



East Hagbourne Parish Council

Improvements to the Pavilion Car Park

Public Consultation on Taking a Loan

Report to the Parish Council

for consideration and decision at the meeting of 7th July 2016

East Hagbourne Parish Council

Report to East Hagbourne Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting, 7 July 2016

This report complements the first report to the meeting of 9 June 2016 outlining the recommendations on application for a loan towards improvements to the Pavilion Car Park

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1. Village Survey

The final cost figures for the car park improvements were not available until mid-May. As a consequence it was not possible before this time to consult with the community in a detailed way on the costs of the proposal and the potential impact of borrowing on the precept and hence residents' Council Tax.

On the advice of OALC, a survey was therefore carried out to allow all residents to give their views. A paper survey was chosen over the alternative of a public meeting, because we felt this approach would be most likely to elicit responses. The survey form shown in **Appendix 1** was printed on coloured paper for visibility and to discourage duplication. It was hand-delivered by volunteers to each of the 500 households in East Hagbourne Parish over the weekend of 18-19 June with a request for responses by 1st July. We asked for one response per household on the basis that Council Tax is levied per property rather than per individual. We asked for paper responses to be delivered to the village shop or any councillor and gave the alternative of an email reply for those who preferred it. As well as asking whether people agreed or disagreed with the proposals, we offered the opportunity to write detailed comments.

At the time of writing (midday 1st July 2016) the overall responses received are:

Support the plan	67 (including 9 email responses)
Do not support the plan	17 (including one detailed email response)
Undecided:	2 (both including comments)
Not filled in:	1

One duplicate vote was excluded from the totals.

There was a clear majority of respondents in favour of carrying out the proposed work and funding it through a loan, however there were a significant number of households opposed. A number of reasoned arguments were put forward and a detailed response to these is included in section 2 below.

The overall level of returns was relatively low. While some residents may not have read the flyer, presumably many do not hold strong views.

2. Responses to the issues raised

The results and comments are documented in **Appendix 2** exactly as they were received.

The comments in support of the proposals cite the necessity for a car park, that the current area is unsuitable and that without a car park there would be congestion along Great Mead. However there was also some criticism of the original specification.

One of the 'undecided' votes reflected divided opinions within the household, the other raised criticisms of the existing design which are covered in the comments below.

The key issues raised by the people who did not support the project are summarised here with a brief response. A more detailed response addressing all of the comments is included as **Appendix 3**..

Are car park improvements really needed?

The car park is in a very muddy state and despite the use of temporary mats is barely usable even during the summer months because of the rutted ground and standing water after rain. The Pavilion is a valuable facility for the village and already hosts a range of activities which will grow in the future.

We are naturally disappointed that our original, cheaper, surface has not proved durable, but need to provide a car park that will last for many years to come.

Funding: why do we need to take out a loan?

The Parish Council will contribute as much as possible of the cost from its reserves, consistent with maintaining a sufficient balance for good financial management and to cope with future contingencies. We had hoped to obtain a grant to cover part of the cost, however SODC informed us at the last minute that the project was out of scope, because it is too close in time to the original grant given for the Pavilion construction. WREN specifically excludes work on car parks. There are no other grant bodies who could provide funding in a timely manner and this work is urgent. A loan is the most effective way of progressing this work.

The potential increase in Council Tax

We understand that even a small increase in Council Tax can be a burden for some people. The Parish Council works hard to control costs while meeting community needs and avoid excessive rises and the Parish Precept has been kept the same for this year as for the previous year. The cost of £10.10 per year for a Band D property is based on the scenario where all of the loan cost has to be met by increased Council Tax. To put this figure into context, the total yearly Council Tax for a Band D Property in East Hagbourne is £1620.05. Relief is available through SODC for those households who have difficulty in paying.

The expenditure is not justified, because few people will use the car park

The new Pavilion will provide a valuable facility to the community for many years to come. While many people walk to the Pavilion some come from further afield and some have difficulty walking. A facility like the Pavilion needs an all weather car park including disabled parking. The pavilion is still not used to its full capacity, but our records for 2015 show over 3000 visits and an estimated 450 people made use of the facility during the year.

Costs have not been properly considered

We did not plan for this unforeseen expenditure and had hoped that the current lower cost reinforced grass surface would have proved durable, however this has not proved to be the case. We now have a better understanding of why the original surface was not more durable and have chosen a solution based on that improved knowledge.

Why was the current surface specified in the first place

The current surface consists of a plastic mesh directly laid on the grass as used in many National Trust properties. This approach was chosen so as not to bring too much urban intrusion to the site and to maintain a green appearance, factors which were instrumental in obtaining grant support from SODC and in our planning discussions. We also wanted to contain costs as far as possible and this is a lower

cost approach. The decision to take this approach rests with the Parish Council and its technical advisors and we believe was appropriate at the time the decision was made.

Is this the best value, is there a cheaper solution

Car park construction is not cheap. That is one reason why we tried to take a minimalist approach in the first instance. In deciding on how to improve the car park we followed two principles: that the eventual solution should retain a 'green' feel as far as possible and that it should be robust and not likely to fail in the future. There may be cheaper options but none that meet these two requirements. Several people commented that cheaper surfaces should be available, however the surface itself represents less than 40% of the total project cost. Preparation and drainage represent another 40% and the balance covers fencing, surveyors costs and a contingency figure. More information is given in Appendix 3.

For technical reasons, we chose a cast-in-situ concrete approach as being the only acceptable solution for our particular ground conditions. This will be load bearing as soon as the concrete is set. It contains a reinforcing steel mesh giving load bearing capability. The concrete structure contains voids through which grass will grow, retaining a green feel, while maintaining strength.

Why were more competitive quotes not obtained

The technical choice of surface outlined above unfortunately leads us to only one supplier who can supply the type of in-situ cast surface required and this is Grasscrete. Grasscrete normally sell only on a supply and fit basis, but do not themselves perform the necessary sub-base and drainage preparation. They have, however, agreed in this instance to provide components so that our own contractor can carry out both the sub-base construction and lay the concrete surface.

We consider that there are significant advantages for a single contractor carrying out both parts of the work to avoid disputes in the event of problems and additional costs for contractor liaison. We have elected to stay with the original contractor, Mullins of Reading, who won the contract to build the Pavilion on a competitive quote in which they were the lowest price supplier. Their labour rates are unchanged and they have experience and knowledge of the existing groundworks and can therefore implement the extensions in the most effective way.

We have a quote for supply and fit from Grasscrete, but this is a more expensive option than the route we have chosen. More information in Appendix 3.

The money would be better spent on other projects

There are indeed other areas of village life where investment could be applied, however not investing in the car park improvements will not release funds for other uses - a loan, if taken out, must be applied to the designated project. Two specific areas were mentioned in the comments:

The 94 bus will continue from 20 July 2016 for a trial period as a commercial service. It's future depends on whether people use it. The OCC subsidy for this service in the past year amounted to £80000 per year - a sum far beyond the Parish Council's ability to support, even if it could be justified.

The other area mentioned was road safety and traffic calming. This has been an area of discussion for many years including in the 2011 Parish Plan following which some actions were implemented, some not. It will be a continuing topic for discussion in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, but we are not at a point where specific actions can yet be endorsed or funded.

Financial payback and future needs

The Parish Council's investment in the Pavilion and car park are justified on the basis of providing facilities for use by the community. While the Pavilion should become financially self-sufficient as its use grows, it will not return investment to the Council. Instead, greater use of the facility will generate sufficient revenue to render operating support from the Council unnecessary. Improving the car park will certainly improve the chances of attracting further users to the Pavilion.

It is not possible to foresee what pressures and needs will arise over the next 10 years, we will have to address these as they happen. For today, this is the urgent task before us, so we should act.

Will the work now proceed in a timely manner?

We are checking timing with the contractor, but plan that the work be completed before next winter.

3. Updated Evaluation of Council Finances

The figures reported in the first report to the Council meeting of 9th June 2016 have been updated with the latest figures

Current Council Funds:

At the end of June 2016 PC Meeting, taking into account known commitments, the Council funds are projected to be £47,248 (information from the Parish Clerk, 29th June 2016).

This figure is higher than that reported at the 9th June meeting, primarily because of a refund of VAT received during the intervening period,

Requirements for end of financial year (31st March 2015)

Expected future income within the financial year is £14,860 (second precept payment, October) and £1,465 (lease income, before October).

Expected expenditure for the 9 months to the end of the financial year remains £21,319 (75% of the budgeted operating expenditure for 2016/17)

Expected operating balance at year end is therefore

Current funds (end June 2016)	£47,248
Expected income	£16,325
Expected operating expenditure	£21,319
Year end operating Balance	£42,254

From this balance, certain figures have been allocated for specific projects

Pavilion Car Park	£10,000 allocated, £7,120 remaining
Neighbourhood Plan	£3,000 allocated, est £5,000 needed
New Road Development	£10,000 allocated, ca £4,500 remaining

After subtracting these allocated figures, the year end reserves are projected to be £25,634 or 86% of this year's annual precept of £29,720.

I propose that reserves amounting to 50% of the precept are an absolute minimum for prudent operation of the Council's finances and in these times of organisational changes and development pressures a higher figure is desirable.

How much capital can we contribute to the Car Park from Council funds?

- The amount in the allocated project budget is £7,120.
- A further discretionary amount up to £10,774 could be contributed from general funds while retaining 50% of precept as a reserve. However in these times of change it may be prudent to hold a slightly higher reserve in hand.
- The cash flow situation also needs to be considered. VAT on the final bill could amount to £11,143. Retaining a reserve of 50% of precept would provide sufficient buffer to fund these until the VAT is refunded.

Loan Costs: *(These figures remain unchanged since the report to the 9th June 2016 meeting).*

Loan costs have been calculated for a sum of £55,716.80 - £7120.00 = £48596.80 which is the maximum we can ask to borrow under government guidelines. Costs for a smaller loan can be estimated pro-rata.

The Public Works Loan Board provides indicative costs for loans to Parish Councils. The actual figure may vary from today's, but is not likely to change by much. Loans are provided on an Annuity basis

(same cost per annum throughout the loan) and EIP (reducing payments over time). The difference in cost is small, so for simplicity I recommend the Annuity basis.

The interest rate is fixed and for a 10 year loan the indicative rate is 1.83% pa. The total repayment based on a loan of £48,596.80 is £53,400.40 and the half-yearly repayments £2,670.02 (£5,340.04 pa).

For 2016/17 one payment would be required, in December 2016, equal to £2,670.02.

Current Precept and Expenses: *(The figures remain unchanged since 9th June 2016).*

For the full year 2016/17, the Parish Council's income is expected to be £32,319. This is made up of £29,700 from the precept plus lease income etc of £2,599.

Operating expenses for 2016/17 are projected to be £26,925 including a small contingency of £500. This leaves a surplus of £3,894 which is sufficient to cover the first loan repayment in December. Additional security against unforeseen expenses is provided by the General Reserve Fund.

For future years we will need to budget for the full annual cost of the loan repayments. Based on this year's figures this would require either cost savings or an increase in precept.

In the worst case, where no cost savings were possible, covering the £5,340.04 annual cost would require an additional £1,466 over this year's projected surplus representing an increase of 4.9% on the precept. In reality, savings are already identified this year of £1,000 in operational support to the Pavilion and a likely £550 in legal expenses.

The additional loan repayments can therefore in principle be met by cost savings within the current precept, subject to normal year-to-year adjustments.

The scenario presented in the community consultation, where the full cost of the loan repayment is recovered through increased Council Tax therefore represents a worst case.

Risks and Uncertainties

The parish has already adjusted to the loss of Millbrook to Didcot parish, effective in 2015. The existing Council Tax base therefore seems secure.

During the past year additional costs have been incurred to respond to speculative proposals for housing development which would damage the character of the village. These threats will hopefully become smaller as the new SODC Local Plan 2032 and the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan come into effect.

It is already apparent through the Neighbourhood Plan discussions that some residents would like to see higher expenditure in grass cutting and other maintenance within the parish. At the same time, the County is working to devolve more responsibilities to parishes. The financial implications of these pressures are not yet clear, but public consultation could be needed if these measures increase operating costs.

However, the Parish council's operating costs are well understood and a close control is kept over budgets and expenditure, so the Council's procedures are well placed to respond to future pressures.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- I believe the work to the car park is essential.
- I am convinced that the selected technical solution is the right one and that the implementation method is the most cost effective.
- The financial impact of covering the full cost of a loan through a Council Tax increase has been explained to residents.
- I understand and sympathise with the unwillingness of some people to incur additional charges on Council Tax, however the cost per annum is manageable and over 75% of those responding to the consultation supported the plan to take a loan.
- Going ahead with the car park improvements will not stop other village improvements being progressed. Not going ahead will not mean that we have funds to apply to other projects.

Recommendation

That the Parish Council should apply for Borrowing Approval and apply for a loan, but that the financial implications for current and future Council budgets be reviewed again to see if a larger sum can be contributed from reserves.

Prepared by: Cllr D Rickeard, 1st July 2016

APPENDIX 1



East Hagbourne Parish Council

Our Pavilion car park needs work - Please show your support

Our new Pavilion at Great Mead is a marvellous facility, but the reinforced grass surface has not survived the rain and the traffic very well and now needs better drainage and an improved surface.

We have a solution that will be both durable and green, but the cost is around £55,000 and we cannot obtain grant funding for this project. The Parish Council can contribute £10,000 from reserves and so will need to take out a loan of £45,000.

The Public Works Loan Board can provide a loan over 10 years at a very favourable rate of 1.83%, however they do want to know that the community supports this project and is aware of the impact it may have on their Council Tax.

How much will it cost?

The repayments on the loan will amount to £4932 per year for 10 years. This amount includes the debt plus interest.

How will it affect my Council Tax?

Most of our Council Tax goes to OCC and SODC, but it also includes money for Parish Council work. For a Band D property the yearly amount to EHPC is currently £60.82 (£20 less than the average in South Oxfordshire). The Council will look for efficiency and cost savings to mitigate the effects of the loan repayments, but without these the maximum effect of taking out the loan will be an increase for Band D properties of £10.10 per year.

We hope you will agree that the approach the Parish Council is taking is sensible and will support us to bring this finishing touch to the Pavilion project.

Please Show Your Support by ticking the box below:

I support the plan to fund the car park improvement	I do not support the plan to fund the car park improvements
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

You may write any comments on the reverse of this form

Please return your form by 1st July to:

- The Village Shop, any Parish Councillor or Farthings, Blewbury Road (next to no 20)
- Alternatively you may email your support or comments to carpark@easthagbourne.net

More information:

- is on the web site www.easthagbourne.net
- there will be an information table at the Fête on Saturday 28th June
- or contact the Chairman, Cllr David Rickeard on 813373 , david@rickeard.org.uk

Thank you in advance for your response . .

APPENDIX 2



East Hagbourne Parish Council

Community responses to consultation on taking a loan.

Consolidated Summary at 1st July Midday.

All votes and comments received have been reported here in full

Votes in support of taking a loan

Paper votes: 58
Email votes: 9 total 67

Comments:

- Could an idea like this be used to buy the Green Gap when Graingers finally lose?
- For the Pavilion to succeed as a village facility, it must have a good car park. I support the PC proposal.
- The Pavilion is a lovely facility and asset for the village, but at times the car park is unusable and should be improved. Taking out a loan at minimal cost per household is an excellent approach.
- A long term solution to wear on a car park in playing surfaces is both sensible and forward thinking.
- The current car park surface is unfit for purpose and it would be short-sighted to leave it as it is. Neither of us at xxx have any objection to the improvement plan funding
- Desperately needed to stop serious congestion on Great Mead and damage to the track as the cars are parked all the way up Great Mead on days the Grounds are used for e.g. football, parties etc
- A small increase in (?) rates should be considered as these users will be the main benefactors.
- Why stop when we are almost finished and the good surface will be a bonus for everyone that uses it especially in winter - no further destruction too.
- Without the proper car park surfacing the Pavilion will become a white elephant! It is a huge shame that the car park drainage and surface had not been researched adequately in the first instance, which would have thus saved the mess and extra expense of laying the plastic currently in situ. It is to be hoped that the Parish Council will make future financial savings in the other activities to mitigate any further increase in the Parish Precept.
- I do think it is important to complete the new centre however I am concerned that possibly the specification or quality of work was not fit for purpose, therefore I consider some contribution should come from the contractors/professionals engaged to deliver the whole project. Would work now be in a timely manner, does it not need some more consolidation? Possibility of hardcore distribution after bulk delivery similar to 'gravel' day at Blewbury.

Votes undecided or invalid

Paper votes:	Undecided	1 + 1	
	Not filled in	1	
	Duplicate	1 (one vote per household, please)	Total 3 votes

Comments:

- Yes, it looks odd to have ticked both boxes, but this household is of divided opinions and we feel to return it this way is better than simply discarding the form.
- Presumably the existing surface should have been durable and green? After all it was specified for the job. Blame should lie with either/or
 - i) the installer
 - ii) the material supplier
 - iii) the architect
 for not getting something fit for purpose. It is not as if it really has been used a lot? For me, there has to be some sort of guarantee/refund to partly fund this out of existing monies already paid. I would like to know the cost of the initial surface and what guarantees there are against surface #2 nor being adequate either. For info to be provided before giving consent.

Votes against taking a loan

Paper votes: 9 + 3 + 2 + 2

Email votes: 1 total 17

Comments:

- We are still paying for V Hall car park. You spent enough on roads to pay for this
- If any increase in Council Tax is necessary it should be used to preserve the local bus service - this would help the whole village - not just the people using the new "sports" facility.
- (because of the increased cost of £10 per year)
- Difficult! But some people could not afford extra on the Council Tax!! Pensioners mostly & they are not very likely to use the car park, as I said, difficult!!
- I feel that the cost of the car park is by far too much for the local council to support. There must be a cheaper way to make a car park. This is putting too much for the local people to commit to. I am sure there are better things to spend the money on. Like traffic calming for instance. There is a desperate need for a Z crossing from the local shop & garage for adults and children to get to the Recreation Ground. This is an accident waiting to happen and the money would be well spent.
- The £55k cost seems excessive. A heavy duty permeable surface would be available at considerably lower cost.

Comprehensive comment received by email:

I am writing to respond to your recent communication regarding plans for the new car park at the pavilion.

I am afraid that we have very serious concerns about the plans. I have set them down below:

1. Overall, we are extremely concerned that these plans involve very large sums of money being expended, which we do not think can be justified by the benefits and moreover we do not think have been properly considered. The 17% increase in tax paid by residents – a huge jump and this sort of decision must justify a more detailed and robust decision making process.

2. We are extremely surprised by the contention that the current car park is 'not durable' – it is used in many National Trust properties and many others with a much higher traffic flow. Why was an unsuitable car park surface originally included in the pavilion construction?

3. We do not believe that there is currently evidence that supports that the proposed solution is the best value. In order to justify borrowing / spending such a large sum of money, we would need to see the cost / benefit analysis of a wide range of car parking solutions – including cheaper solutions. We believe that there are many alternatives that should be properly considered:

- a. Tarmac
- b. Gravel

- c. Grass reinforced mesh
- d. Permeable stone
- e. Proprietary solutions e.g. Ecogrid Paving, Sudspave, Grassform, Gridforce, Suregreen, Enviropave. Most of these supply and install so getting a comparative quote to your current proposal is a zero cost option.

4. In terms of benefits to the community, it is surely the case that the vast majority of users of the pavilion live in easy walking distance of the pavilion. It is hard to see how this expenditure can be justified given that so few people will need to use it. Moreover, given that the majority of users could easily walk to the pavilion from anywhere in the village, then surely this car park will encourage car use. It would be helpful to see a survey of pavilion users to show their journeys and how many really need the car park.

5. There is also no evidence that, even if this WAS the best value solution in itself, that the costs as quoted have been challenged and alternative quotes have been obtained from other contractors in accordance with appropriate practice in all spheres and particularly when public money is being expended. Certainly a minimum of three quotes is to be expected as good practice.

6. There is also no assessment of the financial payback and return on the investment.

- a. Cost per user
- b. Increased revenue from better car park
- c. Maintenance and repair costs over time
- d. Change in interest rates

7. There is no proper assessment of the future risks over the next 10 years – what if the funds spent on this solution are needed elsewhere in the village in the next decade?

APPENDIX 3

Parish Council responses to community comments.

This appendix gives a more detailed response to the comments from those who responded to the consultation.

Why do we need to apply for a loan to pay for the car park - why can't this be covered from Council funds?

The Parish Council makes great efforts to keep the level of Council Tax as low as possible and the precept is set each year to meet the requirements foreseen for that coming year while maintaining a reasonable balance for emergencies. Consequently, the Council does not have large reserves available to fund an unexpected project such as the car park.

We were planning to apply for grant funding from SODC towards part of the cost, but were informed at the last minute that our project was ineligible. There are relatively few organisations that can provide grant support of the amount we need and we consider it urgent that a weatherproof solution is found before next winter.

The increase in Council Tax is large, some people cannot afford to pay more Council Tax

We do understand that any increase in Tax can be a burden for some people and will do our utmost to minimise any Tax increase by funding as much of the cost as we can from our reserves and controlling other costs so that any eventual increase in Precept for 2017/18 is kept as low as possible. The figures of £10.10 per year is based on the situation where the whole loan cost would have to be funded from a Council Tax increase.

This figure of £10.10 needs to be put into context. The portion of Council Tax for a Band D property coming back to the Parish Council is £60.82 for the year 2016/17, so it is a significant increase in our Parish Council costs. However, the total Council Tax collected by SODC for a Band D property in East Hagbourne amounts to £1620.05. Of this £1281.64 goes to Oxfordshire County Council, £111.24 goes to SODC and £166.96 to police services.

The cost is not justified, because few people will use it; most people could walk to the Pavilion

The project to replace the previous very dilapidated Pavilion has been a long and arduous one and efforts to build a replacement have been under way for over 15 years. The current project started in January 2012 and the building we have is of a high standard and will serve the community for many years. Use of the Pavilion is growing, but it will be difficult to attract more users while the car park is in such a poor state. More users will generate more income, relieving pressure on Parish Council funds.

We do keep records of how the Pavilion is used and over 2015, the first year of operation, we estimate that there were over 3000 'visits' by around 450 individuals. As use of the pavilion grows, these numbers can only increase.

Total users 2015	Estimated	
	Visits	individuals
Football matches	1510	
HUFC		30
Visitors		140
Table Tennis	113	20
Pilates	304	20
Children's Parties	180	126
Community Choir	875	40
Meetings	40	10
Other		
Open afternoon		30
DGS astronomy evenings	20	10
CAB event	24	24
Totals	3066	450

The users represent people of all ages including young children and older people, some of who are eligible for disabled parking. They come from all parts of our parish and beyond and while many people do walk to the Recreation Ground it is not practical for everyone. Our building is designed to be accessible to those with disabilities and this includes provision of disabled parking.

We do need to improve our car park and we believe that the current proposals are the best solution.

Costs have not been properly considered

The 17% increase in tax paid by residents – a huge jump and this sort of decision must justify a more detailed and robust decision making process

We did not plan for this unforeseen expenditure and had hoped that the current reinforced grass surface would have proved durable, however we ran into problems over the last winter. We now have a better understanding of why the original surface was not more durable (see below) and have chosen a solution based on that improved knowledge.

A robust decision making process is needed

The Parish Council responded to the problems over last winter by laying temporary mats which allowed the car park to remain usable, but still in a muddy state. They are certainly not a long term solution and so we began work with our consultant Tony Grover of BDS Surveyors to consider a more durable fix. This has been documented in Parish Council minutes particularly those from January 2016 which can be consulted on the web site.

Why is the current surface not durable; why was it specified in the first place; is there any guarantee? Blame should lie with either/or i) the installer, ii) the material supplier, iii) the architect for not getting something fit for purpose

The current surface consists of a plastic mesh directly laid on the grass as used in many National Trust properties. This approach was chosen so as not to bring too much urban intrusion to the site and to maintain a green appearance, factors which were instrumental in obtaining grant support from SODC and in our planning discussions. We also wanted to contain costs as far as possible and this is a lower cost approach.

The mesh is purely an improving layer, so its performance is influenced significantly by the weather, the soil conditions and the amount of use. We believe the surface did not perform as expected primarily because the area became very disturbed from construction traffic due to the wet weather during construction of the pavilion and the resulting soil structure became compacted and does not drain well. An additional factor is the slight gradient to the recreation ground which tends to shed any run-off towards the car park corner of the site, adding to the problem.

The decision to take this approach rests with the Parish Council and its technical advisors and we believe was appropriate at the time the decision was made. The surveyor's comments are

- The product itself has not failed. The installation is not defective, it is simply pegged to the ground.

- The mesh has been used in accordance with the manufacturers details so it has not been used inappropriately, and on paper it provided a cost-effective method of providing an area for occasional use, and also satisfying the Planning requirement of not unduly 'hardening the area'.

What is the evidence that the proposed solution is the best value; Why were alternatives not considered. There must be a cheaper way to make a car park.

Car park construction is not cheap. That is one reason why we tried to take a minimalist approach in the first instance. In deciding on how to improve the car park we considered a number of elements.

- Principle 1: to retain a 'green' feel as far as possible.

- Principle 2: the eventual solution should be robust and not likely to fail in the future.

We considered that we needed firstly to ensure that the sub-surface drainage was sufficient given the tendency of water to collect in the area. This component of the work is responsible for a significant portion of the cost.

Secondly that the surface should be robust to traffic including heavier vehicles: even though it is designed for cars, many modern cars and light vans are of considerable weight. The possible need for access by emergency vehicles also needs to be considered.

we initially considered options using pre-formed concrete grid construction (plastic grids are less robust and better suited to gravel infill than grass).

However, the following guidance was found at <http://www.pavingexpert.com/grasspav.htm>

"Precast Concrete block systems: The grass jointing is essential to the structural integrity of such systems. Where grass growth is absent or poor, the individual blocks have a lowered resistance to differential movement when trafficked. In regularly trafficked situations, this can result in sub-base pumping via the gaps between the individual units."

Plastic systems (HDPE and Polypropylene): Only really suitable for low speed occasional use. The relatively thin depth of these systems and their inherent flexibility can result in 'trampolining', where the units 'bounce' when trafficked. This can turn the surface into a quagmire in regularly trafficked areas, such as car parks.

In situ castings: Each job can be individually designed according to traditional slab design methods to ensure competence and adequate drainage control. No differential settlement or lateral spread, so no need for edge restraint."

In our case, we will be carrying out the work in late summer and cannot allow the grass to grow for several months before the area is trafficked. In fact, given our understanding of the ground conditions at Great Mead we do not have confidence in the long term durability of pre-cast (and therefore jointed) systems even if a long settling period were allowed.

Therefore, for technical reasons, we chose a cast-in-situ concrete approach as being the only acceptable solution for our particular ground conditions. This will be load bearing as soon as the concrete is set. It contains a reinforcing steel mesh giving load bearing capability. The concrete structure contains voids through which grass will grow, retaining a green feel, while maintaining strength.

Of the alternative systems that were mentioned in the responses:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------------|
| a. | Tarmac | FAILS PRINCIPLE 1 |
| b. | Gravel | FAILS PRINCIPLES 1 & 2 |
| c. | Grass reinforced mesh | THE CURRENT SURFACE |
| d. | Permeable stone | LIMITATIONS OF PRE-CAST SYSTEMS |
| e. | Proprietary solutions | |
| | e.g. Ecogrid Paving, Sudspave, Grassform, Gridforce, Suregreen, Enviropave. . | THESE ARE ALL PRE-CAST SYSTEMS |

Surveyor's comments

- a. Tarmac is not favoured by the planners due to the visual hardening of the area.

- b. Gravel again a visual change, the planners were in favour of maintaining a 'green' appearance. Gravel is also comparatively noisy in use.
- c. Grass reinforced mesh is what we currently have, which has proven insufficient.
- d. Permeable stone is similar to gravel above
- e. Proprietary solutions All similar in principle to grasscrete and require a sub-base construction. Grasscrete was selected due to the proportion of the wearing surface being concrete to give greater certainty on all-year-round durability.

A minimum of three quotes should have been obtained

A first principle of competitive tendering is that the solutions offered by those tendering should be acceptable if the price is right.

The technical choice of surface outlined above unfortunately leads us to only one supplier who can supply the type of in-situ cast surface required and this is Grasscrete. Grasscrete normally sell only on a supply and fit basis, but do not themselves perform the necessary sub-base and drainage preparation. They have, however, agreed in this instance to provide components so that our own contractor can carry out both the sub-base construction and lay the concrete surface.

We consider that there are significant advantages for a single contractor carrying out both parts of the work to avoid disputes in the event of problems and additional costs for contractor liaison.

With respect to the contractor for the groundworks and surface laying, we have elected to stay with the original contractor. **Mullins of Reading won the contract to build the Pavilion on a competitive quote. Their labour rates are unchanged and they have experience and knowledge of the existing groundworks and can therefore implement the extensions in the most effective way.**

We can breakdown the costs of the project into the main component items and also estimate the costs of a supply & fit surface versus a contractor laid surface. Grasscrete would only supply and fit the concrete surface, not carry out the whole job.

	Mullins quote	Grasscrete
Site supervision & facilities etc	£ 4750	Mullins
Drainage & preparation for surface	£17760	Mullins
Supply & fit cellular system	£21100	£23362.40
Fencing improvements & cleanup	£ 3280	Mullins
Contingency (with approval of site supervisor only)	£ 5000	Mullins
Contractor Total	£51890	£54152.40
BDS supervision fees	£ 3826.80	£4098.29
Project total	£55716.80	£58250.69

NOTES: BDS costs are based on the total project cost
 Were Grasscrete to lay the surface we would expect a small additional cost for Mullins liaison.

Conclusion: The cost of the concrete surface is less than half the total project cost.
 There is a cost advantage in the chosen approach of about £2530.
 No other identified options are technically acceptable.

There is also no assessment of the financial payback and return on the investment.

- a. Cost per user
Not a useful metric - the work needs to be done
- b. Increased revenue from better car park
Improved car park is needed to encourage more Pavilion use. We have target usage

- figures, but to quantify would be speculation
- c. Maintenance and repair costs over time
The chosen surface should be essentially maintenance free. One visit to site to maintain grass surface is included one month after completion.
- d. Change in interest rates
Interest rates are fixed for the loan period

There is no proper assessment of the future risks over the next 10 years – what if the funds spent on this solution are needed elsewhere in the village in the next decade?

We always face uncertainties from year to year. Since 2015 we have seen the big change when Millbrook was transferred to Didcot, reducing our Council Tax base and over the past two years government has progressively reduced their direct support for Parish Councils. Speculative housing applications and the start of our Neighbourhood Plan have placed new strains on our resources, both people and funding. changes are underway in the whole way local government is carried out and we may see more responsibilities devolving to parish level from the District and County Councils. We need to respond to these new challenges as they arise while working hard to minimise the cost to our community.

If we take out a loan, it can only be applied to the project for which we request it.

We are still paying for V Hall car park. You spent enough on roads to pay for this.

The Village Car Park at Hagbourne Village Hall was constructed in 1995 and has been fully paid for. Road maintenance is generally the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council. Over the past few years, the Parish Council has contributed to the following works:

- Wilcher Close entry: £2512 (25% of cost, balance paid by SOHA)
- New pavement at Lower Cross/New Road £5000 (balance of about £9000 paid by OCC)

The money could be better spent on other projects.

If any increase in Council Tax is necessary it should be used to preserve the local bus service - this would help the whole village - not just the people using the new "sports" facility.

The 94 bus service will continue on a trial basis as a commercial service after 20 July 2016. We hope that the 'whole village' will indeed use it so that it can continue economically. The subsidy from Oxfordshire County Council just for the one year up to July 2016 was about £80000.

The money would be better spent on alternative projects like traffic calming for instance. There is a desperate need for a zebra crossing from the local shop & garage for adults and children to get to the Recreation Ground.

Road safety was a key part of the 2011 Parish Plan and will again feature in the Neighbourhood Plan currently being prepared. We are not ready at this stage to make decisions on what road safety improvements should be pursued or how they should be funded.

Will the work now proceed in a timely manner

We are checking timing with the contractor, but plan that the work be completed before next winter.
