

Feedback from the Bredon Lawn Tennis Club meeting about the plans for Bredon Playing Fields

Helen Townsend, BLTC Chairman

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1 Moving the existing play area

All present would prefer that the play area for younger children remain where it is. It is used a great deal by younger children and families while older children are involved in activities - particularly during coaching sessions on the courts, and during football matches. Members understood the undesirability of bad language and shouting during football matches, but concerns were raised about young children being left unsupervised at the proposed site on the farthest car park, near to the main road. An alternative would be to re-site the main playground, but build a small one closer to the present site.

2 Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

The two main suggestions from the plans so far are:

1. To build the MUGA on the site of the existing playground.
2. To site the MUGA on existing BLTC Courts 3 and 4, with a gap between the two areas.

2.1 Points to consider

- The new MUGA must be lit in the winter - otherwise it will not be usable all year round for all age-groups. Otherwise, BLTC lights would still be only source of light in the area, continuing the anti-social behaviour shown towards us during play.
- Members generally would prefer there to be a solid barrier of some type between any new MUGA and the courts - boisterous and noisy activities on it would be very distracting during matches and coaching. Also hopefully this would reduce young people's negative involvement from their area towards our activities.

- The barrier between a MUGA and BLTC must have inward-sloping fencing above the main divide to prevent balls being kicked over into the courts - otherwise young people would try to retrieve the ball and damage our fencing.

Re: 2.

- BLTC members measured the available space on the existing playground site and it is not sufficient for 2 new courts - the area is 9 metres too short. There is room for only one court on the site.
- If BLTC accepted the building of 1 new court, the clubhouse would need to be altered to provide windows/doors overlooking the new court. The court would also have to be floodlit - would this be acceptable to planners given its location?
- Having only 3 courts would be a massive backwards step for BLTC and would reduce our capacity for club sessions, coaching and matches. We would inevitably lose some members to larger clubs with more courts.
- BLTC has worked hard to become a 4-court club, and during the main tennis season in the summer, all 4 courts are frequently in use - especially during coaching sessions with juniors. If 3 and 4 were 'multi-use' club members would have to set up tennis nets on there before every session of play - this would be a huge inconvenience (it takes a while!) and would inevitably lead to a reduction in their use.

Tennis Clubs at Twynning and The Lenches have had multi use courts. We have spoken to members there and they say that it just doesn't work because of a conflict of interest and damage to equipment. The third court at Twynning is now just for tennis but there are problems with the fourth, which is for five-a-side with balls being kicked against the fence or onto the tennis courts.

Members overall felt that a MUGA would only be a positive improvement for the area if it reduced the amount of anti-social behaviour shown at times towards club members by the young adult age group. Members felt that if the MUGA were the main focus for that age group in the evenings, then they would still feel intimidated having to walk through the fields and past the MUGA to get to the club. Several incidents of name-calling and jeering have taken place in the past as members pass the current playground - this has made them feel threatened. General concern was expressed that this could lead to the club losing members if the situation in this respect deteriorated any further. Members want to feel safe and be respected when they use their facilities.

An alternative would be to site a new MUGA near the site of the current kick-wall or at that end of the lower rugby pitch, well away from the most 'built-up' area. This would have several benefits - young people would be able to be noisy and boisterous (as they will!) without disturbing local residents or other clubs too much, and they would have a space of their own where their activities were not constantly overlooked. Anti-social behaviour would be significantly reduced in the whole area of the different clubhouses.

3 Other clubs in the area

Have other clubs been asked to consider giving up space for the new MUGA or suggesting alternatives? As BLTC has hard surfaces, we feel that we are being pressurised to solve this problem for the community, at possible detriment to the club.

Would it be possible for the football club, for example, to mark up 5-a-side pitches for children during the summer on the main football fields when they are not in main use by the club - it would then be a more interactive space for children.

Members would be keen to know the views of the other clubs in the area on the proposed changes.

BLTC would like if possible to see the main football pitch adjacent to our courts to be moved further away and for a more rigid fence to be erected on that side of our fencing to protect it. Considerable damage takes place regularly due to footballs being kicked against it, and during matches spectators lean against and damage the fencing. If this is not possible, the club would appreciate a small yearly contribution from the football club towards the repair and maintenance of this fence.

4 BLTC courts 3 and 4

There was much discussion about the condition of these courts and whether or not it would be beneficial to the club to have a possible alternative. The trees at the rear of these courts were planted by the council and are too close to the courts - widespread root growth has caused considerable damage to the court surface and has reduced the lifespan of these courts to the extent that they are now in a poor state of repair and need resurfacing. As this has come sooner than expected, if the courts were to be resurfaced within the next year the club would have to spend between £20-25,000 on the work, including digging out and concreting a barrier trench between the trees and the courts to prevent future damage. The club feels that as the council planted these trees, it should assist the club in these works. The committee has already discussed writing a letter to the council asking for such assistance.

5 Other points

The two main funding sources are Wychavon Council and the Lottery. Have local businesses been asked to contribute/assist with the funding for the area?

BLTC is very keen that young people in the area have more facilities to enjoy, but is also concerned that other age groups do not suffer as a consequence. BLTC would not like to see more large groups of young people hanging around by the courts, which in the past has led to intimidating behaviour and vandalism. Club members are concerned for the future of the club if membership starts to suffer

as a result of the club facilities being seen as less desirable due to the location of other facilities close by.

The majority of our members actually live in Bredon. At present out of 147 members, 92 live within the parish and 48 of these are under 18. We suspect that this isn't the case with football and rugby, where both adults and children come from further afield. We have a wider age range than any other club, from 4 to 78! BLTC does more for children and young people than any other group currently using the playing fields as we provide facilities, coaching and organised activities for our junior and mini members. The club is proud of the fact that so many of its members are under 20 years of age, and feels that its efforts should be more widely acknowledged. At present we have 45 members aged between 5 and 17 receiving coaching on our courts every week. Our fees for junior members are £8 p.a. for 'mini' age groups, and £17 for juniors - this is very cheap for the facilities available! Also Cheltenham municipal courts are charging over £5 per hour for use of their courts, which we think makes our charges even better. We are providing an excellent facility for children and young adults, and feel that this should be taken into consideration.

An important point for us is that the land our courts stand on was left for tennis in perpetuity, and compared with the other clubs we have a very small percentage of the overall area of the playing field.

Overall, BLTC members are positive about the plans and appreciate the need for improvements to the area. It was felt that the fact that the plans are not yet to scale was not helpful when trying to work out possible changes!