

Woodley Preschool

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

Purpose of Report

To ask Members to consider a proposal from Woodley Preschool to enclose the area to the rear of the existing pre-school building for use as an additional, secure outside space.

Background

Woodley Preschool rents, from the Town Council, an area of land upon which the school building and small outdoor space sits. The preschool has submitted a proposal to extend the footprint to include the grassed area to the rear of the building to provide additional outdoor space for children's activities and learning.

Proposal

The proposal is explained in **APPENDIX A**, with a plan of the proposed usage of the space at **APPENDIX B**.

Members are asked to consider the proposal and to make a recommendation to Full Council, should the Committee wish to support the project.

Impacts

Resources
The ground rent for the current footprint is £187.50 per quarter. Consideration will need to be given to an appropriate rent amount for any additional space.
Equality
The preschool has an equality policy in place and is open to children of all backgrounds and abilities. The proposal would provide additional learning and well-being opportunities for all the children at the school. There are not considered to be any equality issues in the context of the proposal.
Environmental
The enclosure of the area is not considered to have any negative environmental impacts. The space behind the preschool would remain a grassed area with the addition of a bug hotel, planted allotments area and fruit trees.

Recommendations

- ◆ **That Members note the contents of the report.**
- ◆ **That Members consider the proposal from Woodley Preschool and make a recommendation to Full Council.**

WOODLEY PRESCHOOL PROPOSAL

Currently Woodley preschool has a modest garden with concrete and Astro turf flooring. The practitioners have done a fantastic job of making it a dynamic learning space with lots of open-ended resources that spark the children's imaginations. In order to further the children's learning opportunities, the preschool would like to request to extend the garden area using the small area of land tucked away behind the pre-school.

The proposed extension to the garden would include the grass area behind the preschool's current garden and the preschool building itself which is on a slight hill. The preschool would install a fence to match the current fence with a gate allowing access to the new garden from the current preschool garden. This will allow the staff to close off the additional area if required. The fence would leave enough of a path around the outside of the garden to allow maintenance to the surrounding shrubbery.

The pre-school would like to use the space to provide further learning opportunities which they are not necessarily able to provide in their current outdoor space such as growing vegetables in a vegetable patch. This would be a fantastic opportunity to not only expand the children's knowledge and understanding but to help encourage healthy eating habits as they will be able to taste what they have grown, encouraging children to try new foods. It is also important to mention that these are experiences that some children will not necessarily get at home.

The hill itself lends the perfect opportunity for children to roll both themselves and resources such as tyres, balls and cable reels down, enabling them to experience and experiment with speed and gravity and learning to take safe risks.

The preschool staff have also expressed a desire to do forest school activities should the garden be extended and we can then consequently look at a practitioner becoming forest school trained. There are no trees in the preschool's current garden and the tree in the proposed new garden area will allow the children to explore the tree in all seasons, potentially use the tree for a tyre swing, build a fairy garden, take bark rubbings, use a rope and pulley to lift a bucket etc. Plans for the garden could also include planting flowers and shrubs to create a robust natural environment to explore, it could include a herb garden for the children to be able to explore their senses, to pick and make potions in their mud kitchen.

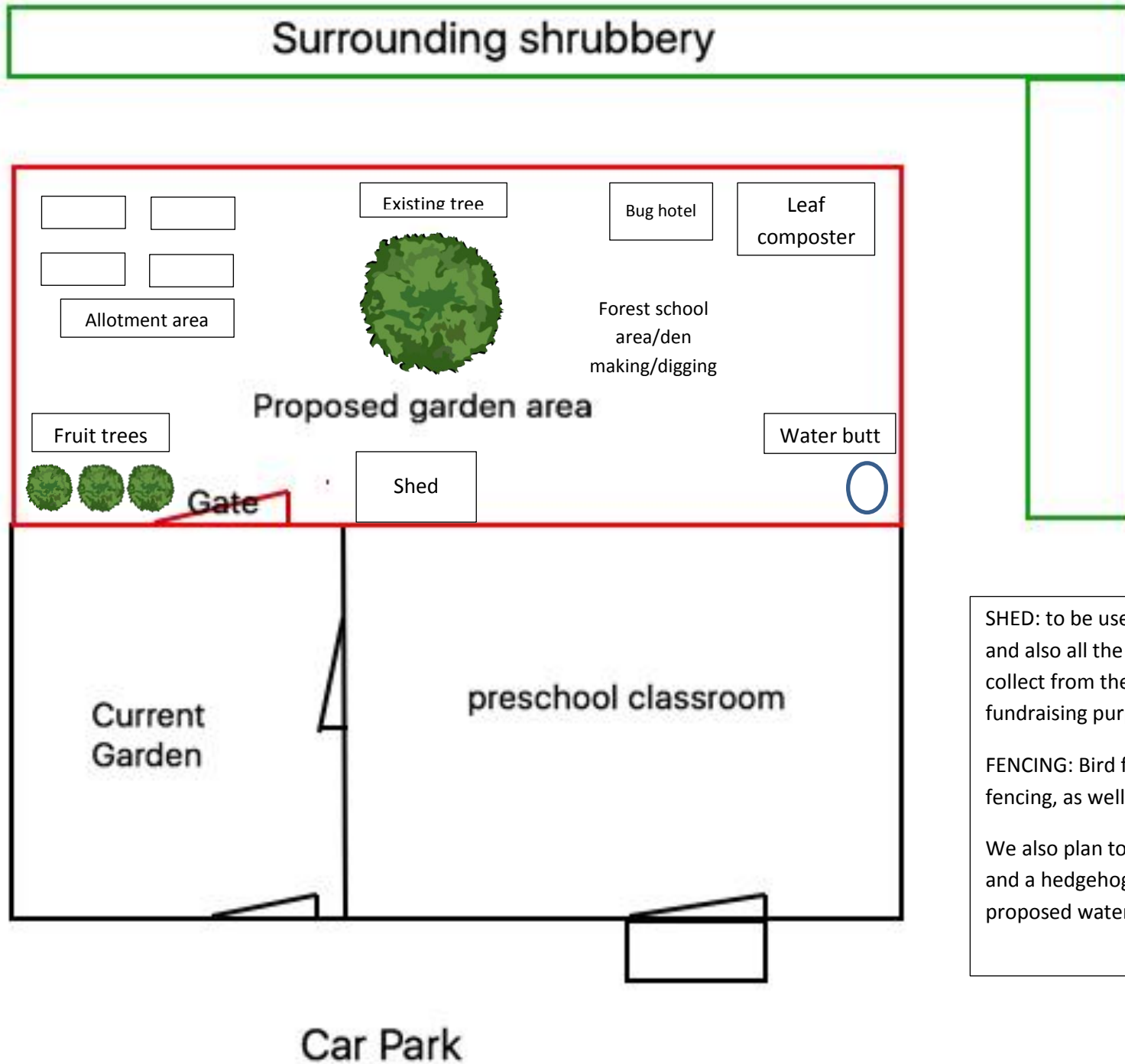
There is a huge emphasis in early years for children to be provided with rich outdoor learning experiences, in particular play that involves the natural world and taking safe risks. This has become more important than ever as children are spending more and more time on devices inside. The additional proposed space will provide the children with open space to run, play games etc burning off lots of energy helping tackle another relevant national concern of childhood obesity.

Being able to explore the natural world and manage risks increases children's self-esteem, and confidence. This is another key benefit for children as it is increasingly being reported that children are suffering from mental health issues at an earlier age.

Furthermore, the land that the pre-school would like to use is a secluded area and has often been used (as witnessed by staff) for anti-social behaviour. By fencing off this area for the pre-school it will discourage the space from being used for such purposes. Additionally, allowing the pre-school to fence off the area it will also potentially be less of an area for the council ground maintenance team to maintain.

In Conclusion this is a fantastic opportunity for the children to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world and an amazing opportunity for the preschool to be able to provide a multitude of experiences to the children within their care.

Woodley Preschool



SHED: to be used to house a lawn mower and also all the teracycle recycling that we collect from the local community for fundraising purposes.

FENCING: Bird feeders to be put on the fencing, as well as bird houses.

We also plan to install a hedgehog highway, and a hedgehog house in the area by the proposed water butt.