

## Introduction

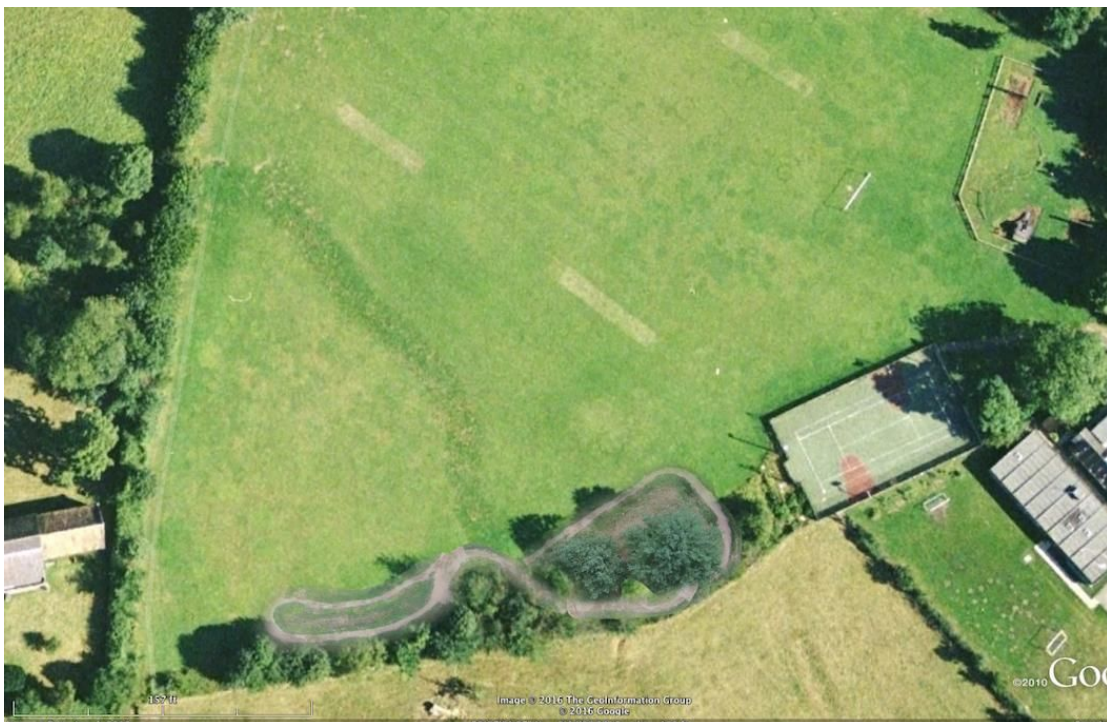
This is a proposal for a new facility on the Abington Recreation Ground, which is managed by a joint committee of Great and Little Abington parish councils. It was initially proposed by the school headteacher and then adopted by the committee.

It is for an off-road cycle track for training and practice in a safe environment, adjacent to the county primary school.

A **pump track**, a small track using as little as 10 x 30 feet of land, is a looping trail system of dirt berms and “rollers” (smooth dirt mounds for pumping) for bicycling without the rider pedalling. The name comes from the pumping motion used by the cyclist's upper and lower body as they ride around the track. The purpose of a pump track is to use this pumping motion to maintain speed around the track without pedalling.

## Site Location

The Recreation Ground is in the centre of the village, near to the school, shop and Three Tuns pub. On the south side, there is a strip of rough ground, which has some trees but is not utilised. It is also potentially accessible directly from the school grounds. It is proposed to use this for the pump track.



*Figure 1: Plan view of the field with a track superimposed under the trees (note this Photo was taken before the additional playing field was added to the school grounds and the outdoor gym installed).*

## Planning History

The Recreation Ground (Rec) was set up in ca. 1967 under application SO/66/730.

There was an initial pre-application consultation on this project in 2017, ref. PRE/0429/17.

Note that the whole ground is in a conservation area and some trees are subject to specific TPOs, ref. TPO 0001 (1961). In addition, the church to the SW of the Rec is Grade 2\* listed.

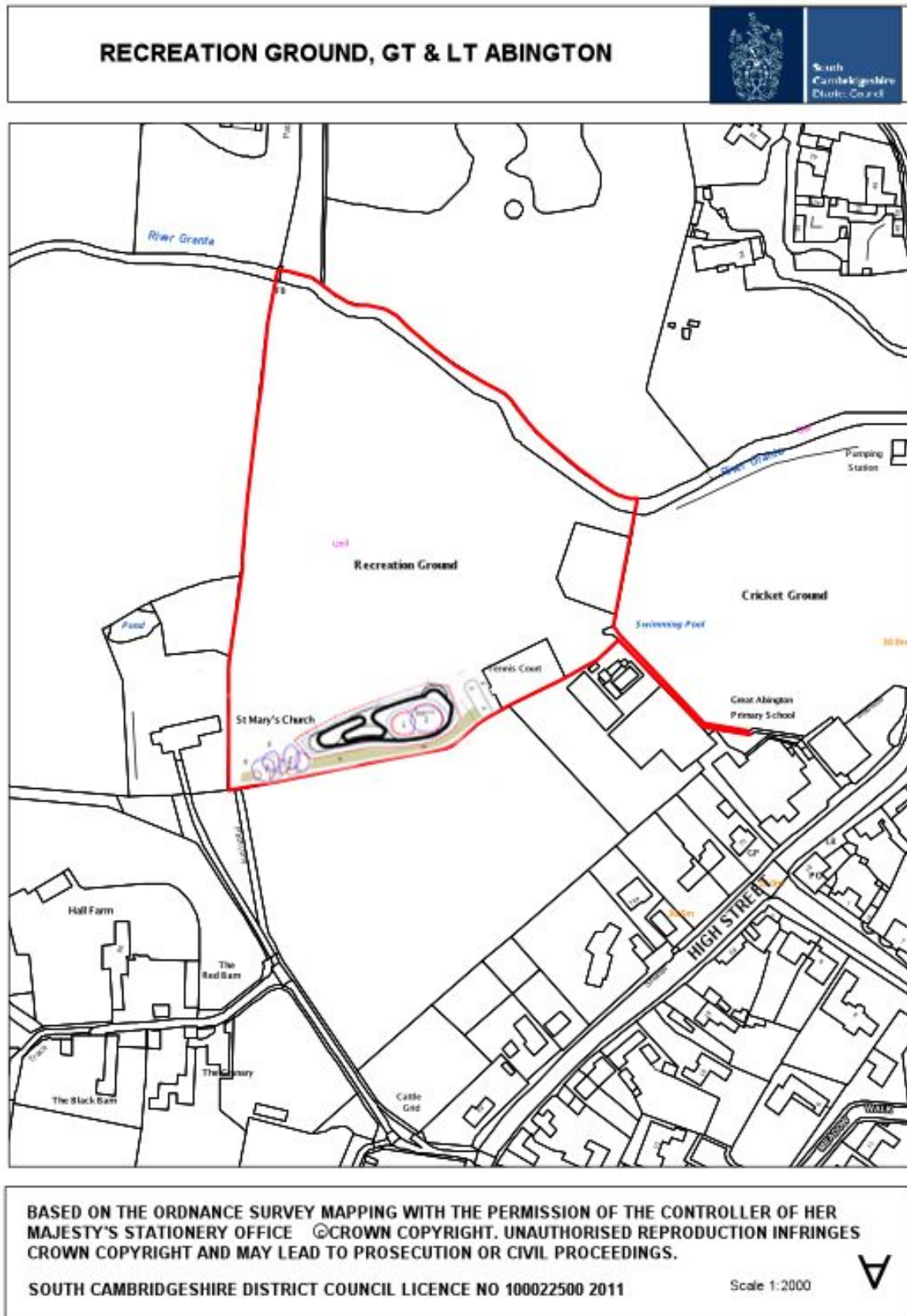


Figure 2: Location Map

### Application Details

Full design details are not yet available, but it is intended that the track will be available to the school for cycle training and will also be attractive to older children and adults. A hard (tarmac) surface is planned, which will allow use by small children under supervision and use for scooters and skateboards. The maximum height above ground will be around 1.5 metres and the track width about 1 metre.

There will be two raised platforms and a looped track under retained trees. Seating will be provided, which will also be close to the existing outdoor gym. The main features are shown below.

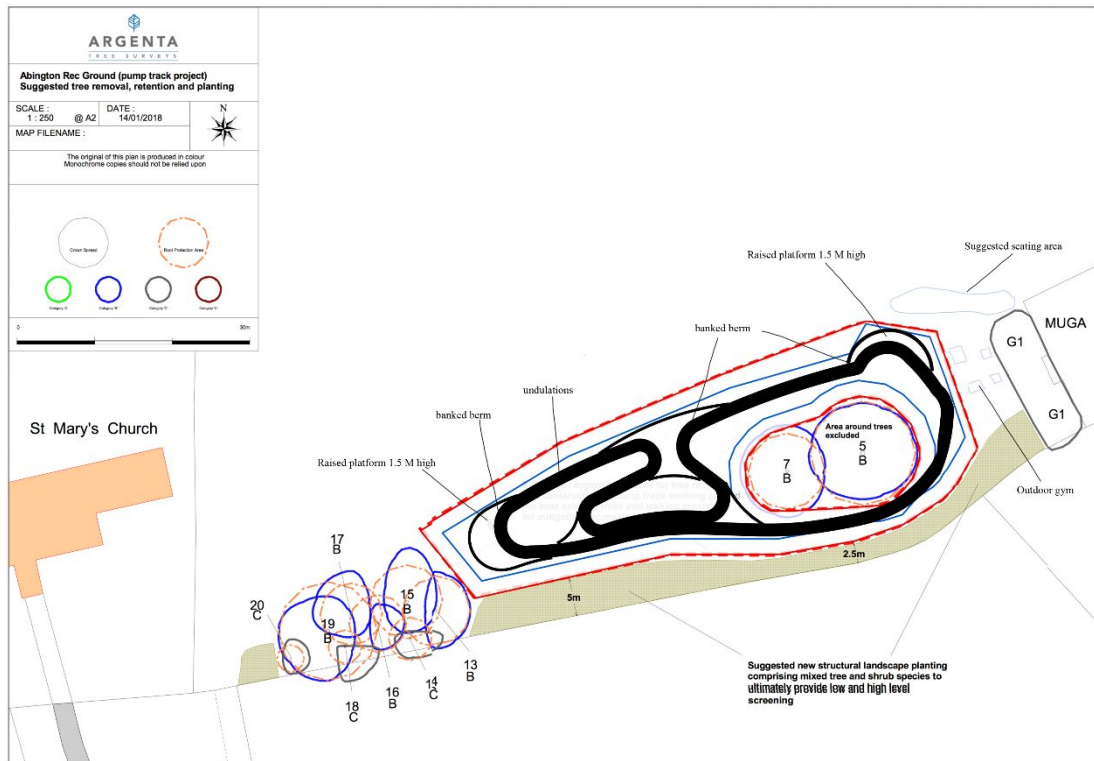


Figure 3: Sketch Layout (to be confirmed)



Figure 4: Artist's impression



It is intended to consult a specialist design company once the concept and constraints are agreed. This will then be agreed with the committee and other interested parties before submitting a full planning application.

## Advantages of a cycle training track

Cycling provides an ideal exercise for children. It improves fitness and helps to reduce obesity. More cycleways are being provided in the Cambridge area and it is imperative that pupils learn to use these safely and to improve their cycling skills, balance and confidence. The Pump track is designed to meet all these needs.

Riding a pump track will teach a number of critical skills that can benefit you in tangible ways:

1. It teaches you how to pump the terrain to gain speed (more on this below).
2. It teaches you how to ride berms and improve cornering.
3. It teaches you how to maintain momentum in order to ride as fast as possible.
4. It helps you learn how to look several steps ahead of where you're riding.
5. It creates a playful bike-handling demeanour, allowing you to see interesting lines on the trail that might not be so obvious.
6. It provides an intense full-body workout in a very short amount of time.
7. It's tons of fun!

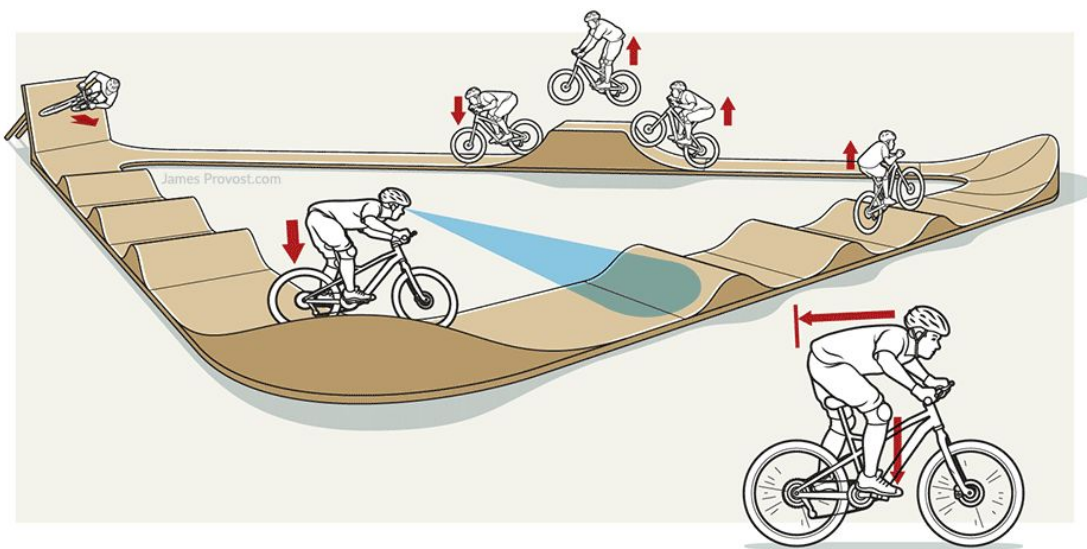


Figure 5: Cycling skills developed on the track

## Community Consultation

The proposal has been endorsed by various parties within the community. An article was published in the village magazine, consultation has been carried out with school children and a stand used at the school fete to engage with the community.

We consulted widely with the village, getting feedback from various children's groups and other users of the recreation ground. The response has been very positive, with a demand from the skateboards and scooter rider for a full tarmac surface. There is also a request for the facility to be accessible to people with physical disability.

A note (see Appendix) was received from Abington Woods, which provides outdoor facilities for children and youth and is located on the other side of the river.

## Design Philosophy

Detailed design will be by a specialist company, probably in accordance with 'BMX Safety and Planning Guide' by RoSPA 2005. It is hoped that disabled children and young people can integrate with their peers and access opportunities appropriate to their ability and development level, with the opportunity to progress and fulfil their potential. The track will support and provide users riding specially adapted cycles and those that are new to cycling and allow progression.

## Community involvement

Depending on the detailed design, there is scope for community involvement in the build. There are possible sources of material and labour from local businesses. Activities such as tree-planting are particularly appropriate for the local community.

The school has recently appointed a full time Sports Assistant to drive forward sports and activities with all 135 pupils. Part of the brief is to maximise the opportunities for young people through use of community resources.

Established community groups such as the Parents, Teachers and Friends of Abington School would utilise the resource for events outside the usual school term times.

## Existing Trees

There are several existing trees within the proposed site and a full survey was commissioned in January 2018. See reference 1. Some will be removed, and others incorporated into the design. A group of larger trees towards the church will be retained for screening. The Tree Officer has already commented on an earlier pre-application notice – see reference 2.

## Access and Safety

The proposed site is on public open space adjacent to the Abington Recreation Ground, which is used for football and occasional other sports events, as well as general public access for dog walking etc. Access will be via the 3 public entrances from the village cricket ground, church and footbridge from Church Lane. There is potentially access from the school grounds via a new gate. There is vehicle access from the track to the church.

There are safety concerns but the consensus view is that learning and riding a bike on a track contributes to skill and safety when later riding on roads:

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/blog/bikeclub/dirt-jumping-bmx-make-children-safer>

## Maintenance

An annual check by professional staff will be supplemented by regular inspection by school staff and members of the committee. Advice will be taken on frequency and scope, to ensure that it is in good order at all times.

## References

1. ARBORICULTURAL REPORT FOR PRE-APPLICATION (ATT 00194.pdf)
2. Tree Consultation 2018 03 01 - PRE 0429 17

## Appendix

### Note from Abington Woods (adjacent to Recreation Ground)

Hey Alan,

I was absolutely chuffed to hear about the progress being made with the bike track. We always encourage visitors to the woods to explore the sites of the village and they will often go over the river to use the recreation grounds including playground and it is a shame the older children and less physically able children cannot access that equipment. They enjoy the exercise equipment to an extent but it isn't what they would call 'fun'. I think The Abingtons could lead the way in providing play equipment and areas for all ages and abilities with this project.

Our main philosophy here at the woods is to get people of all ages, skill level and ability outside. Making the woods accessible to them all is the main emphasis of the work we do here. So if I may suggest just one thing? Could you ensure the pump track is wide enough for people with physical difficulties to access especially those in wheelchairs? So we can make full use of this exciting facility? We here at Abington Woods wholeheartedly support the pump track project and would be happy to offer any baby trees or hedgerow if you need?

Deep Regards and Thanks

Deborah James

Abington Woods