

## Introduction

The Abington Recreation Ground (Rec) was set up in ca. 1967 under application SO/66/730 and was formerly a field. Facilities have been added over the years for children's play, sport (MUGA) and adult gym for fitness, but we feel there's less for the older children (secondary school age). Hence the desire to add facilities such as a cycle track, which can also be used by the school.

A joint committee, Abington Recreation Ground Committee (ARGC), of Great and Little Abington parish councils, with representatives from the main users, manages the ground.

The adjoining Great Abington Primary School is keen to have access to a safe and exciting space to develop pupils' cycling skills and prepare them for active travel in the future. They already use the MUGA.

The bulk of the field is currently used as an open space, including use as a football field in season. It is bordered to the north by the River Granta with a footbridge crossing at the north-west corner and is surrounded by trees on all sides.

The grade II\* listed St Mary's Church is adjacent to the SW corner of the Rec. and fairly close to the site but separated by a small copse of trees, which will be retained.

## Objective

A cycle track is proposed along the southern edge of the Recreation Ground, which adjoins a paddock. The site is scrub, with a few trees, most of which will be retained and will extend onto the grass field. It is designed as a pump track to help learn good bike control but also has some flat sections for beginners. It will connect with the school grounds (top left in the image below) but also be open to the Recreation Ground.



To the left of the proposed track, there is a multi-use games area (MUGA) and to the right the East End of the church is just visible.

## Site & Design

The site is around 3000 m<sup>2</sup> and the track around 70m long. The track is designed for beginners and intermediate riders and includes some flat sections as well as the 'pump track' for developing skills. There is an access path from the school and from the area of the MUGA.



### Consultation

Considerable consultation has been carried out using the village news magazine, the website (see <http://www.theabingtons.org.uk/parish-councils/abington-recreation-ground/pump-track-proposal/>) and a parish council consultation event in early 2019.

### Planning Constraints

The Recreation Ground, including the application site, lies outside both Abington village development frameworks. However, it is within the Conservation Area between the two parishes of Great and Little Abington, so all the trees have a statutory protection. In addition, Tree Preservation Orders exist on the site (ref:1 and 61). They seek to protect Elm, Ash, Horse Chestnut and Sycamore trees.

The church of St Mary, Great Abington (Grade 2\* listed) is located close to the south-west corner. Several other listed buildings are also in the locality but mainly along the High Street, further south.

The site is within a Flood Zone 3 as defined on the Environment Agency's Flood Maps.

### Impact of proposal

The ground to be used is located at the southern edge on land which is currently rough scrub land, with longer vegetation including nettles. There is some evidence of rabbits, which are not welcome in a sports field. It adjoins the school grounds and meadows used for grazing horses. The nearest house is at least 100 m distant. The church is to the west, but the intention is to leave a small clump of trees, including three large ones, to provide some shielding both from sight and from noise.

### Trees

A tree survey was carried out in early 2018, for safety reasons and to support this application. The detailed report is on the website noted above. Very few trees will need to be removed apart from dead or dying elm. The track will not be positioned under trees, both to protect them and the reduce leaf fall onto the track.

### Justification

These works are for outdoor recreation in line with the existing use of the ground. Policy DP/7 'village frameworks' of the adopted Local Development Framework supports such developments. They were

initially suggested, and are strongly supported by, the school and also have the support of many residents, as shown by consultation via the school and village newsletter.

The location was chosen for its juxtaposition with the school grounds, enabling easy access without going on the road. It is also the best available on the field, avoiding the football pitch.

## Landscape

A tree survey of the area has been carried out. Several are self-seeded elm with limited expected lifespan; one or two are already dead or dying. It is intended to provide some replacement trees between the track and the remaining field and planting along the existing mesh fencing of the boundary.

The view from the main access to the church (from the south) will not be much affected, though the track will be a little higher than the surrounding ground.

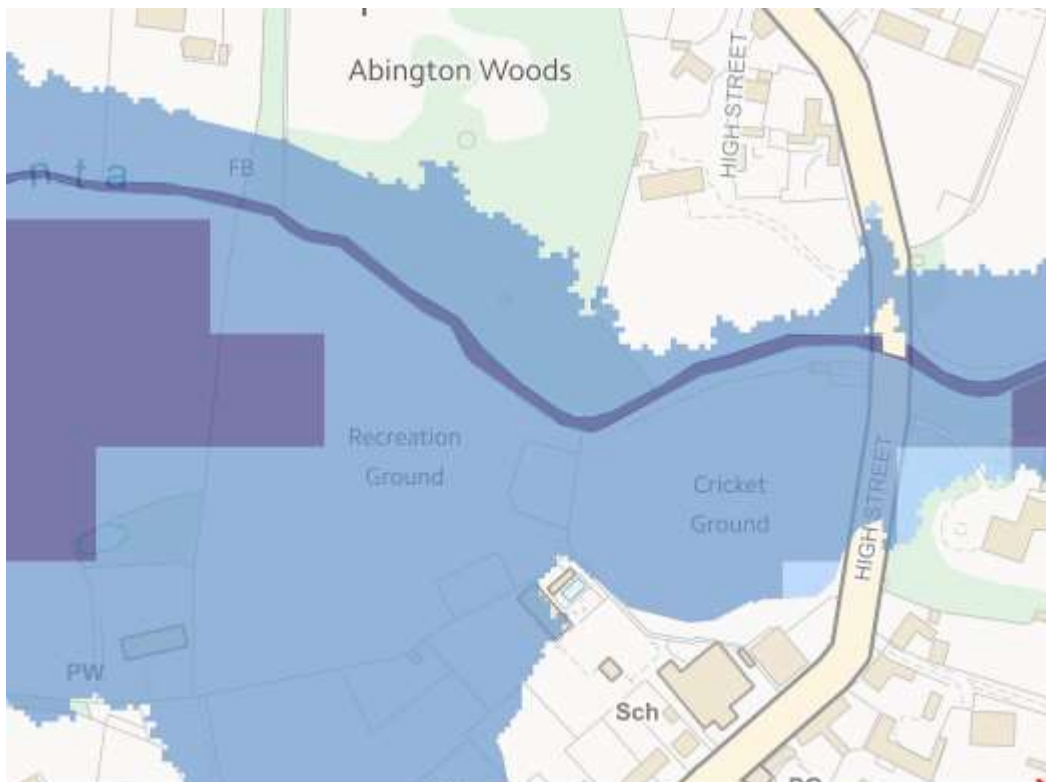
## Access

The main access to the Rec is from the High Street, to the east along a tarmac path between the school grounds and the cricket ground.

Vehicular Access will be necessary for construction traffic along the track to the church and through a gate in the SW corner of the ground. Access is also possible via the school grounds. Vehicles are rarely allowed on the Rec.

## Flood Risk & Drainage

The Rec forms part of the River Granta flood plain (medium risk) and occasionally floods for short periods of time but the site is slightly higher so rarely affected.



The area enclosed by the track will be drained to the main field to avoid any pooling in the centre. This is not expected to create any significant change to flood levels.

## Archaeology

No significant archaeology is expected in this field, which was used for agriculture until its use for recreation. It is adjacent to the river and the site is very close to an old meandering river course. It is adjacent to a paddock in which magnetometry and resistivity surveys were carried out on 17 September 2006 by Archaeology RheeSearch. This noted that “the greater part of the survey area is undoubtedly alluvial. This is supported by the type of the soil visible, the old meander course of the river (clearly visible in the field to the north...) [the site] and the shape of the river on the Inclosure map.”

The site is also reasonably close to the churchyard, which has recently been the subject of archaeological examination during construction of a church porch (planning application S/2608/13/FL).

The site will be largely undisturbed. The entire track will be built a minimum of 300 mm above average ground level. Excavation will be minimal, restricted to saving topsoil (up to 200mm) for landscaping. The profile of the track will be built up with imported material, chiefly Class 1A Fill, 75 mm to dust, for track layout and Class 1A Fill, 75 mm to dust, for the main track sub-base.