted the Westwoods is the closest, with houses just over 30m away.
- 7.8 The FIT performance standard of 15 minutes’ walk or 1,000m walk for users is achievable by all options; however the KGV is noted as the most central location.
- 7.9 Whichever location is chosen, there will be a small possibility of anti-social behaviour. The facility is being provided as an activity area for young people and if successful the facility will encourage youngsters to congregate. This however should not be a reason in itself for not providing facilities for young people.
- 7.10 Experience from other providers is that litter is an ongoing issue.
- 7.11 If floodlights are used, the Working Group recommends that bookings will be limited to finish at 9pm.
- 7.12 The Working Group recommends that the area would not be hired to individuals or for competitive matches. The fear of minibuses turning up loaded with teams of players is unfounded if this policy is in place.
- 7.13 Floodlight use would also be anticipated by a future youth club and Cubs/Brownie groups.
- 7.14 None of the options recommended by the Working Group provide for a north/south layout as recommended by Sport England and other bodies. However this is only significant if formal use by clubs is a key part of the use. As we do not see this as a priority, we do not see that putting the site of the MUGA in an east/west direction as a significant issue.
- 7.15 There is no requirement or intention to provide changing or toilet facilities for what is essentially a play facility.

8. Location Options

- 8.1 Westwoods was the preferred location in the 2008 report. The suggested location of a MUGA at Westwoods is now adjacent to the doctors' surgery and ideally adjacent to the river, leaving space for additional car parking provision between the MUGA and existing car park. The proposed location would be mainly on the redundant tennis courts, leaving a good portion of the existing grassed area intact for informal play.
- 8.2 The KGV option is situated behind the cricket nets and adjacent to the tennis courts.
- 8.3 A third option has recently been proposed, i.e. on the site of the sports and social club and changing rooms, necessitating relocation of same.

9. Floodlighting

- 9.1 The Working Group has not ascertained the running costs for the floodlights in terms of power consumption. However all power costs will be charged for and covered by the hire fees.
- 9.2 Annual maintenance will include lamp replacement and repairs e.g. due to vandalism or breakdown. Paid for floodlit use fees should include a contribution to this cost.
- 9.3 We acknowledge that a floodlit synthetic pitch at Bourton "whist popular" is available as an alternative for hire for organised sports groups. The adult football club currently use an indoor school training facility in Bourton and the Northleach under 13's team train at Bourton on the synthetic pitch under floodlight.
- 9.4 Consultation with the junior and adult football clubs was undertaken. The adult club were strongly in favour and would use the facility 2 hours a week. Use by the juniors was inconclusive as the under 6 to under 11 age groups would continue to train on a Sunday morning and any evening use would be dependent on availability of coaches.
- 9.5 There is no interest from the tennis club in any floodlit use.
- 9.6 The cricket club would not use the facility for cricket in the winter under floodlights.
- 9.7 Installation costs at KGV would be substantially higher. The actual figure is difficult to determine at this stage, but is believed to be prohibitive.

10. Funding

10.1 Whilst the following sources of funding have been identified, the Working Group believes the design of the project should be based on community priorities and not overly amended to suit funding opportunities.

10.2 A range of quotations has been received (2014 prices).

Westwoods-MUGA-Polymeric (4 quotes)-	£80,000 - £85,000
Westwoods-MUGA-Tarmac (with polyurethane coating) (4 quotes)-	£64,000 - £70,000
KGV-MUGA-Polymeric (1 quote)-	£84,000
KGV-MUGA-Tarmac (with polyurethane coating) (1 quote)-	£66,000
Floodlighting – not including supply to MUGA area or additional access lighting	A wide range of quotes between £10,000 and £40,000 (KGV)
Westwoods additional car parking and access ramp	£8,000 - £30,000

10.3 It is likely that the viability of the project will depend on contributions from a number of sources. These have been identified as follows:

- a) Section 106 contribution from developers. This would provide a partial contribution and of course would compete with other priorities and requirements from both district and local level. Given that the speed of development for such funding would not be available for some years. From discussion with the Farmington Trust, any support from them falls into this category. Financial support would only be dependent on a *quid pro quo* basis aligned to development.
- b) Sport England Inspired Facilities lottery funding. Funding is available up to £75,000 for parish councils. We believe there are two funding runs a year and money is allocated on a ranking basis based on the relative quality of acceptable applications. For example a priority for Sport England is to increase the recreational activity of 14-16 year olds. Maximising the use of an asset through floodlighting is also preferred. We could have a very good bid submission which fails because of better bid submissions in that particular tranche or a reasonable bid submission which succeeds because of the lack of quality of other acceptable bids. However Sport England has indicated support for the project and

we see this as a good opportunity for funding. It should be noted however that a facility without floodlighting would be relatively less attractive to Sport England.

- c) Gloucestershire County Council Active Together. A grant of up to £10,000 has been discussed with Councillor Hodgkinson. This has some chance of success to obtain some or all of this money, but is in no way guaranteed.
- d) Northleach youth club fund contribution. Two of the Trustees sit on a working group and confirm this is the sort of project that fits with the articles and objectives of the fund. There will be no intention to fund the entire project from this fund. We recommend that we seek a commitment from the fund trustees to provide a grant of up to £30,000 to make up the shortfall from other sources. Of course it may be considerably less than this amount if we are successful elsewhere.
- e) Other grants- Gloucestershire Playing Fields association from Jubilee or Anniversary Funds up to £2000. Other grants to be researched once the Town Council makes a commitment to starting the project.

10.4 Before an application to Sport England is made, confirmation of the rest of the funding required has to be put in place.

11. Running Costs

- 11.1 It should be noted that these are provisional cost sums at this stage.
- 11.2 Floodlighting a PC sum of £500 a year for bulb and changing and lighting repairs (if provided). Most of this cost would be offset by a contribution from hire fees.
- 11.3 The SAPCA guidance on maintaining tarmacadam surfaces is for a weekly sweep and leaf clearance, monthly check for moss and algae and annual application of moss killer. Polymeric maintenance is essentially the same.
- 11.4 Routine sweep and tidy of the facility every 2 weeks by the grounds maintenance contractors. Assume a budget of 30 hours a year at £15 per hour = £450, PC estimate.
- 11.5 If, for example, problems with the surface and algae build-up occurs, then there will need to be a few additional hours allocated for maintenance by the grounds contractor. We therefore recommend a total budget of £600 a year for routine maintenance and cleaning (excluding lighting).

- 11.6 Electricity costs would only result for use as a floodlit area by sports clubs. All of the non-floodlit informal use is free, though clubs may pay a booking fee for daylight use. By comparison Cotswold School charges £24 - £30 an hour for use of half the synthetic pitch and floodlight. Swindon Borough Council charges £45 - £72.50 for an area of similar size to the MUGA.
- 11.7 A repair and renewal fund to resurface after 20-25 years should be considered. An annual sum of £1000 to be allowed for. Actual figures to be confirmed during the contract awarding process.

12. Westwoods Centre Option

12.1 Advantages of providing the MUGA at Westwoods:

- a) Floodlighting is a feasible option at this site.
- b) Topography is advantageous, with the facility being set down below the level of nearby housing.
- c) The land has already been earmarked for recreational use. A MUGA is a typical and accepted use of the land and planning has already previously been approved.
- d) The redundant and dilapidated tennis courts adjacent to the doctors' surgery would be brought into use.
- e) Could provide some additional car parking as part of the development. This would alleviate occasional car parking problems at the Westwoods.
- f) With the proposed layout for the MUGA, it is possible to retain 30m of existing grass area in front of the Westwoods Centre for continuing use for informal play, and to limit disturbance to users of the Westwoods.
- g) The Doctors' surgery has accepted the location as reasonable.
- h) Close to car parks and support facilities. Relevant if use was ever to be expanded to accommodate organised events.
- i) Some sound absorbing/spectator terracing and banking facilities., e.g.,...a natural amphitheatre...sheltered by surrounding terrain we do have natural banking, a more sheltered location and a site well below the level of surrounding houses at Westwoods
- j) Good access for people with disabilities.
- k) Additional car parking can be provided as part of the development, which will be of benefit to the Westwoods for events.

12.2 Disadvantages of locating the MUGA at Westwoods:

- a) Not in a central location of the Town, although complies with Fields In Trust (FIT) recommended walking and travel distances.
- b) Whilst distance from the nearest houses complies with the FIT guidance (at least 30 metres), there will be a social impact on residents. This has been unmeasured in terms of actual noise levels. Our research shows that the vast majority of MUGA's are installed well away from residential properties.
- c) The impact on the operation of the Westwoods Centre has been raised as a concern. We accept there will be some impact. Inevitably some users of the MUGA will try and use the toilets at the Westwoods. It does however highlight the current relaxed security at the Westwoods, with the building sometimes being left open and unattended. The management approach would need to be reviewed if the MUGA was located on the site. The organised use will be extremely local which will mean there will be no need for user to use the Westwoods for changing or other purposes. The Working Group did not feel the users of the Westwoods would be driven away by the occasional unauthorised person coming in to use the toilet. So this concern is not in itself a justification for not locating at Westwoods.
- d) However locating at this site, the management and security arrangements at Westwoods would have to be reviewed as there would be some impact. There may be some increased management costs associated with improved security.
- e) Additional tree planting to break the site line from the houses to the MUGA area would need to be considered.
- f) Objections received from a small group of nearby residents, re the impact on their quality of life.

13. King George V Fields (KGV) Option

13.1 Advantages:

- a) Location would increase use by the school for informal and organised play.

- b) Less social impact on residents as the distance is over 50m to the nearest house.
- c) Central location
- d) Keeps play facilities primarily in one location.
- e) Could be used by the junior club at weekends when the grass is unfit for Sunday morning training.

13.2 Disadvantages:

The KGV site seems to meet most of the Sport England criteria for where **not** to site a MUGA; the most important are to avoid a site;

- a) *Where steep gradients lead to and away from the area - we may need to bring the levels up to meet the KGV level avoid the bank off the KGV*
- b) *Where there is poor access for people with disabilities – access for wheelchair users cannot be across the field, but would have to be from the high street adjacent to the tennis courts. This is impractical and a significant concern.*
- c) *Where the facility is remote from support facilities such as changing accommodation, WC's etc. This only becomes an issue if it is used for organised team sports.*
- d) *In very exposed terrain - raising the levels will increase exposure, the valley runs E/W and there will be no shelter*
- e) *Where it is not possible for access roads/footpaths and maintenance routes to reach it - all this would be less than ideal. There would inevitably be more mud transmitted on to the playing surface due to most of the users accessing across the field. This will increase maintenance costs.*
- f) *Where incoming services e.g. electricity would be prohibitively expensive to install - choosing the KGV fails to future proof the facility and effectively means it will not be capable of future upgrading. Cost of getting electrical supply highlighted in 2008 report is probably prohibitive. That might leave the Town with a facility later considered inadequate and, after grant funding, little prospect of getting more. This location is likely to be unsuitable for floodlight use due to excessive cost and possible impact on nearby residents due to the elevated nature of the site.*
- g) *Where emergency vehicles cannot readily get to the facility.*

- h) Where users have to traverse naturally turfed areas, as mud etc., can lead to "*rapid deterioration of the playing surface*"
- i) *where non-sports users may be passing and be at risk of injury* - It might be an issue of being too close to the play area(s)
- j) Any development will limit the expansion/redevelopment of the playground. This is a concern.
- k) Will require the removal of at least 3 trees. They would either need relocating or felling.
- l) Increased cost of groundworks, although this is claimed by one contractor to be marginal, if retaining walls are not required.
- m) To light the access across the playing field is expensive and difficult and could only be running a path along the side of the football pitch. This would mean moving the football pitch to ensure the touchline is the minimum distance from the path.
- n) Funding of a no floodlit facility by Sport England is anticipated to be more problematic.

14. Pavilion Location

14.1 A suggestion has been raised that the MUGA would ideally sit on the location of the current pavilion and sports social club. This would involve demolishing the facility and relocating it elsewhere on the KGV field. The Working Group does not recommend this option for the following reasons:

- a) Expense. 2012 Sport England figures show a double changing room with club room at £2,630 per square metre, i.e. £320,000 for a standard provision. This would exclude the provision of a sport and social club. It does not include the cost of the MUGA or the demolition cost of the existing club.
- b) Such a move is likely to lead to the closure of the sport and social club.
- c) There is no means of funding effectively a £400,000 plus development in the short to medium term.

14.2 This option is beyond the scope of the Working Group to consider and does not recommend pursuing it this stage.

15. Social Impact Research

15.1 At the end of December 2014, 12 organisations were approached to collect data on the social impact of MUGAs. All were chosen based on research that indicated they had a MUGA built between 30 and 50 metres from housing. A simple questionnaire was provided, designed to be quick to complete and included the following questions;

- Approximate distance from housing
- Has there been significant negative feedback from nearby residents?
- What was the feedback concerning?
- If the resident feedback was significant and justified, were steps taken to reduce the impact and were these steps successful?
- Comment on the overall impact of the MUGA provision? For example has the usage levels been as high as anticipated? Is the MUGA popular with the users?

15.2 In addition Peter Mills obtained feedback direct when visiting Wishaw Sports Centre in North Lanarkshire and from Hart District Council.

15.3 The report on the research is appended.

15.3 The key conclusions were;

- a) There are few MUGAs built close to residential housing. The research found it difficult to identify suitable installations to contact and feedback from installers confirmed that it is uncommon for them to built within 50 metres of residential housing.
- b) There is a small chance of anti-social behaviour having a negative impact on nearby residents. The level of the disruption was depending on a number of factors, some unrelated to the MUGA itself. In most cases this does not have a significant social impact. However whilst the working group was reassured that the risk is low, there remains a small residual risk of social impact on the adjacent houses.
- c) Managing the hours of operation by switching floodlights off at 9pm reduces the impact.
- d) Good design and programming policy minimises the impact of noise.

16. Working Group Conclusions

16.1 We reiterate that the priority is to provide a facility for young people and informal play.

16.2 Whilst club and organised group use would be desirable both now and in the future, it would be made more likely if floodlit. However we do not see this as essential to meet our primary objective. The provision of floodlights would though maximise the benefit of the facility.

16.3 Both Westwoods and KGV locations are achievable.

- 16.4 Whilst the ideal location of the working group is KGV due to the central location and less social impact, we accept that the site has significant limitations and obstacles to its installation and ongoing operation.
- 16.5 In accordance with the 2008 report conclusions the Westwoods is the most practical and cost-effective location. However we are concerned that building a new public amenity close to residential housing may have a negative impact on their quality of life.
- 16.5 The recommendation of the working group is to pursue funding for provision of a MUGA at Westwoods site subject to including a number of measures to mitigate the impact on nearby residents and the Westwoods Centre:
- a) High quality rebound fencing to minimise the noise
 - b) Floodlights not to operate after 9pm.
 - c) No hire for competitive matches
 - d) No hire to organised clubs except for local Northleach and Eastington based clubs.
 - e) Provision of a new access path adjacent to the doctors' surgery, to reduce the pedestrian traffic through the estate.
 - f) Siting the MUGA as close to the river as permitted.
 - g) Installation of a row of trees to hide the view from nearby houses.

17. Voting

- 17.1 The Council is asked to vote on the following resolutions on one of the three options:
- a) To pursue the installation of the MUGA without floodlighting at KGV.
 - b) To pursue the installation of the MUGA at Westwoods with floodlights.
 - c) Option 3 to shelve the project until it is possible to effectively redevelop the pavilion at the KGV site and put the MUGA on a redeveloped site.