



# HASLEMERE TOWN COUNCIL

## TOWN MEADOW – Possible relocation of playground and planning permission

### 1. Introduction – possible relocation of playground

Following initial discussions with a play equipment provider and internal evaluations, considerations have been raised regarding the potential relocation of the existing playground within Town Meadow. This report outlines the reasons supporting the retention and potential expansion of the playground at its current site.

#### A. Compliance with Fields in Trust Standards

The existing location, while partially within 20m of nearby residences, is an established site. The play equipment provider raised concern that the extent of the proposed expansion may not follow the Fields in Trust guidelines which recommend new playgrounds maintain a 20m buffer from habitable rooms of dwellings; however, this standard applies primarily to new developments and is guidance, not a statutory requirement.

#### B. 2. Tree Coverage and Maintenance

While part of the playground lies under a tree canopy, leading to occasional soiling of equipment, the issue is currently mitigated through annual cleaning. Importantly, there have been no complaints from users, suggesting that current management practices are sufficient and acceptable to the community.

#### C. 3. Constraints at Alternative Site

The proposed relocation area within Town Meadow offers a maximum enclosed footprint of 320 sqm. By comparison, expanding the current playground—up to the drainage line—could increase the play area to approximately 416.25 sqm. This represents a 64% increase in usable play space compared to the current 253.75 sqm, which would support a wider age range of users and more equipment.

#### D. 4. Environmental and Cost Considerations

Relocating the playground would involve significant groundworks, possibly planning permission (see later in this document), and disruption. Retention of the playground at its current site avoids these risks while enabling focused investment in surfacing, equipment upgrades, and enhanced accessibility.

#### E. Conclusion

Retaining the existing playground location offers the best value in terms of land use, community impact, accessibility enhancement, and cost-efficiency. Expansion within the current footprint further increases benefits without incurring the complexities and limitations associated with relocation.

(Map of Town Meadow overleaf)



**Brown** - existing playground, **purple** – proposed extended playground, **hatched** – proposed new area

## 2. Introduction – planning permission

Extending an existing play area may fall under permitted development rights for local councils, depending on specific circumstances.

### A. Legal Framework

Under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, certain developments by local authorities do not require a full planning application. These are typically covered under Part 12, Class A – Development by Local Authorities, which allows:

"The erection or construction and the maintenance, improvement or other alteration by a local authority or by an urban development corporation of:

(a) any small ancillary building, works or equipment; or (b) the laying out of land..."

This includes:

- Small buildings and structures incidental to open space use
- Play equipment
- Fencing
- Surfacing or minor landscaping

### B. When It Is Likely Permitted Development

- The extension is within land already owned or managed by the council
- The play area remains ancillary to open space or recreational use
- New structures or surfacing are not excessively large or visually intrusive
- There is no change of use (e.g., not converting a car park into a playground)
- There is no significant increase in noise or traffic that could affect nearby properties

**C. When You May Need Planning Permission**

- The extension includes significant new buildings or lighting
- The site involves protected trees, listed buildings, or is in a conservation area
- The site is within the Green Belt or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- The proposal changes the principal use of the land
- The site is near residential properties and could attract objections
- The development could be viewed as an intensification rather than an improvement

**D. Conclusion**

The project should be allowed under permitted development rights for the following reasons:

- a. Play equipment is included in the definition of Part 12, Class A – Development by Local Authorities
- b. The land is already owned by the council
- c. The playground will remain ancillary to the open space
- d. There is no change of use
- e. There will not be a significant increase in noise or traffic
- f. There are no protected trees, listed building nor is it in a conservation area
- g. The site is not within the Green Belt or Surrey Hill National Landscape (formerly AONB)

However, Council needs to consider the possibility that:

1. The neighbours might argue the extension is excessively large and/or intrusive;
2. The neighbours might object saying the extension is within a buffer zone; or
3. The local planning authority disagrees that it is not permitted development and a retrospective planning application has to be submitted.

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- 1) **RECOMMENDATION:** The working group recommends the play area is extended in it's current location and not relocated.
  - 2) **RECOMMENDATION** - No planning application be submitted.