

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Leisure & Amenities Committee

Shelfinch Play Area Youth Shelter

1. Background:

1.1 West Swindon Parish Council has recently invested in improving the play facilities at Shelfinch play area. This has included new basket ball and football goals, resurfacing the ball court, new toddler equipment and additional swings and climbing equipment.

Whilst work has been underway, we have received feedback from residents about the problems associated with the youth shelter. This includes general anti social behaviour, problems with drugs and smoking.

The Toothill Parish Councillors have invited residents to comment on options to remove the youth shelter all together, remove and relocate somewhere else or keep it as it is. A consultation was circulated on the Parish Facebook and Website via Survey Monkey and a letter was distributed to neighbouring properties of the Shelfinch play area. (Letter attached as Appendix A). The Police and the local youth group have also been approached for their comments. (Police response attached as Appendix B)

1.2 Following the distribution of the letter and circulation of the online survey, the following written comments have been received.

| | Yes | No |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Keep the youth shelter as it is | 3 | 11 |
| Remove and relocate the youth shelter | 10 | 5 |
| Remove the youth shelter all together | 5 | 2 |

SURVEY MONKEY WRITTEN RESPONSES

Comments regarding relocating:

- I would like to see it moved and relocated to somewhere else in Toothill, possibly the road side of folly park or to where Deerhurst park once was- it's now being used as a car park for vans! Would be nice to see a communist area there again.
- away from any of the park area completely but you are still encouraging the anti social behaviour

Comments regarding removing and disposing:

- Abusive teens, broken glass

Leisure and Amenities Committee 15 July 2020

- young people in these sheds behave terribly, take drugs, drink alcohol, smoke marijuana , and until late at night they make noise
- I hate taking my kids there with teenagers even younger men sat in there smoking doing drugs and the foul language
- Attracts antisocial behaviour
- Too much antisocial behaviour. Attracts older teenagers, adults. Late night noise, littering and drug using/ dealing.
- No one except youths use it to gather in large numbers.

Any other comments:

- I think we have to respect the youth of our area and consider the message that this would give to them if it was moved. They have a right to gather together and have facilities provided for them. Some older elements of society will always see groups of youths as up to no good. Is there hard evidence that drug taking frequently goes on or is it just supposition or even may I suggest discrimination? Some young people smoke; yes, some use language we might prefer not to hear; yes, but many are more desirable to be around than some adults (parents) that I see around our community.
- Leave it well alone. The rumours of rampant drug at this site are nonsense. There is far less cannabis detritus around this area in general. I don't think the young are able to afford it anymore.
- It's always attracting drug users leaving that part of the park unusable
- It looks horrendous. Put a few nice benches in for adults and children to use We don't need a drinking and smoking hut
- young people are sitting there in the afternoon and despite the fact that there are younger children in the park smoking marihuana and we often observe aggressive behaviour, so it is in Bloomsbury Park
- I live near Bloomsbury Park and we always have such problems with shed in our Park
- If to stay in situ, use a dummy cctv to deter teens. Or put it on the bike patrol for the police. And remember we were once teenagers and where we used to go has been taken away. Don't take everything away.

EMAIL RESPONSES

- It would be great if you could remove it altogether. Too many issues with Drugs, Drinking and Anti Social behaviour There are alot of young families around here, including our own. It would be nice to go into the park without worrying what those hanging out at the Youth Shelter may do
- I would definitely recommend removing the shelter altogether as have observed drug dealing and smoking occurring there.
- Remove it altogether
- Please remove altogether
- Please remove shelter completely from Shelfinch park

- Regarding the shelter, when walking my dog in the evening youths are always in the shelter and a strong smell of cannabis every night will be smelt when passing by. In the day youths can also be found in the shelter which will pick on the younger children and sometimes throw items.
Lots of glass is usually found in the shelter and younger children have been seen climbing on top on the shelter in pass years.
Whilst the shelter would be nice idea if used appropriately unfortunately this has not been for a very long time I have lived here for 16years now and therefore unfortunately strongly believe the shelter should be removed before an injury to a child or stronger drugs are used being needles and these found in the shelter and one of the children picks these up.
- We've always been concerned about how the youth shelter is used. It seems to be a magnet for drug users/drinkers etc, leading to antisocial behaviour. We'd prefer it to be removed as we feel it's a health hazard to those children using the play area. We've seen many empty alcohol bottles left there, broken glass, syringes etc and it is also used as a urinal unfortunately. In the past we have tended to avoid walking through the park because of the smells emanating from the shelter.
- The history of the Youth Shelter is that it was initially put outside the local shop but it was moved due to attracting unwanted people to the shop area so they put it where it is now. Since day one of the relocation it has been trouble attracting the wrong sort of people, as it is did by the shop, and been a meeting place for all sorts of youths and those a little bit older. It has attracted drug addicts and every summer there is always a new group of kids with motor bikes or minibikes. Almost every night there are a load of kids who are very noisy with screaming to the point where I no longer investigate screams so could mask a real attack. They hit the metal structure which makes it a bell. All that noise makes it impossible to have the windows open at the front of the house until the early hours of the morning.
I would get rid of it as it will attract unwanted people wherever it is placed so will be a problem and if you put it away from houses then you make an ambush point for all sorts of perverts.
It is a bad idea wherever it is, and I really hope and pray you can get it taken away. As its first location was definition of how bad an idea it was you can only get rid of it now and give all those houses with a direct line of sound to it a rest finally.
- I would prefer the youth shelter to be removed.
The park is so family friendly and unfortunately this is not used for the use it was intended. Instead a concealed space for drug deals and use which I would prefer not to be near my young family.
- I have observed from using the park frequently, even before the redevelopment that teenagers use it as a smoking and drinking

station.

My husband has on numerous occasions picked up broken glass from the shelter and put in the bin which is right next to it. I must say that the teenagers I have seen have mostly been polite and said hello to me and I've had brief exchanges with them. However, I have had people complain about teenagers sitting under the shelter drinking and intimidating others.

In my view, if the absence of the shelter will eradicate these problems then we can all safeguard the park for future use.

Some might argue it is a nice sitting area but it is not currently as they make it dirty and that prevents decent people sitting there. There's always the grass to sit on if necessary.

- 1.3 It is possible to remove the existing youth shelter from the Shelfinch play area without significant disruption to the ground area. Councillors will need to monitor the impact of the removal in terms of displacement to another local area.



- 1.3 There may be no additional costs for removing the shelter as this should be able to be managed by the existing workforce. Depending on how it is originally fixed together, it may not be possible to take it down in a state that would enable the structure to be reinstated in a new location.

2 Recommendations

- 2.2 Councillors note the report and feedback from local residents.
- 2.3 Councillors consider the removal the youth shelter at Shelfinch Play Area.

Leanne Curtis
Assistant Clerk

APPENDIX A



West Swindon Parish Council c/o
West Swindon Library

Link Centre
Whitehill Way

Swindon
SN5 7DL

Email: westswindonpc@outlook.com

Tel: 01793 466418

Website: www.westswindon-pc.gov.uk

June 2020

Residents near Shelfinch Play
Area

Dear Resident

Re: Shelfinch Play Area – Youth Shelter

West Swindon Parish Council has recently invested in improving the play facilities at Shelfinch play area. This has included new basket ball and football goals, resurfacing the ball court, new toddler equipment and additional swings and climbing equipment. We hope families will enjoy using this space as soon as we are able to reopen play areas.

Whilst work has been underway, we have received feedback from residents about the problems associated with the youth shelter. This includes general anti social behaviour, problems with drugs and smoking.



Your Parish Councillors for Toothill would be interested in your feedback on whether to

- remove it altogether
- remove and relocate somewhere that is more open and visible.
- keep it as it is

Leisure and Amenities Committee 15 July 2020

If you would like to share your thoughts with us, you can telephone, email or complete a form online. You can contact the office or one of your Parish Councillors. We will then review the feedback and make a decision. Unfortunately our feedback options are limited by Covid-19 as the office is currently closed with no public access and only limited access to post.

We hope you can still find a way to share your views.

You can follow our webpage or our Facebook page for updates.

All contact details are listed below: Parish Councillors:

CLlr Mike Burtenshaw - email: mpbholly@yahoo.com

CLlr Steph Exell – email: stephexell@sky.com

CLlr Tim Makofu – email: tmakofu@gmail.com

Parish Office:

Email: westswindonpc@outlook.com Tel: 07470652137

Website: www.westswindon-pc.gov.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/westswindonparish.council>

We appreciate your time in giving this some consideration. Stay safe and take care.

Yours sincerely,



Paula Harrison

Parish Manager

APPENDIX B

Good Afternoon,

I have been asked to provide some feedback in relation to the newly renovated paly park at Shelfinch, Toothill specifically in relation to the Sheltered area that has been added.

Firstly can I say what a fantastic job has been done with the redevelopment, it looks amazing and a really great addition to the area.

I have been over to the park and have assessed the layout along with the new Youth Shelter and have also reviewed the police logs for the area for the last year.

I can certainly see as to why the local residents may feel that the shelter could become a focal point for youths and potential ASB, the only reason for this that I can see is that it has a roof on the structure which when it is raining could become a 'meeting' point as such to protect them from the elements. Unfortunately with or without a Youth shelter parks generally do attract some level of ASB which can be attributed to a number of things, I do not feel that the sole inclusion of a Youth Shelter will necessarily increase ASB.

I have looked at the police logs and there does not appear to be many reports of ASB in the park so it is either not being reported or it just doesn't happen.

My suggestion would be that we see how things go in the next few months of the park being re-opened and should the Council and/or the police receive numerous/continuous complaints of ASB from the park then we can review as to whether the Youth Shelter needs to be re-configured (maybe removing the roof so it doesn't provide the shelter) or removing it all together.

It would be a real shame to lose the shelter as it does add something different to the park and when I visited the other day it was pleasing to see a family all sat under it together enjoying their venture out to the park.

I will be sure to keep an eye on how things progress over the next few months.

Should you require anything further then please do not hesitate to make contact with me.

Kind Regards

Nathan Martin
PC 2791
CPTN Stratton, Central North & West Swindon