

Woodlands Development Proposal

BACKGROUND

Objectives

Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) has designated £200k towards site improvements with three key objectives:

- 1) Improve park facilities, including catering and public toilets,
- 2) Create extended scope for community work,
- 3) Maintain the financial viability of the site and safeguard rental income.

The YMCA has earmarked a matching amount of £200k to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Increase the positive impact on families and young people in the community,
- 2) Improve the health and wellbeing of those who need it most ,
- 3) Maintain financial viability and safeguard income generation.

Although there is some overlap, it is clear that there are TRDC objectives which are not viewed as 'core' activities in line with the YMCA's mission and vision.

History

The YMCA presented a possible extension to the gym facilities to councillors in September 2010. This scheme is now viewed as impractical on the grounds of cost, insufficient latent gym demand and a failure to deliver the majority of TRDC and YMCA goals in an effective way. This has been discarded.

In 2013 the site development was revisited and a number of options were discussed, including clarity on both parties' requirements. This document now outlines the YMCA's proposed final option for the consideration of TRDC.

Feasibility

The YMCA has recently engaged industry specialists to investigate the feasibility of our options, allowing us arrive at our final proposal. These organisations have advised us and quoted for the desired works to be completed. The YMCA has also visited providers of similar facilities to explore business models and viability. We draw on our significant experience of running community facilities and programmes, and we feel this option maximises the opportunities available to the local community whilst keeping true to the requirements of both parties.

Since the YMCA feasibility report, TRDC have conducted a Strategic Review of Leavesden Country Park and identified several needs that are relevant to the proposed development:

- Enhancing Country Park with facilities such as a café
- Enhancing and upgrading outside play and sports facilities, which are 'poor' in the area
- Seeking to provide facilities and activities for young people and older young people

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

COMMUNITY SPACE FACILITIES

- 1) Demolition of existing eye-sore building, leaving concrete foundations in place
- 2) Bespoke log-constructed building built on concrete foundation, including
 - a. small seasonal café outlet / kitchenette for basic hot & cold catering
 - b. fully accessible toilet for park users within YMCA opening hours
- 3) Limited landscaping of the area around the log-constructed building, to encompass an outside space for café users and including the removal of the hawthorn and barbed-wire fencing on the site perimeter

COMMUNITY SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES

- 4) YMCA to assume management of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and Tennis courts
- 5) Relaying/redevelopment of the MUGA, installation of low-level evening floodlights

ADDITIONAL POINTS

- 6) TRDC has put forward £200,000 for the scheme, with the understanding that the YMCA will secure match-funding of an equivalent amount = total development spend of £400,000.
- 7) The YMCA seeks a renegotiation of the existing lease in order to:
 - a. Extend to 30 years, allowing the YMCA investment to be written off without adversely affecting the financial viability of existing activities.
 - b. Guarantee of TRDC's commitment to maintaining free parking on the site
- 8) The redevelopment is subject to resident consultation, planning permission and may require additional fundraising support for the Sports & Recreation elements.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The YMCA's research and feasibility work to date has uncovered several challenging issues:

- a) Ongoing cost of the provision of public toilets. Expensive & risky to run & maintain
- b) Financial exposure in running café. No local community café is claiming to be sustainable
- c) Return on investment. Current facilities & new building will not generate sufficient income to repay the YMCA's initial outlay, without lease extension & MUGA management
- d) Survey works required into existing utilities (electricity, gas, water) and determine what is required in addition, as this could create additional, unbudgeted expense
- e) Planning constraints of new building and MUGA developments
- f) Fundraising targets will need to be met in order to upgrade the MUGA facilities
- g) Charging for parking will inhibit the ongoing viability of the site.

Through close partnership work with TRDC, these potential challenges can be overcome in order to deliver a community-focussed site that meets the identified needs of local residents, whilst providing a sustainable way forward for YMCA activities.

The following pages give further detail on the principles of the development proposal:-

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

COMMUNITY SPACE FACILITIES - Log-constructed community building

The current building foundations of the old art therapy block are approx. 27m x 7.6m. The YMCA proposes to demolish the existing building and replace with a log-constructed building to maximise the space of the foundations without incurring the £500k+ brick & mortar equivalent build costs.

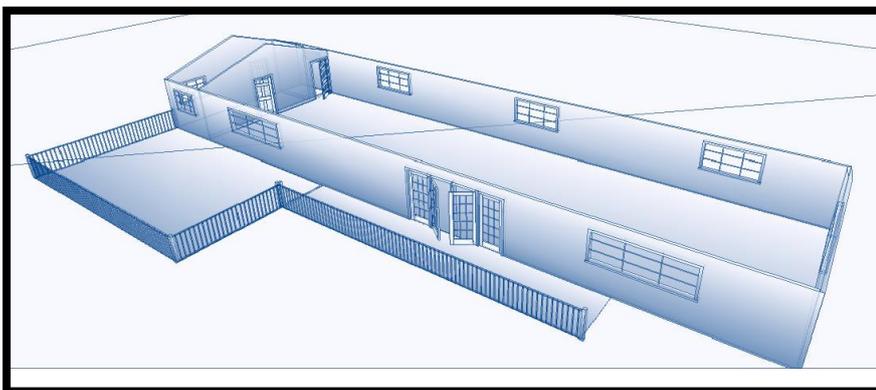
The log construction provides an option that remains in keeping with the surrounding area of Leavesden Country Park. It is a significantly more environmentally friendly option than bricks and mortar, particularly in construction, with excellent thermal efficiency ratings. Construction is swifter, as well as more cost-effective. The proposed log building is constructed to building regulation standards and has an indefinite lifetime provided that the wood is specially treated every 5 years.

This log construction will comprise:

- A small café / kitchenette facility allowing for the preparation and sale of hot and cold snacks and drinks
- A fully accessible toilet facility that can be made available during YMCA opening hours
- A large, multipurpose community room, divisible into several rooms via folding walls
- Decking outside the building for seating in relation to the café. This decking is proposed to overlook the children's play area to allow for added child safety and security.

Advice and quotes have been sought from a number of specialist companies. Demolition, site preparation, building construction and interior finishing of a log constructed community building will require a significant budget and remains subject to the stability of the existing concrete foundation block. The budget for the large log building and landscaping of the adjacent area is set at **£350,000**

INDICATIVE DRAWINGS these are for illustrative purposes only and will be subject to change.



The activities that take place within the building are envisaged to include:

- YMCA Health & Wellbeing activities in conjunction with the Health Club
- YMCA Youth & Community activities particular evening work
- 'Community Hub' *ad hoc*, or regular concessionary community group hire

COMMUNITY SPACE FACILITIES - Landscaping entrance

The YMCA proposes to landscape the area outside the log building, allowing a welcoming entrance to the entire YMCA site. The design will provide a focal point for park users which helps to draw the proposed cafe and community building together with the existing children's play area, green gym zone and recreational green space adjacent to the site.

Fencing and hawthorn hedge will need to be removed as part of this landscaping and the YMCA has excellent links with a local community landscaping charity, who could complete these works

Budget required £10,000

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

COMMUNITY SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES - Multi Use Games Area

The Leavesden Strategic Review identified a need for local play and sports facilities to be enhanced. In order to undertake such work and as part of the overall financial sustainability of the development, the YMCA proposes to assume management responsibility for the MUGA. The YMCA's extensive experience of facility management and delivery of health & wellbeing projects allows for confidence that the facilities can achieve significantly greater utilisation levels.

Subject to securing the necessary funding, the proposal is to resurface both courts with surfaces that suit local needs, replace fencing, add low level, evening floodlights to both existing courts, create a path leading to the courts and path lighting for user access. The Strategic Review did not identify the need for additional football pitches and tennis courts, so the proposal seeks to upgrade and redevelop the existing site and footprint, but with modern, multipurpose surfacing and equipment. This upgrade will make the facilities a destination of choice for hundreds of individuals and teams, with low-level floodlights allowing play to continue to an appropriate deadline after dark.

Advice and quotes have been sought from industry specialist companies and a budget of **£150,000** will be required to complete these works. Ongoing maintenance will cost approx. £2,000 per annum, which would be the responsibility of YMCA.

COMMUNITY SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES - Floodlights

If TRDC agree to the transfer of management responsibility and the resurfacing and upgrading of the MUGA facility, we propose to install low-level lighting to allow local residents to take part in evening activities, up until a determined hour. Such lighting would include path lighting to the MUGA from the main YMCA site to ensure safety of users.

Planning permission for floodlights has been considered and granted in the past, but needs to be revisited. Lighting technology has significantly improved over the past few years and the YMCA has

sourced lighting maps to indicate how far the light will travel, demonstrating the lack of disturbance to local residents. TRDC’s assistance with local resident consultation would be appreciated.

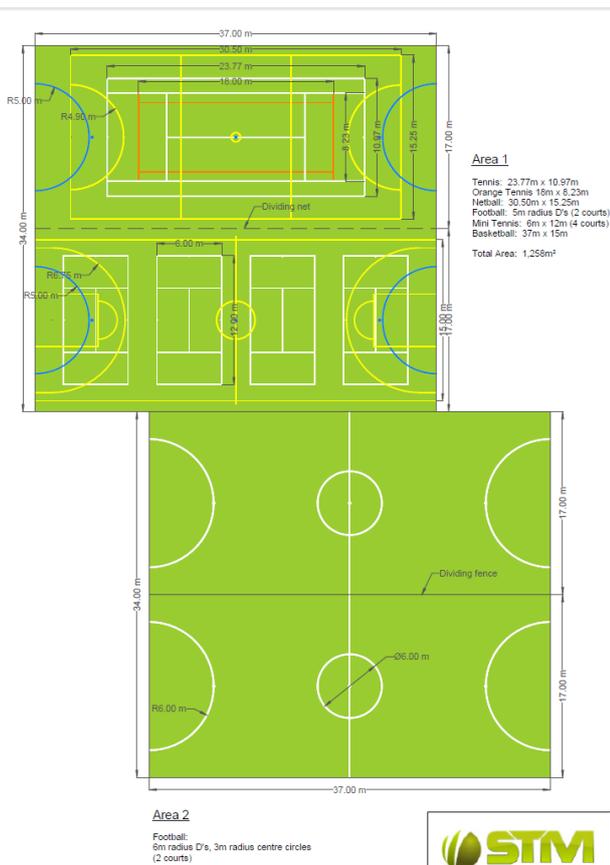
Advice and quotes have been sought from industry specialist companies and a budget of **£50,000** will be required to complete these works in addition to the MUGA budget consideration, above.

Running costs and maintenance will be the responsibility of the YMCA.

INDICATIVE DRAWINGS: these are for illustrative purposes only and will be subject to change.

Possible Court marking layout:

Possible floodlighting impact:



The above drawings are taken from a different industry specialists, but give a broad indication of the type of pitch marking arrangements that could be achieved, giving a huge variety of variable sporting options. The lighting impact diagram, gives an early indication of the low impact of specialist floodlights on the surrounding area, based on the current topography of the country park. More detailed diagrams will be undertaken as part of any decision to proceed.

OVERALL FUNDING SITUATION

The combined budget that TRDC and YMCA can contribute may not extend to cover the MUGA redevelopment, so the YMCA will seek alternative grant funding opportunities to cover the funding deficit caused by these ambitions plans. The YMCA has had significant success in the past with sport-related funding bids and a support from TRDC will increase the likelihood of successful bidding.

BUDGET

Final option budget proposal

Log constructed community building	
- Public Use Toilet	
- Community Café / Kitchenette	
- Professional fees	
- Demolition	£350,000
Landscaping	£10,000
MUGA upgrade	£150,000
Low-level floodlighting	£50,000
Contingency	£10,000
<u>TOTAL INDICATIVE COST</u>	<u>£570,000</u>

Indicative project cost **£570,000**

TRDC commitment **£200,000**

YMCA commitment **£200,000**

Grant income (target) £170,000

NEXT STEPS

TRDC

Log constructed community building

- Approve YMCA proposal, providing assistance with resident consultation

MUGA

- Approve YMCA proposal,
- Support with obtaining planning permission for floodlights

Landscaping

- Remove hedgerow and fencing

Gain approval for £200k commitment

Guarantee free parking

Renegotiate & Extend lease with YMCA

YMCA

Log constructed community building

- Agree layout of rooms and specification of toilets
- Commission technical drawings
- Commission project management
- Consider security system for the site
- Establish what services/utilities run to site
- Establish foundation stability

MUGA

- Agree final design
- Source grant funding

Landscaping

- Commission provider to develop proposal

Apply for planning permission with TRDC's support

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