

North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan

Appendix 7 - Community Improvement Projects

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, taking account of Neighbourhood Plan resident consultation and in discussion with the Parish Council, has identified a series of priority improvement projects in relation to community infrastructure. These are set out here to offer further detail as to the type of improvements that may be sought via **Policy IF2 – Community facilities**.

1. Adventure Playground

Description and rationale

As the pictures in Appendix 6 show, the Adventure Playground does not live up to its name. It comprises 2.3 acres of undulating grassland with virtually no play equipment. Access to the site is restrictive and off-putting and residents complain of anti-social behaviour. This represents a huge wasted opportunity and one that has been recognised by the Parish Council. At the time of writing (November 2025) the Parish Council intends to submit a planning application for improvements to the Adventure Playground intended for older children. It will be funded from S106 monies obtained from the Marlborough Gardens developer. Given the size of the space, there is also scope to use it for other community events like a parish picnic or small concerts etc. There is widespread support for improving this playground as the community survey showed.

It should also be noted that the Rectory Rise development, when it goes ahead, has been planned to provide a MUGA (Multi-use Games Area). The Parish Council is in discussion with the developers to provide a skate park and 5-a-side football pitch instead. Moreover, there are also smaller children's playgrounds in the Marlborough Gardens development and the Breakspear Way development, both of which were provided by the developers. These existing facilities will be considered alongside of future plans to develop the Adventure Playground.

Priority / timescale

This is a straightforward project with no adverse consequences on local residents or infrastructure but with major positive benefits for the health and wellbeing of local children. Work has already started to lease the land and a timescale of 18 months does not seem unreasonable to sign off the lease and commission ideas and plans with a further year for development, construction and installation.

Indicative budget needed

Play equipment £ TBA

Access £TBA

Maintenance £TBA

Promotion and management £TBA

2. Park Road playground**Description and rationale**

This play space is aimed at younger children and is located next to the primary school. Unlike the Adventure Playground it does already have suitable play equipment but overall, the site looks tired and in need to some maintenance and upgrading.

Priority / timescale

This is another easy win. The ideas for improvement suggested by residents are mainly cosmetic and relatively inexpensive. For example, lower the hedge, fix fences, better landscaping and layout of equipment. Some new equipment would not go amiss. There is a wider parking issue at this point on Park Road that is addressed elsewhere. The improvements suggested should take no more than 12 months to implement once budgets have been confirmed and monies made available.

Indicative budget needed

£10,000 - £20,000 max

3. Community sports pitch for football / cricket on the built side of the A4095**Description and rationale**

This is a top priority for the parish but it comes with a number of considerable challenges (unlike the playgrounds). As mentioned elsewhere, the parish does not have a flat sports pitch and this is seen as a significant omission in local assets by residents. It impacts on the health and wellbeing of children of all ages but especially teenagers and it significantly restricts their options for sports recreation that results in them either not developing their sporting skills or travelling further afield to take part in outdoor sport. North Leigh Football Club is not open for free public use and even if it were, it is located

on the 'wrong' (southern) side of the A4095 making it a hazardous place for young people to get to, notwithstanding the new 40mph speed limit that is largely ignored by motorists.

As the parish is built on sloping land there are natural limitations on the location of a flat sports pitch. The most obvious locations are to the west of Common Road or to the west of Green Lane beyond the Masons Grove development. However, there are no sizeable plots of flat land in the parish owned by the county council, district council or parish council and therefore the only feasible option is to purchase land from private landowners or negotiate land from developers.

A final possibility is that the Adventure Playground could be re-purposed as a sports pitch (this would require significant land excavation and remodelling) and the Adventure Playground could be relocated. The only benefit of this option is that the plot of land need for the Adventure Playground might be smaller than the sports pitch. A more controversial option would be to do away with the Adventure Playground altogether and use the land it occupies as a sports pitch.

Priority / timescale

Whilst this is seen as a priority the logistics of bringing the project to fruition make it impossible to set a timescale over and above the time needed for full consultation with the local community which could take less than 12 months and only need a modest communications budget.

Indicative budget needed

Aside from community consultation it is impossible to put a budget on this project. The main cost is obviously the land itself, particularly if land had to be purchased at commercial rates from private landowners and then it would be dependent on whether the land is only ever going to be for agricultural use or if the landowner believes the land may have development potential.

If the Adventure Playground land were to be remodelled a full land survey and expert advice would be needed before budgets could be itemised.

4. Village shop

Description and rationale

The village shop is well loved and well used. But this much cherished facility also presents many frustrations for the local community as it is very small and cramped, not accessible to buggies and wheelchairs and, along with the school, Memorial Hall and Library has a parking problem.

More than one person has suggested swapping the site of the shop with the site of the library but this would not allow sufficient space for the library. Perhaps there is potential to completely reconfigure the spaces inside the outer building, for example by taking a small amount of space from the Hall and adding it to the footprint of the shop. This, and other ideas, would need consultation with the local community and careful analysis by architects. This solution does nothing to alleviate the parking problem though and in fact it might exacerbate the parking issue if more people are attracted to use the shop. Mostly, the improvement suggestions from residents focus on relocating the shop to a completely new space with adequate parking but this brings with it similar challenges as the sports pitch – where is the land to build a new shop going to come from? Many locals feel that the Windmill Field could be put to community use (e.g. for a shop) but this land is in private ownership.

Residents also suggested that North Leigh Business Park could house a bigger shop but this brings with it other challenges such as creating non-vehicular access from the village.

Priority / timescale

Given the logistical challenge of relocating the shop entirely this feels like a project to be reviewed over the next 5 years. However, if the local community supported a reconfiguration of the Hall/ Shop space this could be achievable in a much shorter time frame.

Indicative budget needed

Reconfiguration costs £TBA after consultation with architects.

5. Memorial Hall

Description and rationale

As described elsewhere the Memorial Hall is a considerable asset to the parish. It is used for everything from voting to film nights, community engagement events to dance classes and lots more and as such it is a vital community asset. A thriving community needs a space where residents can come together and socialise, enjoy entertainment, keep fit and cultural experiences like learning about local history etc. Whilst we are fortunate to have the Memorial Hall the biggest issue it faces is inadequate parking facilities. The hall is a good size and it has kitchen facilities and toilets. In the residents' survey some people suggested the kitchen and toilet facilities could be improved. Other small initiatives that could easily be implemented with modest disruption and outlay were also suggested such as an online booking system for the hall and better ventilation. But these all skirt around the main issue which is the lack of parking.

Priority / timescale

Minor improvements such as online booking and aircon could be achievable in less than 12 months once quotes had been obtained and suppliers vetted.

The parking problem needs a complete re-think of the road use; for example, it has been suggested that Park Road could be turned into a one-way street and this might allow for more street parking but a full consultation with OCC, WODC and the local community would be needed along with expert advice from consultants regarding bus and other large vehicle access etc. This idea also has a knock-on effect for other arterial roads that would need to be explored in depth. Given the scale of the parking challenge it is impossible to put a time frame on this issue that affects all the park Road village assets.

Completely relocating the Hall, as has been suggested by some residents, brings with it even more challenges.

Indicative budget needed

£ Unknown

6. Library

Description and rationale

The library is no longer simply a facility for borrowing physical books – it offers e-books and audio books, free access to the primary school even when closed, play sessions, story time, craft events, a book club service, printing and copying, a Lego club and, of course, access to computers and Wi-Fi. For many adults and for local schoolchildren it is an important asset that should be accessible and developed.

Local residents are generally very happy with this asset and the suggestions for improving it are modest and achievable with little cost. However, the main comments relate back to parking and this is tied into the wider considerations described above.

7. Turner Hall

Description and rationale

The Turner Hall is owned by the church but parking land around it is owned partly by the church and partly by North Leigh Parish Council.

This Hall is used for church services and it can be hired by members of the public/ local groups for events like Parish Council meetings, birthday parties etc. Being much smaller than the Memorial Hall and located at the edge of the built area at the bottom of a steep hill it is less suitable for things like whole community meetings, film nights etc. Two big

advantages of the Turner Hall over the Memorial Hall is that it has a dedicated parking area and outdoor space.

Suggestions for improving the Hall focus mainly on minor internal matters for which St Mary's church would be responsible. Resurfacing the carpark (which can be slippery and muddy in winter) would be a joint project for the church and the Parish Council. It is not considered a high priority issue but it is simple to fix if the money was available.

8. Windmill Field

Description

Whilst the Windmill Field has been included in this Plan as a Local Green Space it would be wrong not to repeat the overwhelming view of local residents that it should be returned to community use. It is a flat piece of land that sits at the very heart of the village and it is overgrown and untended. The list of suggestions as to its potential use is long and varied. Clearly to act on any of these suggestions would mean buying the land with the owner's consent and at the moment that is not a feasible option. So, for that reason only this potential asset can only be seen as a wish rather than something that can be actively progressed.