

# Slade Road Play Area and Playing Field Consultation results and analysis



## Document History

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## Distribution

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# 1 Background

The Slade Road Play Area and Playing fields are two plots of adjoining land at the bottom of Downside, a short walk away from the High Street. They were both part of the old Portishead Primary school land.

Plot 1, consisting of roughly two-thirds of the land is owned by North Somerset Council (NSC) and previously was the Slade Road school playing field. Plot 2 is owned by Portishead Town Council (PTC) and used to be the school play area including a nature trail. Plot 1 is now a rough field which has occasional ad hoc "clearance" maintenance by NSC. Plot 2 is wooded and not been maintained in the recent past.

The only road access to the site is via Downside (a narrow cul-de-sac). The North Somerset land is a field sloping down to Slade Road whereas the Portishead Town Council land is a strip of unmaintained woodland further up the hillside towards Briary Road, bordered by a small stream which rises from a spring on the North Somerset plot.

The PTC plot has a covenant on it which states: "... it (the landowner) will not at any time hereafter use the property for any purpose other than a playground and amenity area"

The North Somerset owned land is currently part of the NSC development list for potential future housing development.

In recent years PTC has received regular representations from residents with significant concerns about the potential loss of this town centre green space to development. These have only increased during covid, with more awareness of the value of urban green spaces, in particular to health and wellbeing. The Town Council has also been lobbied by enterprising children and young adults who have twice built their own hand made BMX track over the last 2 years, the first one was demolished by NSC after complaints by residents with a different view of the best use for the land.

PTC therefore commissioned a survey to gather a much wider set of views from Portishead residents on how best to use the land in the future.

The consultation ran from 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022. It was published on PTC and Portishead Community Facebook Pages and in the North Somerset Times. Around 300 physical leaflets were delivered to the houses closest to the Play Area and Playing Field.

The photos below show the land registry entry and photos of the two plots:

Figure 1: Land Registry entry.

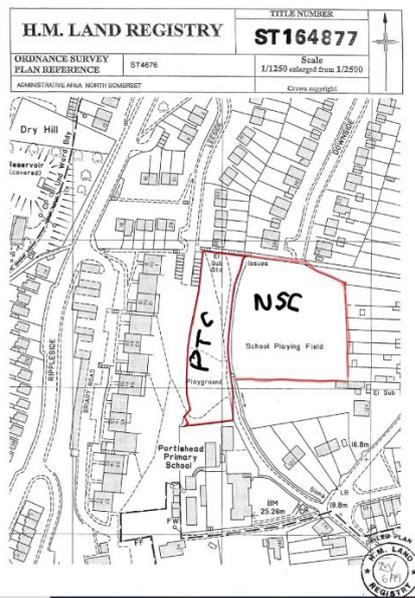


Figure 2: Portishead Town Council Land



Figure 3: North Somerset Council Land



## 2 Survey Responses

### 2.1 Overall response.

There were 306 responses in total.

In comparison, PTC has either been involved in or run around a dozen consultations over the last 2 years. This response rate is the second highest figure, it is above the Wyndham Way Study Area consultation but well below the survey on the future of the Lake Grounds which had 1000 responses. (The Lake Grounds survey did have a large response from outside Portishead).

87.5% said they were either aware of the location or used the play area or playing field.

### 2.2 PTC Owned land numerical analysis.

We asked “What are your preferred options for the Portishead Town Council Land? “and allowed people to choose multiple options. We did not ask people to choose a favoured option.

Approximately two thirds of responses were for creating a nature trail and play area in the woodland setting. As one of the respondents noted, this could be done by clearing some of the scrub rather than any of the mature trees.

Circa one third of comments wanted to leave the land as it is.

2.6% of people wanted to see the covenant removed and the land made available for development.

#	What are you preferred options for the Portishead Town Council owned land?
220	Nature trail/play area in woodland setting
110	Leave as woodland with minimal maintenance
26	Play area/seating by removing trees
8	Remove covenant to allow development
1	community farm
1	Mix nature & housing
1	Managed woodland for both people and wildlife
1	Maximise its potential to absorb excess rainwater.
1	A percentage left as trees and a skate park
1	Managed Woodland
1	Accessible green space
1	Bristol
1	The play area can be re instated without removing trees. Only scrub will need removing and the existing trees can stay in place along the public footpath
1	Allotments for residents of surrounding streets.
1	Cycle trail/pump track
1	Mix of nature trail/play area but also woodland and scrub land for nature

## 2.3 Summary of PTC Land comments

“Leave the area as it is. Not enough space for a play area.”

“This land provides a lovely wild oasis within the town, and a much-needed haven for urban wildlife”

“A nature trail/play area would be a significant improvement especially for families with young children.”

“Good Educational opportunity for a nature trail and wildlife nature corridor”

“Cannot afford to lose green spaces within the town”

“I would increase the protection provided by the covenant (which could be changed by a future council) with a Deed of Dedication”

In summary, there is demand for a good educational play area and woodland trail, but any implementation must be sympathetic to the woodland environment and the local wildlife.

As a resident stated:

“With care, the play area could be reinstated as the hub of a wildlife corridor enabling children and parents the chance to watch and learn about wildlife.”

## 2.4 NSC Owned land numerical analysis

We asked, “Would you like to see the North Somerset owned land developed for housing or not?”

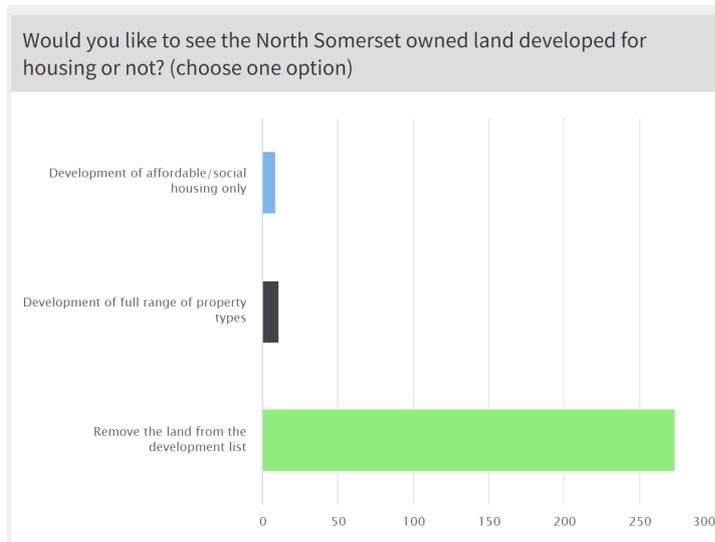
- 93.2% wanted the land removed from the NSC development list
- 3% chose development for social housing only
- An additional 3.8% chose development involving a full range of property types

For context, a housing survey undertaken in summer 2020 for the Portishead Neighbourhood Plan asked questions about housing across the whole of Portishead, with 175 responses. This separate survey had the following responses.

- 45% of respondents do not want any more housing in Portishead. As a second choice, the majority of these people would want to see market or smaller market homes
- 28% favour market homes or smaller market homes
- 26% prefer some form of “affordable” housing
- 22% see no more houses as their least favoured option, presumably as they are looking for somewhere to live or will be in the future.
- Analysing the demographic data, younger people who are not yet on “the property ladder” were much more likely to be the people seeking affordable housing whereas older people who tend to already have a secure housing situation, are happy with the status quo where market housing predominates.

Looking at the results of both the Slade Road survey and the comparison with the Neighbourhood Plan survey, the conclusion is the same. There is an overwhelming support for NOT developing either

of these specific plots of land plot of land although there is higher demand for affordable housing across Portishead as a whole.



We asked, “If you want the land removed from the development list, what would you like to see happen?” (People could choose multiple options)

There were a mix of views. The two options to leave the land in its most natural state, i.e., a meadow/wildflower area or a community orchard were the most popular single choices. However, there was about the same level of support for making the area into more of a community amenity area with the most popular options being a children’s playground, urban farm or allotments in that order. There was also a small amount of interest in a memorial garden.

The land is a substantial plot so it would be possible to combine one or more of these options to meet the wishes of the largest group of people

#	If you want the land removed from the development list, what would you like to see happen? (multiple options possible as its a large plot)
181	Meadow, wildflower area
131	Community orchard
126	Children's playground
109	Urban farm(small animals,cafe,community area)
75	Allotments
34	Memorial Garden
1	bike ramps
1	Local people led managed rewilding site
1	If small farm etc. Is compatible with maximum flood prevention it would be a huge asset to the town.
1	Continuation of woodland setting to make one park with seats
1	Mixed wildlife area and skatepark.
1	Nature trail
1	SkatePark
1	Bike trails
1	Nothing.. why do we need to make use of it. What can it not be left for nature.
1	Space to play, but not necessarily with play equipment.
1	Various, see comment
1	Rugby fields for Gordano Rugby Club
1	Leave it alone
1	def opportunity for allotments for the young to develop skills - so rather than farm maybe chickens and food production
1	Leave as is and allow areas of natural beauty
1	Open grassed maintained area.
1	Picnic area
1	As before leave as woodland

## 2.5 General Comments about both plots of Land.

Asked about how they felt about the current state of the two plots of land many people made similar comments such as “unkempt”, “neglected”, “overgrown”, “poorly managed by NSC”, “unattractive”, “unloved”.

These could be summed up by one comment. “I’m sad that is not beautiful or useful”

In contrast, some people like the land as it is. “I like that it has been left to nature”

People saw it as “a quiet breathing space in the town” and lamented that it used to be a thriving amenity hosting many sporting and other uses.

“In past years Leaside residents had sports days and volley-ball games here. It was a real community space.”

As for the future, this comment from a resident perhaps sums up the consensus." I like both uses - playground and "rewilded".

People also expressed various concerns about any future use:

- Very poor vehicular access to the land through a narrow cul-de-sac
- Lack of parking nearby
- Potential loss of any natural land on a hill side because of the potential impact on flooding in the Town.

The rich wildlife in the area, including Deer, Badgers, Green Woodpeckers, Tawny Owls, Field Mice and Hedgehogs on land in the heart of Portishead, was also highlighted.

## 2.6 Summary of NSC Land comments.

### **General Points**

"While on paper these areas of land are "owned" by PTC and NSC it's important to remember that both councils are there to serve the local community. I would like to see the two councils work together to make the whole area a place that can be enjoyed by all."

"I would be willing to join a committee/ working party and help look after the park"

### **Concerns over vehicular access**

"Too much over development already in the town, unsuitable access via a small, narrow cul-de -sac"

"It's poor access and lack of green space in the vicinity of these roads make it an ideal area to publicise and share with the local community"

### **Retaining the land in a natural state**

"Just let nature be nature!! It can take care of itself."

"Cop 26 makes it clear that preserving our open spaces is crucial for the health and well-being of future generations. Let the Council be a shining leading light in the fight against climate change"

"Please let's think about our beautiful planet. We don't need any more concrete which reflects heat back into the atmosphere. We need greenery and trees to soak up the CO2... Please let's get the community involved in something good for the planet and for our mental health, we are all suffering from the effects of this Covid pandemic. We need hope, fresh air and something to give us inspiration"

"It would be good to have a managed area – a combination of both safe access for people but around the edges it becomes a wild area ... perhaps planted out in a way that attracts wildlife. Remove brambles so that the area can be used... but otherwise leave wild"

"Leave the trees and maintain it as a natural space. Stop development taking these spaces. Once they are gone there is no going back. Cop26 showed us that we just need to stop and keep protecting."

“It’s nice as it currently is. There aren’t enough areas for ‘kids to be kids’ – This is a good space for young adults and kids to come and enjoy natural land.”

“Anything Natural that can be enjoyed by the community, not more housing”

“An area for young children to discover more about nature would be amazing. It was a nature reserve for the children of Slade Rd school to learn from and it should remain so.”

“The field is a great wildflower meadow and wildlife hub but could be further enhanced by a community orchard and other sowings.”

### **Accessibility**

“Portishead's lack of accessible green space is an embarrassment to the town. This space could be turned into an all-weather, central, wheelchair accessible green space for all.”

### **Amenity / Play Area**

“I think having a really good playpark just off the High Street would bring more visitors to Portishead High Street and would be great for the large number of young children living in that area.”

“There is too little green space and activities for people, children and pets to walk. Somewhere in central Portishead maintained for this purpose would benefit the town. conversely more housing will detract”

“There are no good woodland play areas within Portishead. Weston Big Woods and Battery Point are on the extreme edges of town and require families with children to drive to access them, plus there is not much to "play" beyond the simple woodland. Take examples of good integrated play areas such as the top play area at Tynesfield where the play furniture blends into their setting and apply this here.”

“The path through the woodland is a convenient shortcut down from Leaside to St Peters Church, school and Gordano School. If it was maintained better, it would be used by lots of school children and their parents. If there was a play area in the woodland, then I believe it would be used by lots of children as the area doesn't currently have a play area.”

“There is no decent play area in this part of the town. This seems like an ideal opportunity to return this area to a play area for surrounding families as it's away from traffic and is therefore a safe area.”

“A nice area for walking and exercising would benefit the community. A play area for children would help - there aren’t any nearby.

“Wouldn’t it be lovely to have a nature trail or a woodland play area for our children to appreciate amongst the land.”

“Part of the charm of the old play area was its woodland setting - it felt like being in a forest! As well as the environmental aspect, it would just generally be a better area for kids to play with trees and nature around.”

“Thank you for putting this survey together, but please also look to how the area is being used. The children (and young adults) have spoken with their feet already and demonstrated just what potential the area has to them.”

“As a young child and teenager, I spent a lot of time here, it was our local park/play area. It was disappointing not to be able to bring my own children here to play on the equipment and big slide. I think the area would be well used as a play area; it is surrounded by houses with young families.”

### **Allotments**

“Woodland is historic and can’t just be planted later on. (Not without waiting a long time!) I’d rather use what we have and integrate NSC plot with the woodland. It could all blend together woodland to orchard with children’s area in the middle, and a zone for allotments.”

“Allotments would be private – the land must be available to the public, and not just children.”

### **Urban Farm**

“I love the idea of an urban farm with the animals CAFE and community area. So long as the green space is still maintained as much as possible. There are many people that live in the flats that could really do with somewhere lovely to go and to be involved in perhaps a community garden. There are also people with mental health issues around the area that could really do with some therapeutic activities. It is well documented how working with others, helping to plant trees and vegetables et cetera, working with animals, cleaning them out et cetera really improves people’s mental health and well-being.”

“The fields are in a central location and used to be the school playing fields so I think the emphasis should be on children, especially as there is a shortage of outside amenities for our kids. A community cafe /urban farm might help make this a central sustainable destination”

“Traditionally we had farms in that area, so an urban farm would be great to get youngsters out in the fresh air in a safe environment”

“Urban farm may be challenging due to access, but the idea is great. Certainly should be developed as a play area.”

### **Community Orchard**

This idea had a lot of support but always in conjunction with one of the other ideas rather than for a single use.

“Children’s playground and community orchard sounds like an ideal combination, might even be enough space for allotments too.”

“It could all blend together woodland to orchard with children’s area in the middle, and a zone for allotments.”

### **Memorial garden**

Only one specific comment:

“It should remain green open space for the benefit of the residents in Portishead, and maybe have some purpose as a covid memorial orchard or garden.”

### **Comments on Development**

6.8% were in favour of development on the land.

“We need some affordable houses and this area around it is already developed. Site is not pretty or ecologically special”

This contrasted with:

“Really important to keep the green space. It helps with mental health and is better for the climate”

“Anything but building and development”

“One of the few natural areas in a very developed area”

## 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 3.1 Slade Road Play Area; PTC Land

The conclusions from this part of the survey are that the woodland environment needs to be kept intact and the needs of local wildlife fully accounted for, whilst at the same time restoring a woodland play area and potential nature trail along the land. Any play equipment needs to be in-keeping with the woodland setting.

There is almost no appetite for removing the covenant which designates the land as amenity land.

As the land is owned by PTC, future decisions can be made by Portishead Town Council. Subject to formal agreement at a Town Council meeting, the logical next step is to ask some experts to survey the land and submit proposals for a woodland play area” which fully accounts for the existing environment.

Any proposals will undergo further resident consultation.

Budget has been set aside for the 2022-23 Financial Year to pay for any work that is agreed.

### 3.2 Slade Road Playing field; NSC Land

There was a large majority (93.2%) who do not want to see the land developed, many reasons were quoted, the need for more natural green space in an urban setting for health and wellbeing, the need for more local amenities and the practical issues of very poor access and the potential impact on flooding

“A community space to me means a place for all, and that could be achieved here by allocating space for allotments, children, and nature.”

“I would like it to keep its natural feel but with interactive areas for everyone”

“Whilst neglect is good for wildlife, the loss of a play area that could be used as a teaching resource is regrettable”

“Ideally this would be developed as an accessible area that all the community can make use of. Ideally without losing the trees, making a woodland themed park area with seating and tarmacked paths for residents with all types of needs catered for”

In terms of what to do with the land in the future, the survey showed a much more of a mixed set of views between those who wanted the land left in a mostly natural state whereas many others want to see it used as an amenity as it has been in the recent past.

Given the size of the plot, there is potential to satisfy both set of needs.

**However, the land is owned by North Somerset who still have it on their development list.**

The next step is for Portishead Town Council to formally ask NSC to remove the land from their development list and to then work with PTC to implement the requests made by residents in the survey